

**European Regional Forum on Education, Language and the Human Rights of
Minorities, 6-7/5/2019
Interventions of Greece**

Panel 4

The only recognized minority on the Greek territory is the Muslim minority of Thrace. Regarding Cham Albanians, it must be clarified that they left en masse Greece in 1944, following the retreating Nazi army, with whom they had collaborated during the Axis Occupation.

The Greek Ministry of Education is very interested in the views of the Muslim community regarding its education. Firstly, the Minister himself has met parents' representatives and secondly he has appointed a Special Advisor on Minority Education, who regularly meets (whether inviting them or accepting a meeting request) with representatives of Turkish speaking teachers' associations and Muslim parents' associations. It must be noted that in 2006 the Greek ministry of Education added the Turkish language as an option to the curriculum of non minority schools in Thrace but the representatives of the Muslim minority opposed this measure, so it was suspended.

It is true that there is a reduction in the number of primary minority schools, but this is linked to a country-wide phenomenon; it relates to the movement of families of small villages to larger villages or cities, where schools have seen an increase in their student population. According to the Greek legislation, a primary school must have at least 9 students in order to continue functioning and this limit applies throughout the Greek territory. It would be economically burdensome to exclude minority schools from this rule, since even with 9 pupils a bilingual school has at least two teachers, i.e. the operating cost is double than that of the mainstream schools. We should note that recently a minority primary school re-opened in the village Kommaros, when it re-gathered the necessary number of pupils, something that proves that the state applies a general rule and there is no discrimination.

As far as secondary bilingual schools are concerned, it is not feasible to establish them in the countryside, where the number of pupils is small, because they require teachers of many different specialisations. The state is committed to satisfy all applications in the existing secondary minority schools, and efforts are being made to expand and upgrade the spaces and to improve their general operating conditions.

In addition, at local level, parents, who are the main stakeholders, have been significantly involved in the management of minority schools: they elect the parents who constitute the School Committee of each school, which is responsible for managing the school budget and other issues, including, in the case of secondary schools, the recruitment of teachers for the Turkish section. Given the above, minority schools parents have a stronger participation in decision making than the parents of mainstream schools.

Regarding the content of the education provided, the Greek Ministry of Education has the responsibility of the Greek section of the program, and the Turkish Ministry of Education is responsible for the Turkish section. In order to improve the quality of the Turkish section, the only thing the Greek Ministry can do is to ensure teachers' pedagogical knowledge and didactic skills. For this purpose, the old three-year post-secondary school preparing the teachers for the Turkish section has been abolished and a new department for pedagogical studies has been established at the University, so that teachers of the Turkish program also have four-year university studies, as do those of the Greek programme. At the same time, a

recent law provides for the support of teachers in the Turkish section by pedagogical consultants (who have the responsibility of the teachers' training in innovative didactic methods and modern pedagogical practices); it also provides for the hiring of psychologists and social workers belonging to the minority in the support structures addressed to students.

As far as the Greek part of the program is concerned, an effort is being made to renew the teaching materials for minority children, following the findings of relevant international research, which shows that the language level of the textbooks of the non-mother language should become progressively difficult, in order to limit school failure.