

### **Greece: a big improver despite the spyware scandal**

Greece remains a “flawed democracy” but its overall score improved from 7.56 in 2021 to 7.97 in 2022. It has thus come close to being upgraded to a “full democracy” after languishing in the lower category since 2010, when the Greek sovereign debt crisis led to a political and economic meltdown. In 2006 Greece had a score of 8.13, higher even than that of the UK, with 8.08. In 2022 Greece’s global ranking improves from 34th in 2021 to joint 25th, making the country one of the best performers in our index. It registers the fifth-biggest increase in score of all the countries covered by the index.

The improvement occurs across most categories of the index in 2022. The *electoral process and pluralism* category improves, driven by the authorities’ increased effort to promote political participation and facilitate the diaspora vote. Greece’s score for *functioning of government* also improves markedly, driven by the ending of the post-bailout enhanced surveillance regime, to which Greece had been subject since 2015. Greece managed the fallout from the covid-19 pandemic well, helping to restore public trust in political parties and government, which had been shattered during the crisis years after 2010. Greece’s tourism industry, the mainstay of the economy, could have been permanently scarred if the pandemic had been mishandled. Instead, in 2022 tourism rebounded strongly, returning almost to pre-pandemic record levels. Similarly, the government

handled the economic fallout from the war in Ukraine in 2022 capably and in a way that avoided the sort of social and political polarisation that characterised the 2010s. Finally, Greece organised an effective vaccination campaign and moved faster than most other countries to roll back pandemic-related restrictions, resulting in improved scores on several indicators in 2022.

Greece is penalised in the 2022 index in relation to freedom of the press. There is freedom of expression in Greece, but there is evidence to suggest that journalists are not free to investigate uncomfortable truths. There is considerable censorship on issues related to the police, the army and the church, and journalists often face harassment, threats and violence. Furthermore, it was revealed in August 2022 that the state had been engaged in wiretapping journalists and politicians using spyware technology on the grounds of national security. The prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, strenuously denied having personal knowledge of the activity, but apologised for it, saying that it should never have happened. The scandal damaged the government’s reputation, especially as the government official who would have had oversight of the wire-tapping was Grigoris Dimitriadis, the general secretary of the prime minister’s office. The affair led to Mr Dimitriadis’s resignation and that of the head of the National Intelligence Service, Panagiotis Kontoleon. The government subsequently introduced legislation to make the possession and use of spyware a criminal offence punishable by up to ten years’ imprisonment and sought to distance itself from the scandal.

scores, as other countries made faster progress. Greece makes the most notable overall improvement, rising nine spots in the rankings.

### **The UK’s democracy score strengthens in spite of governmental disarray**

The index score for the UK improves in the 2022 Democracy Index, rising from 8.10 in 2021 to 8.28.