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**OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
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Warsaw, Poland**

Dear President,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
And esteemed NGO Delegates,

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) would like to recall that freedom of expression is a fundamental and internationally recognized human right and a basic component of a democratic society and that free, independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society. OSCE States should ensure the individual's freedom of expression and the freedom of media, and they should carry out successful investigations against acts impeding media freedom, including harassment, detention or violence against journalists.

The electronic media outlets or newspapers through which ethnic minorities can express themselves does increase the possibility of the participation of ethnic minorities in public sphere, because ethnic minorities are poorly represented in the mainstream media or they are often minorised.

However, Law 3592/2007 on the "Concentration and Licensing of Media Enterprises and Other Provisions" includes a provision which provides that the main broadcasting language for radio programmes should be Greek. The provision that the minimum human and financial resources required to obtain a license jeopardizes smaller regional and minority media. The minimum disbursed capital for radio owners has been established at 100.000 euros for radio stations broadcasting news and 60.000 euros for those broadcasting music.

In July 2007, Miklos Haraszti, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media expressed his concern and stated that OSCE commitments regarding pluralism of views require that all communities have access to follow of information and can contribute to it. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Press release, New radio licensing law in Greece restricts minority media, says OSCE media freedom watchdog, Vienna, 27 July 2007, [http://www.osce.org/fom/item\\_1\\_25793.html](http://www.osce.org/fom/item_1_25793.html)

The preservation of freedom of media and freedom of expression and promotion of respect for cultural sensitivities remains a serious concern in the OSCE area. The National Commission for Human Rights in Greece notes that there is a trend in news bulletins to reproduce stereotypes and prejudice concerning different ethnic or social groups.

Some media express certain prejudices and negative stereotypes towards members of minority groups, including the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace. The statements in question are sometimes tolerated by the judicial authorities on the name of freedom of expression. The problem is that the interpretation of the notion of racism by certain judicial authorities, leading to either no charges are being brought, or charges are dropped in the cases.

Violent attacks committed against journalists and the role of authorities in carrying out investigation remains a serious concern in the OSCE area. ABTTF notes with concern there is increasing trend of assaults against journalists in the region of Western Thrace. However, there have been very few prosecutions and convictions under the criminal law provisions addressing racist offences in Greece, although a few exemplary penalties have been imposed.

On 19 February 2009, the journalist Abdülhalim Dede was attacked while he was on-air during the morning programme, Kalimera Ellada, broadcast by the Athens, Greece-based Antenna TV. The Turkish Ziraat Bank had invited, among others, Dimitris Stamatis, Secretary General of the Region of East Macedonia and Thrace, to attend the opening of its first branch in Komotini, Thrace, Greece. Stamatis declined because the letter of invitation was written in English and Turkish, but not in Greek, and because the city of Komotini was referred to by its Turkish name only, Gümülcine. Abdülhalim Dede, activist on the promotion of minority rights of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace and publisher and director of the newspaper *Trakyanın Sesi* and owner of the radio station IŞIK FM in Komotini, was invited by the hosts of Kalimera Ellada to express his opinion live from Komotini on Antenna TV. During the interview, an unknown man approached Dede, shouted at him using obscene language, and physically attacked him. The main studio in Athens immediately terminated the live broadcasting.

We urge the Greek authorities:

- To review Law 3592/2007 and all OSCE States to ensure that media pluralism and free flow of information is in compliance with international standards and mechanisms
- To take measures to support pluralism and independence of the media, while addressing the conflict between freedom of expression and of the media and the right to freedom from discrimination
- To introduce a provision into criminal law expressly stipulating that for all ordinary offences, racist motivation constitutes an aggravating circumstance. In addition, we would like to draw attention of the Greek authorities to ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination, indicating the provisions that should be included in criminal legislation.