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Law 5224/2025 (A' 142)

PART B

REGULATIONS ON MATTERS UNDER THE COMPETENCE OF THE GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

CHAPTER A

PURPOSE AND SUBJECT MATTER

Article 21

Purpose

The purpose of Part B shall be to:

(a) Ensure the unimpeded exercise of the right of worship for all religious communities and their members, through the establishment of a modern, comprehensive, and coherent legislative framework governing places of worship of religious communities, irrespective of whether such communities possess legal personality, with the exception of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ pursuant to Article 3 of the Constitution;

(b) Strengthen the Higher Ecclesiastical Academies and the Departments of Theological Schools of Higher Education Institutions with foreign - non-native students;

(c) Facilitate the charitable work of ecclesiastical institutions;

(d) Reinforce the Schools for the Training of Candidate Clergy (“Σ.Μ.Υ.Κ”.) and facilitate the attendance of foreign students at the Model Ecclesiastical Schools;

(e) Streamline the staffing structure of the Holy Metropolises;

(f) Recognize the Church of Sweden in Greece as a religious legal entity under Law 4301/2014 (A' 223) on the organization of the legal form of religious communities and their associations in Greece, and

(g) Recognize the Bektashi-Alevi Muslims of Thrace as a religious legal entity under Law 4301/2014.

Article 22

Subject Matter

Subject Matter of Part B:

(a) To define places of worship, to provide for the procedures relating to the licensing, erection, establishment, operation, relocation, and structural interventions of places of worship of religious communities, irrespective of whether such communities possess legal personality, with the exception of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ pursuant to Article 3 of the Constitution;

(b) To expand eligibility for entrance examinations of the Higher Ecclesiastical Academies to include graduates of Higher Education Institutions, Technological Education Institutions, or equivalent institutions, Higher Schools of Pedagogical and Technological Education, within Greece or abroad, and to introduce the possibility of exceeding quotas for foreign - non-native entrants to the Higher Ecclesiastical Academies and Departments of Theological Schools of Higher Education Institutions;

(c) To regulate the legal status of ecclesiastical institutions;

(d) To introduce the option for the clergy to enroll in the Schools for the Training of Candidate Clergy (“Σ.Μ.Υ.Κ”.) and to facilitate the studies of foreign students at the Model Ecclesiastical Schools;

(e) To introduce the option for married clergy to attend educational programs at the Schools for the Training of Candidate Clergy (“Σ.Μ.Υ.Κ”.);

(f) To provide for the right to teach at the Schools for the Training of Candidate Clergy (“Σ.Μ.Υ.Κ”.) also to members of the Laboratory Teaching Staff of Higher Education Institutions;

(g) To redistribute the permanent posts of Parish priests and ecclesiastical employees of the Holy Metropolises, and to regulate matters concerning Subdeacons of the Panhellenic Holy Foundation of Evangelistria of Tinos;

(h) To provide for a digital system for the granting of authorizations for the solemnization of marriages and the performance of baptisms by the Church of Greece;

(i) To provide for the granting of residence permits of type “A.5” for students of the Model Ecclesiastical Schools residing in student dormitories;

(j) To recognize the Church of Sweden in Greece as a religious legal entity under Law 4301/2014 (A' 223), and

(k) To recognize the Bektashi-Alevi Muslims of Thrace as a religious legal entity under Law 4301/2014.

CHAPTER B

PLACES OF WORSHIP AND RELIGIOUS MINISTERS OF KNOWN RELIGIONS

Article 23

Scope of Application

The provisions of this Chapter shall apply to all religious communities, irrespective of whether such communities possess legal personality, with the exception of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ pursuant to Article 3 of the Constitution, for which special provisions apply, unless otherwise expressly provided herein.

Article 24

Places of worship

1. Places of worship are spaces dedicated to the expression of religious reverence or the performance of acts of worship. They are classified as: a) Houses of Prayer, meaning places of worship with a surface area of up to two hundred (200) square meters; and b) Temples, meaning places of worship with a surface area of more than two hundred (200) square meters.
2. The layout of the place of worship must demonstrate that the distinct area designated as the principal place of worship is the predominant feature and characterizes the use of the space subject to licensing. This area must occupy at least two-thirds (2/3) of the total surface area of the space subject to licensing. Minor deviations from the above percentage may be examined on a case-by-case basis, depending on the specific characteristics of the space, upon submission of a reasoned report by the engineer, and provided that the predominant religious character is not undermined.

3. The place of worship may not be used as a permanent or temporary residence, or as accommodation for any individual, including the religious minister.
4. Houses of Prayer and Temples existing prior to 1955 may be licensed in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 26, in areas where the special land use category of 'religious sites' is permitted under urban planning regulations and applicable land use legislation, without any additional conditions, except where expressly required by the area's regulatory urban planning.

Article 25

Name of Places of Worship

1. The name of a place of worship must indicate in particular the religious identity of the place, comply with the principle of truth, not contravene public order, morality, or the international relations of the State, not be used abusively, and not infringe the rights of third parties, especially other religious communities, so that the true and precise religious identity of the place of worship is evident, without any possibility of confusion. If, for religious reasons, the name must be expressed in another language, it must be rendered in a faithful translation into the Greek language, with the option of also being indicated in Latin characters in parentheses, so that the true and precise religious identity of the place of worship is evident without any possibility of confusion. An incorrect or misleading rendering of the name in the Greek language shall render it inadmissible.
2. A change of the name of a place of worship shall require authorization by the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, which shall be granted upon application and provided that the conditions of paragraph 1 are met.

Article 26

Licensing Procedure for Places of Worship of Known Religions and Obligations of Notification

1. For the erection, establishment, operation, or relocation of a place of worship, as well as for any addition (vertical or horizontal), and for any construction works on an existing place of worship, or for the demolition of a place of worship, of any religious community, irrespective of whether such communities possess legal personality,

authorization shall be required. Such authorization shall be granted, upon application, by the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports and shall be issued in the name of the religious minister. The granting of the authorization referred to in paragraph 1 shall be a prerequisite for the issuance of the related administrative acts, such as building permits and preliminary approvals for construction works or changes of use required under urban planning legislation for the operation of the place of worship, as well as for approvals by agencies or collective bodies, and for the submission of notifications. The religious minister shall post, adjacent to the main entrance, and in a place clearly visible to the public, a clearly legible sign stating the name of the place of worship as specified in the authorization, the Online Publication Number (ADA) of the authorization, and the religious community to which it belongs.

2. Places of worship existing prior to 1955 shall lawfully operate without the authorization referred to in paragraph 1, provided that they have obtained the pertinent declaratory act issued by the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, upon application.
3. For the licensing of the erection, establishment, and operation of Houses of Prayer, an application must be submitted by at least five (5) individuals and one (1) religious minister who are Greek citizens or citizens of European Union (EU) Member States or third-country nationals lawfully residing in Greece. A natural person who acts as a religious minister or as a member of the governing body of a legal entity under public law (L.E.P.L.) pursuant to Article 1 of Law 2456/1920 (A' 173), or of Article 1 of Legislative Decree 301/1969 (A' 195), or of an ecclesiastical or religious legal entity under Law 4301/2014 (A' 223), may co-sign more than two (2) applications.
4. For the licensing of the erection, establishment, and operation of Temples, an application shall be required from at least one hundred (100) individuals and one (1) religious minister, who are Greek citizens or citizens of European Union (EU) Member States or third-country nationals lawfully residing in Greece. A natural person who acts as a religious minister or as a member of the governing body of a legal entity under public law (L.E.P.L.) pursuant to Article 1 of Law 2456/1920 (A' 173) or of Article 1 of Legislative Decree 301/1969 (A' 195), or of an ecclesiastical or religious legal entity under Law 4301/2014 (A' 223), may co-sign more than two (2) applications.

5. For the granting of the authorizations referred to in paragraph 1 concerning places of worship of the Muslim minority of Thrace, the consent of the relevant Mufti shall be required.
6. The authorizations referred to in paragraph 1 for places of worship of the Israelite (Jewish) religion shall be granted only to the legal entities under public law pursuant to Article 1 of Law 2456/1920 and Article 1 of Legislative Decree 301/1969.
7. Religious communities and religious ministers, including those of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ pursuant to Article 3 of the Constitution and its religious ministers, when acting in their capacity as religious members: (a) shall clearly and explicitly state the religious community to which they belong: (aa) when publishing books, periodicals, and other printed materials of religious content, or when presenting radio, television or internet broadcasts of religious content, or when systematically or in an organized manner posting publications and material presenting or transmitting religious teaching on online media of networking, communication and information, and in all informative or promotional material that they circulate, send or distribute under their responsibility to the public outside their religious community by any means of information and communication, provided that the purpose is the dissemination of the religious beliefs of the religious community to which they belong or the admission of new members into their religious community; (ab) in the course of their collective communication with natural persons or with representatives or members of associations of persons or legal entities that do not belong to their religious community, by any means of communication and for the purpose of disseminating the religious beliefs of the religious community to which they belong or the admission of new members into their religious community; and (b) to respect the refusal of the recipients of the religious material and content referred to in subparagraphs (aa) and (ab) of paragraph (a) to receive communication, and not to repeat communication for the purposes of the aforementioned cases. Any person in breach of the present provision shall be subject to an administrative fine, as determined by the joint ministerial decision of paragraph 2 of Article 62.
8. The authorization for a place of worship referred to in paragraph 1 or the declaratory act referred to in paragraph 2 shall be revoked, in particular, on grounds of: (a) violation of constitutional provisions, public order rules, or on grounds of national

security, as defined in Article 3 of Law 5002/2022 (A' 228); (b) violation of the terms and conditions for the issuance of the administrative acts of paragraphs 1 and 2 herein; (c) absence of a religious minister for a period exceeding six (6) months; (d) cessation of operation of the place of worship for a period exceeding six (6) months, as established by any appropriate evidence; (e) operation of the place of worship for purposes other than the expression of religious reverence or the performance of acts of worship, as established by any appropriate evidence; (f) failure to notify the Tax Identification Number ("Α.Φ.Μ.") of the place of worship to the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports within thirty (30) days from the granting of the authorization for establishment and operation; (g) request of the religious community.

Article 27

Replacement, Dismissal, Suspension, and Removal of Religious Ministers from the Register pursuant to Article 14 of Law 4301/2014

1. The replacement or dismissal of a religious minister or any substitute thereof shall be permitted with the authorization of the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports, which is issued following an application of the religious community.
2. The registration of the religious minister in the Register pursuant to Article 14 of Law 4301/2014 (A' 223) shall be suspended from the commencement of criminal prosecution and until the issuance of a final and irrevocable judicial decision for felonies or the following misdemeanors: (a) theft, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, forgery, bribery, breach of trust, breach of duty, perjury, false accusation, slander, any crime against sexual freedom or crime of financial exploitation of sexual life, bodily harm to a fetus or newborn, the offences under Law 3500/2006 (A' 232) on combating domestic violence, abduction of minors, unlawful detention, unlawful violence, vigilante justice, threats, disturbance of religious assemblies, (b) violence against public officials and judicial officers, undue influence on judicial officers, disruption of public service, disruption of judicial proceedings, disobedience, mutiny, impersonation, breach of official seals, breach of official custody, (c) incitement to disobedience, incitement to commit crimes, acts of violence or discord, solicitation and offer to commit a crime, criminal organization, terrorist acts – terrorist organization, punishable support, disturbance of the public peace, threat of

committing crimes, dissemination of false news, desecration of symbols or places of particular national or religious significance, (d) the offences pursuant to Law 927/1979 (A' 139) on the punishment of acts or actions aiming at racial discrimination, (e) proselytism pursuant to Article 4 of Emergency Law 1363/1938 (A' 305), (f) the offences pursuant to Law 4139/2013 (A' 74) on addictive substances, and (g) impersonation of a religious minister. The suspension referred to in the previous sentence also applies to cases of violation of paragraph 7 of Article 26 of this Law. In the event of a final and irrevocable conviction, the religious minister shall be removed from the Register.

3. If the religious minister referred to in paragraph 2 is a third-country national and holds a residence permit, such permit shall be revoked without a period for voluntary departure. If he or she submits an application for the granting of a residence permit, it shall be rejected without a period for voluntary departure. For the implementation of this provision, the Prosecutor who initiates criminal prosecution or the registry of the criminal court which issues the final and irrevocable judicial decision shall immediately notify the Directorate of Religious Administration of the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports of the initiation of the prosecution or the issuance of the judicial decision, respectively.

Article 28

Closure and Sealing of Places of Worship – Criminal Sanctions – Administrative Fines

1. Places of worship erected or operated without the authorization of the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports shall be closed down and sealed by the competent police authority, and the decision to seal shall be notified to the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports. Any person who possesses, erects, or operates a place of worship without the authorization referred to in paragraph 1 of Article 26, or alters its operation in violation of such authorization, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of two (2) to six (6) months and to an administrative fine, as determined by the joint ministerial decision provided for in paragraph 2 of Article 62. If the persons referred to in the second subparagraph are foreign nationals, they shall be subject to administrative removal in accordance with the provisions of Articles 21 to 30 of Law 3907/2011 (A' 7). If they are third-country nationals holding a residence

permit, such permit shall be revoked without a period for voluntary departure. If they are third-country nationals who have submitted an application for the granting of a residence permit, such application shall be rejected, likewise without a period for voluntary departure.

2. The submission of an application for authorization referred to in paragraph 1 of Article 26 shall not suspend the application of the present Article.

Article 29

Granting of Property of Central Government Entities or Local Government Authorities of the First and Second Level for Use as Places of Worship

1. Places of worship classified as monuments under the Code of Legislation on the Protection of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage in general (Law 4858/2021, A' 220) may, by decision of the Minister of Culture, be granted for use, for a limited period, to the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs, exclusively for the purpose of meeting specific worship needs of religious communities.
2. Central Government entities or Local Government Authorities («O.T.A.») of the first and second level may, in accordance with the applicable procedure, grant the use of property under their exclusive ownership, possession, and control for the performance of specific and particularly significant religious events, to ecclesiastical or religious legal entities under Law 4301/2014 (A' 223) or to religious communities, upon certification by the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs that they are such legal entities under Law 4301/2014 or that they hold at least one (1) authorization for a place of worship. The grant referred to in the first subparagraph may not exceed six (6) days per year for each religious community. Municipalities shall notify the competent police authority in writing and shall take appropriate measures to ensure the safe performance of religious duties by those concerned.
3. Central government entities or Local Government Authorities of the first and second level may lease, or grant free of charge, the use of property under their exclusive ownership, possession, and control only to religious legal entities of public law or to ecclesiastical or religious legal entities under Law 4301/2014 solely for the purpose of worship. In such case, the authorization provided for in paragraph 1 of Article 26 shall be required for the lawful operation of the place of worship.

Article 30

Administrative Measures

In the event of: (a) the erection, establishment, operation, relocation, vertical or horizontal extension, or execution of any type of construction works in an existing place of worship, or the demolition of a place of worship without the authorization of the Minister of Education, Religious Affairs, and Sports referred to in paragraph 1 of Article 26, and (b) any violation of the terms and conditions of operation of lawfully licensed places of worship, as provided for in Articles 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29, administrative fines shall be imposed in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 62.

Article 31

Private Places of Worship of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ pursuant to Article 3 of the Constitution

1. Places of worship owned by natural persons or by legal entities other than ecclesiastical legal persons may be established, erected, founded, consecrated, and operated for the purposes of the worship of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ pursuant to Article 3 of the Constitution, provided that: (a) their use is restricted to the celebration of sacraments or liturgical services for the religious needs of either the natural person owner and his/her family, or the members, trainees, beneficiaries, employees, or residents within the premises of the legal entity owner; and (b) a written license has been issued by the Metropolitan of the locally competent Holy Metropolis of the Church of Greece under paragraph 4 of Article 1 of Law 590/1977 (A' 146) or of the Holy Metropolis of the Church of Crete pursuant to Article 17 of Law 4149/1961 (A' 41) and Article 3 of Law 2942/2001 (A' 202), or the Holy Metropolis of the Dodecanese or the Exarchate of Patmos pursuant to Articles 319 and 320 of Law 4957/2022 (A' 141), subject to compliance with urban planning legislation.
2. The ecclesiastical authorities referred to in paragraph 1 shall maintain a register of licensed private places of worship, recording their address, the number and date of the license, and the license holder. Proof of licensing of the above places of worship shall consist, in addition to the above license, of their entry in the above register.
3. The license shall be granted and revoked at the sole spiritual discretion of the locally competent ecclesiastical authority. The issue of the license shall not confer upon its

holders any right, enforceable against the ecclesiastical authority, to demand that their religious needs be served in the private place of worship instead of the Parish church of their district. The license shall be a prerequisite for the issuance of administrative acts or the submission of notifications required under urban planning legislation for construction works or for a change of use of property intended for the erection or operation of a place of worship.

4. A cleric of the locally competent ecclesiastical authority, or another cleric duly authorized by that authority, may officiate in a private place of worship on the basis of the license issued by that ecclesiastical authority.
5. Private places of worship referred to in paragraph 1 shall not: (a) be established or operated without the license of the locally competent ecclesiastical authority; (b) be used for public worship, whether or not ceremonies are performed by a religious minister; (c) operate for purposes other than those specified in point (a) of paragraph 1, or in breach of the license of the competent ecclesiastical authority, or in contravention of Article 6 of Emergency Law 2200/1940 (A' 42), or the regulatory acts of paragraph 6 of Article 36 of Law 590/1977 (A' 146), paragraph 6 of Article 43 of Law 3848/2010 (A' 71), and paragraph 1 of Article 338 of Law 4957/2022 (A' 141); (d) be made available, without the license of the ecclesiastical authority, for the needs of another religious community; (e) be erected, altered, extended, converted, or operated in violation of urban planning legislation. In the event of a breach of the preceding paragraph, the administrative measures and fines provided in Articles 27, 28, 30, and paragraph 2 of Article 64 shall apply to the places of worship, to the holders of real rights or possessors of the above places of worship, and to any religious ministers involved in their operation, as appropriate.
6. For the granting and lawful operation of a private place of worship referred to in paragraph 1, for the needs of another religious community or of natural persons not belonging to the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ, it shall be required that the owner submit an application to the competent ecclesiastical authority referred to in paragraph 1 for the revocation of the license and the deletion from the register under paragraph 2, that the license referred to in paragraph 1 of Article 26 be obtained, and that the place of worship be lawfully operated in accordance with Articles 25 and 26. In such case, the competent ecclesiastical authority shall mandatorily revoke the

license referred to in paragraph 1. Where such granting or operation for the needs of another religious community takes place in breach of the present obligations or of Articles 25, 26, and 27, the administrative measures and fines provided for in Article 30 and in paragraph 2 of Article 62 shall apply.

7. This Article shall also apply to places of worship existing at the time of the entry into force of this law, belonging to the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ pursuant to Article 3 of the Constitution, and owned by natural persons or non-ecclesiastical legal entities.
8. For private places of worship existing at the time of the entry into force of this law, registration in the register under paragraph 2 shall constitute the license referred to in paragraph 1, provided that the conditions of paragraph 1 are fulfilled. With regard to such registration, the provisions of this Article concerning the license, the absence thereof, or its breach shall apply.

Translated by Isidora Prokopiou