

**HELLENIC REPUBLIC**

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH  
AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**  
GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS  
DIRECTORATE FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS  
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To:  
Directorates of Environment and  
Spatial Planning of the Decentralized  
Administrations of Greece to inform  
Building Services under their  
jurisdiction

CC: Ministry of Environment and  
Energy  
General Secretariat for Spatial  
Planning and Urban Environment  
Ms Irene Klabatsea  
17, Amaliados St., 115 23 Athens

**SUBJECT: Process for construction of a worship place (temple or house of prayer) of a formal or informal type of organization of a religion or a denomination of a religious community (other than the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ)**

Please be informed that by the new provisions of Chapter 1 of Law 4301/2014 (A' 223) and the establishment of the new types of collective religious organizations, i.e. the ecclesiastical and religious legal persons, all religious communities, except for those expressly excluded by article 16 of Law 4301/2014, i.e. the Church of Greece, the Church of Crete, the Ecclesiastical Provinces of the Dodecanese and Mount Athos (and generally all the Orthodox ecclesiastical structures), the Jewish Communities and the religious Muslim communities in the territorial communities of the Muftiates of Thrace may be organized in this legal status of legal person of private law in accordance with the provisions of the law. By the provisions of this law it is provided for that religious and ecclesiastical legal persons may establish and operate in their own name places of worship, in accordance with the provisions in force (article 9).

In national legislation in order to issue a permit for all worship places (temples or houses of prayer), other than churches of the structures of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ (Church of Greece, Church of Crete, Ecclesiastical Provinces of the Dodecanese and Mount Athos), referred to in article 3 of the Constitution for which specific provisions apply (it should be noted that other Orthodox Churches spiritually connected with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, i.e. other Orthodox Patriarchates or Autocephalous Churches, may only establish glebes, in accordance with Article 39 of Law 590/1977 on the Charter of the Church

of Greece), the general provisions of Law 1363/1938 (A'305) and Law 1672/1939 (A'123), the Royal Decree of 20.5/2.6.1939 (A' 220) implementing this Law and article 278 of Law 3467/2006 (A' 128) as well as the relevant joint circular 69230-A3/6.5.2014 (Online Publication Number 76774653ΠΣ-5Ω9) issued by the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs are in force. That is to say that in addition to the common planning regulations, it is required to have acquired a relevant permit by the Minister of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. More specifically, pursuant to Article 1§1 of Law 1363/1938, as replaced by article 1§1 of Law 1672/1939 it is established that: "To construct or operate a temple of any religion, a permit by the local recognized religious authority and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and National Education is required, pursuant to the Royal Decree issued upon a proposal by the Minister of Religious Affairs and National Education by which specifications will be laid down". The Royal Decree of 20.5/2.6/1939 issued pursuant the aforementioned enabling provision lays down in article 1§1 that: "1.To issue a permit as provided for in Emergency Law 1672/1939 Article 1(1) in order to construct or operate a temple, not subject to applicable law on Churches and priests of the Orthodox Church of Greece, the following are required:..." furthermore, pursuant to the latest provision of Law 3467/2006 article 27 it is provided that: "In order to establish, construct or operate a temple or house of prayer of any denomination or religion other than the Orthodox Church of Greece no permit or opinion by the local religious authority of the Orthodox Church of Greece is required. All other provisions regulating this matter in a different manner are repealed..."

Thus, these provisions and the provision for the administrative authorization are applied in all cases of operating churches or houses of prayer and in general all buildings used for practicing religious beliefs of all religious communities (except for those within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ in Greece as referred to in Article 2 of the Constitution), whether it is for a new building which will house a worship place or for the use of an existing one in order to establish and operate a place of worship or for religious communities organized as legal persons of any formal type such as association, civil law non-profit partnership, religious legal person, or for communities remaining informal with no special legal personality (on the same legal grounds and for the purposes of equality of all religious people entitled to enjoy their constitutional rights as explicitly stipulated by the Constitution and implemented for decades in the Greek national law).

**In conclusion, before the planning authorities issue a permit to construct a temple or a worship place of any religious community (except for those within the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ as referred to in Article 2 of the Constitution), a permit by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs is required.**

Having regard to all the above, the religious community concerned should be addressed to the Directorate of Religious Administration of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs before the issuing of the building permit by the competent building authority in order to request the issuing of the relevant administrative act by the Directorate of Religious Administration on the building permit. In this way, unpleasant surprises and unnecessary costs will be avoided especially in case of rejection of the application. It is also

clarified that the building permit issued in the stage prior to building, shall not be under any circumstances permit to establish and operate nor does it authorize the operation of the worship place and it is limited only to authorize on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs the reconstruction work since this permit issued by the Directorate of Religious Administration before the beginning of the building works and only following an examination of the conditions defined by Article 13, paragraph 2 of the Constitution on free practice of worship (“All known religions shall be free and their rites of worship shall be performed unhindered and under the protection of the law. The practice of rites of worship is not allowed to offend public order or the good usages. Proselytism is prohibited”) and the provisions in force of Law 1363/38 and Law 1672/39, does not replace the permit to establish and operate (separate and distinct from the one cited above) which is issued in a second stage and concerns the operating possibility of an existing building to serve the aim for which it was built. Therefore, following the issuing of a building permit and the completion of the necessary building works (the control of which falls in any case under your jurisdiction), all interested parties should be addressed again to the Directorate of Religious Administration to submit the file with the necessary supporting documents in order to receive then the necessary permit to establish and operate a temple.

In order to inform the interested parties who come to your Directorates first, please be advised that the necessary supporting documents which need to be submitted to our Directorate are the following:

- Application signed by the local religious minister and the members of the religious community with full name of the religious community and identification of the applicants (permanent addresses of the applicants and signature verification; see specimen attached)
- Attestation of land use
- Confession of Faith
- Attestation by a private civil engineer on the capacity of the place of worship to be built (model forms attached)

For further clarifications on the aforementioned supporting documents, interested parties are asked to contact the Directorate of Religious Administration on phone numbers: 2103442186, 2103442829 and on the e-mail address [dthridee@minedu.gov.gr](mailto:dthridee@minedu.gov.gr)

This document shall prevail over any other former document issued by the Directorate of Religious Administration.

**THE SECRETARY GENERAL FOR RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

**GEORGIOS KALANTZIS**