

Human rights and minority language education.

Greece is a fervent defender of the right to education, which is enshrined in the Constitution. Education constitutes an “essential mission of the State” and, as such, is provided to all, including, of course, minority students.

The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne has established the status of the existing Muslim minority, which is a religious one, located in Thrace, composed of three distinct groups, whose mother tongue is Turkish, Pomak or Romani. The Greek State ensures and guarantees the equal and unhindered participation of minority students in education, through the protection of their cultural identity, language and religious conscience and worship.

The model of minority education is provided for in the aforementioned Lausanne treaty, and is regulated by bilateral educational protocols between Greece and Turkey. It is governed by the overarching legal framework for public education, as well as by special legislation, and aims at protecting the minority linguistic identity and its particular cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics. Parents of pupils belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace retain the right to decide to enroll their children in ordinary or minority schools.

Minority schools in Greece function under a special status and, unlike the other public schools in the country, are granted a degree of autonomy in their functioning. The minority education system follows a bilingual syllabus distributing Turkish and Greek language equally in time and volume. While a general measure regarding the reduction of the number of elementary schools has affected some minority schools, more transportation itineraries to the existing ones have been added to compensate for complications. Their re-opening will be re-examined in case the number of pupils increases.

Regarding the Turkish language syllabus, school textbooks are printed in Turkey, according to the 1968 Greek-Turkish Educational Protocol.

Greece is convinced that Education must be a means to facilitate the social mobility and integration of all students. Minority education must therefore provide the necessary tools for students to be able to strive in their country.

In conclusion, Greece, while fully complying with the relevant provisions of the Lausanne Treaty, will continue sparing no effort in further improving minority education.