Regions, minorities and European integration: A case study on Muslims in Western Thrace, Greece

Dia Anagnostou, Anna Triandafyllidou
ELIAMEP

Contact details:
Dr. Dia Anagnostou, Research Fellow, ELIAMEP, Vas. Sofias ave. 49, Athens 10676, Greece, email: danagnos@eliamep.gr,
Dr. Anna Triandafyllidou, Senior Research Fellow, ELIAMEP, Vas. Sofias ave. 49, Athens 10676, tel. 0030 210 7257111, fax 0030 210 7257114, tel/fax 0030 2610 454964, email: anna@eliamep.gr

1. Introduction

The border region of Western Thrace in the northeast part of Greece is home to a small but politically significant population of about 120,000 Muslims, inhabiting the region together with a Greek Christian majority.[1] With its strategic location between three states and two continents, the Muslim community of Western Thrace marks a particular kind of geographical and cultural-historical boundary between East and West. In Europe's southernmost corner, the region of Thrace borders with Turkey to the east and Bulgaria to the north. Across the northern border, Bulgaria's south and southeast regions are also home to large and territorially concentrated Turkish communities, portions of the country's sizeable Turkish minority. Thrace is part of the administrative region of East Macedonia and Thrace (*Perifereia Anatolikis Makedonias & Thrakis*), and consists of three prefectures, Ksanthi, Rhodope and Evros. Being a lagging region within the sluggish Greek economy, it is a case of a 'double periphery' that ranks at the low end of the EU scale in terms of per capita income and overall development (Ioannides and Petrakos 2000: 32).

A relic of the country's Ottoman past, Thrace's Muslim community was exempt correspondingly with the Greeks of Istanbul, from the mandatory population exchange between Greece and Turkey agreed with the Treaty of Lausanne (1923). Signed in the aftermath of Greece's military debacle in Anatolia, the international Treaty of Lausanne includes a section on the 'Protection of Minorities', a bilateral agreement between Greece and Turkey containing a series of provisions to guarantee the rights of the exempted minority populations. In respect of these, the Greek has government kept in place the institution of Islamic law (*sharia*), which had existed since the Ottoman period. Regulated with Law 2345 of 1920, Islamic law in Thrace is a judicial sub-system, in which the Mufti, the spiritual and religious leader, arbitrates in matters related to family, inheritance and child custody, giving 'opinions' (*fetwas*) on the basis of Islamic law rather than the Civil code which applies to Greek citizens in general (Tsourkas 1987; Soltaridis 1997).[2] In fulfilment of the Lausanne Treaty provisions, the Greek authorities also established a bilingual (Greek-Turkish) minority education system. Greece and Turkey had signed two bilateral agreements in 1951 (*morfotiki simfonia*) and 1968 (*morfotiko protokolo*) to decide educational policy vis-a-vis the minorities (Baltsiotis 1997: 321-2).

Comprising individuals of Turkish origin, Gypsies (Roma), and Slav-speaking Pomaks, the Muslims of Thrace prior to World War II coexisted largely as a religious community characteristic of the Ottoman millet system. Since the 1950s, however, they have transformed into a minority with ethnic consciousness, and in the past twenty years they have mobilized to assert a common Turkish identity. The latter has caused a major and ongoing rift with Greek authorities who officially recognize a 'Muslim minority' in reference to the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 that has defined the status of the latter until the present. Acknowledging the resonance of ethnic Turkish

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[1] The overall population of Thrace is 340,000. The precise size of the Turkish Muslim population is a matter of dispute due to their large-scale immigration over the years and the lack of an official census since the 1950s. Estimates range from 90,000 to over 120,000 while official accounts put it between 110,000-135,000 (see *The Muslim Minority in Greece,* Athens: ELIAMEP, 1995). Alexandris estimated the minority in 1981 to be about 120,000, with 45% Turkish-speaking, 36% Pomaks and 18% Roma (Alexandris 1988: 524).

[2] The Greek Civil Code provides Muslim women the right to chose whether to take a case to religious as opposed to the civil court and thus individuals presumably submit their case voluntarily to them. See *European Perspectives - Economic & Foreign Policy Issues*, Athens: Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Press and Mass Media, 1995, p.106.

identification within the community, but also its internal cultural diversity, in this report, we use both terms interchangeably.

Despite Greece's transition to democracy in 1974, state relations with the minority in Thrace deteriorated due to the deepening crisis with Turkey, as well as to a series of restrictive measures adopted by the Greek governments, which deprived the Muslim population of basic social and economic rights. In protest, in the second half of the 1980s the minority mobilized politically on the basis of Turkish nationalism, supporting independent minority candidates in parliamentary elections, who were not affiliated with Greek political parties. The accompanying tensions that erupted between Muslims and Christians in the region in early 1990 marked a nadir but also a turning point; they made clear the failure of the previous discriminatory policy, pointing to the need for change.

Alarmed by tumultuous conditions in Thrace at the turn of the decade, the Greek government decided in 1991 to abolish the discriminatory measures and announced a new approach towards the minority to be guided by 'legal equality – equal citizenship' (*isonomeia-isopoliteia*). Such an approach was for the first time put to practice through a new regional development strategy for border regions, which was launched with the *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions* submitted to the Greek Parliament in 1992.[3] While not in any direct way prompted by the EU, the redirection of government policy towards minority rights and their embedding in regional development strategies, this report argues, cannot be understood independently from, and would not have been possible outside of, Greece's processes of European integration.

The change in minority policy coincided with the intensification of integration processes, at a time of poor economic performance that necessitated the adoption of stabilization measures under EU supervision. Concern with the growing gap between the Greek and the EC economy[4] led to the transfer of increasing amounts of structural funds to Greece.[5] Resources from structural funds have been allocated to Thrace as a border region of strategic importance in the post-Cold War Balkans making possible intensified development efforts and infrastructure investments (*Stratigiko Schedio Anaptiksis Makedonias & Thrakis* 1994: 98-100). Of the 13 regional development programmes under the Community Support Frameworks for 1989-93, 1994-9, and 2000-2006, Eastern Macedonia and Thrace received the third largest fund in Greece (after the two major urban areas of Athens/Attiki and Thessaloniki in Central Macedonia) (Chlepas 1999: 164; Getimis and Economou 1996: 131).[6] The influx of structural funds enabled the Greek government to put to practice a new development strategy in Greek regions and prefectures, including those of Thrace.

Besides their pecuniary significance, equally, if not more important, have been the institutional implications of EU structural funds for Greece's subnational structures. Linked to growing dependence on structural funds were a series of reforms of local, prefecture and regional institutions, undertaken by Greek governments from

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[3] *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions*, Greek Parliament, Athens, 14 February 1992. Appended in *I Anaptixi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis* (1995).

[4] While in 1981 Greek GDP per capita was 53% of the EC average, by 1995, it fell to 45% of the EC average (Ioannides and Petrakos 2000: 32).

[5] For the second Community Support Framework (CSF) covering the 1994-99 period these amounted to 3.7% of the country's GDP (Ioannides and Petrakos 2000: 51).

[6] Out of the nearly 1 billion euro of total public expenditure for the Regional Development Program of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace for 2000-2006, only 25% of it came from national funds, while 75% came from the EU structural funds. In addition to public expenditure, approximately 0.14 billion comes from private sector contributions. List of programmes for 2000-2006 adopted by the Commission (Objectives 1, 2, and 3). See http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/country/overmap/gr/gr_en.htm

the second half of the 1980s onwards. The extent and nature of EU influence in this regard is a matter of controversy in Greek studies as it was discussed in the state of the art report. Yet, there is little doubt that the country's subnational structures in the early 1990s, considered among the most centralized in Europe, were thoroughly unsuitable to implementing structural funds (Marks 1997: 163). Creating viable and active sub-national structures capable of exercising power had never been a widespread public demand and was largely perceived as a threat to the country's territorial integrity (Verney 1994: 167; Ioakimidis 1996: 343). A series of reforms since the late 1980s in this direction, however, were strongly contested in Thrace because of their important implications for ethnic relations in the region.

Within the frame of the EUROREG project, this report explores the redefined government policy towards the minority and regional changes, largely undertaken in the context of EU integration, as well as their consequences for ethnic politics, cultural mobilization and inter-communal relations in Thrace. In the following section, we outline the background of minority-majority relations and the main socio-economic and political features of the minority and the region of Thrace. In the third and fourth sections we assess the regional context of change within the frame of European integration, and the ways in which it has shaped patterns of socioeconomic activity and political mobilization of the minority. We also discuss the ways in which patterns of minority-majority cooperation and the minority participation in the regional economy and local-prefecture government have changed today as opposed to those of the 1980s. The fifth section discusses the cultural and political demands of the minority and its patterns of ethnic and national identification. We critically assess the minority and majority understandings of Greek national and Turkish ethnic identity, the minority's sense of belonging to Europe and also the minority and majority understandings of Greek citizenship.

The original hypotheses of EUROREG were that regional and minority rights changes in the context of European integration a) promote political and economic integration of minorities in development frames, as well as inter-communal cooperation, and b) reinforce a relative decline of nationalist politics, with the interests and identity of minorities and majorities increasingly emphasizing social-economic integration, civic participation and equal citizenship, as opposed to ethnic solidarity. In this report, we present the findings of the empirical research that partly support the first hypothesis. We furthermore argue that national and ethnic politics in Thrace have grown more moderate since the 1990s, at the same time, there are important differences in how Muslims and Christians in Thrace understand democratic rights and citizenship. In the context of European integration, national and ethnic differences in Thrace remain salient, yet, they appear to diversify and acquire a qualitatively different content and meaning in comparison to the 1980s.

This report is based on thirty five interviews conducted in the prefectures of Ksanthi and Komotini in Thrace with representatives of minority and majority among the following groups: elected representatives, community leaders, civil society and media representatives, development public officials, development private business, and main project beneficiaries. It furthermore draws from the relevant literature and policy documents and other 'grey' material available to us and listed in the bibliography.

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2. Background of the case: the legacy of underdevelopment and minority marginalization

Since its foundation in the 19th century, a fundamental centralist predilection inspired by the French Napoleonic model, has characterized Greek administrative and territorial structures. Historical reasons related to the slow process of unification of different areas and a sense of national insecurity, led to and found expression in the formation of a highly centralized state. Inseparably linked to nation-state building, centralization has been explicitly geared towards modernisation, national homogenization and the achievement of social-political unification (Chlepas 1999: 90; 105). It became entrenched in the country's long-lived administrative division into 51 prefectures that after World War II prevailed as the main administrative-territorial units, as well as public agencies of development policies.

Headed by the prefect who was appointed by the central government, the prefectures' role in development was thoroughly shaped by national imperatives and decisions. Despite reform attempts in the 1970s, they continued to comprise sectorally fragmented departmental units directly linked and subordinate to their respective central ministries, which were minimally connected to local society and their social-cultural milieu (Chlepas 1999: 128; Makridimitris 1997: 74). At the same time, as loci of clientelistic relations and centres for distributing state resources and coordinating public investments in their territory, they functioned as important structures of central state control over local society (Christofilopoulou 1997: 43).

In the ethnically mixed region of Thrace, a particular and reinforced kind of centralization became entrenched; it was permeated by nationalist imperatives that revolved around the prefecture and thoroughly shaped local politics. Surfacing particularly in periods of deteriorating Greek-Turkish relations such as after 1974, it was underpinned by an overarching ideological imperative of national unity. Unofficial but widespread administrative practices that flourished around the prefecture systematically prevented Muslims from acquiring property or performing even routine matters such as receiving bank loans or driving licenses, finding employment, etc. (Giannopoulos and Psaras 1990: 18). The skewed distribution of resources in Thrace that deprived Muslims of rights and resources and exclusively privileged Christians, was deemed imperative and driven by the logic to combat the 'Turkish threat'.

Centralization cum nationalism in Thrace was most glaringly manifested in the fact that minority issues came under the scrutiny and supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry's euphemistically called Office of Cultural Affairs (*Grafeio Ekpolitistikon Ypotheseon)* in the prefectures of Ksanthi, Rhodope and Kavala handled all affairs related to Turkish Muslims with absolute discretion, in violation of laws and rights applying to Greek citizens in general. Run by high-rank state officials ironically referred to as the "minority governors," who had been appointed by the junta in 1967-1974, these offices monitored and circumscribed all economic transactions involving Muslims, with the support of Greek local authorities, employers, banks, enterprises and interest groups. The unparalleled, even if unofficial, separate system outside the sphere of democratic politics, under which the minority in Thrace was governed, was only possible with the consent or acquiescence of the government-appointed prefect and the centralized prefecture administration.

It is evident from the above that the distribution of central resources in the post-World War II period and the workings of local and prefecture institutions in Thrace became specifically shaped by nationalist priorities linked to the presence of

the minority. Lacking explicit development priorities, the national government and the prefect who was its local representative, distributed central rights and resources in Thrace through clientilistic interests to those deemed politically loyal (Verney and Papageorgiou 1994: 111). Local Christians and investors with political leverage were granted the bulk of resources and state grants on the basis of their nationalist credentials (*ethnikofrones*), with little if any consideration of development needs and criteria. The systematic deprivation of the minority's social and economic rights suspended the development of Muslim-inhabited areas, sustained the region's dependence on agriculture[7] and distorted its economy as a whole resulting in its underdevelopment.[8]

The Muslim-inhabited prefectures of Rhodope and Ksanthi are characterised by glaring disparities between a minority-inhabited mountainous and undeveloped zone in the north, and a southern predominantly Christian zone, which is fertile and more prosperous. Between the two, there is an intermediate belt with mixed population.[9] Up until 1996, the northern mountainous areas entirely populated by the minority were designated as 'restricted zones', where travel by outsiders required special clearance and a permit from the police. The majority of Muslims work in agriculture and have a long tradition in the growing of labour-intensive varieties of tobacco, making up over 90 per cent of its producers in the region.[10] They are active in 'their own' segregated section of the local market occupied by minority suppliers (tradesmen, producers, etc.) and customers, and they largely operate within the confines of their community.[11] The close relationship between minority status and economic underdevelopment is also evident in the fact that the prefecture with the highest concentration of Turkish Muslims, Rhodope, is the poorest in the region and in Greece.[12]

With time, the ghettoization of the minority in Thrace led it to strengthen its ties and dependencies across the border; it therefore enhanced Turkey's influence as a custodian power and gave vantage and clout to the minority's most nationalist segments. Excluded from channels of economic participation and political representation in Greece, the minority invested its savings abroad, especially in Turkey, received secondary and higher education there, and sought to exercise influence and pressure through the support of the 'kin-state.' Strongly rooted in the multiple economic, social and educational ties the minority has developed over the years across the border, Turkey's patronage actively intensified in the 1980s. As the minority crystallized its separate position, it transformed from a de jure 'Muslim minority' to a de facto 'ethnic minority' that in the mid-1980s mobilized to claim a common Turkish consciousness (Anagnostou 1999b: 128-139).

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[7] Even though the percentage of those working in agriculture in Thrace has been in steady decline over the past fifteen years, it remains high compared to the average for the country, as well as compared to the average for the EU. See *CSF East Macedonia and Thrace 2000-2006*, p.7.

[8] The region's GDP per capita is 79% of the average for the country (ranking 12th out of the 13 regions), 53,4% of the average for the EU-15 and 58,6% for the EU-25. Eurostat 2001 data, cited in the *Report of the Regional Secretary of East Macedonia and Thrace*, March 2005, p.13.

[9] With respect to land ownership, even though Muslims make up about 50% of Ksanthi's population they own 23% of the arable land and Christians own 71% of it. In Rhodope, Muslims make up 65% of the province's population and own 53,5% of the arable land, while 46.5% belongs to Christians. See *I Anaptixi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis*, p.48.

[10] *I Anaptixi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis,* Vol.1 (Athens: Commercial Bank of Greece, 1986), p. 238.

[11] See *I Anaptixi tis Thrakis* (1995), p. 18 and p. 49.

[12] Rhodope has a GDP per capita that is 62% of the average for the country, ranking at the very bottom of the country's 52 prefectures. See the *Study on employment and the prospects of job creation in Rhodope-Evros*, Prefecture of Rhodope-Evros, Komotini, November 2004, pp. 14-15.

The socioeconomic exclusion of the minority from local and national society in Greece in the post-1974 period, as well as social-cultural changes within the community contributed to the progressive autonomization of minority politics by the mid-1980s (Nikolakopoulos 2002, especially pp. 133-144). Internal political and cultural tendencies within the minority in Thrace prior to the period of the Greek junta had been defined by juxtaposition and antagonism between the traditional Muslim religious leaders (*palaiomousoulmanoi)* and adherents of Kemalist secular reforms (Divani 1995). The post-1974 period, however, witnessed the definitive waning of the former segment and its displacement by the latter group. This transformation was closely linked to the coming of age of a new generation of minority leaders who had completed higher education in Turkey and whose consciousness and outlook had been moulded by national ideas and political party ideologies in Turkey (Nikolakopoulos 2002: 134-5).

The relationship of Greek political parties with minority candidates was characterized by distance and the logic of vote maximization mainly present during pre-election periods. While the minority elected one or two representatives in the Greek parliament on the ballot of the main national political parties, their participation in the latter was largely marginal and token, as there was a cross-party consensus about the overarching national interest to keep the minority disfranchised. As a consequence, minority representatives had little loyalty to party positions and ideology, while the benefits they could extract for their Muslim supporters were limited to selective distribution of favours, i.e. like allowing the issuing of a driver's license for an individual (Dodos 1994: 34). The failure of Greek parties to challenge the official state policy that restricted minority rights in the name of the Turkish threat led to their "… complete dissociation from the party blocs and internal alignments formed within the minority" (Nikolakopoulos 2002: 143). It therefore undermined their ability to integrate minority members among their ranks and influence ethnic politics.

Over time, their political marginalization and economic exclusion in Thrace and Greece created a fertile ground for the radicalization of Muslims who in the 1980s mobilized to protest curtailment of their rights and demand official recognition as a 'Turkish minority'. It reached its apex in 1989-90 with the election of two independent (from national political parties) minority representatives in the Greek Parliament who rallied the support of the minority on the basis of Turkish nationalism and solidarity with 'motherland' Turkey across the border. Turkey's patronage has provided support through advocacy and economic assistance, and operated through the Turkish consulate in Komotini. It brings together minority leaders (mayors of communes, members of the Prefecture Council, members of organizations, etc.) in the unofficial Advisory Committee of the Minority (*Simvouleftiki Epitropi Mionotitas*), which was formed in the 1980s and remains in place until the present.

In 1989-90, fifteen years after Greece's transition to democracy, minority politicization on the basis of Turkish nationalism compelled Greek political leaders to reconsider their policy of exclusion and discrimination. Following minority protests and inter-communal tensions in Thrace, they urgently met behind closed doors in January 1990 to cope with the crisis. In the text produced in that meeting, they recognised the need to abolish the restrictive measures (text appended in Giannopoulos and Psaras 1990: 21). In his visit to Thrace in May 1991, Prime Minister (PM) Konstantinos Mitsotakis declared an end to discrimination and a new approach towards the minority based on "legal equality - equal citizenship" (*isonomia-isopolitia*). This turnabout set in a process of liberalization of government

policy towards the minority of Thrace that culminated with the abolition of Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code in 1998 (Anagnostou 2005).

At the same time, a 1993 change in electoral law also introduced a 3% threshold to enter parliament, an electoral percentage too high for the minority to reach it, effectively precluding the election of independent representatives of the minority. Since then, its parliamentary representatives are again elected on the ballot of national political parties (the centre right ND, the socialist PASOK, and the Leftist SYN) with their number ranging between one and three. No one among them has held any government post. Presently, there is only one minority representative in the Greek parliamentary from the ND party, Mr. Ilhan Ahmet.

The politicization of the minority and the redefinition of Greek policy towards the latter in the early 1990s coincided with the intensification of EU integration processes, following nearly a decade of government ambivalence regarding membership in the EU. Increased resources from and the implementation of structural funds enabled the Greek government to redress regional problems and minority exclusion by launching an economic development strategy defined by the Community Support Frameworks (CSFs) of the EU structural policy. At the same time, Greek governments in the 1990s also undertook political and institutional reforms at the regional, prefecture and local levels. Economic and political-institutional changes both reflected and in turn reinforced a re-orientation in the priorities of regional policy and the workings of local government in border areas. The next section of this report describes the EU-related regional changes and the new conditions that they defined for the political participation and economic mobilization of the minority in Thrace.

3. European integration, the minority and the domestic-regional context of change

Since the early 1990s, EU integration established a context and set the stage for fundamental political changes domestically, as well as for economic and institutional reforms in Greek regions. It introduced a new set of opportunities and constraints for less developed regional and local economies, including that of Thrace, with important consequences for minority politics and its relations with majority and the state. Three sets of factors were important in this respect.

In the first place, the broader processes of economic integration and convergence that have tended to adversely affect peripheral regions like Thrace. As a predominantly agricultural region, over the past ten years Thrace has been strongly disaffected by the gradual decline in income supports and production quotas of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Such decline has been particularly drastic for products like tobacco, for which subsidies are to be entirely suspended by the year 2012. With more than two thirds of minority members living off agriculture, the decline of CAP supports undermines their socioeconomic position and their living standards. The problem is particularly acute in the northern mountainous areas in the two prefectures under study which are not only agricultural but also mono-cultural economies with a geography that does not render viable the growth of alternative products other than tobacco. The changes in the CAP have placed pressures for restructuring the region's economy and its agricultural sector by engaging in alternative kinds of cultivation and production.

Secondly, the inflow of EU structural funds, intended as a compensation for regions likely to be placed at a disadvantage in the competitive European common

market (Hooghe 1996: 5), has provided resources to restructure Thrace's economy. The signing of the SEA and its overhaul in the second half of the 1980s had made structural policy a more central component of the EU, doubling the resources channelled to it. Given tight public finances and strong pressures to reduce public spending in the 1990s as Greece was seeking to enter the EMU, it is questionable whether in the absence of these funds, regional development policy would have been viable at all (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 42). Finally, the growing concern and standard setting activities of European institutions in human rights and minority protection since the late 1980s, exposed national policies and practices to international scrutiny and criticism, and began to influence government approach towards the minority of Thrace.

Scholars have pointed to the difficulty of assessing the direct impact of EU policies in the domestic sphere (Vermeersch 2003: 4). The EU rarely dictates specific reforms, even when they have explicit procedural and institutional requirements like structural policy, and even more so in areas such as minority protection in which it does not have an internal policy. On the basis of empirical studies in a number of different issue areas, Risse, Cowles and Caporaso carefully unravel the domestic effects of Europeanization. European policies and processes are seen to exert adaptational pressures, which are particularly pronounced in member states with structures and policies that are highly divergent from those of the EU (Risse et al. 2001). Such pressures do not necessarily bring about domestic change though, and even when they do, it is far from uniform across member states. Whether or not they trigger domestic change depends on intervening factors at the domestic level that may facilitate or conversely obstruct change: pre-existing domestic institutions, a country's organizational and policy-making culture, differential empowerment of national actors and learning (Risse et al. 2001: 2).

One way to assess the EU impact at the national level is to consider the timing of domestic changes, and whether it coincides with important changes and policy initiatives at the European level. Furthermore, such impact can also be established by assessing whether and the extent to which domestic actors utilize EU policies, rules and norms in order to underpin, justify and legitimate domestic change and structural reform (Vermeersch 2003: 4). Domestic actors may use European norms and policies as an opportunity to further their goals and interests, or they may come to redefine their interests and even identities in response to Europeanization. This usually happens after critical policy failures or in perceived crisis (Risse et al. 2001: 11-12).

Even though Greece acceded to the EU in 1981, it was not until the 1990s that national governments and leaders began to undertake reforms in response to pressures emanating from EU integration. During the first decade of membership in the 1980s, for most part Greek governments were at best ambivalent about the latter and on the whole resisted adaptation and change (Marks 1997: 143). The dire condition of the Greek economy at the end of the decade however, intensified pressures for economic and institutional reforms. By 1990, the unquestionable acceptance of EU membership by all Greek political parties eased domestic resistance to pressures emanating from it. The advent to power of political leaders with a reformist agenda in the 1990s facilitated domestic regional institutional and policy changes to converge with EU policies and norms, and made possible a new approach to minority issues in Thrace.

The establishment (even if only in paper at the time) of thirteen administrative regions in the late 1980s in Greece coincided, not accidentally, with the overhaul of the EU structural policy, and marked the onset of a new set of subnational reforms in the country. With emphasis on partnership between European, national and

subnational authorities, the overhaul of structural funds in 1988-89 presupposed the existence of subnational structures competent to implement the Regional Development Programmes (RDP) of the CSFs (Community Support Frameworks) (Christofilopoulou 1997: 52). In this sense, they made it imperative to put in place new institutions and modernize existing ones as to render them capable of engaging in regional development planning (Verney 1994; Featherstone and Yannopoulos 1996). Already the experience of the Integrated Mediterranean Programs (IMPs) in the second half of the 1980s, a precursor to the EU structural policy, had pointed to the endemic weaknesses of the country's centralized structures to implement integrated development projects (Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). With the doubling of structural funds in 1988-89 and Greece's inclusion under Objective 1 areas, domestic regional and administrative reform could no longer be shunned.

Introduced in 1994, the reforms transformed the prefecture from an arm of the central administration into an institution of local government with a directly elected prefect and Prefecture Council,[13] which became recipient of increased funding under the CSF.[14] Laws 2218/1994 and subsequently 2503/1997 also upgraded and expanded the role of the 13 administrative regions (*dioikitikes perifereies*) (Chlepas 1999: 170-1). Each established its own Regional Development Fund to participate as partner in formulating regional policy and administering national and European projects and funds. The reforms of the 1990s arguably paved the way for the transformation of the 13 regions into decentralised units of administration and governance (Chlepas 1999: 186). The latest wave of territorial reform in 1999, the "Kapodistrias Plan" initiated a massive reconstitution, merging fragmented local governments units into larger entities of administration and local government in order to enhance their capacity and promote their more active role in development (Chlepas 1999: 399).[15]

To be sure, growing demands for, and attempted reforms towards decentralization in Greece pre-dated the overhaul of EU structural funds. As it was discussed in the state of the art report, reform initiatives during the 1980s had sought to redistribute power between central and local level by providing for partly elected prefecture councils. The latter though were largely geared towards empowering local party structures rather than adapting to the EU, and in any case, they were curtailed due to resistance from entrenched party and national interests (Ioakimidis 1996: 348; Christofilopoulou 1997).

Structural funds no doubt served as stimulus for the regional reforms of the 1990s, which, however, were facilitated by domestic party-policy commitments and were a response to strong endogenous demands (Ioakimidis 1996: 348). Prefecture self-government was arguably, largely a victory of middle-level party cadres of PASOK and their assertion vis-à-vis the central government and party leadership in the 1990s (Chlepas 1999: 343; Christofilopoulou 1997: 56). They reflected a new generation of political cadre who came of age in the post-1974 period, and who acquired growing consciousness around local problems and a strong interest in strengthening local party structures through some decentralization of power.

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[13] Law 2218/1994, *Idrisi Nomarchiakis Aftodioikisis kai Tropopioisi gia tin Protovathmia Aftodioikisi kai Perifereia* 1994.

[14] In 1991-5 such funding more than tripled in Rhodope and Ksanthi. Data from the prefectures of Ksanthi,and Rhodope Division of Planning and Investment. The main prefecture fund was SANA (*Silogiki Apofasi Nomarchiakis Aftodiikisis*).

[15] This is one of the central conclusions of a study conducted by the "Andreas Papandreou Foundation," (*Kathimerini*, 14 January 2001: 8-9).

By the 1990s, the advent to power of centre-right New Democracy and that of Kostas Simitis to the leadership of the governing Socialist party PASOK signalled the ascent of Europeanized segments that set Greece's convergence with the EU as the overarching priority. The comeback of PASOK to power with a fresh mandate in 1993 presented an opportune moment to bypass opposition and launch what have been characterized as groundbreaking regional reforms. While the EU did not mandate regional reforms, it nonetheless provided the normative and material resources for leaders to conceptualize and legitimate them. Reformers placed regional changes in the frame of the Community Support Frameworks and depicted them as a major step towards institutional and economic modernization, which for a country in the periphery like Greece is the essence of Europeanization (Featherstone 1998).

Besides offering an opportunity for national leaders to push for change and pursue their goals, EU structural funds arguably also set in unintentionally a learning process, in the course of which local actors redefined their interests. In a highly centralized state like Greece, the implementation of the IMPs in the second half of the 1980s raised local awareness about power relations vis-à-vis the central state (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992: 126). Their firm control by the centre obstructed local authorities and interest group participation and heightened local awareness about the need to mobilize in the design and planning of regional policy (Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). The prefecture reforms of the 1980s were also instrumental in mounting local support for further decentralization, as well as for the EU to acquire greater responsibilities in the development of disadvantaged areas (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992: 126-8).

In sum, EU structural policy prompted reform of subnational institutions in Greece by enabling national leaders and empowered party and local actors to overcome opposition and pursue their interests. It provided a normative frame stressing partnership and subsidiarity, to which domestic actors appealed in order to promote some decentralization of the highly centralized Greek state. This is not to say that structural funds brought about any large-scale decentralization in Greece. In fact, it has been argued that the accompanying emphasis on decentralization and local development has been mainly rhetorical, underpinned by the Community 'paradigm' of deregulation, and driven but the need to reduce central state spending rather than to promote regionalization (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 40). Nonetheless, the reforms of the 1990s initiated some transfer of competences from the central to the subnational level, and widened the participation of local actors in development processes within the CSFs (Ioannides and Petrakos 2000: 46). Furthermore, in establishing systematic contacts of local authorities with the EU, structural funds implementation brought the latter closer to local society and made it less remote (Ioakimidis 1996).

In empowering local government through the Kapodistrias plan and democratizing politics at the prefecture by transforming it into an elected institution, regional reforms have expanded opportunities for the minority to influence resource distribution at the prefecture and enhanced its political status. Furthermore, they have introduced, largely unintentionally, a new logic in local and prefecture politics guided by development and democracy, which came into conflict with the previously unquestionable priority of Greek national unity that prevailed in sensitive border areas like Thrace.

Regional and prefecture authorities have to operate within parameters defined in reference to economic development priorities and social cohesion objectives (domestic as much as European), rather than exclusively in consideration of Greek

nationalist imperatives. This has inserted considerable pressures to distance regional policies and local politics from traditional nationalist interests and foreign policy considerations as these are reflected in the practices of the Cultural Affairs Office of the Foreign Ministry. As an elected body, the Prefecture Council could no longer easily acquiesce with the latter and has been compelled to find ways to eschew ministerial prerogatives when these threaten to undermine the implementation of regional plans and the receipt of European transfers. While the Cultural Affairs Office continues to have one of its high ranking officials placed in Ksanthi and in Kavala, its role is arguably significantly downgraded, even if not abolished. Even though minority affairs continue to be under central government supervision as this is embodied in the office of the General Secretary of the Region, this is now legitimated in the language of equal rights and democracy.

The change in the traditional nationalist approach to the development of ethnically mixed border regions was for the first time signaled with the *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions* submitted to the Greek Parliament in 1992, which had cross-party consensus.[16] In marked departure from the militaristic language frequently employed in the case of Thrace, the *Findings* called for regional development as 'armour' for defence against the threat of secessionism, through upgrading the local economy, reducing inequalities between Christians and Muslims and promoting social and economic integration. For the first time, the minority was depicted as a resource rather than a threat or burden, and its integration as a precondition for the region's development (*I Anaptiksi tis Thrakis – Prokliseis kai Prooptikes* 1994). EU structural funds did not motivate or in any way lead the government to adopt this new approach but they made it possible to put to practice a comprehensive policy of regional development and to firmly anchor the minority issue within it.

Changes at the intersection of regional reform and the new integrative approach to minority rights in Thrace triggered powerful reactions among local and nationalist constituencies, which declared prefecture self-government 'superficial and nationally perilous'. Pointing to the minority inhabiting it, they alarmingly warned that it would 'fragment the state' and strengthen Turkish nationalism, as it made it possible to elect a Muslim prefect in Ksanthi and Rhodope (Kontos and Pavlou 1994; Marinos 1994). To pre-empt this possibility and the consolidation of a Muslim-governed area, the law on prefecture local government was modified in the case of Ksanthi and Rhodope, which were placed in a special category of so-called "enlarged prefectures" (*dievrimenes nomarchies*) (Law 2218/94, Article 40). Essentially a form of gerrymandering targeting the minority, in effect, it incorporated the largely Muslim prefectures of Ksanthi and Rhodope to the Christian-populated prefectures of Kavala and Evros respectively, thereby consolidating two predominantly Christian areas and pre-empting the election of a Muslim prefect. Recently, the nomination by PASOK of a female from the minority to run for prefect of the enlarged prefecture of Ksanthi-Kavala in the upcoming elections has triggered storming reactions from a large segment of the local and national media and political elite.

Besides "enlarged prefectures", the expanded opportunities for local and minority participation and influence are also constrained by what can be called "curtailed prefectures". Presently, the role of prefecture institutions and the resources that they possess, appear to fall short of the initial goal of the 1994 reform to

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[16] *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions*, Greek Parliament, Athens, 14 February 1992. Appended in *I Anaptixi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis* (1995).

decentralize extensively central powers and functions to the prefecture. Instead of the latter, the bulk of these functions and powers have actually been transferred to the regional administration, a centralized institution headed by the Regional Secretary, who is appointed by the central government. Comprising of the region's prefects and representatives of LGBs (Local Government Bodies, that is, municipalities and communes), producers' associations, and others, the regional council that is responsible for participating in the drafting of the Regional Development Program is a weak and largely inactive body. No minority members participate in the latter, thus the minority cannot influence the distribution of funds in the region or the formulation of development plans for the region.

Greek governments have defended the integrating approach to Thrace's minority against nationalist pressures and continued to liberalize minority rights in reference as much to democratic principles as to European norms. In legitimating the restitution of minority rights against domestic opposition, Greek governments referred to the adoption of liberal democratic principles and equality for all citizens as proof for the country's status as a modern country of the EU. In his speech in Thrace during the pre-election period in 2004, the chair of ND at the time and Greece's current Prime Minister Mr. Karamanlis referred to the government's policy emphasizing minority integration and equality as modern, being defined by a 'European logic'.[17]

The liberalization of minority rights in Greece coincided, not accidentally, with the growing activism of European institutions around human rights and minority protection in the 1990s (Anagnostou 2005). The EU has not had any internal policy on the latter but only external as the protection of human rights and minorities is included in the Copenhagen conditions for membership. Nonetheless, Greece found itself in an awkward position in European forums: as the EU was asking candidate states from Central-East and Southeast European countries to protect minorities, Greece's record in this respect was far from spotless (Aarbbake 2003; Heraclides 1996). Furthermore, Greece's treatment of Thrace's Muslims became a target of growing criticisms in the Council of Europe (CoE) and minority organizations such as the Federation of the Turks of Thrace frequently brought their grievances in it (Hersant 2000: 37-40). In a number of cases, individuals from the minority have also appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in claiming violation of their right to religious freedom, freedom of expression or assembly. All this created an international climate critical of national practices, influencing member states, including Greece, through what has been called 'shaming' (Moravscik 1995).

While prompted by Greece's membership in the EU, regional reforms, as much as the liberalization of the rights of Thrace's Muslims were actually facilitated by the Europeanization of domestic political and government elites in the 1990s. Greek governments became particularly sensitive about the country's relations with and overall performance in the EU. Greece began to thoroughly depend on structural funds that comprised a considerable influx of resources for her ailing economy, and was eager to dispel her hitherto reputation as an uncommitted member of the Union. The view that respect for human rights and minorities was indispensable in promoting Greece's national interests in Europe began to gain ground among domestic political elites and across political parties. The next two sections of this report examine the impact of regional reforms and minority integration on the interests and identity of Greek Christians and Turkish Muslims, as well as on their politics in Thrace.

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[17] For a full text of the speech, see the party's website http://www.nd.gr

4. Political participation, socio-economic development and ethnic politics in Thrace

In the previous section, we argued that EU integration provided a context that directly and indirectly prompted national governments in Greece to pursue political and economic integration of the Turkish Muslim minority at the regional-local level. Drawing from the original hypotheses of EUROREG, we examine the claim that the liberalization of the rights of Turkish Muslims and the reforms in local and prefecture government structures and regional development frames reinforce redefinition of their politics and identity, as well as of their relations with the Greek Christian majority in Thrace. In particular, in the next two sections we explore the following hypotheses: that in the context of these changes, minority and majority shift their interests and demands in the direction of pursuing regional integration and inter-communal cooperation as opposed to ethnic community separation; that the minority increasingly advances demands for social-economic integration as opposed to ethnic identification; that there is a challenge to nationalism and for the minority weakening of its ties with 'motherland' Turkey across the border.

The influx of structural funds, as described in the previous section, presented an opportunity for Greek governments in the 1990s to adopt a development politics in Thrace. With the comeback of the Socialist party PASOK such a politics was launched in the frame of the newly instituted prefecture self-government and aimed at minority integration in the region. As the former prefect (for two terms) of Rhodope stated, "the new development politics that we introduced vis-à-vis the minority was an initiative of the prefecture and local self-government. We attempted to implement a politics of rapprochement vis-à-vis the minority, which was premised upon the right to and respect for the individual, and the right to religious identity, and simultaneously, of course, upon respect for the laws of the Greek state" (R31)[18]. The same approach has no less been employed by the centre-right New Democracy. All of our interviewees from the Greek Christian majority, regardless of the political party to which they belong, advocated it and condemned the previous discriminatory measures (R13, R19, R31, R18, R21). In capturing the magnitude and significance of this change, one of the minority's political figures remarked that "today some Christians adopt positions that would previously be considered close to national treason" (R26).

The transformation of the Prefecture Council into a directly elected institution democratized politics around it and provided for the participation and representation of the minority. Prefecture self-government introduced strong pressures to show responsiveness to local problems dividing the two communities. With an interest in attracting the Muslim vote, the prefects and the Prefecture Council began to make efforts to tackle the glaring disparities between the northern Muslim and the southern Christian areas (Anagnostou 2001; R14). Even though there is no data to document this, most of our Greek Christian informants who are local government officials disclosed that for the past ten years there has been an implicit and unofficial policy to channel funds and undertake development projects in Muslim-inhabited areas. The introduction of prefecture self-government in 1994 also paved the way for closer cooperation of Christians and Muslims in local party structures and politics. Greek political parties sought to attract minority candidates in prefecture and local elections

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[18] An anonymous list of the informants interviewed can be found in the appendix of this report.

and in this way incorporate them in the decentralized structures. In the prefecture of Rhodope ten out of twenty five members of the prefecture council are Turkish Muslims and in Ksanthi three out of twenty five.

The ability of subnational institutions to engage in development was further enhanced with the Kapodistrias reform in 1999 that merged small communes into larger municipalities in the first degree of local government. With this reform, LGBs are better endowed with resources from the national budget, and can also pursue additional funds from the CSFs. The minority elects its representatives at the local level as members of municipal councils, mayors and presidents of communes. Since the 1990s, the political status of local representatives has been enhanced by the creation of larger municipalities. In the prefecture of Ksanthi the vice-prefect, one mayor (of Myki; the prefecture includes six municipalities in total), and four presidents of communes (Thermes, Kotylis, Satres, Selero) are from the minority. In the prefecture of Rhodope, the vice-prefect, four mayors (Arriana, Sappes, Sostis, and Fillyra; the prefecture includes nine municipalities in total), and three presidents of communes (Kechros, Amaksades, and Organi) are also Muslims.

At the same time though, the ongoing existence of communes in Thrace, a phenomenon rare in other parts of Greece, which represents the weak tier of local government inherited from the previous system, is exclusively found in Muslim-inhabited areas. In lacking the human capital or know-how to pursue and implement projects, the communes are unable to take advantage of the development resources available through CSFs. In this respect, the CSFs appear to have a paradoxical effect, creating a further divide between on the one hand the large municipalities and urban areas, both majority and minority inhabited, that benefit from them and prosper, and on the other hand the mountainous minority-inhabited communes that remain isolated and marginalised, unable to partake in the overall development process of the region.[19]

In fact, despite the increased inflow of development funds in Thrace and the inclusion of minority representatives in local and prefecture government structures, the integration of Turkish Muslims in the region's economy has until now been limited. The construction of large public works, such as the Egnatia highway, as well as smaller ones such as the building of sewage and water supply systems no doubt upgraded the region's infrastructure and in this sense had a positive impact on the entire population. The minority's socioeconomic position, however, remains vulnerable due to the decline of agricultural subsidies and their gradual elimination in tobacco production. Despite increased funds, subnational authorities have not been able to redress the most pressing issue which is the need to create alternative forms of occupation and cultivation that can substitute tobacco. Even though there is no systematic data to document this, there is little doubt that the bulk of the funds from the three CSFs have gone into the Christian-inhabited areas to the south as opposed to the Muslim-inhabited areas of the north in the two prefectures. This is in large part due to the fact that the former had better infrastructure to begin with and was thus in a more advantageous position to make use of the funds, in contrast to the northern mountainous areas inhabited by the minority. In the latter, funds have been used to put in place basic infrastructure such asphalted roads and water supply systems.

Despite enhanced opportunities to do so, until recently there was limited minority participation also in development programs targeting individual small-scale

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[19] As we explain in more detail below, our minority informants provide support to this view by testifying that very little has changed in the mountainous areas and generally that the minority has not benefited much from the EU funds except for CAP subsidies (R1, R2, R27, R29, R16 among others).

entrepreneurs to receive grants in order to start a business, expand it, or upgrade it.[20] Largely funded through the CSF, these operate on a competitive basis and are allocated through a process of proposal submission, evaluation, and approval. In the past few years, the limited engagement of the minority in development projects became a matter of concern for Greek authorities, particularly in light of the suspension of CAP tobacco quotas and subsidies by the year 2009, and they have undertaken more concerted efforts to incorporate minority individuals. According to data provided by the political office of Ilhan Ahmet, the minority's national representative in the Greek parliament, the participation of the minority in two EU funded programs for individual entrepreneurs was between 0-4% but it began to somewhat increase by 2005 to 7,5% and 10% (Komotini, 26 August 2005). Furthermore, in the last CSF, particular emphasis is given to the need to reduce intra-regional inequalities with interventions and development measures targeting the less advantaged areas, many of which are inhabited by the minority.[21]

As noted by many informants, the disparity in funding allocation between the Christian south and the Muslim north, as well as the limited inclusion of minority individuals in programs can be attributed to the legacy of socioeconomic exclusion, as well as to specific social characteristics of the Muslim community. Given their past economic marginalization and their occupation in tobacco production, most lack the necessary additional private capital required by programs. Furthermore, minority inhabitants in the mountainous north lack proper land ownership titles, a condition for participation in development programs. A number of our minority informants attribute the aforementioned disparity to purposeful or implicit discrimination on the part of Greek authorities. They point to the fact that information and guidance from the central and local authorities was directed on purpose to the majority population and social actors. Minority business people and organisations were not contacted at all or were informed about funding opportunities a few days before the deadline expired (R28, R10).

Notwithstanding persistent (real or perceived) disparities, the participation and representation of the minority participates in local and prefecture institutions significantly influences community perceptions in prompting a more self-critical reflection on the part of Turkish Muslims. Most of our informants among the latter and nearly all of those, who are representatives in local government or producers' associations, claim that the failure of minority members to mobilize in development programs is largely due to "a combination of mentality, weakness and general deprivation" (R33; see also R25). Others attribute it to a general attitude of passivity and reluctance to take financial risks (R11, R23), as well as the lack of skills, guidance and information in preparing and submitting proposal for investment (R29, R15). As one of our interviewees noted, instead "of constantly accusing the 'other', it is essential to do some self-criticism as well. If minority members act with self-confidence, and put some effort in getting informed, they would be able to benefit from such funds equally" (R2).

Prefecture institutional reforms are widely perceived to have been central in the political integration of Turkish Muslims as equal citizens. It is notable that more than two thirds of our interviewees from both communities linked the enhanced

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[20] Besides the Regional Operational Program of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace from the CSF (by far the largest in size), these include URBAN (approved only for the municipality of Komotini), LEADER, the Cohesion Fund (national scale of the CSF, approved only for the municipality of Komotini), OPAACH (Integrated Program for the Development of Rural Areas) and EQUAL (for socially disadvantaged groups).
[21] See *Report by the General Secretary of Region of EMT*, March 2005, p.39.

political participation and representation of the minority to the reforms of prefecture self-government and the strengthening of local government. These reforms seem to have had a significant impact in consolidating the status of minority members as equal citizens, and in imbuing among them a sense of trust towards Greek state institutions (R34, R33, R26 R14, R9, R24). As a minority member of the Ksanthi prefecture council stated:

> "Things have definitely improved since the application of the law that provides for the election of local administration… People trust our local administration. They feel close to our mayors and to our Prefect who is extremely active and sensitive towards our issues. You regularly see him going around from town to town, talking to people, Christians or Muslims, and asking for their problems. This is not only due to his personality but also to the new law that allows us to elect our administration. … Today, the citizen feels more comfortable because he is treated better, he is served by the state and the public services…" (R33)

There is widespread support among our interviewees for decentralization from both minority and majority. Yet, such convergence of views does not seem to take any political expression or translate into any joint initiative between the two groups. Most likely, such expressed support for decentralization is abstract and does not reflect any joint inter-communal interest along regional lines. It is likely that the curtailment of prefecture government competences over the past couple of years and their transfer to regional administration, together with the ongoing existence of enlarged prefectures described in the previous section, is a step 'backwards', sustaining minority scepticism and mistrust towards the Greek state and the Christian majority political representatives. Despite shortcomings and remaining problems, leaders of the minority acknowledge that a process of integration has been under way since the 1990s. Nearly all Muslim informants agree that their political and civil rights as equal citizens are fully restored, but that this is not the case with their minority rights.

Despite enhanced opportunities for economic and political participation of the minority though, its politics on the basis of ethnic Turkish identity has far from declined, challenging earlier views that had depicted ethnic divisions and differences to fade away with national integration (Deutsch 1953). To be sure, the intransigent nature of Turkish nationalism that characterized the politics of Thrace's minority in the 1980s and early 1990s seems to have lost its élan. At the same time, its claims for cultural and religious community rights appear to increasingly resurface over the past 10 years; the most prominent demand today is recognition of the minority's ethnic Turkish character as reflected in the banning of its associations bearing the word 'Turkish' in their name (described in the next section). This prompts us to inquire into the nature and resilience of Turkish ethnicity, which is not merely a set of joint cultural ties; in fact, the minority under study is internally a culturally diverse community comprising of Turkish, Slav-speaking and Roma sub-groups. Instead, Turkish ethnicity must be understood as a historically constituted, dense and strongly entrenched set of institutions, interests and cultural ties (Cornell 1996) that has come to define and set the parameters of minority politics in Thrace.

The 1993 electoral law change effectively undermined the independent minority ballot, which gave voice to Turkish nationalism, yet there is a basic leadership core that remains closely aligned to the hegemonic political line and ideology of 'motherland' Turkey. The Turkish consulate in Komotini embodies the latter and serves as the physical and political space for this core minority leadership that comes together to form an unofficial body called Advisory Committee of the

minority. Bringing together the mayors of the minority, members of the prefecture councils, religious representatives, presidents of minority associations and parliamentary deputies, the Advisory Committee coordinates and makes decisions about the political orientation to be pursued by the minority. According to estimates of our interviewees, this committee comprises between twenty-nine and thirty-one individuals. Even though difficult to assess, the extent to which the minority aligns behind its decisions and the candidates that it promotes is a good indicator for the degree to which minority politics is defined by Turkish nationalism and 'motherland' Turkey as its centre of gravity. The Advisory Committee (*Simvouleftiki Epitropi*) can be characterized as a core group that enjoys either the open support or at least the tacit acquiescence of a dominant section of the minority.

The basic goal of the Committee, which is a non-elected and unofficial body, is the pursuit of minority rights while it is less interested in and vocal about development issues. It demands official recognition as a Turkish minority, as well as community election of its religious leaders (muftis), which are discussed in the following section. Notable is the nearly universal support for the right to ethnic self-definition among our Muslim informants, which is discussed in the next section. It is as much advanced by leaders close to the Turkish consulate and the politics of 'motherland' Turkey, as it is by others who are critical of and take distances from the latter, and as much among the older as among the younger generations. "With the issue of ethnicity though, that is with the self-definition of the [Turkish] associations, there is a problem. It may be largely symbolic, nonetheless it remains serious… regardless of the political views one has, there is nothing else one can say on this other than that this issue has to end" (R24).

Being a continuation of the independent minority politics of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the politics advanced by the Advisory Committee projects a traditional conception of ethnic community that displays solidarity and has control over its cultural and political affairs, as well as loyalty to the Turkish nation-state. Besides the undeniably strong cultural ties, the persistence of the hegemonic role of the Turkish consulate of Komotini and the Advisory Committee also stem from the multitude of interests and dependencies tying the minority to Turkey. The role of the latter as a protecting power was institutionalized with the Lausanne Treaty and has become thoroughly entrenched through a series of agreements flowing from the latter. Besides a core group of leaders, whose political clout and reputation rely on support by authorities across the border, a large segment among the community has bought property and studies in Turkey, as described earlier in this report.

Even though in the context of changes over the past 15 years, minority members have increasingly joined Greek political parties as candidates in local, prefecture or national elections, they do not have any consistent and stable affiliation with the latter. Their political-ideological differences appear to fade away as they come together in the aforementioned committee on the basis of ethnic Turkish identity. Many among Turkish Muslims perceive a fundamental incompatibility between belonging to a Greek political party and being able to represent the interests of the minority (R27, R29). There is a lingering mistrust that several minority members feel towards Greek political parties, who deny or shy away from acknowledging the right to self-definition as an ethnic Turkish minority.

Nonetheless, while minority alignment with Greek political parties is largely instrumental, tentative and circumstantial rather than lasting (R7), the inclusion and cooperation of Turkish Muslims with them is relatively greater now than in the past. While isolated and low-key, there have been growing intra-communal criticisms of

the Advisory Committee, which are at least partly linked to the closer ties some minority members have developed with political parties through their participation in local-prefecture institutions. There are a number of examples of minority 'disobedience' to its recommendations, i.e. about who to vote in national elections, over the past ten years, which merit closer attention. Over the past ten years, at least two of the minority members who were elected in the Greek parliament on the ballot of national political parties did not have the support of this Committee, which had instead recommended that the minority cast its votes for other candidates that it had designated. One of those former Greek parliamentary representatives has refused to participate in the latter on grounds that it is a non-elected body, while another one has refused to preside over it.

The overwhelming hold that the Advisory Committee and Turkey appear to have over the community and its politics also conceals a growing diversification of views regarding the content and meaning that minority members have tended to attribute to Turkish identity and its political expression. Some individuals, particularly among the younger generation, are critical of the monolithic and homogeneous kind of ethnic community that the Advisory Committee and its politics reflects but also seeks to impose. In reference to the massive community support that Mr. Sadik enjoyed in the 1990s, one of our informants remarked that "unity was also the product of oppression", but "now it is harder to keep the minority united" (R7). Some of the younger minority members are also critical of this Committee in so far as it puts forth inter-state agreements as the overarching frame for addressing minority rights. While the Lausanne Treaty and the inter-state agreements that emanate from it remain the unquestionable frame for minority protection, some consider them overly restrictive. One of our younger informants expressed discontent with those advocating strict adherence to the educational protocols between Greece and Turkey: "this whole mentality upsets me because it implies that after all these years we are still a community totally dependent on Greece and Turkey, and we are not even capable of discussing what is good or bad for our own educational system" (R14).

To be sure, intra-communal criticisms are not an open challenge to the Committee, nor do they form any alternative and coherent minority politics. Nonetheless, such criticisms are significant because they may foreshadow important even if latent social-cultural changes within the Turkish Muslim community. A careful study has attributed the strength of the Committee's leadership core that is connected to the Turkish consulate of Komotini, to the socialization of a whole generation of minority members in institutions of higher education in Turkey (Nikolakopoulos 2002). It would be interesting to see what will happen as a new generation of minority members who since 1998 study in Greek universities, comes of age. Since 1998, and within the frame of a government policy of minority integration, a Greek law established a quota for the entry of minority students in Greek universities and several hundreds of them now study in or have recently graduated from the latter.

While broad community support for its Turkish character appears to reflect continuity with the 'old' ethnic nationalist politics of the past, there are important elements that suggest the potential rise of a 'new' minority politics. In the first place, our interviews revealed an unmistakable and widespread minority quest for integration in Greek society. This can be inferred from the widely expressed view among our Muslim interviewees that the minority's limited incorporation in development projects is in part due to its own shortcomings related to mentality, reluctance to be extrovert and to break away from the narrow community shell, as

well as lack of information and communication. This report suggests that the participation of Muslims in local and prefecture institutions as well as the opportunities to mobilize in regional development projects appear to have nurtured such a realization. Recognition of the need to overcome their own shortcomings and change their mentality is at least in part reflected in the profound concern and interest of the minority in its education, which is considered to be the most important issue. There is an abundance of data showing low levels of education and literacy, as well as high drop out rates of students in Thrace. In Rhodope in particular, about 67% of minority children quit school early, as a consequence of which the literacy rate in the mountainous areas is as high as 40%.[22]

What is 'new' in the emerging kind of minority politics in Thrace is that the assertion of its ethnic Turkish character appears to go hand in hand with the quest for integration in Greek society. While ten years ago the latter would be considered an unacceptable concession to the Greek state's wish to assimilate the Muslim community, today it is increasingly seen as precondition for the effective pursuit of its interests and survival: "if our aim is to attain minority rights, we shall not leave this to those who are unable to express themselves in Greek" (R14). Leaders from the hard core group of Turkish nationalists as much as individuals from the minority's younger cohorts advocate the need to acquire good knowledge of Greek alongside education in Turkish (R14, R16). Learning Greek and achieving a higher level of education is also seen as a means for one's own socio-economic advancement (R30). It is notable that individuals who emphasize integration and are critical of nationalism tend to be those who have managed to advance socio-economically (R7, R23, R14) At the same time, one interviewee from the minority also advocates positive discrimination measures in order to achieve integration: "the problem is not the existence of negative discrimination but the non-implementation of measures of positive discrimination that would accelerate the integration of minority businesses in EU programs" (R22).

As far as the European context is concerned, local minority actors also refer to the importance is the European frame of human rights. Human rights norms are seen to have influenced Greek government policy towards the minority and to have acted as an external constraint against nationalism and discriminatory measures domestically. There is an overwhelming perception among the minority of the EU as an external guarantee for their rights, despite its shortcomings, as well as a guarantee against nationalism and an alternative to the nation-state (R7, R26, R10, R22, R17, R17 among others.) Local minority actors view the EU as an external frame that guarantees their rights, restrains Greek governments and ensures the irreversibility of changes.

By virtue of the fact that it is a multi-cultural sphere, the EU, unlike the nation-state, appears to validate the minority cultural demands and ethnic claims for community self-determination. In both of these respects, the EU provides a way out of the constraints of the nation-state. The minority displays greater trust for the EU than it does for the Greek state but not nearly as much as it does for Turkey. The latter is considered by most of our informants as a more reliable external guarantor when compared to the EU, which has not actively defended its rights as ardently and consistently as Turkey (R24, also R26). Nonetheless, even informants who are highly critical of the EU and perceive its role in protecting minorities as ambivalent and

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[22] See the *Study on employment and job creation prospects in the prefectures of Rhodope-Evros*, Komotini, November 2004, p.17.

pretentious still want to be part of it, because "[they] do not want to be locked in a cage that is the nation-state" (R6).

By virtue of the fact that it is a multi-cultural and multi-national entity, the EU also seems to have made more acceptable cultural and ethnic differences within states, without, however, eliminating national divisions. Not few Christian Greeks among our informants concede that "Christians have realized that the new status quo could not be analyzed in terms of the nation-state any more. We had to become more open-minded and less focused on our small national reality if we wanted to get closer to the Germans, English, etc." (R13, see also R18). At the same time, the demand for Turkish self-definition and recognition is a major source of division between the two communities, strongly opposed by the majority of Christian Greeks who see in it defiance of the status quo and a prelude to the revision of state borders (R20). In general, our Greek Christian informants tend to talk about a Muslim minority, with the rare exception of less than a handful of individuals who acknowledge the minority's right to self-definition as a Turkish minority.

Interestingly, both minority and majority interviewees seem to believe that the EU should assume greater responsibilities in a region like Thrace and develop into an entity beyond an economic union in order not to disillusion people. At the same time, there is considerable scepticism about the EU among the minority and majority alike, which did not exist ten years ago. The minority is critical of what it perceives as EU reluctance to intervene on behalf of minorities in member states, while on the contrary it puts forth their protection as a hard condition in the accession process of Turkey. The minority is strongly in favour of full membership for the latter. Another source of Euro-skepticism emerging among the minority is the decline of agricultural subsidies, which some see as proof of the primarily economic nature of the EU that gives voice to the interests of strong states like the UK. Generally, most interviewees among both groups expressed a sense of disappointment about the EU in the aftermath of the negative votes in the referenda on the constitutional treaty, considering this as a step backwards and a victory of nationalists.

5. Changing cultural and political demands of the minority

Although it may seem paradoxical, our interviews show that minority and majority actors agree as to what are the main minority political and cultural claims. They diverge in their prioritization of these (also minority representatives may have different views about the importance of each issue) and in the solutions that they see as plausible.

The main minority political claims are clearly defined and stated on various occasions by minority representatives, not least in our interviews: the election of the Mufti directly by the minority population; the management of the Vakf (religious) property of their community; and the right to define themselves collectively as a Turkish ethnic minority.[23] The main cultural demand of the minority is further reform and improvement in the minority education system.[24]

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[23] For more information on these issues see Tsitselikis (1999), Paraskevopoulou (2002),.

[24] For more information on the minority education issue see Baltsiotis (1997) and for a critical appraisal of the implementation of the recent reforms see Androusou (2002), Askouni (2002) and Dragonas (2004).

The aforementioned demands have been systematically advanced since the 1980s. What is relevant for the research focus of our study here, is the ways in which minority and majority members perceive their citizenship rights, their ethnic and national identity and their belonging (or not belonging) to Europe. These changes are directly related to the change in the policy of the Greek state towards the minority (see previous sections and Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou 2004 for details) but also to the new European context and the new identity space (Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003) that the European Union offers for minority and majority respondents.

In this section we shall consider the ethnic, national and European identity understandings among the minority and the majority respondents, how these are reflected in the formulation of the political and cultural claims of the minority today and also, more concretely, how new courses of action undertaken by the minority as regards the recognition of its ethnic Turkish character reflect a new dimension of minority political mobilisation beyond the national state framework.

Ethnic, national and European identities and the political demands of the minority

One cannot discuss the political and cultural demands of the minority without taking into account the way in which minority and majority members understand the notion of ethnic and national identity and the way they perceive their rights and obligations as citizens.

A large part of Greek citizens confuses the terms ethnic and national identity.[25] In Greek language the term *ethnikos* is used to refer to both national and ethnic issues as if there cannot be a separate level of identity and action that refers to ethnic matters, but not to national matters. In this work, we propose a working definition of ethnicity:[26] an ethnic group is a population that shares a common consciousness, a belief in common ancestry, links with a historic territory that is defined as their homeland, common customs and traditions and a common language. A nation shares all the above characteristics plus sovereignty over a specific territory and a high degree of political autonomy and/or its own independent state.

Following from these definitions, the ethnic character of the Muslim minority as Turkish is compatible with Greek citizenship. Minority representatives recognise (R10) that the citizenship rights of minority members are now respected and guaranteed. It is their political and collective right to self-determination that is however still a matter of controversy with the Greek state. One minority respondent argues that there should be a collective group denomination such as Turkish Greek (R29).

Greek public opinion is divided on this matter. Minority members appear to agree with this view and argue, as our informants do in the interviews, that their ethnic identity is Turkish but they are citizens of Greece and also citizens of the EU (and accept all the rights and duties that are derived from their citizenship) (R29). Some of the representatives of the Christian majority in Thrace and generally Greek

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[25] See also Kassimati (2004) about the meaning of Greek national identity, its connection with ethnic ancestry, religion and other national features as well as Europe.

[26] We agree with Malesevic (2004: 1-12) that ethnicity is a term and concept difficult to pin down as it is used to describe very different types of groups and often reflects stereotypes that are commonly used in public opinion with regard to distinct notions such as culture, race and nation. In this work, we opt for a working definition of ethnicity that goes along the Anglo-American tradition, using the term ethnic to define a minority group within a larger society of the nation-state (Malesevic 2004: 1).

public opinion are worried that the minority's claim to define itself collectively as Turkish is a national claim, re-opening the question of state borders between Greece and Turkey and allowing for Turkey to interfere in Greek internal affairs. They thus argue that the minority identity is not compatible with Greek citizenship but only with the EU one (R20).

In this context, both the minority and the majority members see the EU action and intervention as beneficial to their political and cultural demands albeit in an indirect way. The minority representatives perceive the EU as a distant and indirect but still important guarantor of their rights. Many of our minority and majority informants state with a high degree of certainty that Greece has changed its policy towards the minority largely because it realized that it could not get away with discriminating against the minority for much longer (R27, R26, R4). They argue that the Greek government probably feared sanctions from the European Court of Human Rights and was no longer willing to be exposed to criticisms by its fellow member states on this issue.

Some of the majority informants also conform with the opinion that conceding full rights to the minority and integrating it into the Greek society and polity was part of Greece's adjusting and integrating to the EU. However, they see this as a redressing of nationalism and a lessening importance of religion in everyday life and in politics. This is what majority informants perceive as the impact of Greece's integration into the EU on the minority politics in their region (R18, R19, R21). They do not see this influence as contrary to Greek nationalism: the latter remains their main or their 'primary' identity.[27] They see it as part of the multicultural reality of Europe and of their region in particular.

Both majority and minority members recognize largely that the EU set a good example to be followed by individual member states as a large entity that respected and preserved cultural diversity and that made the peaceful coexistence of different peoples and cultures possible (R26, R12). Informants argue that it encouraged the preservation of the Greek Turkish minority culture and of minority cultures generally (R23, R15). The EU was thus seen as setting a higher standard that contributed towards Greece's change of minority policy in the early 1990s (R8).

A small group of minority (R14, R6) and majority (R5) representatives view the EU as a new framework for geopolitics and identity that would allow the minority to set free from the Greek Turkish net of relations. They are thus in favour of self-determination not only in symbolic terms (as a Turkish community in Greece) but also in actual, political and policy terms as a community of Turkish Greek citizens that claims its own interests and rights.

Nonetheless, most minority members emphasized that the change of the policy came from the power centre of Athens, it was initiated by the then Prime Minister Mitsotakis' speech in Komotini in 1991, and that overall policy fluctuations had and still have to do with the Greek Turkish relations and the Cyprus question (and its ups and downs) rather than with the process of EU integration or with decisions, directives or conventions issued in Brussels or Strasbourg (R12). Some minority informants (R16, R26) argue that the EU framework for protection of minority rights is less advantageous than the Lausanne treaty.

Indeed, this general conviction (among several minority and majority representatives) that the EU has played an important role in the change of the Greek

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[27] See also Kassimati (2005) about Greek national identity being seen as the 'primary' identity while a sense of belonging to Europe being felt as a 'secondary' identity.

policy towards the minority is little substantiated by concrete examples and events. As one of our interviewees (R24) suggested, if it were not for the EU they would not have dared to mobilise in the early 1990s but at the same time, 'although the [European] framework [for the protection of human rights] is better, we have not seen the EU sending a Commissioner to tell the Greek government that they would have sanctions if they violate human rights.'

The only concrete example of minority mobilisation in the European framework took place last year (in 2005) when the minority, having exhausted all legal means in Greece, has referred to the European Court of Human Rights for the resolution of its controversy with the Prefecture of Ksanthi regarding the naming of the Turkish Union of Ksanthi. The naming of minority associations and in particular of this Union as Turkish has taken a symbolic character, epitomising the minority's claim for recognition of its ethnic (Turkish) rather than religious (Muslim) character. The Turkish Union of Ksanthi and the Prefecture have been involved in a judicial battle for nearly twenty years on this matter. The last judgement of the Supreme Court (*Areios Pagos*) (decision no. 4 of 2005) has confirmed the decision of the Appeals' Court of Ksanthi that banned the Turkish Union of Ksanthi. It did so because its name was, according to the court's decision, confusing to the Union's membership as it referred to another national entity pursuing thus, by its mere naming, the interests of another state into Greece. It was thus damaging the peaceful coexistence between the Muslim and Christian population of Thrace and was raising, following the wording of the decision, a 'non existent issue of a Turkish minority problem' there.[28]

Despite the unhappy (in our view) development of this judicial battle, minority respondents note that the situation in this domain has improved in the past years. Sometimes (especially during pre-election campaigns) Greek politicians refer to the minority as Turkish, with a view to attracting its votes. And minority members can use the word Turkish as a feature of self definition both at the individual and the collective level freely. However, Greek politicians suffer from 'bad memory' as soon as the election is over and go back to referring to the Muslim minority (R1, R28).

Although all respondents state that the two communities can live together peacefully, some perceive their relationship with the majority and with Europe writ large as an antagonistic one. They construct a hierarchy of civilisations or religions (R16) where entities such as 'Muslims', 'Christians', 'Greeks', 'Turks', 'Europeans' are compared and evaluated.

When asked whether they felt European and what it meant for them to be European, our informants invariably considered Europe as a 'modern, advanced, developed society (R2, R8). Europe was contrasted to the reality of the minority in material terms (R8, R28). Greece was contrasted to Europe as regards their values and culture (R2): 'Greeks are not very European, they are a very conservative nation'.

Some minority members emphasised that the EU meant to them security, justice and mutual interdependence among member states (R15). Others emphasised that Europe means 'to have knowledge, to be educated, it means development, respect

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[28] See also the public letter addressed by the minority MP, Ahmet Ilhan, to the Prime Minister of Greece Kostas Karamanlis (dated 21 February 2005). The issue is quite controversial as a previous Supreme Court decision (in year 2000) ruled that the name as such could not constitute a threat for the public order and hence annulled the decision of the Appeals' Court of Xanthi. The Supreme Court ruled that there should be concrete actions endangering the public order and damaging the peaceful coexistence of the two communities. Such a danger could not be inferred from mere conjectures as to the intentions of the members of this Union. However, the new ruling of the Supreme Court states otherwise.

for differences and human rights' (R27), 'Being European means being civilised' (R3). Several minority members explained that they felt Europeans because they adhered to European values and aspirations for material well being (R3, R17, R27). The same happened with majority members who emphasised that Thrace became European only in the last ten to fifteen years when the state policy towards the minority changed (R4).

Majority members emphasised democracy, equality and equal opportunities as well as efficiency in governance as the main features of Europe and the EU (R20). By and large minority and majority representatives shared a similar representation of Europe as an entity that protects cultural diversity, that is democratic and that provides guarantees for people's human rights as well as a certain level of material well being. However, minority members emphasised the role of the EU as provider of security and a guarantor of human rights while majority members attributed more importance to democracy and equality in a general sense. Among minority members some stated that they felt European but others stated that they did not. No majority members denied their European identity.

Citizenship understandings and cultural claims in the national and European context

As regards the informants' understanding of citizenship, minority and majority representatives are in agreement to a large extent. The changing socio-political context since 1991 has played a role here: both sides agree that one can be a Greek citizen but have a different cultural or religious identity. They also agree that Greek citizens should enjoy the same rights and duties, notably what has been referred to in the Greek political discourse as equality before the law and equality of status (*isonomia, isopoliteia*) as also declared in the famous speech of Prime Minister Konstantinos Mitsotakis in Komitini in 1991, which signalled the start of a different policy of the Greek state towards the minority.[29] Thus, both the majority and the minority members condemn the state policy until 1991 which deprived the minority members from fundamental human rights and affected such daily issues as the issuing of a driving license, the possibility to buy property, the possibility to exert a profession or open a shop, the possibility to obtain and renew their identity documents. Not least, the state policy at the time included depriving the minority members who migrated for a longer period, of their citizenship (the infamous application of article 19 of the Greek Constitution) leaving them often stateless. In sum, the two sides agree both on the negative liberties that the minority should enjoy just like the majority, i.e. not to be limited in its normal socio-economic activities. Minority and majority respondents agree on the positive liberties that the minority should enjoy, notably its right (enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923) to a minority education. However, the two sides disagree as to what exactly is the scope and means through which this education should operate.

Although minority education matters were settled in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the actual functioning of the minority schools and the quality of education that they provide was and still is politicised. Until the late 1990s, minority education was largely neglected by the Greek state. The state, bound by the Treaty of Lausanne, did not and still does not dare to change for instance the number of minority schools with

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[29] For more detailed presentation of the issue, see Paraskevopoulou (2002) and Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou (2005).

a view to rationalizing the resources and improving the quality of learning because any reduction in school numbers even if done with a view to improving the quality of the educational process would be seen by the minority members as undermining the Lausanne treaty provisions and generally the rights of the minority. The state failed until recently to provide for good quality infrastructure (school buildings), learning materials (obsolete) and higher education training for the minority school teachers.[30] While majority informants believe the education issue (which all local actors recognize as of paramount importance for the development of the region) is solved, minority representatives think otherwise. They recognize that infrastructure has largely improved and so have learning materials but criticize the overall structure of the minority education curriculum and the system for training minority teachers. They ask for full bilingualism in education (R8) so that minority members preserve their ethnic culture and at the same time (by learning fluent Greek) are better integrated in the local and national society and labour market. The importance of speaking and writing Greek fluently is emphasised by several minority informants as part of the minority citizens' obligation towards the Greek state and also as a practical issue that would contribute significantly to their chances of employment and economic advancement (R30). They also ask for University level courses for the training of minority teachers.

Overall, minority education is less controversial an issue than the political demands of the minority. Although its reform has been an important step for improving the minority's integration and progress in Greek society, more courageous steps need to be taken. Such steps would involve a change in the view of the overall Greek education system, recognizing that it needs to be less centred on a single national culture and language and introducing the need for mutual (i.e. also of native ethnic Greek children) learning of cultures and ethnic traditions of the people who live in Greece including not only the Muslim minority's culture in Thrace but also the cultures of large immigrant groups now residing in Greece.

As regards education, it cannot be said, in our view that EU integration has mattered much in the changes introduced. Such changes were more a result of the Greek Turkish rapprochement in the late 1990s and in some probably personal beliefs of the then Minister of Education George Papandreou. Such changes were supported by University professors who headed the special education programme (Anna Frangoudaki, professor at the Aristotle University of Thessalonike) including the training of minority school teachers (both Greeks and Turks/Muslims) and also by a large part of the local society. CSF funds may have mattered in the minority views as regards their education needs in an indirect way: minority members have realised in an ever more pressing and frustrating manner that the low educational level of the minority prevents it from taking advantage of the new context of economic opportunities. Some informants put it bluntly: how can the minority benefit from the funding schemes if they are unable to read Greek, to speak Greek or to fill in an application form (R30, R28 among others).

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[30] Most minority schools are located in remote villages and the numbers of their pupils have been declining. There is wide diversity in terms of the composition of the minority schools (student/teacher ratio). Textbooks for the Turkish language courses were until recently obsolete and those for the Greek language courses were inappropriate, since they were the standard textbooks prepared for pupils whose first languae is Greek. The minority education reform has been met with mixed feelings by minority members because it is geared mainly towards improving the learning of Greek language by minority pupils. It is thus perceived as undermining their ethnic and cultural consciousness. For more discussion on this see Dragonas (2004) Paraskevopoulou (2002), Androusou (2002) and Askouni (2002).

6. Concluding remarks

To recapitulate, in this report, we presented a background of the historical and political conditions that have shaped the position of the Turkish Muslim minority of Thrace. We also provided an overview of Greek administrative-territorial structures and regional policies and the ways in which these were geared towards strengthening the nation-state, empowering the Greek Christian majority and marginalizing the Turkish Muslim minority in the border region of Thrace. In section two of this report, we argued that through structural funds and human rights norms, EU integration set a new context for, and prompted significant domestic reforms in regional development, subnational institutions and minority rights in the 1990s. The EU did not mandate specific changes in subnational structures or minority policy but it established a frame in reference to which domestic elites and national governments appealed in pursuing domestic reforms in these domains. These reforms integrated Muslims in prefecture-local government institutions and abolished discriminatory measures, restoring their rights as equal citizens.

In sections four and five, we analyzed the effects of the abovementioned reforms for the minority, as well as their consequences for ethnic politics and their relations with the Greek Christian majority. In particular, we have sought to assess if and in what ways EU development funds and the overall EU integration process have affected the patterns of social, economic and political mobilisation of the minority and its relations with the majority, including its understanding of its ethnic, national and European identity and of its national and EU citizenship.

In the first place, our findings suggest that minority and majority partly shift their interests in the direction of pursuing regional integration and inter-communal cooperation. There is a higher degree of regional socio-economic integration today (as opposed to fifteen years ago), which is supported by both minority and majority actors. At the same time, despite greater cooperation between Christians and Muslims in prefecture and local government institutions and political parties, as well as widespread support among both groups for greater decentralization, there are no joint political initiatives on a regional-local basis. Neither though are there any territorial or self-government demands on the part of the minority, as its small size does not render such demands viable. The most important claim of the minority is that for cultural autonomy and self-definition, as these are expressed in the demand for community selection of the religious leader (Mufti) and the right to identify itself as a 'Turkish minority'.

While more extensive now than in the past, minority integration in Greek political parties remains tentative and circumstantial. Neither does there seem to be a significant degree of inter-communal cooperation in economic activities except for the odd exceptions (notably the few successful and prosperous minority entrepreneurs or some young individuals from the minority that ask for the services of young majority individuals in setting up their business or accessing a funding scheme). In sum, the regional economic and institutional changes taking place within the EU frame in Thrace, have promoted some inter-communal cooperation, which, however, is constrained by ongoing political separation along ethnic-national lines.

Overall, ethnic identification matters less than it used to as regards economic activities, however, past divisions and discrimination, although much attenuated now, often persist. They may persist less in the form of institutional discrimination but they

do in the form of attitudes and implicit favouring of majority members at the expense of minority ones. There is however a new vision and identity asserting itself among the younger generation of the minority which looks at what minority members can do for themselves rather than what the Greek state cannot or does not want to do for them. This attitude should be interpreted as an attitude in favour of regional integration, breaking away from nationalism and moving closer to a sense of multicultural Thrace and multicultural Europe that bypasses (even if it does not subvert) the monocultural and mononational understanding of Greek and Turkish nationalism.

Turkish and Greek nationalism remains salient among minority and majority leaders and social-political actors, yet, it has become significantly moderated over the past 15 years. Exclusive conceptions of national-ethnic identity and solidarity are not as pervasive but are subject to alternative and diverse understandings, as well as more subject to intra-communal challenge among both minority and majority. A number of individuals, particularly among the younger generation of the minority, are critical of Turkish nationalism in so far as its politics involve and depend upon the patronage of Turkey. At the same time, they support the right to self-determination as an ethnic Turkish minority. As one of our younger informants stated: "Now it is harder to keep the minority united… The political change had many major outcomes… in general positive… but it has been a difficult birth. Since the beginning of 1990s politics has moved from nationalism and conflict to a general pursuit of something new" (R7). In a parallel fashion, despite opposition to the demand for minority recognition as ethnic Turkish, nationalism among Greek Christians also seems to have lost some of its exclusive quality and political rigour of the previous decade.

By virtue of the fact that it is a multi-cultural and multi-national entity, EU integration appears to indirectly encourage a distinct ethnic Turkish identity. It also does so as it promotes norms of human rights and minority protection. It is notable that claims to cultural autonomy as reflected in the religious demands and ethnic self-definition claims enjoy widespread support among the minority. They are not merely endorsed by those segments close to the Turkish consulate but also among others who are indifferent or even opposed to the later. At the same time, our findings suggest an equally strong minority quest for integration in Greek society, which was absent fifteen years ago at the height to ethnic politicization. Regional development processes, as shown in section four, have most likely contributed to imbuing the belief in the need to pursue minority interests from within Greek educational institutions and political structures. One could conjecture that this qualitative change in minority politics reflects a declining concern with or fear of assimilation, which was made possible multi-national context defined by the EU.

At the same time, the adamant opposition of Greek majority and state authorities to recognize the associations bearing the word 'Turkish' in their name and to respond to demands for community selection of the Mufti is a factor that sustains minority mistrust. The insistence of Greek authorities and political parties in viewing such demands as instigated by Turkey, instead of recognizing and strength and firmly institutionalized nature of ethnic Turkish identity in Thrace, as well as their inability to understand the variable and diverse meaning that such demands have for individuals, could lead to further polarization.

While minority members continue to refer to the Lausanne Treaty as the main framework guaranteeing their rights, they also acknowledge the impact of the EU integration process and of the overall framework of human rights protection in Europe as guarantors of their rights and of their minority status in Greece. Many of them use

the European framework to criticise Greece for being 'non-European' and 'parochial' or 'closed'. At the same time hardly any minority member (including its very political and religious elites) identified with Europe. They rather identify their geopolitical and cultural position as 'peripheral' to Europe. They point to the fact that their everyday lives have little to do with 'European' ways of life, perceived as modern and affluent. Their non-feeling European is related to cultural issues but also and perhaps mainly to socio-economic aspects: Thrace and the minority population are too poor to be part of Europe.

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Appendix: List of interviewees

Respondent 1 Community leader – minority Lawyer Male 8 December 2005, Komotini
Respondent 2 Community leader – minority Young Professionals Association, Women's Section Female 8 December 2005, Komotini
Respondent 3 Political representative – minority President of commune Male 27 August 2005, Ksanthi
Respondent 4 Development/private sector – majority Business Male 23 August 2005, Komotini
Respondent 5 Political representative – majority Municipal Council of Komotini Male 1 July 2005, Komotini
Respondent 6 Civil society/media – minority Journalist Male 24 August 2005, Komotini
Respondent 7 Media/civil society – minority Journalist Female 24 August 2005, Komotini
Respondent 8 Political representative – minority President of commune Male

29 August 2005 – Komotini
Respondent 9 Business/private sector – minority Male 24 August 2005 – Komotini
Respondent 10 Community leader – minority Male 5 December 2005 – Komotini
Respondent 11 Political representative – minority Member of prefecture council Male 26 August 2005 – Ksanthi
Respondent 12 Political representative – minority Member of prefecture council Male 25 August 2005 – Komotini
Respondent 13 Political representative – majority Mayor of municipality Male 31 August 2005 – Komotini
Respondent 14 Community leader – minority Lawyer Male 7 December 2005, Komotini
Respondent 15 Community leader - minority Male 25 August 2005, Komotini
Respondent 16 Community leader – minority Male 5 December 2005, Komotini
Respondent 17 Civil society/media – minority Journalist Male 1 September 2005 – Komotini
Respondent 18 Political representative – majority Mayor of municipality Male 26 August 2005 – Iasmos
Respondent 19 Development/Public sector – majority

Male 30 August 2005 – Komotini
Respondent 20 Development/public sector – majority Administrative Region of East Macedonia and Thrace Male 1 September 2005, Komotini
Respondent 21 Political representative – majority Mayor of municipality Male 1 September 2005, Egiros/Rhodope
Respondent 22 Political representative – minority Municipal Council, Member Male 30 August 2005, Komotini
Respondent 23 Project beneficiary – minority Business, private sector Male 27 August 2005, Ksanthi
Respondent 24 Community leader – minority Male 25 August 2005, Komotini
Respondent 25 Political representative – minority Mayor Male 28 August 2005, Ksanthi
Respondent 26 Community leader – minority Male 24 August 2005, Komotini
Respondent 27 Community leader – minority Male 27 August 2005, Ksanthi
Respondent 28 Community leader – minority Female 8 December 2005, Komotini
Respondent 29 Project beneficiary – minority Male 8 December 2005, Komotini
Respondent 30 Project beneficiary – minority Female

6 December 2005, Komotini
Respondent 31 Development/private sector – majority Business Male 29 June 2005, Komotini
Respondent 32 Political representative – majority Mayor Male 27 August 2005, Ksanthi
Respondent 33 Political representative – minority Prefecture Council, Member Male 27 August 2005, Ksanthi
Respondent 34 Civil society/media – minority President of minority association Male 25 August 2005
Respondent 35 Political representative – minority MP Male 29 August 2005, Komotini