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## Working Session 17: Tolerance and non-discrimination II (continued)

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Distinguished representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

The OSCE participating States have committed in the 1990 Copenhagen Document that they will respect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities to effective participation in public affairs, including participation in the affairs relating to the protection of the identity of such minorities.

Under the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has an equal right with the non-Muslim minority in Turkey to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institution, any school and other establishment for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein. Greece only recognizes a “Muslim minority in Thrace” and denies the existence of an ethnic Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

The autonomy in education and religious affairs was in practice until the Greek military junta regime in 1967. After seven years of military rule and the return to democracy in 1974, the autonomy in education and religious affairs was not restored. The educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years through legislations without prior consultation or opinion sharing with the representatives of the Turkish Minority.

During a fact-finding mission in 2012 with the participation of Hans Heinrich Hansen, President of Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), former MEP François Alfonsi (France) and Willy Fautre, Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l, the delegation found that the problems in the field of education are alarming. The rapporteur Willy Fautre noted that state intervention on minority issues to such an extent that in practice, the Greek Government, through the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, has wide-ranging control over the minority schools at all levels, whether it concerns the composition and the functioning of the school boards, the hiring and firing of teachers, the distribution of textbooks or the building and repair of school buildings.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the full report, please visit [https://www.abtff.org/images/22\\_Raporlar/2012-1128-Report-Ethnic-Turks\\_.pdf](https://www.abtff.org/images/22_Raporlar/2012-1128-Report-Ethnic-Turks_.pdf)

The children belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece have been discriminated with respect to the right to education in mother tongue at the preschool level. Under Law 3518/2006, the compulsory period in education in Greece has been extended from nine to ten years starting from the school year 2007-2008 and the pre-school education for all children who are 5 years old has been made compulsory. The regarding law does not bring any regulation about ethnic and cultural characteristics of the children in Greece, therefore all children, who have completed their age of five, are obliged to attend public kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek.

The right not to be discriminated is violated because Greece without an objective and reasonable justification fails to treat the children belonging to the Turkish Minority differently, who speak a different mother tongue other than Greek. The former UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues Gay McDougall commented that bilingual education would allow better knowledge of both Turkish and Greek from an early age and enable greater choice of whether to go to minority or Greek public primary school.<sup>2</sup> Greece does not allow the establishment of bilingual minority kindergartens within minority schooling system. Furthermore, it does not allow minority institution to build and operate private bilingual kindergartens. 211 local representatives of the Turkish minority signed a petition in 2010 for the inclusion of pre-school education into the bilingual education scheme in Western Thrace. Although the petition was submitted to the Greek Ministry of Education, it was not taken into consideration by relevant Greek authorities. Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority (CEFOM) had applied to the Greek local authorities for establishment of a private bilingual kindergarten in 2011. The Greek authorities did not respond the establishment of the first private bilingual kindergarten in Western Thrace.

When the UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues carried out a fact-finding in 2008, there were 194 minority primary schools in Thrace with courses taught in both Turkish and Greek<sup>3</sup>. In 2011 Greece went for combined schooling for the sake of reducing expenditure and improving the quality of education at present schools. The number minority primary schools decreased to 188 in 2011, 170 in 2014. On 31 August 2015, the Greek Ministry of Culture, Education and Religious Affairs has decided to close down eight more primary schools belonging to the Turkish minority of Western Thrace on the grounds that these schools have recorded diminishing pupil numbers. According to the daily *Gündem*, based on the report released by the Directorate of Education of the East Macedonia and Thrace Region and beginning with the academic year of 2015-2016, four minority primary schools (Payamdere-Paterma, Karagözlü-Exochi, Muratlı-Mirana and Çuka-Tsouka) in the Rhodope prefecture, three (Sinikova-Satre, Çaymahalle-Revma and Güney Mahalle-Prosilia) in the Xanthi prefecture plus one (Aksakal-Polia) in the Evros prefecture will be closed down by the Ministry.

The decision of the Ministry of Education has gained a strong reaction from the minority's institutions. EPATH Graduates Teachers Association of Rhodope- Evros sent a letter to the Ministry of Education and requested for the removal of the decision. The association underlined that the closure of minority schools resulted an important decrease in the number of minority schools and the teaching staff in minority schools but no improvement in quality of education.<sup>4</sup> The Directorate revised its decision and cancelled the decision of closure of minority schools in Payamdere and Çaymahalle.<sup>5</sup>

The number of minority secondary schools is not sufficient. Willy Fautre, Willy Fautre, who wrote a report following the fact-finding mission the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party organized on 16- 20 October 2012 with

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<sup>2</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>3</sup> <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G09/111/98/PDF/G0911198.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/715>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/trakyahaber/detay/743>

the participation of President of Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Hans Heinrich Hansen and former MEP François Alfonsi (France) noted in his report that While 52% of the population of the Rhodope Prefecture and 45% of the Xanthi Prefecture are Turkish speaking, there is only one minority school in each prefecture against 24 and 37 public (secondary and vocational) Greek-language schools respectively. In the Evros Prefecture, there are more than 45 Greek-speaking secondary schools but no minority secondary school for the Turkish-speaking families who represent 10% of the population.

Two private minority secondary schools operate in Xanthi and Komotini while two Koranic schools operate in Komotini and Echinós. All the teachers are paid by the school board. Muzaffer Salıhođlu High School in Xanthi and Celal Bayar High School in Komotini are privately owned, although they are regulated by the Greek state. Although these minority secondary schools should be administered and run as any other private secondary schools in Greece, the Greek state determines how many students can attend that school and how they will be enrolled. Other problems at the secondary school level include the shortage of adequate textbooks. The 1968 Cultural Protocol provides for the production and use of textbooks in minority schools for both the Turkish minority of Western Thrace and the Greek minority in İstanbul. However, there are long delays in distribution of the textbooks to the minority schools in Western Thrace. The textbooks sent from Turkey have last been distributed not at the beginning of the school year, but in spring.

The shortage in the number of classrooms in the two minority secondary schools is an urgent problem which has resulted in many minority children enrolling in Greek-language state schools. The number of students in these two minority schools will increase in the next school year of 2015-2016, but there are not enough classrooms for their students. The number of students at Celal Bayar High School in Komotini rise from 780 to 860 and from 550 to 640 at Muzaffer Salıhođlu High School in Xanthi with new enrollments. There is an urgent need for new classrooms or a new building at the high school in Xanthi.

The Director of the State Education Department of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Panagiotis Keramaris declared on 25 August 2015 that double-shift schooling will be done at Muzaffer Salıhođlu High School in Xanthi in order to accommodate growing student numbers. The demand for a new building or a new classroom for the minority secondary-high school in Xanthi has not returned a positive answer.<sup>6</sup> Keramaris noted that the registrations at the minority secondary schools both in Komotini and Xanthi are very high and added that two modular classrooms will be placed at the garden of Celal Bayar High School in Komotini.

The Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority applied to the Greek authorities for opening new minority secondary schools in some localities with high minority populations, e.g. Fillira, Sappes, Ariana and Organi. Although the municipality of Fillira allocated a plot of land for the construction of a secondary school, their demands were not accepted. On 20 December 2011, an application submitted to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs for opening a minority secondary school in Rhodope Prefecture but no reply received.

The drawing-lots system for early registration procedure in minority secondary and high schools has very highly been criticized by members of the Turkish minority. The Directorate of the State Education Department of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace declared in June that the registration to the minority secondary and high schools will be in accordance with the drawing-lots system. This system for registration had been applied first applied in 1994 to 1999 and continued till 1999. In August 2015, the Director Keramaris declared that they called in drawing-lots system for early registration procedure and decided to manage all applications for enrollment.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gundemgazetesi.com/haber/detay/644>

The problems in minority schooling system due to various practices of the Greek government in disadvantage of the autonomous structure in minority education resulted in many children stopping their education at the end of primary school, enrolling in Greek-language state school.

The Director of the State Education Department of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Panagiotis Keramaris declared that the new Department of Minority Programme Teacher School which will be included in Department of Pedagogy in Democritus University of Thrace will start to operate in the academic year 2015-2016. The Department of Minority Programme Teacher School has been established under Law 4310/2014 which introduced reforms and changes in administrative organizations that were described as a heavy blow to the autonomous structure of the minority schooling system.

On 27 November 2014, the new Law for “Research, Technological Development and Innovation and other Provisions” was approved by the Greek Parliament. Law 4310/2014 introduces reforms and changes in administrative organizations, in issues related to teaching staff at minority schools, issues related to the functioning and scientific-pedagogical support of the minority schools, establishment of a teachers school under Democritus University of Thrace and appointment and hiring of educators to primary minority schools. Law 4310/2014 was prepared with no prior consultation and/or dialogue with the Turkish minority.

However, in its replies to the list of issues which is submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Fifty-sixth session on 21 September - 9 October 2015, Greece claimed that Law 4310/2014 has been adopted after prior consultation with the Minority Teachers' Associations<sup>7</sup>. But, EPATH Graduates Teachers Association of Xanthi declared on 26 August 2015 that the new law has not been consulted to them.<sup>8</sup>

The Department of Minority Programme Teacher School will give a graduate diploma to members of the Minority who have a four year undergraduate education and the right to education in this department will only belong to members of the Minority who are graduated from domestic elementary pedagogic departments in Greece. ABTTF would like to stress that the right to education in that department should not be limited to only those who are graduated from pedagogic departments in Greece. Members of the minority who are graduated from other universities in Europe and other countries and received diploma equivalence in Greece should have the right to enter that department. Furthermore, one-year education after graduation of four-year undergraduate education will not be enough for a high quality education in Turkish curriculum at minority schools. ABTTF recommends the establishment of a department of Turkish Literature and Language in Democritus University of Thrace for educators who will teach in Turkish curriculum at minority schools.

The law notes that under 694/1977 only members of the Minority are allowed to serve in minority programme in Turkish curriculum at primary minority schools. Through Law 4310/2014 that member of the Minority are not allowed to teach in Greek curriculum at minority schools. Members of the Minority who are graduated from Greek faculties of education and teach in the Greek curriculum at minority schools reacted against that on the ground that this is a violation of the principle of equality enshrined in the Greek constitution. Furthermore, ABTTF would like to stress that there is no “Turkish” word in the text of the law while mentioning the curriculum in minority schools, which is Turkish. The word “minority programme” is used to define Turkish curriculum, while the word “Greek programme” is used for Greek curriculum in minority schools. We would like to remind that Greece does not subscribe to the right of Turkish minority to self-identification

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<sup>7</sup> [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=9&DocTypeID=18](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=9&DocTypeID=18)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.rodopruzgari.com/item/5012-iske%C3%A7e-ili-s%C3%B6pa-mezunu-%C3%B6C4%9Fretmenler-deme%C4%9Fi-nden-a%C3%A7C4%B1klama.html>

as “Turkish” on a collective basis and the right of assembly or association for minority associations which include the word “Turkish”.

In its replies to the list of issues which is submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Fifty-sixth session on 21 September - 9 October 2015, Greece noted that Law 4310/2014. The law only applies to members of the Muslim minority who wish to become teachers of the minority programme in minority schools in Thrace. The law ensures that the teaching positions of the minority programme of minority schools in Thrace will be occupied exclusively by members of the Muslim minority.

However, in its parallel report on Greece’s compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 16 January 2015, Greek Helsinki Monitor criticized the ban on teachers from the Turkish minority, even if they have the formal qualifications, to teach in the Greek language program of the minority schools. Additionally, Greek Helsinki Monitor noted that the new Minority Program Teachers’ Academy in the University of Thrace which all aspiring minority language teachers, after having graduated from any regular Teachers’ Academy, must attend before they are qualified to teach Turkish language classes in minority schools. This means that whereas all teachers in Greece become qualified after graduating from a four-year Academy, Turkish-language minority teachers will have to study five or more years to become qualified, while at the same time they are disqualified to teach the Greek-language classes in the minority schools after graduating from the four year Teachers’ Academy. Greek Helsinki Monitor stressed that with these legal provisions, minority educators are doubly discriminated against.<sup>9</sup>

In April 2015, the Xanthi Minority Schools Teachers’ Association, sent a public letter to the Minister of Education asking him inter alia to “abolish the Minority Program Teachers’ Academy in the University of Thrace. On 25 July 2015, the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates’ Association (WTMUGA) issued a bulletin supported by the Associations of Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki Graduates Teachers of Rodopi, Evros and Xanthi and opposes the discriminatory character of the training of teachers for the Turkish-language program for 5,5 years where all other teachers in Greece are trained for four years.<sup>10</sup>

The problems mentioned above makes education counteracted in Western Thrace and prevent minority schooling system to provide a qualified education to the children belonging to the Turkish Minority. Various challenges in minority education result in fewer graduates and an unsatisfactory level of education. The new law which was prepared with no dialogue with members and representatives of the Minority will not be enough to solve current problems in minority education.

We call upon Greece to restore the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace enshrined in the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. A mechanism for dialogue between governmental authorities and the Minority should be established in the form of advisory or consultative bodies that would be the channel for the Turkish minority to raise its own voice.

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<sup>9</sup>[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fICO%2fGR%2f19296&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fICO%2fGR%2f19296&Lang=en)

<sup>10</sup> <http://btaytd.com/en/default.asp?P=Read&ID=84>