

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000861/26
to the Commission
Elena Kountoura (The Left)
(2 March 2026)**

Subject: Protecting maternity, unequal treatment of fixed-term workers, infringement procedure and the demographic challenge in Greece

In Greece, substitute teachers on fixed-term contracts do not enjoy adequate ⁽¹⁾ and equal protection in matters of pregnancy, maternity and sick leave due to threatened miscarriage, compared to permanent teachers ⁽²⁾. This practice constitutes discrimination against fixed-term workers and is contrary to EU law on equal treatment.

On 7 May 2025, the Commission issued a reasoned opinion ⁽³⁾ to Greece, pointing out that the current national framework does not comply with Directive 1999/70/EC concerning the prohibition of discrimination against workers on fixed-term contracts ⁽⁴⁾.

Meanwhile, Greece is facing an acute demographic problem, with declining births and accelerated population ageing. The insecurity of thousands of women in precarious forms of employment and the lack of maternity protection act as a disincentive to starting a family and run counter to the Union's strategic objectives on gender equality, social cohesion and demographic sustainability.

In view of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. How does it view the compatibility of Greek legislation with the principle of equal treatment of workers and with the obligations arising from the relevant directives on maternity protection, and at what stage is the infringement procedure against Greece?
2. How does it view the impact of the lack of maternity protection on the country's demographic development?
3. What initiatives does it intend to take in the event of non-compliance of Greek legislation with EU law?

Submitted: 2.3.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Mînzatu on behalf of the European Commission
(4 May 2026)**

As the Honourable Member refers in her question, a potential discrimination of fixed-term teachers contrary to Directive 1999/70 EC ⁽¹⁾, is already being examined in the framework of an infringement procedure INFR(2024)4013 ⁽²⁾.

Currently, the Commission is assessing the reply provided by the Greek authorities to the reasoned opinion sent in May 2025. The steps that the Commission decides to take in the infringement procedure will be made publicly available.

The Greek authorities with the support of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), have initiated efforts to address Greece's demographic challenges.

This includes the establishment of a National Observatory of Demographic Policy to support the implementation of the National Action Plan for Demography and to strengthen the capacity of public administration to design targeted interventions at national and regional level.

Furthermore, in Greece ESF+ supports women's participation in the labour market by financing measures addressing employment insecurity and enhancing maternity protection, including through developing early childhood education and care and long-term care services.

¹ EU equality legislation sets minimum standards for the protection of pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, as well as for fixed-term workers. See Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.

² In Greece, there is a serious issue of discrimination regarding maternity leave for substitute teachers, who are only entitled to 119 days of parental leave. Many women are forced to return to work prematurely or even resign, with negative consequences for their family, economic and professional situation.

³ Greece had two months to reply and take measures — see reasoned opinion (INFR (2024) 4013), https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/inf_25_982.

⁴ Council Directive 1999/70/EC concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP.

⁽¹⁾ Council Directive 1999/70/EC of 28 June 1999 concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP ((European Trade Union Confederation, Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe and European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services), <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1999/70/oj>).

⁽²⁾ In the following webpage: [https://ec.europa.eu/implementing-eu-law/search-infringement-decisions/?lang_code=en&langCode=EN&version=v1&typeOfSearch=byDecision&page=1&size=10&order=desc&sortColumns=decisionDate&refId=INFR\(2024\)4013](https://ec.europa.eu/implementing-eu-law/search-infringement-decisions/?lang_code=en&langCode=EN&version=v1&typeOfSearch=byDecision&page=1&size=10&order=desc&sortColumns=decisionDate&refId=INFR(2024)4013).

Additionally, targeted programmes support the development of women's skills and career opportunities, which helps mitigate disincentives to family formation.
