

WARSAW, 12 October 2006

OSCE HDIM-WORKING SESSION 16:
Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

STATEMENT BY THE GREEK DELEGATION

Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Discrimination has appropriately been given a prominent place in the activities of OSCE, over the last years. We consider it as a contribution to the efforts of our societies to ensure an even higher level of freedom for every person and to strengthen equality of rights and possibilities, that is to ensure personal freedom and equality as the only basis for achieving harmony and welfare in modern societies.

To increase the effectiveness of our efforts, my delegation believes that apart from the consistent implementation of the relevant OSCE commitments by the states, our Organization must remain unwaveringly guided, in its activities, by a comprehensive and principled approach of the issues of Tolerance and Non Discrimination.

Following these thoughts, I am going now to inform you on policies and measures implemented by the Greek Ministry of Education for promoting equality of educational opportunities, inclusiveness, Tolerance and Non Discrimination.

Before referring to them, allow me to mention, as a kind of historical preamble, that the principle of equality as well as the principle of freedom in the choice of religion and the performance of religious duties were included in the very first Greek constitution, adopted in 1822. These principles are of fundamental importance especially today, an era of increasing cultural enrichment of the Greek society.

1. Education of Immigrants

Following the adoption of new legislation, the minor immigrants are allowed to be registered in the Greek public schools even if they do not have sufficient supportive documents. This is allowed in cases of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as when they originate from conflict regions, or their legal status has not yet been decided.

Appropriate measures have been taken for ensuring the registration and school attendance of the minor immigrants.

Special teachers, competent to cope with the special education needs of migrants, work at a considerable number of schools.

Special teaching material has been prepared aiming at adaptation to the new cultural and educational environment.

26 intercultural elementary schools are already operating.

During the 2005-2006 school year there were in operation 322 reception classes and 147 support classes for immigrants in the primary school, while at the Secondary there were 39 reception and 42 support classes.

Currently there are 130.000 immigrants students attending mainstream Greek schools.

2. Education of Greek Roma students

Primary care is taken for reducing the rate of drop outs among the Roma students. A project, titled "Education of Greek Roma Students", is currently implemented, whose goals are the educational support and pedagogical monitoring of the Roma students, the training of teachers in order to meet the students' special needs, the creation of teaching material as well the sensitization of the Roma communities on the importance of school attendance. One of the most successful new measures is the introduction of a "card of itinerant student" which allows the attendance to any school.

3. Education on Human Rights in the Elementary Schools

This school year a program, titled "Kallipateira", started to be implemented which aims at promoting the education on the equality of men and women, the Human Rights, Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, fighting xenophobia and racism, social solidarity, and Olympic ideals.

4. Education on the issues of anti-Semitism and racism.

The Greek Parliament adopted in 2004 unanimously a resolution on the establishment of the 27th of January as "Day of Remembrance of the Greek Jews and Heroes of the Holocaust". Since November 2005 Greece is a member of the International Organization for Cooperation, Study, Remembrance and Research on the Holocaust". In this spirit, the Greek State has introduced the teaching of the Holocaust at school.

In particular:

-The Ministry of Education had recommended to the teachers to attend the seminars of 2004 and 2005, on "Teaching about the Holocaust in Greece", which had been organized by the Jewish Museum of Greece.

- In the last two years, a special text on the Jews of Greece during the Second World War, was presented on the 27th of January to the students, as a way of prompting a discussion on Holocaust in the classroom.

-The Ministry of Education has asked the schools to include in their activities a visit to the Jewish Museum.

-By Ministerial decision of May 2005, the teaching of the subjects "Fasism - Racism - Anti semitism - Holocaust" has been included in the curriculum.

- A student competition was organized, in November 2005, all over Greece, the object of which was an essay on the Holocaust.
- A cd on the Holocaust was issued.
- The subject of the Holocaust is included in four school books, of which three are on history and one on religion.
- Finally, a number of seminars and education programs on Holocaust and racism is scheduled to take place in the near future.