

## Spyware inquiry: Greek journalists, government officials give testimony to MEPs

**The EP inquiry committee heard Greek journalists describe their experiences as targets and investigators of surveillance, and discussed the issue with Greek government officials.**

On Thursday 8 September, Parliament's spyware inquiry committee held a public hearing on Greece. You can catch up with the hearing on [Parliament's Multimedia Centre](#).

### **Journalists denounce impact of surveillance on EU values**

In the first panel, MEPs heard testimonials from Greek journalists who were either targeted with spyware, or have been investigating cases of surveillance.

Thanasis Koukakis and Stavros Malichudis argued that their journalistic work led to their targeting. Koukakis noted that his surveillance would not have been properly assessed without the Pegasus Inquiry committee and the checks made on MEPs' phones, which revealed that the phone of Nikos Androulakis (S&D, EL) had also been targeted. Malichudis noted that at the time of his surveillance he was in talks about setting up an international network of journalists covering refugee issues, so sensitive information about journalists in other countries may also have been revealed.

Eliza Triantafillou spoke about her investigative work into the use of spyware in Greece. Triantafillou found that official investigations on privacy violations seemed to proceed slowly, while investigations into leaks to the media advanced much faster. She argued that credible investigations into the activities of spyware provider Intellexa are necessary.

MEPs agreed on the need to urgently investigate spyware companies, pointing to the risk of evidence destruction. They highlighted the negative consequences for democracy, media freedom and freedom of expression. They also asked whether Greece is heading in an authoritarian direction, to which the guest speakers noted that at least journalists have experienced a negative climate for criticism of the government. MEPs showed interest in spyware export licenses in Greece but also in Cyprus.

### Faster national investigations needed, say MEPs

In the second panel, MEPs listened to representatives of the Greek government. All three officials highlighted the severe limitations imposed on them by law in relation to disclosing top secret information, and that they must not impact ongoing investigations and judicial independence through public comments on these issues. Athanasios Staveris (Secretary General at the Ministry of Digital Governance) outlined the government's national security strategy and timeline, and efforts to bring EU cybersecurity legislation (for example the [NIS2 directive](#)) into national law.

Panos Alexandris (Secretary General at the Ministry of Justice) welcomed the committee's work and highlighted the rights to privacy, family life and data protection provided by Greek legislation. He also emphasised the role of the independent Hellenic Authority for Communication Security and Privacy (ADAE) in safeguarding fundamental privacy rights. Finally, President of the ADAE Christos Rammos spoke about the Authority's supervisory role, and shared his view of its legal limitations related to public prosecutions.

MEPs argued that EU citizens need more transparency, noted that the government has promised to quickly investigate the cases in question, and urged it to make faster progress. They asked about reports of national intelligence service dossiers on people under surveillance having been illegally destroyed, and highlighted the privacy authorities' responsibilities under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). They also asked how well the current EU legal framework is suited to investigations into digital communications, and raised the implications of the events in Greece for all EU member states, as well as the European Parliament itself.

### Further information

[More information about the hearing](#)

[EPRS Briefing - "At a Glance: Greece's Predatorgate" \(8.9.2022\)](#)

[Committee of Inquiry to investigate the use of Pegasus and equivalent surveillance spyware](#)

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