

G R E E C E

SECTION A

Capital

Athens 3,072,922 (1991 est.)

Area

131,957 sq km (50,949 sq mi), of which about one fifth is composed of islands in the Aegean and Ionian seas.

Form of government

Parliamentary Republic

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$13,900 (1999 est.)

Population

10,707,135 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic composition

Greek 98.0%

Other 2.0%

The Government recognizes the Muslim (Turkish) community in Thrace as an ethnic minority.

Official language

Greek (Demotiki version)

Minority languages

Turkish, Macedonian, Albanian, Vlach (Aromanian) and Bulgarian (extant but banned)

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The Constitution, adopted on June 11, 1975

Background notes

Greece narrowly avoided a communist take-over after World War II, and survived the military junta years from 1967 to 1974 to reject the monarchy and form a new Constitution. Greece is a member of the European Union.

TURKS

Ethnic Turks have resided in Thrace since at least the 14th century, and they are Greek citizens. In 1923, under the Treaty of Lausanne, the Turkish minority of Thrace was granted a wide array of rights to ensure protection of their religion, language, culture, and equality before the law. In addition, as Greek citizens, ethnic Turks also enjoy the protection of Greek law, as well as of the European Convention of Human Rights.

However, the Turks are viewed by the state with suspicion, the strength of which largely reflects the state of Turkish-Greek relations.

A number of discriminatory measures have been enacted either to force ethnic Turks to migrate to Turkey or to disrupt community life and weaken its cultural basis. The most egregious example was Article 19 of the Citizenship Law, which, until it was abolished in 1998, allowed the state to revoke the citizenship of non-ethnic Greeks unilaterally and arbitrarily. Between 1955 and 1998, approximately 60,000 lost their citizenship under this article. As a result of Article 19 and other discriminatory measures, the ethnic Turkish minority today numbers approximately 80-120,000.

Despite continued human rights violations, there have been some major improvements since Human Rights Watch began monitoring the situation in 1990. Several of the most egregious laws, such as those that deprived ethnic Turks of basic rights of property and occupation, have been repealed. Ethnic Turks can now buy and sell houses and land, repair houses, obtain car, truck and tractor licenses, and open coffee houses and machine and electrical shops.

MACEDONIANS

Just like the Turks in the Western Thrace, the Macedonian minority living in Aegean Macedonia in Greece continues their struggle not to be assimilated into the larger Greek community. Throughout its history, the Greek Government ignored Macedonia and Macedonians altogether and attempted to write them off their territories through assimilation. Greece

acquired those territories after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. Greece took Aegean Macedonia by conquest, never by act of self-determination. For many years the Greeks avoided the use of the name "Macedonia" to describe its northern province.

The Macedonian minority has been the victim of the Greek State's determination to de-nationalize minorities and other conscious policies. The Greek State has employed all the possibilities and means under its control (army, church, press, culture, institutions, associations etc) to advance its cause of "hellenisation". At times going as far as converting the personal names and surnames into "Greek", and changing, within this framework, the names and surnames of those of Macedonian origin with the comparable Greek names.

In the 1980's when it became evident that Yugoslavia was going to disintegrate and a part of Macedonia would become independent, Greece was afraid to lose Aegean Macedonia. Therefore, the government changed the state policy and proclaimed "Macedonia is 4,000 years of Greek history". Before this propaganda, the existence of such a land, people and language was vehemently denied and the Macedonians were called Slav-Greeks.

Greece is the only Southeast European country not recognizing the presence of any national minorities in its territory. The words "Turkish" and "Macedonian" have repeatedly led to the prosecution of their users.

ALBANIANS

The Albanian minority living in Greece consists of Christian Orthodox "Arvanideses" living in the regions of Corinth, Viotia, Fokiada, Hydra, Specha, and Psara, as well as the Muslim Chamierians living in Ioannina (Yanya) and other neighboring provinces in the West of Greece.

VLACHS

There are two Vlach languages in Greece. Megleno-Romanian is spoken by a population, calling itself Vlasi in their language, concentrated in an area in the North of Greece and across the border in Macedonia and Bulgaria. Aromanian, spoken by people calling themselves Armini in their language, with many dialects spoken by Vlachs throughout Northern Greece but also in Albania and Macedonia.

After the Balkan Wars, the Vlachs, like the Macedonian Slavs and Pomaks, found themselves separated in four different states, Albania, Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria. An effort to create an autonomous Vlach state in the Italian-held Korce area of Albania was proved unsuccessful in 1918. Nevertheless, Greece officially recognized the Vlachs as a minority through an exchange of letters between the Greek and the Romanian

Prime Ministers, which were appended to the Treaty of Bucarest (1913). On the basis of that Treaty, schools with Romanian subsidies operated in Greece through the end of World War II, when communist Romania lost its interest in the Vlachs. Nevertheless, very few Vlachs sent their children to these schools. Such choices were perceived as an indication of an anti-Greek attitude by both the state (which subsequently banished many of their graduates during World War II) and the leading Vlachs who consistently maintained a Graecophile posture and sometimes resorted to physical violence against the Romanophiles.

SECTION B

To what extent are minority groups in this country disadvantaged by their language?

TURKISH

Human rights violations in the education field affect the largest number of individuals and have done the most to foster the Turkish minority's relative underdevelopment. Schools are overcrowded and poorly funded compared to those attended by ethnic Greeks. The quality of the teachers is quite low. Ethnic Turks educated in Turkish universities, which the minority believes are the best qualified to teach, have not been hired for a number of years. On the other hand, graduates of the Thessaloniki Pedagogical Academy (EPATH)—the job candidates preferred by the Greek state—are poorly educated and have a weak command of the Turkish language. Furthermore, community members claim, not without some justification that the EPATH-trained teachers act as “ideological overseers.” Textbooks are decades out of date because Greece and Turkey have been unable to implement a 1968 protocol that would have allowed each country to supply textbooks to their respective minority. The two Turkish-language high schools can provide only a fraction of the needed places, resulting in a disproportionate dropout rate. Greek officials fall back on the Treaty of Lausanne, which only obligates them to provide primary education in Turkish, ignoring the fact that Greek law mandates a minimum of nine years of education. State repression takes other forms as well. Members of the ethnic Turkish minority also complain of police surveillance, discrimination in public employment, and restrictions on freedom of expression.

Greece's attitude toward the ethnic Turkish minority is nowhere more evident than in its continued official denial of the Turkish identity of the community. Greece only accepts the existence of a “Muslim” minority in Thrace and aggressively prosecutes and bans organizations and individuals who seek to call themselves “Turkish.” While it is indeed true

that much of the minority is of mixed ethnic origins, it overwhelmingly claims an ethnic Turkish identity and wants to be referred to as such. The Greek government points to the Treaty of Lausanne, which speaks only about a "Muslim minority." Past government policy, however, negates such a justification. In the early 1950s, during a period of rapprochement between Greece and Turkey, the Greek government itself ordered the use of "Turk" and "Turkish" to refer to the minority, rather than "Muslim."

VLACH (AROMANIAN)

The situation of the Aromanians in Greece is a very delicate one. More Aromanians live in Greece today than in all other countries combined, yet their situation is the most complicated. They are not recognized as a national minority, since Greece does not acknowledge the existence of national minorities within its boundaries but rather religious ones (Muslims). Also the Greek government has pursued an active policy of "ethnic homogenization" which has weakened the identity of the national minorities residing in Greece. As part of this policy minorities have been renamed with the clear intent of creating a separation between them and the state in which they form a majority (Albanians are now called Arvanites and Macedonians Slavs). As for Aromanians, they are defined by Greek authorities to be Vlach-speaking Greeks. Furthermore, the government has done everything possible to limit their cultural ties with Romania.

As part of the limitation policy the use of minority languages has been banned. There are recorded situations when those using Aromanian in public, especially in the army, have been persecuted. In general, the use of minority languages has been portrayed as a sign of backwardness, and the name of Vlach has been given a connotative meaning of a lazy person.

MACEDONIANS

A policy of merciless assimilation of the Macedonian ethnic minority is under way, through legal measures and court decisions. Use of the Macedonian language and religion has been banned. Under a specially made law, put into force after being published in the Official Gazette, the Macedonian names of cities, villages, rivers, mountains etc have been changed; and there has been a concerted effort to ignore all the Macedonian elements in Greece.

ALBANIANS

Orthodox "Arvanideses" have also become the target of a radical assimilation policy of the Greek Government. The public use of the

mother tongue, Albanian, has been banned and the Albanian place-names have been changed to Greek ones.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

There are 5 lesser-used languages spoken on the territory of Greece.

ARBËRISHTE, ARVANITIKA, SHQIP (Albanian)

Arvanite is spoken in small isolated communities widely separated from each other in present-day central and southern Greece. Albanian is also spoken in communities in western Epiros. It is not clear how large the present number is of Arvanite speakers. The 1951 census counted about 23,000 Arvanites. However, these figures were underestimated. The language is only used on an informal basis. The language has no legal presence and it is not used in public, or in education and media.

ARMÎNESTE, VLAHESTE (Aromanian/Vlach)

Vlach speakers are found scattered across Thessaly, Pindus and Ipiros (the mountainous regions of the Hellenic peninsula). Greece has by far the largest Aromanian community. According to the last census in Greece that recorded the nationality of the people in 1951, there were 22,736 Vlachs in Greece. Vlachs are not recognized as a national minority, since Greece does not acknowledge the existence of national minorities within its boundaries but rather religious ones. The language is confined to family and colloquial use. Vlach does not enjoy any public presence.

MAKEDONSKI, BUGARSKI, BALGARSKI (Slav-Macedonian)

The official census of 1951 indicated that about 40,000 speakers of Slav-Macedonian lived in Greek Macedonia but the figures were underestimated. The language is confined to family and colloquial use and has no official recognition whatsoever.

In some Slav speaking areas, it is possible to receive TV programs from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) as well as Bulgarian and Macedonian radio programs. A bilingual (Greek-Macedonian), bi-monthly magazine is currently published in Florina.

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TÜRKÇE (Turkish)

The Turkish-speaking population of Greece lives in Western Thrace. They are Muslims by religion. During the last two decades, a few thousand Turkish speakers (mostly gypsies) have emigrated to the Athina and Thessaliniki urban areas. The vast majority of Muslim gypsies (who lived originally only in Western Thrace) use Turkish as their mother tongue. There is also a small Turkish-speaking community on the Dodecanessa islands. The 1951 census counted well over 90,000 Turkish speakers.

Under the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the Muslims of Western Thrace (Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies) enjoy protection and rights. They are allowed to maintain their own religious institutions. Turkish in Western Thrace is the only de jure recognized lesser-used language in Greece. A translator is available at the courts and at Muslim polling stations.

Muslims have their own elementary schools (co-funded by the Greek state) where around half of the subjects are taught in Turkish. There are two secondary schools with the same situation. There is also an Academy in Thessaloniki in which Muslims study in order to teach in these elementary schools (for the subjects in Turkish).

There are some newspapers and weekly magazines and some local radio broadcast in Turkish. The local public radio broadcasts news in Turkish. The municipality of Komotini offers one of the Turkish satellite channels.

POMATŠKI, POMASKI (Pomaki)

The Pomaks live in Western Thrace (Greece). In the past two decades, a few thousand of them have migrated to the prefecture of Attici. They speak the Rhodope dialect. According to estimates, about 27,000 Pomaks lived in Western Thrace in 1971.

Pomaki enjoys no official and public presence in Greece. Pomak and Roma languages are not taught at schools because they do not exist in written form.

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities signed September 22, 1997 but has not yet been ratified.

What else can be found about languages and minorities?

One of the worst examples of Greek discrimination against the Macedonian minority occurred in September of 1995, in Lerin. The Rainbow Party (the Macedonian Party in Greece) hung up a sign for their

office in the Macedonian as well as in Greek language. The office was subsequently burnt down by a mob of Greeks. The Party was then charged for “inciting citizens to commit acts of violence upon each other”.

SECTION C

The use of language in everyday life, education, broadcasting and other

Updated (October 2002)

Since last July, the office of the Political Party of the Macedonian People in Florina (northwest corner of Greece) has had a sign in the Macedonian language again. However, before hanging the sign the party had to inform the city’s public prosecutor about it in order to avoid the incidents that took place seven years ago when after hanging the same sign for the first time, a group of people destroyed the office and four party members were charged with having “incited discord” among the citizenry (Article 192 of the Penal Code).

Despite Greece is a member of the EU and has been already criticized and contradicted in the international scope, the internal state of affairs for Macedonian minority is still extremely hard. Greece does not officially recognize the existence of ethnic and language communities other than Greek in the country.

Source: Mercator News, September 2002, <http://www.troc.es/ciemen/mercator/index-gb.htm>

What else can be found about language and minorities?

Updated (January 2001)

A case of a language activist describes the situation of national minorities in Greece. Sotiris Bletsas, a member of the Aromanian (Vlach) community was sentenced to 15 months in prison for distributing information about minority languages.

First time he was arrested in July 1995 after distributing publications of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages at the meeting of the Vlach community. The publications mentioned the existence of the Vlach language in Greece.

Vlach, closely related to Romanian, is spoken through central Greece. However, the language enjoys little or no public status and there are no reliable estimates on the number of speakers.

Updated (February 2002)

The European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages (EBLUL) made the final step towards a new Member State Committee (MSC) in Greece. Sixteen representatives of linguistic and cultural associations elected the six future members of EBLUL's MSC in Greece and its Chairman, Athanasios Parisis from the Slav-Macedonian group as well as his Deputy, Sotiris Bletzas from the Vlach community. After adopting the Bureau's statute and being accepted by EBLUL's Council, the new established MSC will represent four minorities in Greece: the Slav-Macedonians, the Vlachs, the Turks and the Pomaks. "Hopefully representatives of the Arvanite language - which were not present at the meeting only due to technical reasons - will join the Greek Member State Committee soon", said Bojan Brezigar, President of EBLUL.

"The information exchanged in our meeting showed that within the European Union, Greece is undoubtedly a state where linguistic diversity has not been considered a wealth so far. It will be the task of the new Committee, with technical and political support of the whole of EBLUL, to promote common EU understanding about this topic also in Greece. Furthermore, the MSC will contribute to assure a relevant level of dignity for minority languages in Greece, and real possibilities to survive and to develop," added Brezigar. So far, the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages is made up of thirteen committees, which represent the interests of the various communities. The Member State Committees comprise cultural organizations, official institutions and other bodies active in the field of regional or minority languages and cultures.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF GREECE



APPENDIX B

GREECE - CONSTITUTION

(Adopted on: June 11, 1975)

(Document Status in 1986)

(Editor's Note The ICL edition of the Greek Constitution has been checked by George Katrougalos in 1995 and 1996)

Article 3

3) The text of the Holy Scriptures shall be maintained unaltered. The official translation thereof into any other linguistic form, without the sanction of the Autocephalous Church of Greece and the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople, is prohibited.

Article 5

2) All persons within the Greek State enjoy full protection of their life, honor, and freedom, irrespective of nationality, race, creed, or political allegiance. Exceptions shall be permitted in such cases as are provided for by international law. Aliens persecuted for acts carried out in defense of their freedom shall not be extradited.

Note: The complete text of the Constitution and further information on the constitutional background of Germany are provided by the International Constitutional Law Project at the University of Wuerzburg.

LAW 694, 16.9.1977 (FEK A 264, 1977) ON MINORITY SCHOOLS OF THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN WESTERN THRACE

Article 1

1. The education of the Muslim Minority in W. Thrace is governed by:

a) the provisions of the Treaty on Peace ratified by Article 1 of the Legislative Decree dated 25 August in Lausanne,

b) Law 309/1976, "on the organization and administration of the General Education" [nowadays Law 1566/85 "on the organization of the General Education"] and

c) this law is subject to the principle of judicial reciprocity applied in any case.

2. The terms “minority”, “minority school” and “minority population” mentioned herein refer exclusively to the Muslim minority in W. Thrace.

Article 2

The aim of the minority school is to ensure the physical, intellectual and moral development and progress of the students according to the basic purposes of the general education in Greece and the determined principles of the curriculum of the respective public schools of the Country.

Article 3

The minority schools are subject to the inspection and supervision of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

Article 4

The establishment, operation, inspection and supervision of the minority schools of primary education are conditioned accordingly by the provisions in force on the Private General Education, subject to the provisions of this law.

Article 5

1.a) for the establishment of minority schools an application form shall be submitted to the local Inspector of minority schools signed by the parents or guardians who enjoy the civic and civil rights of the Greek citizen and resident of the town, large village, village, settlement or quarter of the local district for which the establishment of the school is requested.

b) The number of the applicants is determined every time by the local Prefect taking into account the site, the number of residents interested in the establishment of the school and the principle of reciprocity between the two countries.

c) The Inspector forwards the application to the local Prefect following his recommendation.

2. The permit for the establishment of the minority school is granted by order of the Prefect approved by the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs. In the permit, it is specified as the founder, one of the applicant parents or guardians who should be Greek citizen. A deadline,

which cannot exceed the one-month, is also set for accepting his appointment as a founder.

3. In the event that the appointed person as the founder does not accept his appointment, the Prefect choose another person from the list of the applicants and sets a deadline for accepting his appointment as specified in the above paragraph. If this person declines his appointment too, the same procedure is followed until the list is exhausted. In that case, the Prefect appoints, according to his judgment, the most suitable person for the capacity of the founder parent or guardian.

4. The capacity of the founder ceases when his capacity as a parent or guardian of a student of the school ceases. He is instantly replaced by another person chosen by the Prefect selected from the list of applicant parents or guardians for the establishment of the school. In the event that the selected person declines his appointment, the procedure described in paragraphs 2 and 3 is followed accordingly.

5. The permit is revoked when, according to the Prefect's judgment, the requirements for the operation of the school cease to exist. The permit is revoked by fully justified order of the Prefect approved by the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs.

6. The equality between the minority schools and the general education and the relevant requirements are laid down by the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs following a recommendation of the competent inspector, preserving the principle of reciprocity between the two States.

7. The minority school is represented in its relationships with the competent educational and other administrative authorities of the State or before a court, by the Greek citizen appointed as the founder of the school, as it is laid down by the decision of the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs.

Article 6

1. The minority school has its own three-member Board, appointed by the local Prefect, who selects its members from a list containing five to fifteen names of parents or guardians of this minority school. This list is formed following elections by the people who possess the right to vote and are residents of the region of the school.

2. Only the residents of the town, large village, village, settlement or quarter of the educational district, which the school serves, who are parents or guardians of the school's students have the right to vote,

providing that they have not exercised this right for the election of a School Board in another school of the educational district.

3. The term of office of the School Board is four years and when it expires new elections are held and a new list is formed, as it is described in the previous paragraphs.

4. During their term of office, the members of the School Board shall preserve their capacity as parents or guardian of a student of the school of which they are members of the Board. The members of the School Board who cease to have this capacity are substituted by others selected by the Prefect from the list as it is described in the paragraph I of this article. When the list is exhausted, the Prefect appoints the most suitable parent or guardian, according to his judgment, for his contribution as a member of the School Board.

This appointment is valid only until the new election of the School Board with the completion of the period of three years.

5. The procedure of election, the duties and the competence of the School Board are laid down by the decisions of the Minister of National Education and Religious Affairs.

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