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GREECE

INTERVENTION OF THE HEAD OF THE GREEK DELEGATION, MR EVANGELOS SYRIGOS, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

AGENDA ITEM 4

Dear President, I would like to thank you for offering us an excellent opportunity to exchange views and experiences on the identification of best practices and positive measures regarding national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities.

Greece, fully subscribing to the principles and aims enshrined in the Declaration and in other relevant human rights standards and instruments has, over the last years, translated its provisions and guidelines into specific measures regarding its Muslim Minority, residing in the region of Thrace, north-eastern Greece.

Allow me to present you a brief outline of some of these best practices

1. In 1996 a 0.5% quota has been introduced for the admission to Universities and Higher Technical Educational Institutes of members of the Muslim minority. This proved to be an excellent tool against the segregation of students in schools. The number of Muslim students who preferred to attend public schools in all levels together with their Christian colleagues, has tripled since 1996.

More important, in 1996 the number of Muslim students entering Greek universities was 67 persons. This year 510 Muslim students entered the universities. This means an increase of 820% within 17 years.

2. In order to stop segregation of students, a program for the teaching of the Turkish language in High Schools in the big cities of Thrace has been introduced since 2008. The programme can be attended by both members of the minority and majority.

3. A third measure is a 0.5‰ quota to the State exams system for civil servants which was introduced in favour of persons belonging to the Muslim minority.

4. A fourth example of best practices is the establishment of Youth Councils, with the participation and active involvement of young Christians & Muslims alike, as part of the Local Administration network in Thrace.

5. In secondary education, the Greek state supports the operation of two Muslim religious schools in the areas where the Muslim minority lives. These schools follow the curriculum of public schools including the respect of democratic values while educating students to undertake religious duties in Islamic mosques.

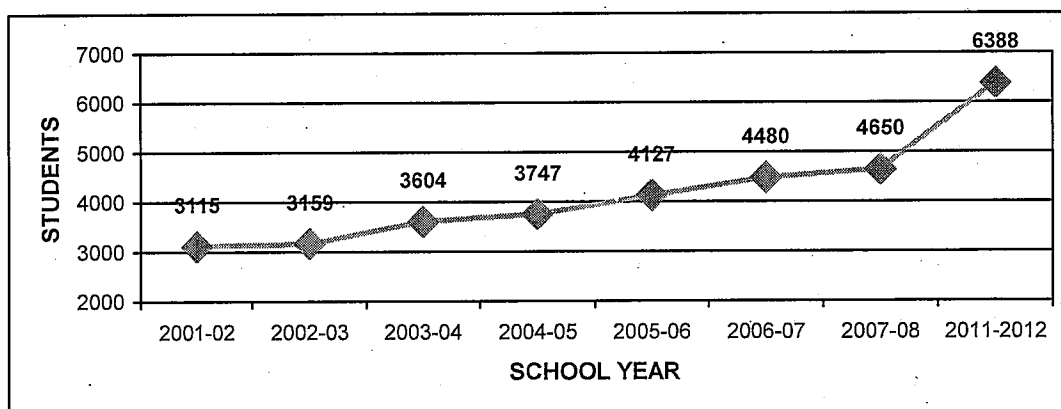
6. Last but not least, more than 6.000 Muslims over 16 years of age participated in adult education programmes of lifelong learning. These schools called "second class schools" proved to be a great tool to combat illiteracy.

Dear President, we are eager to hear other best practices from other areas of the world and see if they can be adopted in Greece as well.

GREEK THRACE: A modern, European model of Minority Education

The educational situation in a nutshell

- In school year 2011-12 174 minority primary schools operate in Thrace. Most of them are in mountainous and inaccessible areas and do not have the minimum number of students required for their operation. Nevertheless, the state continues to operate them to help students who, otherwise, would be forced to move to other schools. Specific programs have been implemented for several years to make it easier for minority students to learn the Greek language, through books written specifically for them.
- In minority regions of Thrace there are 57 public kindergartens.
- In secondary education, there are two minority secondary schools in Xanthi and Komotini, as well as two religious secondary schools in Komotini and in Echinus in the Municipality of Myki in Xanthi, respectively. The religious schools follow the curriculum of public schools, while educating students to undertake religious duties in Islamic mosques. At the same time, a large number of Muslim students choose to attend public secondary education. In school year **2011-12, 6.388** students attend public Junior High schools, Senior and Vocational High schools in Thrace.



- Since school year 2007-2008, a pilot program for the teaching of the Turkish language in public Junior and Senior High Schools has been introduced.
- Muslim minority students are allowed to enter Greek universities and Technological Institutes with additional rate posts (0,5%).

Primary education

- In school year 2012-13 194 kindergartens operate in Thrace. Out of a total of 3902 students, 1279 are members of the Muslim minority.
- 44 all-day minority schools operate with 93 classes.
- In the period 2004-12, 146 young Muslims permanent teachers were recruited. In the school year 2011-12 there were 309 permanent Muslim teachers graduates of the Muslim Special Education College and 72 Muslim teachers have been recruited as alternates.
- Expenditure on salaries for elementary education teaching staff has increased over the last years amounting to 18.672.936,000 euros in 2012 .
- The operating expenditure paid over by the Ministry of Education to the minority schools' elected school boards reached the amount of 1.115,000 euros in 2009. In 2011, 632.411 euros were spent for the same purpose.
- In order to address school drop-out in socially disadvantaged groups of Muslims, more than 1.200.000 euros have been spent over the last five years.
- Each year, on average 60.000 copies of 55 Greek school books and 38.000 copies of 37 Turkish school books are distributed to all Muslim students. In 2012, 80.000 of 55 Greek school books and 50.000 copies of 43 Turkish school books were distributed.
- For the Muslim Students' Special Education programme, run by the University of Athens:
 - 10.2555.000 euros have been allocated for the programme over the period 2010-2013. 9.640.000 euros have been spent over the period 1996-2004 and 7.350.000 euros over the period 2004-08.
 - 55 new Greek language-learning books have been published
 - 412 teacher received in-service training over the period 2010-2013. In total 850 teachers have received in-service training on the programme, during the last 12 years.
 - Hundreds of Muslim students, especially those in mountainous and inaccessible areas, have been educated through Special Mobile Units.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Pilot introduction of the Turkish language teaching in public junior and senior high schools in Thrace
- Extension of 0.5% quota for the entry of Muslim Children to Greek higher education institutions for graduates of Vocational schools, as well.
- Combating school drop-out rates of Muslim girls: Substantial increase over the last years in the enrolment rates of female Junior High School students and in Senior High School students in Thrace.

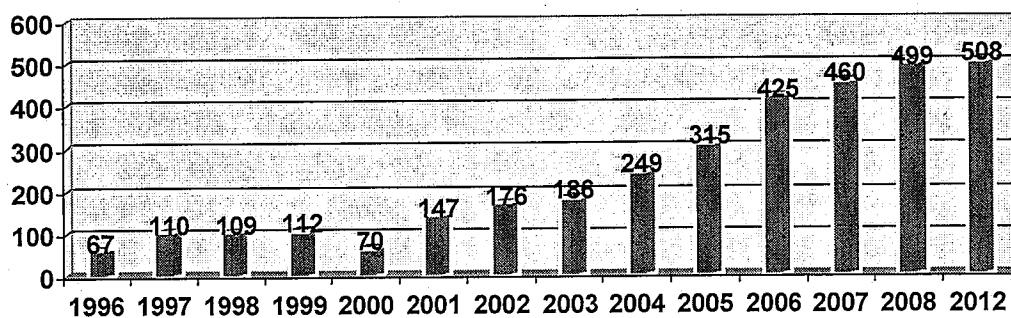
BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

- Modernization in building infrastructure over the last 6 years :
 - 18 new and upgraded kindergartens were built
 - A new hall of residence for students was built in Organi, which cost 500,000 euros.
 - A new annexe was built for the kindergarten of Echinus which cost 14.000 euros.

HIGHER EDUCATION

- Over the last ten years , the rate of Muslim students who have succeeded in the university entrance exams and are now University students has increased by 180%.

MUSLIM STUDENTS ENTERING GREEK UNIVERSITIES



Number of Muslim students entering Greek Universities increased from 67 in 1996 to 508 in 2012

**Number of Muslim students entering Greek Universities for the academic year 2012-13
per region and gender**

	Universities		Technological Institutes		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Evros	4	4	4	2	14
Rodopi	40	55	54	51	200
Xanthi	68	49	78	77	272
Total	112	108	136	130	486

Total of male: 248 (percentage 51%)
Total of female: 238 (percentage 49%)

Lifelong learning

- “Second-chance schools” operate in the area in order to combat illiteracy:
 - In Komotini with branches in Organi, in the Municipality of Neo Sidirochorio and in the Municipality of Iasmos
 - In Sappes
 - In Xanthi with branches in Sminthi and in Myki in the Municipality of Myki
 - In Alexandroupoli
- More 6.000 Muslim adults over 16 years of age participated in adult education programmes of lifelong learning over the last decade.
- Counselling programmes and health education for families of Greek Muslims.

Conclusion

Greece is systematically improving the content of education in Thrace with respect towards different religions and cultures, renewing building infrastructure and equipment, modernizing the institutional framework. Greek policy aims at enabling every student of the Muslim minority to be educated, develop his personality freely and enjoy equal opportunities for integration into the labour market as a modern Greek, Muslim, European citizen. The first results of our educational policy show that the disadvantages of the past have become in Thrace comparative advantages for the conquest of tomorrow.