

**Regions, minorities and European policies: A state of the art report  
on the Turkish Muslims of Western Thrace (Greece)**

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## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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, Xsanthi, 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. The Lausanne Treaty specified an explicit condition of bilateral reciprocity (*amiveotita*) according to which the two states assumed a mutual obligation to institute the requisite measures to safeguard minority rights (Ladas 1932).

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, without joint bonds of political solidarity. Since the 1950s, however, they have transformed into a minority with ethnic consciousness, and in the past twenty years they have mobilized to claim 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 through the present. Acknowledging the resonance of ethnic Turkish 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 against Muslims adopted by the Greek governments. The tensions that erupted between Muslims and Christians in the region in early 1990 marked a nadir but also a turning point set in by the restoration of minority rights and marked by an overall and progressive improvement in relations with the state that continues until the present (Yagcioglu 2004: chapters 12 and 13). This turning point in the early 1990s coincided with the intensification of Greece's process of EU

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

integration stimulated by poor economic performance and the adoption of stabilization measures under EU supervision. At the same time, concern with the fact that the gap between the Greek and the EC economy was growing instead of narrowing<sup>2</sup> led the to transfer increasing amounts of structural funds to Greece. 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).

In the frame of the CSF, increased 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). Out of the nearly 1 billion euro of total public expenditure for the RDP of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace for 2000-2006, only 25% of it came from national funds, while 75% came from the EU structural funds.<sup>3</sup> The significance of the CSF for Greece and for Thrace, both in size but also political importance, has been fundamental; it is questionable whether in the absence of the CSF, regional development policy would have been viable at all in the 1990s (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 42).

Linked to growing dependence on structural funds were a series of reforms of subnational institutions undertaken by Greek governments from the second half of the 1980s onwards. Even though the extent and nature of EU influence in this regard is a matter of controversy in Greek studies as will be discussed later in this report, there is little doubt that the country's regional and local government structures in the early 1990s were thoroughly unsuitable to implementing structural funds (Marks 1997: 163). Considered among the most centralized in Europe, Greece's territorial and administrative structures are divided into fifty-two prefectures, the origins of which coincide with those of the modern Greek state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as into thirteen administrative regions established for the first time in 1988. 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). Since the late 1980s, however, a series of reforms have taken place in this direction, which have unsurprisingly been strongly contested in the ethnically mixed region of Thrace.

This report aims to describe the case of the Muslims of Thrace and present the relevant literature, with particular emphasis to the works and topics that are related to the main themes of the EUROREG project, such as EU structural funds and domestic regional reform and politics, the European regime on human rights, and ethnic identity change. Besides situating the case of the Turkish Muslims in the regional economic and political context of Thrace, the purpose of this report is to draw a series of propositions to guide the empirical questions and research to be undertaken in the second phase of the EUROREG project. The first part describes the historical conditions, cultural-economic policies and regional-territorial structures defining

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<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/country/overmap/gr/gr_en.htm)

relations between the Turkish Muslim minority with the Greek state (part 2). The second part presents and discusses the existing literature pertaining to this case (part 3). The last section of this report formulates a series of propositions for empirical research.

## 2 The case of Western Thrace in Greece



### 2.1 The Greek State and the Muslims of Thrace: the historical context

In southeast Europe, the presence of minorities is linked to a historical context of antagonistic nationalizing states seeking to achieve homogeneity through aggrandizement and unification with ethnically kindred frontier groups. In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, relations between the Muslims of Thrace and the Greek state developed in such a context, defined by a triadic pattern of conflict between a host state, an internal minority and an external homeland (Brubaker 1996). During the inter-war period, the nationalist ideas of Kemalist Turkey began to diffuse among the Muslims of Thrace, who until then predominantly made up a religious community.

Similarly to other parts of the Balkans, Thrace became the “theatre of conflict” between traditional Muslim religious leaders (*paleomousoulmanoi*) who resisted secular ideas propagated by adherents of Kemalism (*neotourkoi*). Vying for a share of social and political authority, the two competed in aspiring to shape the social-cultural identity and consciousness of Muslims (Divani 1995: 185-188).<sup>4</sup>

In the post-World War II period, Greek state policy towards the minority and the application of the Lausanne Treaty provisions fluctuated in response to the ebbs and flows of Greek-Turkish relations (Rozakis 1996: 105). The Treaty defined Greece and Turkey as custodians of the Greeks of Istanbul and the Muslims of Thrace, respectively, on the principle of bilateral reciprocity. In this way, it established a basis for each state to monitor and intervene in the affairs of its kindred minority across the border, subsuming minority affairs under Greek-Turkish relations (Rozakis 1996: 105). In 1951-52, the official designation of Thrace’s minority briefly shifted from ‘Muslim’ to ‘Turkish’, arguably as a goodwill gesture to Turkey during a brief period of rapprochement as the two countries had both joined NATO. Minority schools and other associations were denominated as ‘Turkish’ and the teaching of Turkish language was also made mandatory for Pomaks, contributing in the long run to their linguistic and cultural homogenization.<sup>5</sup> As a result of their education in bilingual Greek-Turkish schools together with ethnic Turks, Pomaks also speak Turkish and have developed extensive affinities with ethnic Turks. The official term shifted back to ‘Muslim’ as the relations between the two countries deteriorated in the 1960s, particularly following the 1967 installation of the military regime in Greece.

The persecution of the Greek minority in Istanbul in the 1950s and the Cyprus conflict in the 1960s led to a serious deterioration in inter-state relations and had detrimental repercussions for the minority in Thrace. Thoroughly misconstruing the principle of reciprocity, Greek authorities sought retribution by disenfranchising the latter. Depicting it as a “fifth column” of Turkey, a danger to national unity and territorial integrity that had to be assimilated or defended against, also served a powerful nationalizing function domestically. Characteristic of a broader pattern of national politics, the aim was the demobilization and marginalization of particular groups – besides the minority, of communists and non-Greeks - who were deemed untrustworthy in a society divided by the legacy of the civil war of the 1940s and the polarized international climate of the Cold War (Verney 1994: 168).

Greek governments and the military junta of 1967-74 in particular instituted a series of informal but widespread restrictive measures (*katastaltika metra*) against the minority, including arbitrary deprivation of Greek citizenship. The Council of Europe’s readmission of Greece in 1975 and the process of seeking membership in the EC did not bring any attention to the rights of the minority that were further curtailed in contrast to the restoration of civil rights to Greek citizens in general following the 1974 democratic transition. The next section describes the government policies and practices. On the one hand, a system of cultural and religious rights that

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the two orientations, see Lena Divani (1995), pp.184-192. When the Lausanne Treaty was signed, Islamic religion thoroughly defined the social and cultural character of the Muslim communities in Thrace. Kemal Attaturk’s reforms in the newly established Republic of Turkey in the 1920s removed religion from the affairs of public life and began to appeal to Thrace’s Muslims as a progressive and influential ideology.

<sup>5</sup> It is argued that the decision to make mandatory the teaching of Turkish language to Pomaks was motivated by the concern to distance the latter from the neighbouring, linguistically proximate, and communist Bulgaria, at the height of the Cold War. See “The Pomaks”, *Greek Monitor of Human & Minority Rights* 1/3, December 1995, p.19.

had been established in reference to the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty remained in place. At the same time, the adoption of discriminatory measures from the late 1960s onwards implicitly assigned to the minority of Thrace a status of partial citizenship with a separate and restricted set of rights. Over the next two decades, it led to diffused grievances and the nearly complete ghettoization and disengagement of the minority from the Greek society and the political system.

## **2.2 Greek government policy in the post-1974 period: cultural rights and discriminatory practices**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Greek government policy pertaining to the preservation of cultural identity of Muslims was formulated in reference to the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and in the context of the principle of bilateral reciprocity between Greece and Turkey. With regard to the designated ‘Muslim minority’ of Thrace, articles 37-44 of the Treaty proscribe discrimination on the basis of religion, language, ethnic origin, etc., and recognize the right to education, free exercise of religion, use of language, movement and immigration, civil and political liberties, equality before the law, etc. Furthermore, articles 40-42 guarantee the right of the minority to maintain its educational and religious institutions, as well as require positive action on the part of governments to make the necessary provisions to this end.

The provision of cultural rights in the post-1974 period continued to be defined in reference to articles 40-42 of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty. The Greek government maintained 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). They are of strictly local character (that is, only Muslims who permanently reside in the region can appeal to them) and their jurisdiction is voluntary rather than mandatory.<sup>6</sup>

In fulfilment of the Lausanne Treaty provisions, the Greek authorities had also established in the 1950s a bilingual (Greek-Turkish) education system at the primary level and partially at the secondary level. On the basis of the reciprocity clause, Greece and Turkey had signed two bilateral agreements in 1951 (*morfofotiki simfonia*) and 1968 (*morfofotiko protokolo*) concerning educational policy vis-a-vis the minorities, regulating issues such as the exchange of instructors, teaching material, and other matters (Baltsiotis 1997: 321-2). Signed in a brief period of detente between the two countries, the 1951 agreement was a turning point paving the way for Turkish-speaking education in Western Thrace. Minority education includes a system of about 234 schools (*mionotika scholia*) at the primary level, in which about 11,000 students are enrolled, two schools at the secondary level and two religious schools (*medresse* or *ierospoudastiria*) functioning as five-year schools at the secondary level (Kanakidou 1994: 73-74).

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<sup>6</sup> 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.



Despite the generous educational and religious provisions, post-1974 Greek governments sought to restrict the socioeconomic rights of the minority, treating it in the aftermath of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus as a “fifth column” of Turkey. They did so through unofficial but widespread administrative practices that systematically prevented most 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). Being dictated by the logic of combating the Turkish threat in the region, minority issues from the 1960s onwards came explicitly under the scrutiny and supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter established the euphemistically called Office of Cultural Affairs (*Grafeio Ekpolitistikon Ypotheseon*) in the prefectures of Ksanthi, Rhodope and Kavala that 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 continued to monitor and circumscribe all economic transactions involving Muslims, with the support of Greek local authorities, employers, banks, enterprises and interest groups dominated by Greek nationalists.

The informal status of second-class citizenship implicitly assigned to the minority in Thrace found its formal expression in Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code (Law 3370/1955) that gave state authorities the discretion to rescind Greek citizenship from non-ethnic Greeks who left the country with no intention of returning. While targeting communists during the Civil War years, the removal of Greek nationality on the basis of this provision was overwhelmingly employed from the 1960s onwards vis-à-vis the Turkish Muslims of Thrace, possibly as a means of balancing out the demographic decline of the Greek population in Istanbul. Out of the 60,000 individuals estimated to have lost their citizenship between 1955-1998, about 50,000 were Muslims from Thrace (Kostopoulos 2003: 59-60). In attributing “intent of not returning” to Greece, state authorities had a virtually unlimited discretion to deduce it in each case. They often did so in an arbitrary manner without sufficient justification and without consulting the interested individuals or families, who would often find out that they were no longer Greek citizens upon their entry to Greece. With the transition to democracy, Greek authorities restored citizenship to over 1,000 individuals, who had been deprived of it during the dictatorship years, however, the application of Article 19 continued unabatedly, indeed, it peaked after 1974 (Kostopoulos 2003: 65).

The widespread discriminatory measures against the minority resulted in its social and economic marginalization in the region, in large-scale emigration outside it and abroad, as well as its complete alienation from Greek political parties and institutions. In such a context of thorough socioeconomic exclusion, the autonomous system of educational and religious rights in practice only served to heighten the community’s isolation from the local and national society. With a curriculum heavily influenced by Muslim religion, with equal hours of instruction in Greek and Turkish, minority schools, marred in infrastructural, pedagogical and other shortcomings, have been only marginally associated with Greece’s educational system. Until the mid-1990s, when the Greek Ministry of Education instituted a quota for the entrance of minority students in Greek institutions of higher education, most continued their education in Turkish universities, of which the vast majority of the educated members of the minority are graduates (Aarbakke 1996).

### 2.3 The politicisation of Turkish ethnicity and the liberalisation of Greek policy towards the minority

The socioeconomic marginalization and cultural isolation of the minority went hand in hand with its progressive alienation from Greek political parties and its withdrawal from all channels of political representation at the local and national level. A “national” consensus across the country’s political spectrum deemed discrimination against Turkish Muslims imperative and prevented the representatives elected from the ballot of Greece’s main political parties to represent and redress the problems of the minority in the national and local government. The minority elected two deputies from the ballot of the two major political parties of New Democracy (ND) and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK).<sup>7</sup> With their participation being purely of a token nature, equally unable to redress the problems of the Muslim community that elected them, except for securing limited favours on an individual basis, minority deputies had little reason to sustain any ties of loyalty to Greek parties (Dodos 1994: 34-35).

Excluded from channels of economic participation and political representation in Greece, the minority invested its savings 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. It provided support through advocacy and economic assistance, as well as resources for various initiatives and purposes through a local and semi-organized network of relations in Thrace. This network has operated through the Turkish consulate in Komotini, which has widespread activity and direct contacts with the minority’s leaders (mayors of communes, members of the Prefecture Council, members of organizations such as the Union of Turkish Teachers and the Association of Minority Professionals). With time, the ghettoization of the minority in Thrace and the strengthening of its ties and dependencies across the border enhanced Turkey’s influence as a custodian power and gave vantage and clout to the minority’s most nationalist segments. As they crystallized its separate position, they transformed it 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).

With changing political conditions in neighbouring Turkey and domestically in Greece in the 1980s, a new alternative for the minority to mobilize and represent itself began to emerge. It gained momentum around a powerful demand for self-determination as a ‘Turkish minority’ that sought to capitalize upon the growing activism of European institutions around human rights. For the first time, the minority began to cast its vote not on the basis of individual favours promised by candidates in the two main political parties, but by asserting a distinct ethnic Turkish consciousness. Such mobilisation was galvanised by a Supreme Court (*Areios Pagos*) decision in 1984 that ordered signs of local associations designating them as ‘Turkish’ to be taken down (Stavros 1996: 119). It upheld the decision of lower courts to disband the Union of the Turkish Youth of Komotini on the grounds that the use of the word ‘Turkish’ in the organization’s name created the impression of foreign nationals operating on Greek soil. A year later, the movement for self-determination found expression in an

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<sup>7</sup> Left wing parties like the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) have not traditionally enjoyed the support of Muslims. This changed since the 1990s, when there was large minority support for the Coalition of the Left and Progress, the European-oriented leftist party.

initiative that slated independent minority candidates for the first time for the 1985 elections, denouncing discrimination and rallying the support of the young and educated Turkish Muslims, as well as the rural segments of the community.

The ballot of the independent minority candidates managed to politically consolidate a diverse population of Muslims, Slav-speaking Pomaks, ethnic Turks and Roma, under the banner of ethnic Turkish nationalism. Having the political support and backing of 'motherland' Turkey, they provoked tremendous opposition from the Greek authorities and the public, which viewed it as a flagrant challenge to national unity and a prelude to autonomy demands in the region. The movement gained mass support in 1989-90, when an electoral alliance was formed under the leadership of the late Ahmet Sadik and succeeded in electing two deputies to the Greek Parliament. In January 1990, following Sadik's penal persecution by the Greek courts for referring to the minority as 'Turkish' during his electoral campaign, escalating inter-communal tensions erupted into protests and incidents of vandalism in Komotini that alarmed the national government (Giannopoulos and Psaras 1990).

The politicisation of the minority and the eruption of inter-communal tensions in Thrace alarmed Greek political leaders who urgently met behind closed doors to cope with the crisis in January 1990. In a text produced by the political leaders of the three largest parties in that meeting, they recognised the need to abolish the restrictive measures (text appended in Giannopoulos and Psaras 1990: 21). A year later, in May 1991, Prime Minister (PM) Konstantinos Mitsotakis visited Thrace and declared an end to discrimination and a new approach towards the minority based on "legal equality - equal citizenship" (*isonomia-isopolitia*) (Tsouderou 1995: 47-8). At the same time, a change in electoral law essentially targeting the independent minority candidates, set a minimum 3% threshold for a political party to enter parliament and effectively precluded their re-election to parliament (the minority's size is too small to reach the 3% threshold). In the subsequent 1993 elections, the minority vote was split between "protest" or "useless" and "useful," signalling the onset of dwindling support for separatist politics. Nonetheless, the abolition of the restrictive measures and the proclamation of 'legal equality - equal citizenship' set in a process of liberalisation of the government's policy towards the minority of Thrace that culminated with the abolition of Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code in 1998 (Anagnostou 2005).

The gradual process of liberalisation of minority rights from the early 1990s onwards was possibly closely connected to the growing activism of European institutions around human rights and minority protection. During this period, Greek governments became particularly sensitive about Greece's relations with and performance in the EU. The advent of Kostas Simitis in 1996 as the leader of the governing Socialist party PASOK signalled the ascent of the Europeanised segment of the party that set Greece's convergence with the EU as the overarching priority. Already from the late 1980s onwards, Greece's treatment of the Turkish-speaking Muslims of Thrace became a target of growing criticisms in the CoE, with charges often brought at the initiative of Turkish delegates (*Eleftherotypia*, April 24, 1991). NGOs, minority leaders and organisations such as the Federation of the Turks of Thrace, established by those who had immigrated to Germany, systematically brought their grievances in front of European fora, particularly in Strasbourg (Hersant 2000: 37-40). European institutions such as the CoE drafted reports about the situation of the Muslims of Thrace and had expressed concern about Article 19 (see also ECRI 2004). While she has yet to sign the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, in 1998 Greece signed the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCPNM), with ratification still pending.

In the course of the 1990s, the politicisation of the minority in Thrace has undergone important changes, defined most notably by the decline of the independent candidates, undoubtedly linked to the aforementioned 1991 electoral law change. Such a change, however, cannot merely be seen as a consequence of the electoral constraints, which did not elicit any large-scale reaction as perhaps might have been expected. By the second half of the 1990s, the intransigent style of former MPs Mr. Sadik and Mr. Faikoglou and their declarations of solidarity and identification with the ‘motherland’ (*mitera-patrída*) no longer constituted a predominant or indisputable basis of minority politics. The minority began to cast its vote for Greek political parties, particularly for the Socialist PASOK and partly the leftist SYN (Coalition for the Left and the Progress), in contrast to the immediate post-1974 period when it overwhelmingly tended to vote for conservative right wing parties (Stoyanova 2001). A new generation of Members of Parliament from the minority has adopted a conciliatory and pragmatic approach committed to working within the Greek institutions. The battle between the Greek state’s insistence on a ‘Muslim minority’ and the community’s self-determination as a ‘Turkish minority’ is ongoing. Yet, there has been a notable shift to issues of education and socioeconomic development, which the minority considers to be its most important problems.

#### **2.4 The regional economy: the problem of development and the socioeconomic conditions of Muslims**

The administrative region of East Macedonia and Thrace, where Thrace belongs, is predominantly agricultural with 40% of the active labour force in 1997 (this percentage is possibly higher if one looks at Thrace proper) employed in agriculture (when the average for Greece as a whole is 19.9%; see Ioannides and Petrakos 2000: 36). The agricultural character of the region is unevenly spread between the two prefectures predominantly inhabited by the minority. The prefecture of Ksanthi, primarily populated by Pomaks, has a significant industrial and manufacturing sector with development and infrastructure indicators around the national average, while the predominantly ethnic Turkish and agricultural prefecture of Rhodope ranks near the bottom of national scale (*Dierevnisi Kritirion Technikis Ypodomis* 1987). Besides, its less developed and agricultural character, Thrace has an overall low level of education with a high percentage of its inhabitants having only primary level education (73% in 1991; see *I Anaptixi tis Thrakis* 1995: 15), which is possibly even higher among the minority.

Muslims live in segregated settlements in the region’s towns and villages (Dragonas 2004: 3), and they are also concentrated in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas within Thrace. The two prefectures under study are characterized 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 which is an intermediate belt with mixed population.<sup>8</sup> In systematically denying to them basic rights such as acquisition of property or expansion of economic activity, state policy in Thrace put an absolute blockade to the

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<sup>8</sup> 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 anomioenia tou plithismou, ena chronio provlima,” *Prosegisi*, December 1995, pp.68-83. See also *I Anaptixi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis*, p.48.

development of Muslim-inhabited areas. It sustained the region's dependence on agriculture and distorted its economy as a whole, rendering it underdeveloped. The land Muslims own is predominantly in the northeast zones of the region, which are mountainous and arid. The majority of Muslims work in agriculture and have a long tradition in the growing of labour-intensive eastern varieties of tobacco, until recently making up over 90 per cent of the region's tobacco producers (*I Anaptiksi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis*, p.238).

It becomes obvious from the above that Muslims live in conditions of greater geographical, social and economic isolation in Thrace, which prior to the 1990s stimulated emigration for economic purposes to Turkey but also Germany, as well as internally to the urban centres of Athens and Thessaloniki. In Thrace, Muslims are active in "their own" segregated section of the local market occupied by minority suppliers (tradesmen, producers, etc.) and customers, and largely operating within the confines of the ethnic community (*I Anaptixi tis Thrakis* 1995: 18; 49). Reinforcing their socioeconomic segregation along ethnic lines has also been the fact that they have tended to export most of their savings abroad (especially to Turkey), as until the early 1990s restrictive measures prevented them from investing them in the region. This, however, appears to have been changing since then, with the abolition of those measures in 1991 (50).

The past two decades have seen the large-scale entry of minority women in the region's labour market, primarily as workers in the region's textiles and tobacco processing factories. In general, women's entry in Thrace's labour market accounts for the increase in the size of the economically active population despite the overall demographic decline the region's has witnessed over the past twenty years (*I Anaptixi tis Thrakis* 1995: 16). It is possible that in the case of the minority, women's undertaking of paid employment has been one way for families to deal with reduced income from agriculture, to which Muslims extensively depend, as levels of agricultural subsidies provided by the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have been declining.

Thrace underdevelopment as a whole and the significant intra-regional disparities between Christians and Muslims, have been a consequence of Greek regional policy in the post-World War II period that in this case became specifically jaundiced due to the presence of the minority. Prior to the 1990s, resource transfer and distribution in Thrace took place in a top-down manner with explicit foreign policy considerations related to the presence of the Muslim population. Lacking explicit development priorities, regional policy was for the most part based on arbitrary government decisions, permeated by party interests that distributed rights and benefits through clientelistic networks to those deemed politically loyal (Verney & Papageorgiou 1992: 111). An overarching ideological imperative of national unity pervaded and served to justify the reproduction of highly centralized state structures and distribution of resources. In Thrace, depriving Muslims of rights and resources and exclusively privileging Christians were deemed imperative in order to defend the region and country against the Turkish "threat."

On the whole, Thrace became a target of generous subsidies granted in the name of national and security interests, yet levels of public investment and central transfers to the region fluctuated in response to political party interests, as well as Greek-Turkish relations. In the 1980s, when EC structural funds promoted some redistribution and regional disparities relatively declined in comparison to the 1970s,

Thrace was not affected.<sup>9</sup> Policies and decisions vis-a-vis the region materialized through alliances between the central government, economic interests and political constituencies in Thrace linked to the local and prefecture administration and backed by nationalist organizations. Local Christians and investors with political leverage received the bulk of resources and state grants on the basis of their nationalist credentials and morale (*ethnikofrones*) and with little, if any, consideration of or correspondence to development needs and criteria.

Generous subsidies attracted investments in industry and manufacturing, which, however, tended to concentrate around the central towns of Ksanthi and Komotini and in the southern Christian-populated zones as opposed to the rural Muslim-populated areas to the north that stagnated. A study of the Commercial Bank of Greece in the mid-1980s on Thrace acknowledged that “constraints of a strategic character have had inhibiting effects on the region’s development with restrictions on infrastructure improvements, as well as controls on the creation of industrial units and the development of ‘restricted zones’” (*I Anaptiksi tis Anatolikis Makedonias & Thrakis* 1986: 21). These zones encompassed the northern mountainous areas of the prefectures of Ksanthi and Rhodope entirely populated by the minority. Until their abolition in 1996, they were designated as ‘restricted zones’, where travel by outsiders required special clearance and a permit from the police.

Over time, regional economic policies combined with nationalist government policies that erected discriminatory barriers nurtured sharp inter-communal divisions between Christians and Muslims that erupted in violence in January 1990. Even though these had been put in place in the name of combating the “Turkish threat” in Thrace, they paradoxically became instrumental in nurturing it. They turned the original Greek assumption of the minority as a “foreign body” into a self-fulfilling prophecy, and brought into being a sharply divided local society suffused with suspicion and insecurity about the ethnic ‘other.’ On the one side, a locally entrenched class of entrepreneurs, officials and others monopolized Greek state resources and power in the region by perpetually invoking the “Turkish threat” (Georgiadis 1993). On the other side, a parallel structure of clientelistic relations and interests also developed among the minority, through which political and other favours were distributed by the Turkish state to those loyal to the ‘motherland’. The two seemingly sharply opposite poles of Greek and Turkish nationalism in Thrace paradoxically reached an accommodation with one another, based on an implicit mutual consent to maintain the isolation of the minority as a “state within a state” (*kratos en kratei*).

Given the conditions of socioeconomic exclusion prevailing among Muslims, it is not accidental that the Greek government in 1991 decided to tackle the minority issue and the crisis in inter-communal relations by calling for a new development strategy for the region. Having cross-party consensus, this new approach was introduced with the *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions* submitted to the Greek Parliament in 1992.<sup>10</sup> 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 region’s economy, reducing inequalities between Christians and Muslims and promoting social and economic integration of the minority. It must be

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<sup>9</sup> In 1979-85 when public investments in the north of Greece (in Macedonia and Thrace) increased in 11 out of the 16 prefectures, Ksanthi and Rhodope were among the four disadvantaged ones. See *Regional Development Programme - Greece 1981-1985*.

<sup>10</sup> *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions*, Greek Parliament, Athens, 14 February 1992. Appended in *I Anaptiksi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis* (1995).

noted here that the EU structural funds, the size of which had greatly increased after 1989-90, did not motivate or in any way led the government to adopt this new approach. However, their influx made it possible to put to practice a comprehensive policy of regional development as defined by the Regional Operational Program (ROP) of the CSF I for Thrace, and to firmly anchor the minority issue within it.

## **2.5 Regional reform, subnational institutions and the EU structural policy**

Greek nationalism in Thrace and its entrenchment in clientelistic relations cultivated by political parties, which so thoroughly skewed the region's economy and development, were made possible by, and in turn reinforced, the centralized administrative and territorial structures of the modern Greek state. 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. Since its foundation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this centralist predilection inspired by the French Napoleonic model, was linked to nation-state building, being explicitly geared towards modernisation, national homogenisation and the achievement of social-political unification (Chlepas 1999: 90; 105). It was 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. 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).

Headed by the prefect who was appointed by the central government, the prefectures' role in development was thoroughly shaped by national imperatives and decisions. 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). The unparalleled, albeit unofficially, separate system, under which the minority in Thrace was governed by high level officials directly subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was only possible with the consent or acquiescence of the government-appointed prefect and the centralized prefecture administration. Consisting of a weak and extremely fragmented system of municipalities (*dimoi*) and communes (*koinotites*), local government was also financially depended on the central state, which exercised supervision and political control through the government-appointed prefect (Verney 1994).

After the Greek transition to democracy in 1974 and particularly following the advent to power of the socialist government of PASOK in 1981, growing demands for, and professed commitment to decentralization met resistance from entrenched party and national interests. Regional development was for the first time in the 1980s directly linked to the issue of redistribution of administrative power (Lavdas 1999: 226), yet attempted reforms failed to redress the imbalance between local level and the centre (Ioakimidis 1996). In an attempt to disentangle the prefecture from the central administration, Laws 1235 and 1262 of 1982 introduced the Prefecture Council as an institution, in which elected members of professional and local government associations, trade unions, etc., participated in an ex officio capacity (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992: 112). Furthermore, Law 1622 of 1986 established 13 administrative regions (*periferies*) for purposes of regional planning and further

enhanced the role of the Prefecture Councils in development planning. The first regional secretaries were appointed, yet these reforms, which were partly geared towards strengthening local party structures, were not fully implemented due to strong resistance against them (Christofilopoulou 1997).

By the mid-1990s, a combination of domestic and European factors led to a new wave of reform characterized as groundbreaking, which enhanced sub-national structures and crystallized the territorial organization of the Greek state (Lavdas 1999: 230). The reforms of the 1990s introduced two major changes. The first one was the transformation of the prefecture from an arm of the central administration into an institution of local government with a directly elected prefect and Prefecture Council, defining its goal as “the economic, social and cultural development of the region”.<sup>11</sup> Local governments and prefectures became recipients of increased funding under the CSF, which in 1991-5 more than tripled in Rhodope and Ksanthi.<sup>12</sup> 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).

Secondly, Law 2218/1994 also upgraded and expanded the role of the 13 administrative regions (*διοικητικές περιφέρειες*), each of which was to establish its own Regional Development Fund and to participate as partners in formulating regional policy and administering national and European projects and funds. The ensuing conflicts over the redistribution of functions between different levels of government led to the adoption of a “corrective” law (L. 2240/1994) that undercut the large array of powers originally envisioned for prefecture self-government. Nonetheless, the strengthening of regions further continued with Law 2503/1997 that established the centrally-appointed Regional Director and upgraded the role of the 13 regions, with their personnel no longer subordinate to central ministries (Chlepas 1999: 170-1). According to an authoritative scholar of Greek local government, the reforms of the 1990s paved the way for the transformation of the 13 regions into decentralised and cohesive units of administration and governance, despite their non-elected character, and expanded their capacity for coordinated action in development planning and fiscal management (Chlepas 1999: 186).

Regional administrations and councils draft the Regional Operational Programs (ROPs) before giving it for approval to the central administration, they play an important role in managing and supervising structural funds implementation, and are responsible for the highest possible absorption of funds. In drafting and planning the ROPs, regional authorities accept or reject applications for individual projects submitted by local government or private bodies. Day to day implementation of the individual projects included in the ROPs, however, rests with the prefectures, as well as with local government at the level of communes and municipalities (Getimis and Economou 1996: 135). 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 of assuming greater responsibilities and a more active role in development (Chlepas 1999: 399).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Law 2218/1994, *Idrisi Nomarchiakis Aftodioikisis kai Tropopioisi gia tin Protovathmia Aftodioikisi kai Perifereia* 1994.

<sup>12</sup> Data from the prefectures of Ksanthi, and Rhodope Division of Planning and Investment. The main prefecture fund was SANA (*Silogiki Apofasi Nomarchiakis Aftodioikisis*).

<sup>13</sup> This is one of the central conclusions of a study conducted by the “Andreas Papandreou Foundation,” (*Kathimerini*, 14 January 2001: 8-9).



The decentralizing potential of the reforms of the 1990s triggered powerful reactions among segments of the opposition, as well as broader local and nationalist constituencies across political parties, which declared prefecture-level local government 'superficial and nationally perilous'. Pointing to the case of Thrace, they alarmingly warned that it would 'fragment the state' and strengthen Turkish nationalism, which could gain political control in Ksanthi and Rhodope where a Muslim prefect could be elected (Kontos and Pavlou 1994; Marinos 1994). To preempt 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" (*dievrimes 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 preempting the election of a Muslim prefect.

## **2.6 Concluding Remarks**

In conclusion, the Greek region of Western Thrace has been characterised by long term and structural economic under development, uneven concentration of wealth and political power in the hands of the Greek Christian majority, prejudice and discriminatory practices (both in private and public practices and discourses) against the Turkish Muslim minority. The overall situation was further complicated and polarised by the complex and often tense external relations between Greece and Turkey and the overall 'defensive' Greek nationalism (Triandafyllidou et al. 1997). In reality, the minority has often played the part of Greece's internal threatening Other (Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou 2002), serving to further enhance Greek nationalist ideology and centralised administration.

In recent years, though, and in particular since the early 1990s, we are witnessing a positive change in the majority-minority relations coupled with important administrative reforms, empowering regional structures and actors. Although neither the improvement in majority minority relations nor the reforms were merely motivated by EU structural funds, the implementation of these funds (whose economic impact in regional development in western Thrace cannot be exaggerated) has provided a catalyst for better cooperation between the two groups. Recent studies (Anagnostou 2003) record a change in minority and majority mutual representations and economic and political behaviour. In the empirical research to be undertaken during the life of EUROREG, we aim to look deeper into these changes, follow their developments in recent years, assess the importance of domestic political and economic factors in promoting these changes, question and assess the part played by EU structural funds in this process and more generally assess how the economic opportunity structure and identity space opened up by the process of European integration is entrenched with regional processes of social and economic transformation in western Thrace.

### 3 Politics, identity and institutions: a literature review on the minority in Thrace

The homogenisation drive characterising the arduous processes of consolidation of the Greek nation-state in the 20<sup>th</sup> century bequeathed a tendency to deny or keep silent about the existence of remaining minorities, which has been perceived as a threat (Milas 2002). Up until the 1990s, Greek academics abstained from studying the region of Thrace and the minority inhabiting it. In his introduction to the volume *Minorities in Greece*, Richard Clogg refers to the strong sense of Greek insecurity and defensive attitudes towards minorities that continued to prevail in the post-1974 democratic period in the country, leading to a broad silence surrounding the issue. Such a negative approach was so prevalent and so distorting that the stated purpose of this volume is “to redress the damaging ignorance about the heterogeneity of Greece and the presence of minorities and immigrants that most of the world is unaware of” (Clogg 2003: x).

Writings on the latter, mostly in a personalised or journalistic style, adopted a heavily ideological and jaundiced perspective aimed at defending the unity of the Greek nation in the region against the threat of Turkish expansionism. Viewing minority claims to define itself as ‘Turkish’ as alarming signs of the latter, these authors staunchly insist on its definition as ‘Muslim’ in reference to the Lausanne Treaty (Holevas 1993; Soltaridis 1990). Their writings often contain criticisms of the centre (Athens) and Greek national governments for failing to prevent Turkey from steering the minority in the region. Caught in a self-contradicting and apologetic logic, they eagerly asserted that Greece respected minority rights, even as they implicitly acknowledged that these were thoroughly curtailed, and attributed the problem as stemming not from deprivation but actually from the generosity and permissiveness of the Greek state towards the minority. In a veneer of sociological objectivity, Panagiotides’ study is caught in the bifurcated lens of Greek-Turkish antagonism, using survey questions such as “what is the city you would prefer to live” or “which courses do you like at school”, as indicators to assess whether the minority has a pro-Greek or pro-Turkish attitude (Panagiotides 1995).

In the 1990s, a new strand of writings on minorities began to emerge out of a new generation of Greek academics, some of whom came together in the Minority Groups Research Centre, and who were highly critical of the hitherto nationalist perspective on minorities, including that of Thrace. Condemning the apologetic stance of the dominant government position, the amateurism and the silence or indifference characterising approaches to the latter, they argued for the need for a more sober understanding and objective study of the subject.<sup>14</sup> In addressing the issue of minorities and viewing as legitimate their claims for self-definition, these scholars drew their inspiration and found their reference in the system of human rights and minority protection that had begun to emerge around the Council of Europe and the OSCE (Giakoumopoulos 1996).

During the same period, sociologists, media experts and also non governmental actors (both based in Greece and abroad) started paying more attention to xenophobia and racism in Greek media and political discourses. Although public and intellectual discourses focused more on recent non-EU immigration to Greece and the existence of a Slav-Macedonian minority in Greece – both topical issues at the time – some attention was paid also to the plight of the Turkish Muslims in Western

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<sup>14</sup> See *I Sinantisi ton Delfon kai I Drasi tou Kentrou Erevnon Mionotikon Omadon*, 2000.

Thrace, a less topical but more complex and sensitive matter (Greek Helsinki Monitor and Minority Rights Group 2000; Lenkova 1997; Minority Rights Group 1995; Papanikolatos 1999; Triandafyllidou 2002; Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou 2002).<sup>15</sup>

The findings of a recent study on the Greek media representations of the Turkish Muslim minority of Western Thrace in the mid to late 1990s are quite telling however about the pervasiveness of negative stereotyping and prejudice towards this minority in Greek society:

‘The character of this minority as a national - and not merely a religious and linguistic one - is even today denied by a large part of the Greek media. Moreover, its portrayal is closely linked to the negative stereotypes and reports concerning Turkey as a neighbouring country. Media coverage on Turkey reached a peak of hysteria, hostility, and offensive language in early 1996 after the Imia-Kardak controversy<sup>16</sup> between Greece and Turkey. Such hostility has been occasionally revived in relation to the affair surrounding the Kurdish leader, Ocalan, the Cyprus question and, not surprisingly, the political mobilisation and claims raised by the Turkish minority in Greece. Throughout the period covered by this study (1995-2000), this minority has been portrayed as ignorant, uneducated, backwards, culturally inferior, mere victims at the hands of its religious leadership and manipulated by Turkish propaganda. This last point is argued to be behind any claims raised by the Turkish Muslim minority concerning local administration, education, or employment. According to most Greek newspapers, the minority is not Turkish; ‘they are Pomaks, Gypsies and citizens of Turkish origin’. In recent years, the minority’s socio-economic problems have attracted the attention of the moderate media and some mild criticisms about the inadequacy of the Greek State’s policy in local administration and education have been raised. Nonetheless, any collective demands or political mobilisation of the minority are presented as Turkish expansionism. Occasionally, discrimination against the Turkish minority is admitted by the media and justified on the grounds that Turkey oppresses the Greek minority living in its territory.’ (Triandafyllidou 2002: 160-1)

Indeed, as the analysis cited above confirms, despite the change in state policy towards the minority started in the 1990s, public attitudes still very much supported the nationalist policies of the Greek state.

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<sup>15</sup> It is also worth noting that there was a sudden development of high quality scholarly research on the policies and processes of nation formation in the Greek region of Macedonia (adjacent to Thrace to the west, and together with western Thrace part of the territories annexed to Greece after the Balkan wars in 1909-1913) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during this period (see for instance, Karakasidou 1993; 1997a; 1997b; Mackridge and Yannakakis 1997). However, there was much less academic debate about nation formation processes in Thrace.

<sup>16</sup> NGO studies show the media's contribution in the escalation of the crisis and the near hysteria of public opinion in Greece and Turkey (cf. GHM, 1996; Hadjidimos 1999; Lenkova, 1998).

### 3.1 Minority education and political participation: To be or not to be in the Greek public sphere?

One of the topics attracting a great deal of attention among academics, journalists and policy-makers interested in minority issues in Thrace has been that of education, a field in which important reform and other initiatives have been undertaken. What has elicited such an interest is the deficient state of minority schools (at the primary and to a small extent at the secondary level) characterized by high drop out rate, poor knowledge of Greek and failure of students to continue their education. While its professed intent is to preserve the distinct Turkish cultural and Muslim identity, it is widely accepted that it has actually contributed to their socioeconomic isolation, their exclusion from the general educational system in Greece and from the society at large (Mavrommatis 2003). It is no surprise that from the 1990s onwards, the minority considers education as its most important problem (Baltsiotis 1996: 318).

In one of the first, albeit extraneous, attempts to discuss the deficient performance of minority schools, Kanakidou (1994) attributes their handicaps to the overall state of socioeconomic backwardness and what she views as cultural privation of Muslims stemming from attachment to Islam. In a tautological and circular logic, Kanakidou claims that religious conservatism, the close and traditional character of Muslim communities, as well as bilingualism all inhibit the development and integration of minority students to the Greek educational system. In contrast, Baltsiotis (1996) attributes the segregated place of minority schools to the inter-state frame of Greek-Turkish agreements that has defined their establishment and functioning, aloof to any pedagogical principles suitable for multi-cultural settings. Attempts to overcome their detachment from the broader educational system from the 1970s onwards have largely failed, arguably stumbling over the distinctive web of local structures and actors pervaded by an entrenched Greek nationalist ethos. Often in opposition to official government policy at the national center, they consider minority exclusion as expedient, if not imperative to Greek national interests (Baltsiotis 1996: 320). It is these local nationalist actors in Thrace who in the past decade have promoted a strategy of differentiating the Slav-speaking from the Turkish-speaking group (334).

Over the past ten years, the system of minority education in Thrace has been the target of a series of reform attempts, first signaled by a 1996 law that facilitated the entry of minority students in Greek institutions of higher education.<sup>17</sup> In 1997, the Project on the Reform of the Education of Muslims was initiated by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. It aimed at overhauling and improving the Greek component of education in minority schools, preparing new textbooks and designing new curricula premised upon modern methods of bilingual and multi-cultural learning (Dragona 2004). A central and most daunting task in this large-scale undertaking has been the training of largely Christian instructors who teach in minority schools. Drawing from psychoanalysis and social theory, Thalia Dragona, who has been one of the scientific co-ordinators of the project, discusses and analyzes the psychosocial mechanisms that come at play in the painful process of accepting the 'other', instead of the being contemptuous of it. Considered an essential component of reforming minority education, such identity change has proved to be an extremely difficult endeavor with limited results (Dragona 2004: 23; Androusou 2002).

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<sup>17</sup> This law instituted a special 0.5% quota (a kind of affirmative action measure) to be filled by minority students, in this way allowing for the entrance of 200 minority students into Greek universities (Law 2341/95, Article 2).

Closely linked to the dissociation of the educational system of the minority has been its progressive disengagement from Greek representative institutions and political life in general. In a detailed and sophisticated analysis, Nikolakopoulos (2002), a leading expert of electoral politics, explores the relations of the minority in Thrace with Greek political parties before and after World War II, and analyzes the political and societal changes that marked important turning points. Combining a historical perspective with political sociology, Nikolakopoulos shows how while the political orientation of the minority until the 1960s was predominantly formed in reference to the dividing lines (between religious conservatives and Kemalist modernizers) internal to the Muslim community, this fundamentally changed from the 1970s onwards. The most important characteristic of the latter period was the progressive autonomization of minority organization and its ideological orientation away from the Greek political parties.

Contributing to this progressive autonomization was a complex interaction of factors such as the end of political support for the segment of religious conservatism through erosion of its societal base, as well as the rise of a new generation of minority leaders (Nikolakopoulos 2002). Their consciousness and orientation was thoroughly shaped by the ideological and political currents in Turkey, where they received their education and cultivated close ties with Turkish political parties and governments. The restrictive measures employed by junta and continued by the post-1974 Greek governments played a catalytic role in isolating Muslims and sharply dividing them from Christians. The autonomization of minority politics did not acquire full shape and did not assert itself until the second half of the 1980s with the formation of independent minority electoral alliances in 1985-1993 and the broad support they enjoyed among the minority.

### **3.2 Domestic influences of European human rights and minority protection regime**

The international regime of human rights and minority protection, which emerged around the Council of Europe (CoE), the CSCE/OSCE and a variety of NGOs (such as Helsinki Watch), as well as the ethnic problems in the former communist states in CESE undoubtedly played a significant role in stirring up new interest in minority issues. It also accentuated the concern of Greek authorities, particularly in light of growing political assertion and unrest among the Muslims of Thrace in the early 1990s, and prompted a reconsideration of the government's approach. Greece's hitherto policy towards minorities was clearly at odds with emerging norms of human rights and minority protection elaborated by the CESE/OSCE and the CoE. Greek official delegates in these fora found themselves in an uncomfortable position having to defend or to keep silent about Greece's opposition to minority rights (Aarbbake 2003; Heraclides 1996). Despite growing scrutiny of domestic minority policies by European human rights organizations, there is a dearth of studies that assesses their impact.

In an unpublished paper, Jeanne Hersant describes in detail the far-reaching influence of European integration processes in pushing the Greek government to redefine its policy towards minorities in the 1990s. In the first place, European human rights organizations helped to internationalize the problems of Thrace's Muslims, who, with the support of NGOs, brought their grievances against the discriminatory policies in front of these European fora. The latter publicized reports critical of Greek

minority policies such as Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code (GCC) that gave authorities wide discretion to remove citizenship from individuals of non-Greek ethnic origin, including from historical minorities and long-term citizens such the Muslims of Thrace. The overall frame of European integration became more binding in the 1990s, as Greece became thoroughly dependent on EU structural funds, and was eager to dispel her hitherto reputation as an uncommitted member of the Union.

In a recently published article, Anagnostou (2005) presents an empirical analysis of the process that led to the abrogation of Article 19 of the GCC in 1999 and the catalytic role European institutions (especially the CoE) played in it. Their decisive influence is captured by what has been called 'shaming', namely their ability to create an international climate at the European level that is critical of national practices. Even though such a climate had limited impact in the early 1990s, by the end of the decade the view that respect of human rights and minorities was indispensable in promoting Greece's national interests in Europe began to gain sufficient ground among domestic political elites.

In the 1990s, individual members of the Muslim population in Thrace took recourse to the ECtHR, which clearly, even if cautiously, challenged state refusal to accept the minority's self-definition as Turkish (Giakoumopoulos 1996). Tsitselikis convincingly shows how to this day, and despite the reforms that have taken place with regard to the minority in Thrace, Greek policy towards minorities remains caught in a powerful national ideology that obstructs recognition of ethnic identity and differences (Tsitselikis 2002). Indicative of the latter is the refusal of Greek authorities to comply in full with the relevant decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, as well as the ongoing refusal to ratify European texts of minority protection such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Continuing to shed away from emerging European norms of minority protection, Greek policy towards the Muslims of Thrace insists on emphasizing the religious character of this community, as well as to staunchly hold on to the bilateral frame of Greek-Turkish relations established with the Lausanne Treaty instead of re-orienting its policies in reference to the European sphere.

### **3.3 Turkish ethnicity, Muslim religion and 'Europe': contours of identity formation and change**

The main contours and dividing lines along which collective identity among the Muslims of Thrace has evolved in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are a) the conflict religious conservatives and Kemalist secularists (mentioned in the first part of this report), and b) the distinction between the Slav-speaking and the Turkish-speaking sub-groups. In different time periods, Greek state authorities have interfered with intra-community divisions to encourage or privilege one segment over the other. The division between religious traditionalists and Kemalist secularists salient in the inter-war period in Thrace was from the 1960s onwards superseded by a Turkish national consciousness that diffused and gradually became consolidated across the different sub-groups. Studies have described in detail the process of identify transformation from a Muslim religious community characteristic of the Ottoman millet system to a Turkish national minority in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They identify the inter-state frame of Greek-Turkish relations put in place with the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, in conjunction with the systematic curtailment of minority rights from the 1960s

onwards, as major factors in contributing to this transformation (Trubeta 2001; Anagnostou 1999b).

The main characteristic of the emerging Turkish national identity, particularly as it grew increasingly politicized in the 1980s, has been its attachment to Turkey as a national centre, as its dominant frame of reference. Far from being merely symbolic, such a frame comprises a multifaceted set of ties between the minority with the Turkish government that unofficially but thoroughly shapes minority politics in Thrace (i.e. by approving individual candidates to run for local-national elections in Greece). Traditional in its strong affinity with a national state, this form of minority identification has consolidated itself in polarized opposition to Greek national identity and society. More recently, however, a 'revisionist' (if we may call it so) strand of Turkish identity appears to be emerging, reflected in individual views highly critical of the minority's dependence on and guidance by 'motherland' Turkey. At the same time, they are equally strongly assertive of ethnic Turkish culture as a source of a distinct and powerful collective identity (Anagnostou 1999a).

Despite the growing secularization of the minority from the 1950s onwards, Muslim religion remains a visible and powerful cultural marker shaping social life and family values in Thrace. The preservation of Islamic law in the region with jurisdiction in family and inheritance matters has been a central institutional parameter sustaining the socializing role and influence of religion, which is no longer considered antithetical to Turkish national identity, but rather as an integral component of the latter. Greek authors have typically viewed Muslim religion as a regressive cultural system responsible for the socioeconomic backwardness and isolation of the minority, as well as resistant to change (Panagiotidis 1995; Kanakidou 1994). Others, however, have identified significant changes in the degree and content of attachment to Muslim religious values. In particular, traditional gender roles as prescribed by the latter have arguably undergone significant changes related to the entry of Muslim women in the labour market in Thrace and in the country's urban centres (Anagnostou 1999a: chapter 5).

The nature and significance of intra-communal divisions between the Slav-speaking (Pomaks) and Turkish-speaking Muslims have preoccupied Greek authors, however, these remain little understood, often being caught in Greek nationalist perceptions and pursuits. In the social hierarchy structure existing inside the Muslim community, the Slav-speaking Pomaks form a kind of "minority within the minority". In reference to their traditional, more rural and religiously devout character, they occupy a marginal and implicitly disdained social position vis-à-vis the Turks. The possibility of identifying with the Turkish nation has powerfully attracted many Slav-speaking Muslims in Thrace, seeing it as a means of extricating themselves from the socially demeaning status, notwithstanding any misgivings some individuals may have about the dependencies with Turkey that such identification involves. Despite such reservations, it is beyond dispute that the majority of Slav-speaking Muslims since the 1970s, if not earlier, have come under the umbrella of Turkish nationalism and publicly profess such an identity. Given the latter, official, semi-official or private initiatives over the past couple of years aiming to differentiate Pomaks from Turks, to encourage the former to assert a distinct identity or to proclaim their 'Greek' origins are viewed as highly suspect by the community (Kostopoulos 2003: 62).

More recently, in a number of studies authors point to signs of identity change defined by an emerging sense of identification with 'Europe', however, this has not yet been systematically studied. Signs of such identity shift are identified in connection to the broader liberalization of minority rights initiated by the Greek

government in the early 1990s and the improvement of the economic situation in Thrace linked to the influx of structural funds (Mavrommatis 2003; Mihail 2003). Having thorough knowledge of local society in Thrace, Dragona points to a growing awareness among the younger generation about the need to break community isolation and to participate in the Greek public sphere. In this direction, it is argued that “many see a new European identity as a means of distancing themselves from the one-dimensional identities of ‘Greek’ and ‘Turk’” (Dragona 2004: 19). On the basis of ethnographic field research, Domna Mihail identifies a similar tendency among local communities of Pomaks. Perceived to be as an all-inclusive entity accepting of differences, ‘Europe’ appears to offer a sense of belonging alternative to antagonistic Greek and Turkish national claims, to which Pomaks are most intensely exposed (Mihail 2003).

In the context of structural funds implementation, ‘Europe’ becomes more proximate to local actors in Thrace, who increasingly negotiate it and attribute content and meaning to it. In a study on subnational institutions in Thrace, officials who were minority members increasingly viewed the EU not only as a source of progress and development, but also as an alternative (to ‘motherland’) external guarantor, protecting human rights and cultural diversity and ensuring the irreversibility of the changes. Embedded in the European context, Greek citizenship and participation in the broader public sphere appeared less suspect in the eyes of the minority, partly losing its absolute correspondence to the Greek nation, and acquiring a dimension of inclusiveness that it did not have before. For the minority that has vehemently claimed its Turkish identity, the prospect of simultaneously integrating into the structures of Greek and European citizenship seemed to be viewed less as a force of assimilation and more as a defence against it (Anagnostou 2001).

These developments may seem paradoxical as the main tendency in European media and political discourses about Muslims in general, and European Muslims in particular is rather negative. Religious diversity remains a complex issue in European politics and identity discourses, and Muslim residents/citizens in European countries are of the focus of negative debates. Indeed, there is a widespread perception that Muslims are making politically exceptional, culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands upon European states. Muslims thus become the exemplary ‘problem case’ of European multiculturalism agendas (Triandafyllidou et al. 2005; Parekh 2005; and generally Modood et al. 2005). Such debates have acquired increased salience in the post-11 September context where security issues and representations of Muslim immigrants as potential terrorists tend to overshadow the everyday experience of millions of Muslims living and working in European countries and their just claims to difference, recognition and multicultural citizenship rights. Against this background, the development of a European identity among the Turkish Muslim minority in Western Thrace, Greece, appears to say the least, unexpected. However, social identity is always contextual, and it may well be that in the local and regional context, a sense of belonging to Europe provides for alternative identity repertoires that offer a way out of the dilemma ‘Greek Muslim or Turkish Muslim?’. Moreover, the hope for Turkey’s accession to the EU in not too distant a future, makes a European identity coherent with both Greek civic and Turkish ethnic-religious affiliations.



#### **4 The EU, regional change and minority politics**

A series of studies have inquired into the influence of the EU, particularly through structural funds, in the reform of regional policy and sub-national structures in Greece over the past fifteen years, as these are reflected in the creation of prefecture councils and 13 administrative regions in the 1980s, as well as the prefecture self-government in the 1990s. Authors, largely specialists on Greece, advance diverging arguments on the following questions: a) has the EU cohesion policy been an instrumental factor in promoting regional reform in Greece, and b) have the regional administrative and institutional reforms reinforced a restructuring of the centralized territorial structures of Greece in the direction of decentralization? Furthermore, a number of studies have explored local- and regional-level changes in the patterns of involvement and perceptions of local actors, taking place within the frame and in the course of implementing structural funds. Reflecting a more bottom-up approach, this latter set of studies is more directly relevant to the EUROREG project, and helps us formulate a number of research propositions that are put forth in the last section of this report.

Some scholars attribute to the EU structural policy a catalytic role in regional change even as they concede that through the mid-1990s at least, reforms brought limited, if any, transformation of the highly centralized Greek regional administrative and territorial structures. The experience with implementing the IMPs in the second half of the 1980s pointed to the endemic weaknesses and unsuitability of the country's centralized structures to plan and coordinate integrated development projects (Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). Being premised on partnership and subsidiarity, structural funds arguably made it imperative to create new regional institutions (administrative regions) and to modernize existing subnational structures as to render them capable of engaging in regional planning and qualify for finance under the CSF (Verney 1994; Featherstone and Yannopoulos 1996). The doubling of structural funds in 1988-89 and the establishment of the principles of subsidiarity and partnership between European, national and sub-national actors, as essential for programming and implementing of regional policy, signalled the emergence of a full-fledged EU structural policy.

In light of Greece's inclusion under objective one areas, the need for regional administrative reform could no longer be safely or entirely shunned. While the EU did not dictate reforms towards decentralization, the institutional-procedural requirements of its structural policy emphasizing planning and subsidiarity, made imperative the creation of subnational structures competent to implement and coordinate the Regional Development Programmes (RDP) of the CSF (Christofilopoulou 1997: 52). Albeit established only in paper, the 13 regions were intended to be the structures cardinally responsible for the implementation of the Community Support Frameworks (CSF). By the first half of the 1990s, as the first CSF was well under way, it was clear that the partnership arrangements of the EU structural policy would in practice be impaired without the strengthening of regional structures, while the comeback of the Socialist PASOK to power with a fresh mandate in 1993 presented an opportune moment to bypass opposition against reforms.

On the other hand, while acknowledging the European factor and the difficulties of implementing the IMPs in supplying a stimulus for reform, Ioakimidis argues that the regional institutional reforms of the 1980s were a product of domestic party-policy commitments rather than influences emanating from the EU (Ioakimidis 1996: 348). Similarly, Greek scholars of local government explain the reforms at the prefecture in the 1980s and 1990s (creation of prefecture councils and prefecture self-

government, respectively) as government responses to strong endogenous demands. Prefecture self-government was arguably, largely a victory of middle-level party cadres of PASOK and their strong independent assertion vis-à-vis the central government and party leadership in the 1990s (Chlepas 1999: 343; Christofilopoulou 1997: 56). Such an assertion was not merely an instance of personal-political ambition but also symptomatic of a new generation of political cadre who came of age in Greece's post-1974 democratic system with a mature and growing consciousness around local problems.

Some scholars dispute the role of the EU structural policy in regional reform in Greece, and challenge views about an incipient or ongoing decentralization process. They attribute the 1980s shift away from top-down regional policy characterized by centralization to one emphasizing local initiatives and endogenous potential not to structural funds, but instead to a broader process of deregulation and reduction of central state controls, related to the common market and the EC 'paradigm' (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 40). In fact, the declining trend of the Public Investment Budget (including those for regions) in the second half of the 1980s, in comparison to its upward trend in the first half of the decade, was a result of the EC-induced stabilization program to reduce public deficits (Plaskovitis 1994: 119).

Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas argue that the emphasis on decentralization and local development that accompanied the regional reforms from the 1980s onwards was more rhetorical than actual, underneath driven but the need to reduce state spending, and in practice implying that local authorities and regions are left to survive on and compete for their own resources (40). Part and parcel of the Community 'paradigm' of deregulation intended to compensate for the difficulties faced by the less developed regions, structural funds actually supply such resources, without, however, promoting regionalization and decentralization. If anything, in the second and the third CSF (1994-99 and 2000-06), the national component in terms of size of resources has significantly grown to the detriment of the regional component,<sup>18</sup> partly related to the fact that the European Commission has shifted responsibility for structural funds to national governments (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 43).

Regardless of how they view the role of the EU structural policy in regional reform in Greece or its effects in reinforcing decentralization or conversely strengthening centralization, all studies reviewed here agree on one point where the core research interests of the EUROREG project lie. They all suggest that within the frame of implementing the EU structural funds, important if not fundamental shifts occur at the regional and local levels. These pertain to local actors involvement in subnational institutions and development projects, to their perceptions of the EU, and to their relations with political parties, in sum, to the nature of local and regional politics, with far-reaching implications for minority-inhabited and ethnically-mixed regions.

Regardless of whether EU structural policy is driven by economic deregulation defining the common market or by a premise of enhancing local democracy, a central characteristic of it embedded in the logic of its design and implementation is the mobilization of local actors' initiative. Ioannides and Petrakos

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<sup>18</sup> While in the first CSF, the national component comprised 59.6% of the resources and the regional component 40.4%, in the second and third CSFs the national component increased to about 75% and the regional component dropped to about 25% (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 42).

succinctly capture the latter stating that structural funds implementation in Greece has amply demonstrated the need for enhancing local government capabilities, promoting civic organizations, improving efficiency and human resources (2000: 55). Despite ongoing problems with the centralized administrative structure, Ioannides and Petrakos argue that progressively there has been a widening of participation of local actors in regional policy within the CSFs, as well as mobilization of and initiative among local actors around development goals in certain areas and regions in the 1990s to a much greater extent than before (46).

The subnational reforms since the 1980s arguably had a cumulative effect in stimulating a process of local and regional awareness change, in which the implementation of the IMPs and subsequently of structural funds played a catalytic role. Despite their incompleteness and limitations, the creation of prefecture councils in the mid-1980s raised local awareness about power relations vis-à-vis the centre, as it was succeeded by the launching of the EU Integrated Mediterranean Projects (IMPs), a precursor to the EU structural policy (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992: 126). The same study on the nascent at the time prefecture councils found that while they lacked autonomy their status remained firmly defined by clientilistic relations with political parties. More importantly, they were instrumental in mounting regional 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).

A parallel study focusing on the IMPs in the 1980s found that even though control of latter had remained firmly with the centre, their implementation had diffused socializing effects as the obstacles to local authorities and interest group participation caused them considerable discontent. In this way, they proved to be a significant learning experience as they heightened their awareness about greater decentralization and local mobilization in sub-national structures and in the design and planning of regional policy (Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). Even though he attributes to the EU structural funds a limited, if not marginal role, in promoting regional reform in Greece, let alone in bringing about decentralization, Ioakimidis argues that the process of their implementation established systematic contacts of local authorities with the EU and brought the latter much closer to local society making it less remote. While the widened participation of subnational actors and social partners in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> CSF was mainly symbolic and formalistic rather than substantive, nonetheless the role and functions of regional administration and local government began to transform in response to the pressures and opportunities generated by the implementation of regional development projects (Ioakimidis 1996: 351).

Paraskevopoulos' study addresses the question whether the implementation of the EU structural funds encourages the creation of public-private networks (between subnational authorities and private interest groups, civil society or community organizations) in the regions (Paraskevopoulos 1998). He argues that weak civil society and entrenched clientilistic networks in Greece tend to undermine and constrain such a change. At the same time, Paraskevopoulos argues that some regions in Greece have been more successful in involving civil society, local communities and/or private investors in regional developing programs, and suggests the existence of social capital as a way to explain such a difference. As a concept paradigmatically employed by Robert Putnam (1992) in the study of Italian local-regional government, social capital denotes a pre-existing tradition of civic engagement characterizing some local communities and is centrally premised upon relations of interpersonal trust.

Defined by a strong sense of public responsibility and local autonomy, social capital as a feature of horizontally-shaped citizens-government relations has been seen to be diametrically opposed to traditional party clientilism that is of a vertical nature creating hierarchical dependencies between society and the state. Paraskevopoulos' study suggests viewing social capital not necessarily as a pre-existing socio-cultural condition, but also as an outcome that can be formed in the context of implementing EU regional development programs (1998: 173).

In the case of Thrace, it can be argued that a local-regional politics and mobilization, being shaped by strong divisions along ethnic lines and diffused suspicion between the two communities, constrain the formation of social capital (in the sense of public-private synergies and cross-community mobilization on the basis of development goals). In her study of self-government prefecture in the region in the mid-1990s, Anagnostou, however, identified signs of an emerging, even if limited, sense of trust fostered in the course of cooperation between Christian and Muslim members of the prefecture council over the distribution and implementation of structural funds (Anagnostou 2001).

## **5 Overall assessment**

Notwithstanding their limitations, the regional and prefecture local government reforms of the 1990s within the frame of the EU structural policy were only the beginning of a manifold and longer-term contestation about which level(s) of administration and government will manage to become dominant as a locus of power. Undoubtedly, its consequences have been and will be fundamental, even if still undetermined, potentially with far-reaching consequences for minority-majority relations in Thrace. Whether continued implementation of structural funds will promote the centrality of Greek regions as subnational institutions, or whether it will reinforce the decentralisation or centralisation of their functions and powers, remains an ongoing process.

The reconfiguration of Greek administrative and subnational structures within the frame of EU structural policy is not merely about formal decentralisation or centralisation, but about a more qualitative transformation in the nature of subnational institutions and politics. Whether it will be centred at the prefecture or at the region depends on contestation between the different levels and which institution manages to become the locus for the growth of a new regional awareness and identity. Whether it will draw its basis of legitimacy and support from electoral accountability or from efficient economic and development performance, a new level of subnational government is emerging.

Regardless of the extent to which the regions and prefectures become more attuned to central imperatives or conversely transform into decentralised and/or locally elected structures, their autonomous competencies have been greatly enhanced. They draw their legitimacy from their performance in implementing and promoting regional economic development within the frame of the CSF of the EU structural policy, and arguably open space for the representation and participation of the minority in decisions about resource distribution and regional development. Whether by being accountable to a local electorate, or responsible for effective implementation of the CSF Regional Development Programmes, prefecture self-government, the regional council and the Regional Secretary potentially challenge the

nationalist priorities that in the previous decades defined state-local and minority-majority relations in Thrace.

The relevant literature presented in section 4, suggests that regional change is closely linked to the EU structural policy and possibly to the broader process of deregulation of regional economies. With regard to the main research interests of the EUROREG project, the implementation of structural funds in Greece is premised on and has inserted pressures for enhanced local mobilization, patterns of political participation and regional alliances driven by the logic of development. Does this occur in practice or do these continue to be predominantly shaped by the logic of nationalist opposition? Furthermore, what are the perceptions of local minority and majority actors about each other, about the central state, their nation, and about 'Europe'?

In order to empirically assess these questions, we can examine

- a) Extent of involvement and mobilisation of local government bodies, community organizations and private bodies in project implementation in Ksanthi and Rhodope prefecture: does such mobilization take place across ethnic lines or not?
- b) Allocation of funds and projects in different areas and municipalities within the region (in the two prefectures under study): what kind of differences and conflicts arise and do these run along ethnic lines, political party lines, or other? Is there cooperation or division along ethnic community lines?
- c) What are the views and perceptions of local government officials, members of the regional and prefecture council (from minority and majority): are these characterized by trust or suspicion of each other and the state?
- d) What are the perceptions of Muslim and Christian leaders about the EU and 'Europe'? Do they see it as a means of a) protection of ethnic and cultural identity, c) modernization and economic development, d) a force of assimilation?

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## 8 Annex I

### **Regions, minorities and European policies: A policy report on the Turkish Muslims of Western Thrace in Greece**

#### **8.1 The Muslims in Western Thrace: general overview of the case**

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. 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, Xanthi, 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. The Lausanne Treaty specified an explicit condition of bilateral reciprocity (*amiveotita*) according to which the two states assumed a mutual obligation to institute the requisite measures to safeguard minority rights (Ladas 1932).

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, without joint bonds of political solidarity. Since the 1950s, however, they have transformed into a minority with ethnic consciousness, and in the past twenty years they have mobilized to claim 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 through the present. Acknowledging the resonance of ethnic Turkish 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 against Muslims adopted by the Greek governments. The tensions that erupted between Muslims and Christians in the region in early 1990 marked a nadir but also a turning point set in by the restoration of minority rights and marked by an overall and progressive improvement in relations with the state that continues until the present (Yagcioglu 2004: chapters 12 and 13). This turning point

in the early 1990s coincided with the intensification of Greece's process of EU integration stimulated by poor economic performance and the adoption of stabilization measures under EU supervision. At the same time, concern with the fact that the gap between the Greek and the EC economy was growing instead of narrowing led the to transfer increasing amounts of structural funds to Greece. 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).

In the frame of the CSF, increased 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). Out of the nearly 1 billion euro of total public expenditure for the RDP of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace for 2000-2006, only 25% of it came from national funds, while 75% came from the EU structural funds. The significance of the CSF for Greece and for Thrace, both in size but also political importance, has been fundamental; it is questionable whether in the absence of the CSF, regional development policy would have been viable at all in the 1990s (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 42).

Linked to growing dependence on structural funds were a series of reforms of subnational institutions undertaken by Greek governments from the second half of the 1980s onwards. Even though the extent and nature of EU influence in this regard is a matter of controversy in Greek studies as will be discussed later in this report, there is little doubt that the country's regional and local government structures in the early 1990s were thoroughly unsuitable to implementing structural funds (Marks 1997: 163). Considered among the most centralized in Europe, Greece's territorial and administrative structures are divided into fifty two prefectures, the origins of which coincide with those of the modern Greek state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as into thirteen administrative regions established for the first time in 1988. 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). Since the late 1980s, however, a series of reforms have taken place in this direction, which have unsurprisingly been strongly contested in the ethnically mixed region of Thrace.

## **8.2 Regional (under)development**

The administrative region of East Macedonia and Thrace, where Thrace belongs, is predominantly agricultural with 40% of the active labour force in 1997 (this percentage is possibly higher if one looks at Thrace proper) employed in agriculture (when the average for Greece as a whole is 19.9%; see Ioannides and Petrakos 2000: 36). The agricultural character of the region is unevenly spread between the two prefectures predominantly inhabited by the minority. The prefecture of Ksanthi, primarily populated by Pomaks, has a significant industrial and manufacturing sector with development and infrastructure indicators around the national average, while the predominantly ethnic Turkish and agricultural prefecture of Rhodope ranks near the

bottom of national scale (*Dierevnisi Kritirion Technikis Ypodomis* 1987). Besides, its less developed and agricultural character, Thrace has an overall low level of education with a high percentage of its inhabitants having only primary level education (73% in 1991; see *I Anaptixi tis Thrakis* 1995: 15), which is possibly even higher among the minority.

Muslims live in segregated settlements in the region's towns and villages (Dragonas 2004: 3), and they are also concentrated in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas within Thrace. The two prefectures under study are characterized 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 which is an intermediate belt with mixed population. In systematically denying to them basic rights such as acquisition of property or expansion of economic activity, state policy in Thrace put an absolute blockade to the development of Muslim-inhabited areas. It sustained the region's dependence on agriculture and distorted its economy as a whole, rendering it underdeveloped. The land Muslims own is predominantly in the northeast zones of the region, which are mountainous and arid. The majority of Muslims work in agriculture and have a long tradition in the growing of labour-intensive eastern varieties of tobacco, until recently making up over 90 per cent of the region's tobacco producers (*I Anaptixi tis Anatolikis Makedonias kai Thrakis*, p.238).

It becomes obvious from the above that Muslims live in conditions of greater geographical, social and economic isolation in Thrace, which prior to the 1990s stimulated emigration for economic purposes to Turkey but also Germany, as well as internally to the urban centres of Athens and Thessaloniki. In Thrace, Muslims are active in "their own" segregated section of the local market occupied by minority suppliers (tradesmen, producers, etc.) and customers, and largely operating within the confines of the ethnic community (*I Anaptixi tis Thrakis* 1995: 18; 49). Reinforcing their socioeconomic segregation along ethnic lines has also been the fact that they have tended to export most of their savings abroad (especially to Turkey), as until the early 1990s restrictive measures prevented them from investing them in the region. This, however, appears to have been changing since then, with the abolition of those measures in 1991 (50).

The past two decades have seen the large-scale entry of minority women in the region's labour market, primarily as workers in the region's textiles and tobacco processing factories. In general, women's entry in Thrace's labour market accounts for the increase in the size of the economically active population despite the overall demographic decline the region's has witnessed over the past twenty years (*I Anaptixi tis Thrakis* 1995: 16). It is possible that in the case of the minority, women's undertaking of paid employment has been one way for families to deal with reduced income from agriculture, to which Muslims extensively depend, as levels of agricultural subsidies provided by the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have been declining.

Thrace underdevelopment as a whole and the significant intra-regional disparities between Christians and Muslims, have been a consequence of Greek regional policy in the post-World War II period that in this case became specifically jaundiced due to the presence of the minority. Prior to the 1990s, resource transfer and distribution in Thrace took place in a top-down manner with explicit foreign policy considerations related to the presence of the Muslim population. Lacking explicit development priorities, regional policy was for the most part based on arbitrary government decisions, permeated by party interests that distributed rights and benefits

through clientelistic networks to those deemed politically loyal (Verney & Papageorgiou 1992: 111). An overarching ideological imperative of national unity pervaded and served to justify the reproduction of highly centralized state structures and distribution of resources. In Thrace, depriving Muslims of rights and resources and exclusively privileging Christians were deemed imperative in order to defend the region and country against the Turkish “threat.”

On the whole, Thrace became a target of generous subsidies granted in the name of national and security interests, yet levels of public investment and central transfers to the region fluctuated in response to political party interests, as well as Greek-Turkish relations. In the 1980s, when EC structural funds promoted some redistribution and regional disparities relatively declined in comparison to the 1970s, Thrace was not affected. Policies and decisions vis-a-vis the region materialized through alliances between the central government, economic interests and political constituencies in Thrace linked to the local and prefecture administration and backed by nationalist organizations. Local Christians and investors with political leverage received the bulk of resources and state grants on the basis of their nationalist credentials and morale (*ethnikofrones*) and with little, if any, consideration of or correspondence to development needs and criteria.

Generous subsidies attracted investments in industry and manufacturing, which, however, tended to concentrate around the central towns of Ksanthi and Komotini and in the southern Christian-populated zones as opposed to the rural Muslim-populated areas to the north that stagnated. A study of the Commercial Bank of Greece in the mid-1980s on Thrace acknowledged that “constraints of a strategic character have had inhibiting effects on the region’s development with restrictions on infrastructure improvements, as well as controls on the creation of industrial units and the development of ‘restricted zones’” (*I Anaptiksi tis Anatolikis Makedonias & Thrakis* 1986: 21). These zones encompassed the northern mountainous areas of the prefectures of Ksanthi and Rhodope entirely populated by the minority. Until their abolition in 1996, they were designated as ‘restricted zones’, where travel by outsiders required special clearance and a permit from the police.

Over time, regional economic policies combined with nationalist government policies that erected discriminatory barriers nurtured sharp inter-communal divisions between Christians and Muslims that erupted in violence in January 1990. Even though these had been put in place in the name of combating the “Turkish threat” in Thrace, they paradoxically became instrumental in nurturing it. They turned the original Greek assumption of the minority as a “foreign body” into a self-fulfilling prophecy, and brought into being a sharply divided local society suffused with suspicion and insecurity about the ethnic ‘other.’ On the one side, a locally entrenched class of entrepreneurs, officials and others monopolized Greek state resources and power in the region by perpetually invoking the “Turkish threat” (Georgiadis 1993). On the other side, a parallel structure of clientelistic relations and interests also developed among the minority, through which political and other favours were distributed by the Turkish state to those loyal to the ‘motherland’. The two seemingly sharply opposite poles of Greek and Turkish nationalism in Thrace paradoxically reached an accommodation with one another, based on an implicit mutual consent to maintain the isolation of the minority as a “state within a state” (*kratos en krateri*).

Given the conditions of socioeconomic exclusion prevailing among Muslims, it is not accidental that the Greek government in 1991 decided to tackle the minority issue and the crisis in inter-communal relations by calling for a new development strategy for the region. Having cross-party consensus, this new approach was

introduced with the *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions* submitted to the Greek Parliament in 1992. 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 region’s economy, reducing inequalities between Christians and Muslims and promoting social and economic integration of the minority. It must be noted here that the EU structural funds, the size of which had greatly increased after 1989-90, did not motivate or in any way led the government to adopt this new approach. However, their influx made it possible to put to practice a comprehensive policy of regional development as defined by the Regional Operational Program (ROP) of the CSF I for Thrace, and to firmly anchor the minority issue within it.

### 8.3 Regional administrative reforms

Greek nationalism in Thrace and its entrenchment in clientelistic relations cultivated by political parties, which so thoroughly skewed the region’s economy and development, were made possible by, and in turn reinforced, the centralized administrative and territorial structures of the modern Greek state. 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. After the Greek transition to democracy in 1974 and particularly following the advent to power of the socialist government of PASOK in 1981, growing demands for, and professed commitment to decentralization met resistance from entrenched party and national interests. Regional development was for the first time in the 1980s directly linked to the issue of redistribution of administrative power (Lavdas 1999: 226), yet attempted reforms failed to redress the imbalance between local level and the centre (Ioakimidis 1996).

By the mid-1990s however, a combination of domestic and European factors led to a wave of reform characterized as groundbreaking, which enhanced sub-national structures and crystallized the territorial organization of the Greek state (Lavdas 1999: 230). The reforms of the 1990s introduced two major changes. The first one was the transformation of the prefecture from an arm of the central administration into an institution of local government with a directly elected prefect and Prefecture Council, defining its goal as “the economic, social and cultural development of the region”. Local governments and prefectures became recipients of increased funding under the CSF, which in 1991-5 more than tripled in Rhodope and Ksanthi. 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).

Secondly, Law 2218/1994 also upgraded and expanded the role of the 13 administrative regions (*διοικητικές περιφέρειες*), each of which was to establish its own Regional Development Fund and to participate as partners in formulating regional policy and administering national and European projects and funds. The ensuing conflicts over the redistribution of functions between different levels of government led to the adoption of a “corrective” law (L. 2240/1994) that undercut the large array of powers originally envisioned for prefecture self-government. Nonetheless, the strengthening of regions further continued with Law 2503/1997 that established the centrally-appointed Regional Director and upgraded the role of the 13 regions, with their personnel no longer subordinate to central ministries (Chlepas 1999: 170-1).



According to an authoritative scholar of Greek local government, the reforms of the 1990s paved the way for the transformation of the 13 regions into decentralised and cohesive units of administration and governance, despite their non-elected character, and expanded their capacity for coordinated action in development planning and fiscal management (Chlepas 1999: 186).

Regional administrations and councils draft the Regional Operational Programs (ROPs) before giving it for approval to the central administration, they play an important role in managing and supervising structural funds implementation, and are responsible for the highest possible absorption of funds. In drafting and planning the ROPs, regional authorities accept or reject applications for individual projects submitted by local government or private bodies. Day to day implementation of the individual projects included in the ROPs, however, rests with the prefectures, as well as with local government at the level of communes and municipalities (Getimis and Economou 1996: 135). 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 of assuming greater responsibilities and a more active role in development (Chlepas 1999: 399).

The decentralizing potential of the reforms of the 1990s triggered powerful reactions among segments of the opposition, as well as broader local and nationalist constituencies across political parties, which declared prefecture-level local government 'superficial and nationally perilous'. Pointing to the case of Thrace, they alarmingly warned that it would 'fragment the state' and strengthen Turkish nationalism, which could gain political control in Ksanthi and Rhodope where a Muslim prefect could be elected (Kontos and Pavlou 1994; Marinos 1994). To preempt 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” (*dievrimes 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 preempting the election of a Muslim prefect.

#### **8.4 The EU, regional change and minority politics**

A series of studies have inquired into the influence of the EU, particularly through structural funds, in the reform of regional policy and sub-national structures in Greece over the past fifteen years, as these are reflected in the creation of prefecture councils and 13 administrative regions in the 1980s, as well as the prefecture self-government in the 1990s. Authors, largely specialists on Greece, advance diverging arguments on the following questions: a) has the EU cohesion policy been an instrumental factor in promoting regional reform in Greece, and b) have the regional administrative and institutional reforms reinforced a restructuring of the centralized territorial structures of Greece in the direction of decentralization?

Furthermore, a number of studies have explored local- and regional-level changes in the patterns of involvement and perceptions of local actors, taking place within the frame and in the course of implementing structural funds. Reflecting a more bottom-up approach, this latter set of studies is more directly relevant to the

EUROREG project, and helps us formulate a number of research propositions that are put forth in the last section of this report.

Some scholars attribute to the EU structural policy a catalytic role in regional change even as they concede that through the mid-1990s at least, reforms brought limited, if any, transformation of the highly centralized Greek regional administrative and territorial structures. The experience with implementing the IMPs in the second half of the 1980s pointed to the endemic weaknesses and unsuitability of the country's centralized structures to plan and coordinate integrated development projects (Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). Being premised on partnership and subsidiarity, structural funds arguably made it imperative to create new regional institutions (administrative regions) and to modernize existing subnational structures as to render them capable of engaging in regional planning and qualify for finance under the CSF (Verney 1994; Featherstone and Yannopoulos 1996). The doubling of structural funds in 1988-89 and the establishment of the principles of subsidiarity and partnership between European, national and sub-national actors, as essential for programming and implementing of regional policy, signalled the emergence of a full-fledged EU structural policy.

In light of Greece's inclusion under objective one areas, the need for regional administrative reform could no longer be safely or entirely shunned. While the EU did not dictate reforms towards decentralization, the institutional-procedural requirements of its structural policy emphasizing planning and subsidiarity, made imperative the creation of subnational structures competent to implement and coordinate the Regional Development Programmes (RDP) of the CSF (Christofilopoulou 1997: 52). Albeit established only in paper, the 13 regions were intended to be the structures cardinally responsible for the implementation of the Community Support Frameworks (CSF). By the first half of the 1990s, as the first CSF was well under way, it was clear that the partnership arrangements of the EU structural policy would in practice be impaired without the strengthening of regional structures, while the comeback of the Socialist PASOK to power with a fresh mandate in 1993 presented an opportune moment to bypass opposition against reforms.

On the other hand, while acknowledging the European factor and the difficulties of implementing the IMPs in supplying a stimulus for reform, Ioakimidis argues that the regional institutional reforms of the 1980s were a product of domestic party-policy commitments rather than influences emanating from the EU (Ioakimidis 1996: 348). Similarly, Greek scholars of local government explain the reforms at the prefecture in the 1980s and 1990s (creation of prefecture councils and prefecture self-government, respectively) as government responses to strong endogenous demands. Prefecture self-government was arguably, largely a victory of middle-level party cadres of PASOK and their strong independent assertion vis-à-vis the central government and party leadership in the 1990s (Chlepas 1999: 343; Christofilopoulou 1997: 56). Such an assertion was not merely an instance of personal-political ambition but also symptomatic of a new generation of political cadre who came of age in Greece's post-1974 democratic system with a mature and growing consciousness around local problems.

Some scholars dispute the role of the EU structural policy in regional reform in Greece, and challenge views about an incipient or ongoing decentralization process. They attribute the 1980s shift away from top-down regional policy characterized by centralization to one emphasizing local initiatives and endogenous potential not to structural funds, but instead to a broader process of deregulation and reduction of central state controls, related to the common market and the EC

'paradigm' (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 40). In fact, the declining trend of the Public Investment Budget (including those for regions) in the second half of the 1980s, in comparison to its upward trend in the first half of the decade, was a result of the EC-induced stabilization program to reduce public deficits (Plaskovitis 1994: 119).

Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas argue that the emphasis on decentralization and local development that accompanied the regional reforms from the 1980s onwards was more rhetorical than actual, underneath driven but the need to reduce state spending, and in practice implying that local authorities and regions are left to survive on and compete for their own resources (40). Part and parcel of the Community 'paradigm' of deregulation intended to compensate for the difficulties faced by the less developed regions, structural funds actually supply such resources, without, however, promoting regionalization and decentralization. If anything, in the second and the third CSF (1994-99 and 2000-06), the national component in terms of size of resources has significantly grown to the detriment of the regional component, partly related to the fact that the European Commission has shifted responsibility for structural funds to national governments (Andrikopoulou and Kafkalas 2004: 43).

Regardless of how they view the role of the EU structural policy in regional reform in Greece or its effects in reinforcing decentralization or conversely strengthening centralization, all studies reviewed here agree on one point where the core research interests of the EUROREG project lie. They all suggest that within the frame of implementing the EU structural funds, important if not fundamental shifts occur at the regional and local levels. These pertain to local actors involvement in subnational institutions and development projects, to their perceptions of the EU, and to their relations with political parties, in sum, to the nature of local and regional politics, with far-reaching implications for minority-inhabited and ethnically-mixed regions.

Regardless of whether EU structural policy is driven by economic deregulation defining the common market or by a premise of enhancing local democracy, a central characteristic of it embedded in the logic of its design and implementation is the mobilization of local actors' initiative. Ioannides and Petrakos succinctly capture the latter stating that structural funds implementation in Greece has amply demonstrated the need for enhancing local government capabilities, promoting civic organizations, improving efficiency and human resources (2000: 55). Despite ongoing problems with the centralized administrative structure, Ioannides and Petrakos argue that progressively there has been a widening of participation of local actors in regional policy within the CSFs, as well as mobilization of and initiative among local actors around development goals in certain areas and regions in the 1990s to a much greater extent than before (46).

The subnational reforms since the 1980s arguably had a cumulative effect in stimulating a process of local and regional awareness change, in which the implementation of the IMPs and subsequently of structural funds played a catalytic role. Despite their incompleteness and limitations, the creation of prefecture councils in the mid-1980s raised local awareness about power relations vis-à-vis the centre, as it was succeeded by the launching of the EU Integrated Mediterranean Projects (IMPs), a precursor to the EU structural policy (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992: 126). The same study on the nascent at the time prefecture councils found that while they lacked autonomy their status remained firmly defined by clientilistic relations with political parties. More importantly, they were instrumental in mounting regional 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).

A parallel study focusing on the IMPs in the 1980s found that even though control of latter had remained firmly with the centre, their implementation had diffused socializing effects as the obstacles to local authorities and interest group participation caused them considerable discontent. In this way, they proved to be a significant learning experience as they heightened their awareness about greater decentralization and local mobilization in sub-national structures and in the design and planning of regional policy (Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). Even though he attributes to the EU structural funds a limited, if not marginal role, in promoting regional reform in Greece, let alone in bringing about decentralization, Ioakimidis argues that the process of their implementation established systematic contacts of local authorities with the EU and brought the latter much closer to local society making it less remote. While the widened participation of subnational actors and social partners in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> CSF was mainly symbolic and formalistic rather than substantive, nonetheless the role and functions of regional administration and local government began to transform in response to the pressures and opportunities generated by the implementation of regional development projects (Ioakimidis 1996: 351).

Paraskevopoulos' study addresses the question whether the implementation of the EU structural funds encourages the creation of public-private networks (between subnational authorities and private interest groups, civil society or community organizations) in the regions (Paraskevopoulos 1998). He argues that weak civil society and entrenched clientilistic networks in Greece tend to undermine and constrain such a change. At the same time, Paraskevopoulos argues that some regions in Greece have been more successful in involving civil society, local communities and/or private investors in regional developing programs, and suggests the existence of social capital as a way to explain such a difference. As a concept paradigmatically employed by Robert Putnam (1992) in the study of Italian local-regional government, social capital denotes a pre-existing tradition of civic engagement characterizing some local communities and is centrally premised upon relations of interpersonal trust. Defined by a strong sense of public responsibility and local autonomy, social capital as a feature of horizontally-shaped citizens-government relations has been seen to be diametrically opposed to traditional party clientilism that is of a vertical nature creating hierarchical dependencies between society and the state. Paraskevopoulos' study suggests viewing social capital not necessarily as a pre-existing socio-cultural condition, but also as an outcome that can be formed in the context of implementing EU regional development programs (1998: 173).

In the case of Thrace, it can be argued that a local-regional politics and mobilization, being shaped by strong divisions along ethnic lines and diffused suspicion between the two communities, constrain the formation of social capital (in the sense of public-private synergies and cross-community mobilization on the basis of development goals). In her study of self-government prefecture in the region in the mid-1990s, Anagnostou, however, identified signs of an emerging, even if limited, sense of trust fostered in the course of cooperation between Christian and Muslim members of the prefecture council over the distribution and implementation of structural funds (Anagnostou 2001).

## 8.5 Overall assessment

Notwithstanding their limitations, the regional and prefecture local government reforms of the 1990s within the frame of the EU structural policy were only the beginning of a manifold and longer-term contestation about which level(s) of administration and government will manage to become dominant as a locus of power. Undoubtedly, its consequences have been and will be fundamental, even if still undetermined, potentially with far-reaching consequences for minority-majority relations in Thrace. Whether continued implementation of structural funds will promote the centrality of Greek regions as subnational institutions, or whether it will reinforce the decentralisation or centralisation of their functions and powers, remains an ongoing process.

The reconfiguration of Greek administrative and subnational structures within the frame of EU structural policy is not merely about formal decentralisation or centralisation, but about a more qualitative transformation in the nature of subnational institutions and politics. Whether it will be centred at the prefecture or at the region depends on contestation between the different levels and which institution manages to become the locus for the growth of a new regional awareness and identity. Whether it will draw its basis of legitimacy and support from electoral accountability or from efficient economic and development performance, a new level of subnational government is emerging.

Regardless of the extent to which the regions and prefectures become more attuned to central imperatives or conversely transform into decentralised and/or locally elected structures, their autonomous competencies have been greatly enhanced. They draw their legitimacy from their performance in implementing and promoting regional economic development within the frame of the CSF of the EU structural policy, and arguably open space for the representation and participation of the minority in decisions about resource distribution and regional development. Whether by being accountable to a local electorate, or responsible for effective implementation of the CSF Regional Development Programmes, prefecture self-government, the regional council and the Regional Secretary potentially challenge the nationalist priorities that in the previous decades defined state-local and minority-majority relations in Thrace.

The relevant literature outlined above, suggests that regional change is closely linked to the EU structural policy and possibly to the broader process of deregulation of regional economies. With regard to the main research interests of the EUROREG project, the implementation of structural funds in Greece is premised on and has inserted pressures for enhanced local mobilization, patterns of political participation and regional alliances driven by the logic of development. Does this occur in practice or do these continue to be predominantly shaped by the logic of nationalist opposition? Furthermore, what are the perceptions of local minority and majority actors about each other, about the central state, their nation, and about 'Europe'?

In order to empirically assess these questions, we plan to examine the extent of involvement and mobilisation of local government bodies, community organizations and private bodies in project implementation in Ksanthi and Rhodope prefecture: does such mobilization take place across ethnic lines or not?

The allocation of funds and projects in different areas and municipalities within the region (in the two prefectures under study): what kind of differences and conflicts arise and do these run along ethnic lines, political party lines, or other? Is there cooperation or division along ethnic community lines?

What are the views and perceptions of local government officials, members of the regional and prefecture council (from minority and majority): are these characterized by trust or suspicion of each other and the state?

And last but not least, what are the perceptions of Muslim and Christian leaders about the EU and 'Europe'? Do they see it as a means of a) protection of ethnic and cultural identity, c) modernization and economic development, d) a force of assimilation?

## **9 Annex II: Mapping of Research Competencies Report**

### **9.1.1. Summary**

The study of minorities and regions has been a relatively recent addition in the research and academic landscape in Greece, albeit each for different reasons. The subject of minorities remained until the 1990s largely outside the sphere of academic research and public discourse in general, for reasons explained in the main body of this report. The subject of regions also had a marginal place in the interests of the academic and research community largely because of the absence of regional units of administration and government until the early 1990s. Since then, however, the study of regional development, administrative reform and central-local relations has been the focus of a growing number of studies and writings. In mapping the research competencies below, we have selected some specialized research (and partly advocacy) institutes on regions and minorities, as well as individuals in existing university departments of social sciences, with expertise in one of the two topics.

#### *9.1.1 List of leading institutions and scholars*

##### **Research Institution 1: University of Macedonia of Economics and Social Sciences**

Egnatia Avenue 156, P.O. Box 1591  
54006 Thessaloniki  
Website page: [www.uom.gr](http://www.uom.gr)

Leading expert 1: Lois Labrianidis,  
E-mail address: [loisl@uom.gr](mailto:loisl@uom.gr)  
Professor, Department of Economics  
Regional Development and Policy Research Unit

Leading expert 2: Fotini Tsibiridou  
E-mail address: [ft@uom.gr](mailto:ft@uom.gr)  
Associate Professor of Social Anthropology  
Dept. of Balkan, Oriental and Slavonic Studies

##### **Research Institution 2: Minority Groups Research Centre (KEMO)**

The Minority Groups Research Centre is a non-profit making association formed in 1996. The reason for its creation was the aforementioned bias and lack of systematic scientific enquiry. The members of KEMO are young scientists as well as established

academics. KEMO aims at the multidimensional study of minority groups, minority languages and every form of cultural diversity at a general theoretical level as well as with regard to specific minority groups in Greece and elsewhere in the world. The centre employs a multidisciplinary approach approaching the subject of minorities through the lens of sociology, social anthropology, social psychology, political science, history, political geography, linguistics, law as well as economics. Both the establishing members of KEMO and later, the newer ones represent a variety of disciplines which we believe ensures the success of the Centre's work. In the Centre's website page, one can find several papers and documents pertaining to minorities both in Greek and in English. Website page: [www.kemo.gr](http://www.kemo.gr)

**Leading experts:** Dimitris Christopoulos ([christopoulos@synigoros.gr](mailto:christopoulos@synigoros.gr))  
Konstantinos Tsitselikis ([ktsitselikis@hotmail.com](mailto:ktsitselikis@hotmail.com))

They are scholars with expertise in international law and relations, particularly in relation to human rights and minorities.

### **Research Institution 3: Institute of Regional Development, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences**

The aim of the Institute is to promote scientific research in all subjects pertaining to the development process, through research on Greek regions, participation in EU research projects, involvement in policy making through participation in ministries and in local government associations, and the organization of seminars. The Institute has a specialized library on regional development issues. Website page: [www.panteion.gr](http://www.panteion.gr)

Leading expert: Panagiotis Getimis, Professor  
Leoforos Sygrou 130  
11741 Athens  
Tel: +30-210-9248680

### **Research Institution 4: Aristotelion University of Thessaloniki, Dept. of Political Science**

Website page: [www.auth.gr](http://www.auth.gr)

**Leading expert:** Vemund Aarbakke  
Lecturer of History, E-mail: [vaarbakk@polsci.auth.gr](mailto:vaarbakk@polsci.auth.gr)  
Vemund Aarbakke has extensive expertise in the study of Thrace and its minority.

### **Research Institution 5: National Kapodistrian University of Athens, Dept. of Education**

Website page: [www.uoa.gr](http://www.uoa.gr)

Leading experts: Thalia Dragona, Professor of sociology of education  
E-mail: [drathal@ath.forthnet.gr](mailto:drathal@ath.forthnet.gr)

Thalia Dragona together with Professor Anna Frangoudaki have been scientific coordinators of a large project that has been running since 1998 until the present. The project is funded by the EU and the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and its goal is to reform the Greek-speaking section of minority education in Thrace.

**Research Institution 6: Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences**

Address: Leoforos Sygrou 130, 11741 Athens

Website page: [www.panteion.gr](http://www.panteion.gr)

**Leading expert 1:** Alexis Heraclides, Associate Professor of International Relations  
Dept. of Political Science and History  
Alexis Heraclides is an expert on minority conflicts and the international system

**Leading expert 2:** Marilena Koppa  
Assistant Professor of comparative politics and expert on the Balkans  
Dept. of International Relations



## **10 Annex II**

### **Mapping of the research competencies**