

# DIPLOMATIC INSTITUTIONS OF THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN WESTERN THRACE AND MINORITY POLICY MAKING

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## Abstract

The only recognized by the state minority in Greece is the Muslim minority in Western Thrace. This minority is populated by Greek citizens that are Muslim in religion. The legal frame they belong to is defined by the Treaty of Lausanne and the Convention about the exchange of populations. In 1922 the Muslim minority of Thrace consisted of 86,000 people and in 1991 this number increased to 97,604. The minority includes three ethnic groups: Turkish people, Pomaks and Gypsies. Each of these groups preserves their own language and traditions.

The policy that has been followed by the Greek Governments the past years regarding the handling of the problems of the minority can be characterized by moderation and consensus, especially since 1991 when law equality between Christians and Muslims was implemented. This is a viewpoint shared by some non-governmental organizations that have been closely monitoring the updates concerning minority issues.

Whatever occurs in minorities is basically an issue of domestic policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintains a consulting role in collaboration with the other Ministries.

This research examines the diplomatic institutions of the Muslim minority, the minority policy making and the role of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The research is based on bibliographical and press retrospection. The research records the history of the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, it briefly presents its current situation, it outlines the responsibilities of the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it describes the bilateral relationship with Greece and it presents the Turkish viewpoint regarding the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. The research also analyzes the role of the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Turkish General Consulate in Komotini. The research seeks to explore the political interventions in the local community, the minority policy making, the related organization in both Greece and Europe and finally the attitude of the Mass Media.

The outcomes of the research show that the most important policymaker diplomatic institution is the Turkish General Consulate in Komotini.

**Key words:** Diplomatic institutions, Muslim minority, Greece

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## 1. THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN GREECE: A BRIEF RETROSPECTION

The term “Muslim minority of Western Thrace” includes the Greek citizens that are Muslims in religion. Their legal framework is specified by the Treaty of Lausanne and by the Treaty of population transfer<sup>1</sup>. The Muslim minority of Western Thrace presents two special characteristics: a) it is divided into two groups: the traditional Muslims who reject laypersons and Kemal Ataturk’s positions and b) the modernists. Ethnologically speaking, the Muslims are divided into Turks, Pomaks and Romani people<sup>2</sup>.

The minority of Western Thrace has been characterized as “Muslim” (article 45) due to its ethnological and racial oddity. Also, religion is the central characteristic for minorities and the criterion for the population transfer<sup>3</sup>. The term is not a random choice. On the contrary, much attention was given to the Islamism of the era of the Treaty of Lausanne<sup>4</sup>.

By signing the Treaty, the two involved countries carried the responsibility to insure the freedom of the citizens regardless the sex, the ethnicity, the language, the origin and the religion (article 37). The minority of Western Thrace was given civil and political rights (article 39), legal protection (article 40), education (article 41) and protection of the right to express freely its religion (article 42).

After the population transfer and the Treaty of Lausanne, the minority of Western Thrace is called to face a new situation, to live in peace with the Greeks. When it comes to Greece, the Treaty of Lausanne meant that the war between Turkey and Greece ended and peace started. Furthermore, the Treaty regulated the issue of the protection of the minorities that would stay in Greece and in Turkey and the issue of the protection of their religious freedom<sup>5</sup>.

Three Muslim minorities stayed in Greece after the signature of the Treaty, the minority of Komotini, of Ksanthi and of Didimoticho. Those minorities were ruled by conservative muftis who were opposed to Kemal<sup>6</sup>. The three mufti communities regulated their own religious affairs and the legal affairs of the Muslims of the minority according to the sacred Muslim law (Sariah). Every mufti community had an elected council called “Operational Committee” that handled the Muslim property, that is the temples, the Vakoufis, the schools ect.<sup>7</sup>

The Greek State saw to the education of the Muslim children of Western Thrace. Since 1925-1926, 267 minority schools were built with a total number of students 6,326. These schools were financially supported by the Greek state, according to the law regarding the support of the

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<sup>1</sup> Treaty of Lausanne, articles 37-45 for the protection of minorities

<sup>2</sup> A.Paresoglou Balkans – From bipolarism to the new age, Athens 1994, page 816

<sup>3</sup> S.Troumpeta, Building identities for the Muslims of Thrace, Athens 2001, page 32

<sup>4</sup> N.Liazos, The Turkish school books of the minority educational system and the development of cross-cultural relationship between Muslims and Christians in Western Thrace, Doctorate thesis, Thessaloniki, 2006, page 31

<sup>5</sup> S.Minaidi, The Muslims’ religious freedom in the Greek lawful community, Komotini, 1990, pages 220-221

<sup>6</sup> L.Livani, Greece and minorities, Athens, 1995, page 174

<sup>7</sup> S.Soltaridis, The history of the mufti communities of Western Thrace, Athens, 1997, page 81

minority educational system (law 2781) with 170,000 drachmas<sup>8</sup>. The Muslim minority had the ability to choose the teachers. The schools could arrange their own programs as long as it was in accordance with the formal school program of the state. All the courses were taught in Turkish. The Greek language was taught one hour per day by teachers chosen by the Greek State.

## **2. THE MODERN IMAGE OF THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN THRACE.**

The Muslim minority in Greece (in Turkish Yunanistan müslüman azınlığı, in Bulgarian мюсюлманско малцинство на Гърция mjusjulmansko maltsinstvo na Gărcija and in Roma Xoraxani selyori andi Elada) is the one and only legally recognized minority in Greece.

In 1922, the Muslim minority of Thrace numbered 86,000 people. The census of 1991 showed that there were 97,604 Muslims, that is 0,95% of the total Greek population and 29% of the population of Thrace (338,000 people). The minority is comprised by three ethnicities: 50% of Turkish origin, 35% Pomaks and 15% of Romani origin. Each of these groups maintains their own language and traditions and this is why it is a religious minority. The minority lives in Thrace. 55,000 live in the prefecture of Rodopi (out of a total of 110,828 habitats), 37,000 live in the prefecture of Ksanthi (out of 101,856 habitats) and 7,000 live in the prefecture of Evros (out of 150,580 habitats).

The policy making of the Greek governments during the past few years, especially since the 1991 equality laws for Muslims and Christians, could be characterized moderate when it come to the problems of the minority. This is also the conclusion of the non-governmental organizations that watch closely the latest developments.

The minority issues are mainly issues of internal policy. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a consulting role in the coordination of the other related ministries. The involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the issues of the minority in Thrace, of the Greek minority in Constantinople, Imvros and Tenedos, aims to the adherence of the amendments of the Treaty of Peace and of the Treaty of Lausanne.

### **2.1 Educational issues**

There are 235 minority primary schools in Thrace and the courses are taught both in Turkish and Greek, as the Treaty of Lausanne says. There are 440 Muslim teachers working in the schools. 260 of them are graduates from the Special Pedagogic Academy of Thessaloniki, 82 are secondary education graduates, 90 are graduates from Turkish schools and 9 of them are specially invited from Turkey.

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<sup>8</sup> .Soltaridis, The history of the mufti communities of Western Thrace, Athens, 1997, page 82-83

In Ksanthi and Komotini, there are two High schools that operate under a mixed educational system of teaching both the Turkish and the Greek language. In these schools, there are 12 Muslim teachers who have graduated from Turkish universities in Greece and 7 teachers who have been specially invited from Turkey. It is a fact that the technical infrastructure of the schools does not allow the administration of all the interested students and thus the students are apportioned by lots. This fact has been severely criticized by a part of the Muslim leadership but in fact almost all the application requests are satisfied, according to the General Secretary of the District of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace and the Minority Education Coordinator.

In the wild mountainous area of Ksanthi, where most Ponaks live, there are Greek schools. These schools have integrated courses such as the analysis of religions in Turkish and the reading of the Koran in Arabic.

According to a legal regulation (article 4 1.2621/1998), the two minority secondary schools, in Komotini and in Echinós, (known as “Ierospoudastiria”) are equal to the church lyceums that are completed after six years of study.

As far as the schools books are concerned, the Turkish side submitted 19 titles of school books in order to be approved by the respective Greek authorities to be used as school books.

The Greek government is trying to make further progress regarding the learning of the Greek language by the Muslims. There are currently two research programs running, which for the time being seem to be rather effective. The first program is called “Education of the Muslim children” and it is held by the Special Secretary of Education of the expatriates and the Cross-cultural Education of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the National and Kapodestrian University of Athens. The main target of the program is to publish books that are appropriate for children whose native language is not Greek. The second program is called “Cross-cultural educational support for students in Thrace” and it is held by the National Youth Foundation. The target of this program is to facilitate the adaptation of the students to the Greek educational system and to relieve parents from the heavy cost of education. Both programs are funded by the European Union. There are also programs of additional teaching, beyond the typical school schedule, in order to further support the Muslim students of the secondary education.

The Ministry of Education has launched the initiative to promote the Special Pedagogic Academy of Thessaloniki into the Higher education system. What is more, the project of founding the department “Muslim, Pedagogic and Religious Studies” in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, is currently under process.

## **2.2 Administrative-Religious issues**

As far as the muftis in Thrace are concerned, it must be said that they are appointed, not elected. In Turkey, muftis are appointed and ceased by the administrator of the prefecture according to his judgment. According to the Islamic law, muftis in non-islamic countries must be appointed

by the state as long as the state does not interfere with the religious issues of the Muslims. In Greece muftis are appointed by the Administration (law 1920 regarding the “Muslim religious officials”). The law defines the qualifications, the appointing and ceasing procedure of the mufti, his operational state, his duties and the operational regulations of the mufti communities. Another reason why the mufti is appointed by the administration is because the mufti has juridical duties when it comes to family and hereditary issues between Muslims. The administrator of the prefecture defines the start of the choice procedure. The choice is made by a part of the Muslim elite and the mufti is appointed by a presidential edict after the motion by the Minister of National Education and Religion. For the first time in 1990, a university degree in Islamic theology was considered to be a prerequisite. From 1923 to 1990, the muftis were appointed by the prefecture without actual control. The actions of M.Agga and I.Serif turned the 1990 elections into a parody and they were considered to be legal offense against the authority of the legal muftis of Ksanthi and Komotini, M.Sinikoglou and M.Tzemali.

### **3. TURKEY AND THE MUSLIM MINORITY**

The minority of Western Thrace has been characterized “Muslim” due to the ethnological and racial oddity of the population. Religion is a central element in the identity of the minority and a main criterion for the population transfer<sup>9</sup>. The term has not been chosen randomly. On the contrary, much attention was given to the importance of Islamism during the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne.

It is known that the Muslim minority of Western Thrace is attempted to be manipulated by Ankara<sup>10</sup>, through the Turkish embassy in Komotini. However, there are several attempts from abroad to achieve full recognition of the Turkish minority in Western Thrace.

At the same time, Erdogan’s government has prioritized the issues of the Turkish minority and more particularly its relationship with the Greek government.

In December 2007, during an official visit in Greece, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Mpampatzian, called the population to stand up for their rights even if they have to go to Hague.

In January 2008, the Turkish Prime Minister Tagip Erdogan, in a common appearance with his Greek peer K. Karamanlis, talked about 150,000 members.

Finally, in December 2007, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Mpampatzian, urged the members of the Muslim minority to pursuit their rights to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

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<sup>9</sup> S.Troumpeta, Building identities for the Muslims of Thrace, Athens 2001, page

<sup>10</sup> Mpekiaris D. “The corrosion of Thrace” Magazine Diplomacy, edition 52

Since the 1970s the “Turks of the Western Thrace” have developed activity abroad, especially in Germany, in order to achieve full recognition of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace.

#### **4. THE ROLE OF THE TURKISH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

The Greek and the Turkish Ministries of Foreign Affairs are working together on issues like the Turkish minority in Thrace and the Greek minorities in Constantinople, Imvros and Tenedos. The objective is to adhere to the international provisions of the Treaty of Peace and the Protocols that were signed in Lausanne in 1923.

The issues of the minority are mainly issues of domestic policy and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs have a rather consulting role.

Concerning the “Muslim minority of Western Thrace” the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has:

1. attempted to review and alter the territorial “status quo” that was defined by the Treaty of Lausanne and other international treaties and the legal “status quo” of the water and air space by raising controversy against the sovereignty rights of Greece.
2. The Turkish embassy in Athens submits the titles of the school books intended for the minority schools, in order for them to be approved by the Greek Ministry of Education.
3. The Turkish government has prioritized the issues of the Muslim minority in Thrace.
4. The Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ali Mpampatzian, urged the members of the Muslim minority to pursue their rights to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.
5. The Turkish government is trying to fully manipulate the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, especially through the Turkish embassy in Komotini.
6. There is a General embassy in Komotini which is making foreign and expansive policy.
7. The General embassy in Komotini, in accordance with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is taking intensive action in the local community and is organizing several events (political interference in elections, support of anti-hellenic propaganda, support of non-governmental organizations, Association of mutual assistance of Turks of Western Thrace).

#### **5. TURKISH GENERAL EMBASSY IN KOMOTINI**

The Turkish General Embassy was established in Komotini in 1923 as a response to the establishment of the Greek General Embassy in Constantinople. The obvious reason of these establishments was the protection of the minorities, both the Greek and the Turkish, that were excluded from the provisions of the transfer of populations.

In 1923, the Greek minority in Constantinople numbered 300,000 people (the total population of the city was 1,000,000) and the Greeks in Imvros and Tenedos were 12,000. Today, the Greek minority numbers only 2,000 people, most of which are old. In 1923, the Muslims of Thrace were 90,000 while today they are 110,000.

### **5.1 The political interference of the Turkish General Embassy**

After the retrospection of newspapers, magazines<sup>11</sup> and websites<sup>12</sup>, we can sum up the political interference of the Turkish General Embassy to the following activities:

- Political interference during election periods. This is the most known activity. The course of action is determined by the “Consulting Committee” and it became crystal clear in June 2008 with the proposal to vote “white” in the Euro elections.
- The embassy often acts against the non-turkish minorities of the region. The Pomaks and Romani people that decide not to follow the equation “Muslim=Turk”, find themselves against the embassy<sup>13</sup>. The embassy canceled the creation of cultural association by Pomaks in order not to let them rally together.
- The Greek army organizes free medical check-ups for the people living in isolated pomak villages. The “Consulting Committee” of the minority organizes exactly the same offer so that the Pomaks will not believe that Greece gives more to Pomaks than Turkey.
- Relationship with students: the Minority Scientists Association has founded several associations in Greece in order to keep in touch with the students that have graduated from Greek schools and have entered Greek universities.
- Support to individuals in order to meet Turkish interests (sadik, pseudo-muftis, illegal unions ect.)
- Support of anti-hellenic propaganda abroad (Association of mutual assistance of Turks of Western Thrace).
- Presence in Pomaki festivals as if they are Turkish.
- Honor to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who by the Greek Parliament is declared to be the main responsible for the Greek genocide.
- Opposition to Muslims who wish to study in the public education system.
- Other activities that have a huge impact on the everyday economic, social and political life<sup>14</sup>.

## **6. THE TURKISH CONSULTING COMMITTEE OF THE MINORITY IN WESTERN THRACE**

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<sup>11</sup> Most articles are written by ethicists and extremists both Greek and Turkish

<sup>12</sup> Most sites belong to radical ethnical groups both Greek and Turkish

<sup>13</sup> Th.Malkidis-N.Kokkas Alterations in the collective identity of Pomaks, Ksanthi 2006

<sup>14</sup> Th.Malkidis “he role of the family and women in the minority Muslim societies of the Thrace”, Supervision of Social Studies, 116 A’/2005, pages 51-78

In the late 70s and early 80s, the Turkish minority of Thrace felt the need to establish an organization that would deal with the pressures of the totalitarian regime of Junta. This organization was named “Supreme Consulting Committee of the Turkish Minority” and was comprised by elite individuals from the minority. An Executive Committee was also founded in order to turn the decisions into practice.

The Executive Committee of the minority of Thrace was renamed to Consulting Committee of the Turkish minority in 1994. Until then it served as a supervisor of the decisions made by the Supreme Committee. In 1997, the Consulting Committee changed its constitutional and adopted a new form. It is now a committee that is comprised by the presidents of the Associations, by the current and former MPs, the mayors and the leaders of the local authorities.

This was the form of the Consulting Committee until the assembly of the Supreme Committee in 2006. The assembly decided to expand the membership of the Committee by including representatives from several organizations and institutions that serve the interests of the minority.

The Consulting Committee is run by the president, the two vice presidents and the general secretariat, who are elected every year. Nowadays, the Consulting Committee numbers 74 members.

The activities of the Consulting Committee are known and of course its role is not merely consulting. It is closely connected to the embassy and its role is to guide and successfully manipulate the minority<sup>15</sup>. Every time there is an election, the committee “suggests” what to vote, either officially (Euro elections 2009) or unofficially. Since 2008, the committee has a website online<sup>16</sup>, where it uploads articles from Thracian newspapers, allegations for the abolishment of human rights, announcements ect. The ways the ideas are expressed are not extreme. However, the word “minority” is always accompanied by the definition “Turkish” and also there is no hesitation to make straight pointers to the government. With a recent post (20/5/2009), the committee asked from the government to abolish the limit of 3% for the entrance of Muslim people in the Parliament and abolish the limit for the two prefecture administrators of Rodopi-Evros and Drama, Kavala, Ksanthi. Through the website, the committee also requested that the minorities of Rhodes and Kos will be officially recognized.

## **7. THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF THE TURKS OF WESTERN THRACE**

The European Federation of the Turks of Western Thrace<sup>17</sup> is a Turkish non-governmental organization. The founding members are 29 associations of Turks of Western Thrace. It is a leader organization which operates on a European level. It is rightfully represented to the

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<sup>15</sup> Sophia Christophoridou: *christoforidou@makthes.gr*, 13/12/2009

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bttadk.org>

<sup>17</sup> More information: *www.abttf.org*



Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. The Federation is the seventh Turkish organization to be represented. The E.F.T.W.T is the first organization of Turks of Western Thrace to be recognized by the U.N and has thus gained the right to be represented in all the U.N centers, in New York, Vienna and Geneva. The E.F.T.W.T has a special place in the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and its role is to actively participate in the councils and consult the U.N about the Turkish minority issues. The E.F.T.W.T is an organization that operated under the German laws. As it is declared by the Federation itself, it is an organization that was founded by Turks of Western Thrace who were forced to immigrate to Germany.

The official objective of the E.F.T.W.T is to address the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, to search for solutions, to ensure the rights of its members, to protect and develop the cultural identity of the minority population in Europe and to solve the legal, political, economic and social problems that emerge. In addition, the E.F.T.W.T is fighting for the improvement of the relationship between Turkey and Greece by the means of conferences, panels and meetings. The Federation has also created group projects, whose aim it to bring the two civilizations closer through the organization of meetings, fairs and councils. However, whether or not the Federation wishes to truly improve the relationship between Turkey and Greece is a rather controversial issue. The truth is that the Federation's positions are similar to Ankara's aggressive policy positions when it comes to the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. The Federation's positions are also often in total opposition to the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne, which clearly determines the status of the relationship between the two countries.

According to the charter of the E.F.T.W.T, the Federation is "totally independent from political parties, state services and governments". However, it is obvious that the Federation serves the interests of Ankara when it comes to minority issues. It is impressive how such a big organization –as the Federation itself claims to be- based in Germany, has developed its whole frame of perception of the minorities on the Greek case.

Based on this frame, the E.F.T.W.T is accusing Greece of breaking the rights of the Muslims in Thrace and also of isolating and targeting the members of the minority.

The Federation is also accusing Greece of purposely organizing a plan of installing Pontiacs from countries of the former Soviet Union in order to target the Muslim minority in Thrace and jeopardize the current composition of the population in the area.

Finally, the Federation is projecting issues of education, property, use of the Turkish language and religious freedom.

It is worth mentioning that the Federation does not have a specific, official stance regarding the infringement of the rights of the Kurdish people, the Greeks and the other minorities that live in Turkey. What is more, the Federation has not yet given a response concerning the political refugees and prisoners of the left.

All the former presidents of the E.F.T.W.T were born in the prefectures of Rodopi and Ksanthi and at some point of their lives migrated to Germany, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

Recently, the president of the E.F.T.W.T, Chalil Chalimpoglou, expressed<sup>18</sup> his intention to create a Lobby of Turks of Western Thrace.

## **8. CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF TURKISH WOMEN IN THE PREFECTURE OF RODOPI**

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 2001, some women of the area decided to found a union by the name:” Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the prefecture of Rodopi”. The headquarters of the union are in Komotini, the capital city of the prefecture. According to the charter (2<sup>nd</sup> article), the objectives of the union are a) to set a meeting place for the women to promote and cover their cultural, educational and recreational needs b) to socially, morally and spiritually uplift their spirits c) to create bonds among the members and d) to preserve and disperse their folklore cultural legacy through the revitalization of local customs in cooperation with the local authorities.

The Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the prefecture of Rodopi organizes several cultural events which occasionally provoke controversy. Such an example is the competition of “Traditional Turkish Food of Western Thrace” which took place in a hotel in Komotini. The co-organizer of the event was the magazine “The voice of the teacher”. The competition was promoted by a local newspaper, which was under the influence of the Turkish Embassy in Komotini<sup>19</sup>.

However, it must be said that the Greek state was against the foundation of this union. More particularly, the court of common pleas of Rodopi rejected the approval of the charter of the union. According to the court decision: “only Greeks can found unions and despite the fact that the women are Greek, the proposed name of the union suggests that they consider themselves Turks, with Turkish national conscience and that they intend to promote the Turkish values in Greece”. The request of the union was also rejected by the court of appeal in Thrace and by the Supreme Court of Greece. However, the European Court of Human Rights justified their cause<sup>20</sup>.

## **9. MINORITY POLICY: ORGANIZATIONS-NEWSPAPERS-WEBSITES**

In order to complete the image of the minority policy, it would be wise mentioning the organizations/unions that operate in Greece and that are closely connected to the Federation and the satellite relations with the Turkish embassy in Komotini. Those organizations are:

- The “Party of Friendship, Equality and Peace”

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<sup>18</sup> Statements in the Turkish electronic newspaper [www.trakyanethaber.com](http://www.trakyanethaber.com)

<sup>19</sup> Newspaper Brilik (2/5/2010) in translation from <http://tourkikanea.wordpress.com>

<sup>20</sup> Verdict by the European Court for Human Rights, Strasbourg, 27/3/2008

- The “Committee of preachers and catechists”
- The “Eski Iskeçe Müftüsü Mehmet Emin Aga”
- The “Gümülcine Müftüsü Ibrahim Serif”
- The “Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the prefecture of Rodopi”
- The “Association of the Turkish Minority Movement for the Human and Minority rights”
- The “Association of religious temples in Western Thrace”
- The “Minority scientists association of Western Thrace”
- The “Union of graduate teachers from the Islamic secondary schools (Ierospoudastiria)”
- The “Turkish youth federation of Komotini”
- The “Turkish Union of Ksanthi”
- The “Union of Turkish teachers of Western Thrace”
- The “Educational and cultural minority association Setsek”
- The “Educational and cultural minority Alapente”
- The “Protection Committee of the Vakoufi and Vertiskos Monastery Seid Ali Soutan”

The minority population is watching the traditional channels for its information: Turkish newspapers (often passed out from hand to hand) and the Consulting Committee’s mechanisms.

The newspaper “Birlik” (headquarters in Komotini<sup>21</sup>) asked from the prime minister to expel (!) the general secretariat of the district of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace “because he had an unfavorable stance (towards the minority) and showed no respect and understanding”. There are very few texts that are published in Greek. One of them has the following title: “Ethnic census: an unknown concept for the multiracial country of the Greeks”. The others newspapers of Thrace, written in Turkish<sup>22</sup>, focus on the relationship between Turkey and Greece and often reproduce the issues raised in the website of the E.F.T.W.T. regarding the activities of the minority MPs.

There are also many informational websites<sup>23</sup> with green and black background or the flag of the “Republic of Turks of Western Thrace”, a fact that gives us an insight about the index of the websites. Internet has given the minority the possibility to communicate its ideas and believes way beyond the borders of Thrace and Turkey.

## 10. SUMMARY-CONCLUSIONS

After careful retrospection of the bibliography, we conclude that: The Greek and the Turkish Ministries of Foreign Affairs are working together on issues like the Turkish minority in Thrace and the Greek minorities in Constantinople, Imvros and Tenedos. The objective is to adhere to

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.birlikgazetesi.info>

<sup>22</sup> [www.milliet.gr](http://www.milliet.gr), <http://www.azinlikca.net/>, <http://www.trakyadan.com/>, <http://www.rodopruzgari.com>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.batitrakyalilar.com> and <http://www.westtrakien.de>

the international provisions of the Treaty of Peace and the Protocols that were signed in Lausanne in 1923.

The issues of the minority are mainly issues of domestic policy and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs have a rather consulting role.

When it comes to the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, the policy of the Greek Government, especially after the 1991 equality laws for the Christians and the Muslims, could be characterized moderate in the handling of the minority problems.

The Greek government is implementing a policy that takes care of the administrative, educational, religious and developmental issues.

The Turkish side has attempted to review and alter the territorial “status quo” that was defined by the Treaty of Lausanne and other international treaties by raising controversy against the sovereignty rights of Greece. The Turkish government has prioritized the issues of the Muslim minority in Thrace and is trying to fully manipulate the Muslim minority of Western Thrace, especially through the Turkish embassy in Komotini.

The most important diplomatic factor making minority policy in Thrace is Turkish General Embassy in Komotini. It has developed intense political action in the local community in official or unofficial ways.

Equally important are many associations and organizations, with the Supreme Consulting committee being the most important, that work alone or in collaboration with Turkish General Embassy in Komotini.

There are also attempts for recognition of the minority on an international level. Since the 1970s the self-called “Turks of Western Thrace” have developed a course of action abroad, especially in Germany, which aims to gain full recognition of the alleged Turkish minority of Western Thrace.

The organization European Federation of Turks of Western Thrace (E.F.T.W.T) is a non-governmental organization, whose founding members are 29 Turkish Associations of Western Thrace.

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