

OSCE HUMAN DIMENSION IMPLEMENTATION MEETING
WORKING SESSION 12: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, FREE MEDIA
AND INFORMATION (06.10.2009)

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION

Freedom of Media

A. Law 3592/2007 has been issued in order to provide the necessary conditions for the operation of television and radio stations. This Law is a product of lengthy consultations between the General Secretariats of Communication/Information and competent EU authorities. A number of criteria have been taken into account to ensure that media operators abide by high standards, safeguarding at the same time fundamental rights of media operators, individuals and consumers. Thus, media pluralism, commercial viability, quality of programming, technical requirements, freedom of expression and information are amongst other criteria specified for license eligibility. It must also be taken into account that frequencies constitute a “public good”, which must be carefully managed, bearing always in mind the public interest.

Provisions of the said Law in no way hinder any local or regional applicant from obtaining a license, which is granted by a local (prefecture level) or regional authority. The relevant provisions for minimum disbursed capital (distinguishing between news and information providers and others) linked to population ratio (according to latest population census data) and/or employing a certain number of staff for radio stations, are amongst other requirements which purport to guarantee commercial viability, quantity and quality of programming, professional sustainability and better employment conditions, fully respecting national and international regulations and in line with the demands of professional groups (trade unions) themselves. Serious professionals abiding by the minimum requirements and universal criteria and conditions set by this new media legislation have nothing to be afraid of.

In the said Law, Greek is provided for as main, but not exclusive language of broadcasting. By this provision, which is only of a guiding nature, the Law provides for the use of the Greek language in conformity with the principles of the European Union which ensure and promote **linguistic pluralism** within the European area. **Otherwise, spoken programming can be broadcast in languages other than Greek, thus ensuring the right to the free flow of information, freedom of expression and pluralism, free from any sort of discrimination.**

B. With regard to freedom of expression and freedom of media in Thrace, it should be said that this region has long been a place of harmonious coexistence between Christians and Muslims, even before the terms “xenophobia” and / or “Islamophobia” and “Christianophobia” were brought to the agenda of the international community. Furthermore, human rights and religious freedom as well as freedom of expression of the Muslim minority in Thrace are fully respected.

Minority written (**9 dailies**) and electronic press (**6 radio stations**), as well as **4 magazines**, are a fact of life in the open society of Thrace.

The Hellenic Radio (E.R.A.) for Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, along with the district radio station in the city of Komotini broadcasts the following:

a. On a weekly basis:

1. An hourly information programme in the Turkish language, called after “Helicon”, which is prepared and presented by journalist, member of the Muslim minority.
2. In a broader framework, a musical, cultural and information programme, entitled “We, the others” and prepared by two journalists, one of whom belongs to the Muslim minority.

b. On a daily basis, an approximately half – hourly news bulletin, on both nation – wide and local press, in the Turkish language is broadcasted by four Muslim journalists.

Comments by fringe press or electronic media and **one isolated incident of verbal violence – which has never been reported by the minority press or denounced to the authorities – can, by no means, constitute a hate crime whatsoever or found any claims that a racist, hostile to the Muslim minority, environment exists in Greece.**

On the contrary, one could not turn a blind eye to hate (biased) speeches by very few, but influential, Muslim religious leaders in Thrace, which insult the Christian majority.