

DEPARTMENT OF STATE – CITIZEN RELATIONS

Special Report Summary

The criterion of locality and the permanent residence certificate

The Ombudsman prepared a Special Report (July 2009) entitled “**The criterion of locality and the permanent residence certificate**”. In recent years, “locality” has become a criterion for the enjoyment of certain rights and a requirement when requesting civil status certificates and claiming various benefits (hiring, changes of electoral registration, support for fire victims, permits to operate kiosks, etc.). The permanent-residence certificate, in conjunction with the certificate of registration in municipal rolls, certifies that the *criterion of locality* is fulfilled. By examining the relevant legislative framework and the manner in which it is applied, the Ombudsman has established that there are shortcomings in the procedure for granting permanent residence certificates due to an inconsistency between the actual residence and the residence shown in the supporting evidence. In the absence of an obligation to register a permanent residence, there is no safe way for certifying the permanent residence of people residing in Greece, nor a specific number and/or type of supporting documents from which a permanent residence can safely be ascertained. This results in certificates of dubious accuracy being issued and in disputes arising from interested parties or public services alleging favouritism or arbitrary procedures.

Regarding the permanent residence certificate, the Ombudsman suggests (a) re-examining whether it is advisable to make locality and permanent residence a criterion for the hiring of staff, with the aim of abolishing the awarding of points for meeting the criterion and (b) that a **special register** be drawn up, where every resident of the country is obliged to state a single municipality as their permanent residence. Furthermore, the State should crosscheck each statement electronically, so that each citizen is allowed to state one municipality only. Citizens should declare any change of municipality before entering into any dealings with the State or public utility corporations. The establishment of an electronic register for permanent citizens is necessary to rationalise the whole procedure.