



OSCE
HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
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Working Session 9: Tolerance and non-discrimination

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Thank you Ms/Mr Moderator,

Distinguished Delegates,

We call upon the Greek State,

- To ensure the rights and guarantee the equal opportunity to the Turkish Minority in terms of education with the Majority,
- To end up discrimination in the region of Western Thrace in terms of socio-economic development, among the Minority and Majority resident communities,

Since 2010 Greece has faced more than just an economic crisis, because it lasted more than expected. Since then, Greece has the largest unemployment rate among the EU countries reaching the 25%. Western Thrace for many years was the poorest region of Greece having about 35% lower economic welfare than the country average. Also the unemployment rate in Western Thrace is more than Greece's average reaching up to the 30%.

Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has suffered the most from the crisis in the recent years. The last surveys indicate that the unemployment rate within the Minority has reached up to the 50%. Thus, most of the even university graduates, young people are jobless and are obliged to work with their family at farms or obliged to migrate in order to find a job anywhere else.

Because of this serious socioeconomic change, the populations of many Minority villages have decreased, especially in the last 5 years. An important proportion of the Minority lives in the mountainous regions where there are many small villages whose accessibility is almost impossible, especially in winter times since the Greek authority's lack of interest to develop the infrastructure of the region. This lack of interest obliged people to migrate to bigger villages, towns or abroad. The Greek authorities in recent years closed 60 minority primary schools using the economic crisis and lower number of students at those schools as an excuse. However, while closing the schools, the authorities did not consider the regional difficulties, inaccessibility, and the autonomous structure of the Turkish Minority Education. This implementation justifies the intolerance of the Greek authorities towards the Turkish Minority.

Thank you for your attention.