Greece’s first out gay minister was warned never to run for elected office because of his sexuality

EMMA POWYS MAURICE JANUARY 12, 2021

Nicholas Yatromanolakis has successfully been elected as Greece’s first out gay minister, despite being warned never to run for office because of his sexuality.

Yatromanolakis, 45, was named deputy minister for contemporary culture in a cabinet reshuffle last week, having battled homophobia at almost every step of his career.

In the past he was often discouraged from seeking prominent roles due to his “profile”, and had been told the most he could aspire to was political consulting work.

“All LGBT+ people have at some point in their lives had to work in environments that were not entirely supportive or understanding of who they are,” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Shockingly, he recalled being told “Hush, darling”, on live TV, and receiving condescending looks and smirks throughout his time in public life. He said he was sometimes mistaken for an LGBT+ activist if he ever spoke about gay rights.

“You can’t let that bother you, because it’s your life … and you have to do what you believe is the right thing,” he said.

Yatromanolakis worked in marketing and communications before entering politics in 2014 as a founding member of the centrist party Potami.

“For a long time … I felt I had to choose and that there were identities that could never be compatible with one another,” he said.

He’s since proved himself wrong by forging a career in politics, and firmly rejects the suggestion that his new role might be viewed as tokenism.

Alex Patelis, the Greek prime minister’s chief economic adviser, said the appointment was a “historic day for LGBTI+ representation, a big win for meritocracy and better decision-making through diversity”.

“Congrats to Nicholas Yatromanolakis for showing you can be yourself and still succeed,” Patelis said.

“May others draw strength to live their life openly.”

Yatromanolakis never set out to be a pioneer, but now that he finds himself in the position of being one, he hopes it’ll make it easier for others to follow.

“I wish someone else was first before me … [but] if this helps people who have problems because of who they are … then it’s worth it,” he said.

https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/01/12/greece-first-gay-culture-minister-nicholas-yatromanolakis-sexuality-mitsotakis/