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**ACCEPT**  
PLURALISM

## **Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in Greece**

Anna Triandafyllidou, Ifigeneia Kokkali  
European University Institute



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
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**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE**  
**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES**



# **Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in Greece**

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**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE**

**ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES**

**Work Package 1 – Overview of National Discourses  
on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity**

**D1.1 Country Reports on Tolerance and Cultural  
Diversity Discourses**

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**ACCEPT PLURALISM** is a Research Project, funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Program. The project investigates whether European societies have become more or less tolerant during the past 20 years. In particular, the project aims to clarify: (a) how is tolerance defined conceptually, (b) how it is codified in norms, institutional arrangements, public policies and social practices, (c) how tolerance can be measured (whose tolerance, who is tolerated, and what if degrees of tolerance vary with reference to different minority groups). The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium conducts original empirical research on key issues in school life and in politics that thematise different understandings and practices of tolerance. Bringing together empirical and theoretical findings, ACCEPT PLURALISM generates a State of the Art Report on Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Handbook on Ideas of Tolerance and Cultural Diversity in Europe, a Tolerance Indicators' Toolkit where qualitative and quantitative indicators may be used to score each country's performance on tolerating cultural diversity, and several academic publications (books, journal articles) on Tolerance, Pluralism and Cultural Diversity in Europe. The ACCEPT PLURALISM consortium is formed by 18 partner institutions covering 15 EU countries. The project is hosted by the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and co-ordinated by Prof. Anna Triandafyllidou.

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## **Executive Summary**

*Until 20 years ago, Greece was considered largely a mono-ethnic, mono-cultural and mono-religious country, a true 'nation-state' where the dominant nation, notably people of ethnic Greek descent and Christian Orthodox religion accounted for approx. 98% of the total population. The dominant definition of the nation was ethno-cultural and religious, while civic and territorial elements were of secondary importance in defining who is Greek. This view of the nation as a community of descent and culture was reflected in the Greek citizenship law which until recently was based almost exclusively on the jus sanguinis principle.*

*The Greek state formally recognises only the existence of a religious Muslim minority in western Thrace that accounts for less than 0.2% of the total population of Greece. It also recognises numerically even smaller and relatively invisible religious minorities of Greek Jews, Catholics and Protestants. During the 1990s and following the dismantling of Yugoslavia, a Slavic speaking Macedonian minority has mobilised ethnically in northern Greece but its claims have been ignored (and to a certain extent suppressed) by the Greek state and the local Greek speaking majority. Part of Greece's native minorities is also a relatively large Roma population (300-350,000 people) that is often subject to racist and discriminatory behaviours.*

*During the last two decades Greece has become the host of more than a million returning co-ethnics, co-ethnic immigrants and foreigners – these groups accounting now for more than 10% of the total resident population. In particular Greece received in the late 1980s and during the 1990s approx. 150,000 Pontic Greeks (co-ethnic returnees from the former Soviet Union) and nearly 240,000 ethnic Greek Albanians from southern Albania (the so-called Voreioi-pirotos). In addition during the 1990s and 2000s Greece has experienced significant inflows of economic migrants from eastern European, Asian and African countries. The total legal immigrant population is currently estimated at just under 700,000, the largest groups being Albanians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Georgians, Ukrainians, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi.*

*In order to understand better the kind of diversity challenges that the country has to deal with it is important to divide these groups into three categories: native minorities, co-ethnic migrants, and 'other' migrants.*

*With regard to **native minority groups**, the only officially recognised minority of Greece is a religious one: the Muslims of western Thrace (in the north-western border with Turkey), who are protected by the Lausanne Treaty of 1923. In line with this treaty the Muslims of western Thrace enjoy a special set of cultural, religious and educational rights including the possibility to be judged under shari'a law, bilingual schools, and bilingualism in public administration. Comprising individuals of Turkish origin, Roma and Slav-speaking Pomaks, prior to World War II, the Muslims of Thrace coexisted largely as a religious community. Since the 1970s, the minority has mobilized to assert a common Turkish identity, thus stirring anxieties among Greek elites and the public opinion. Although an initially repressive state policy in the 1970s and 1980s has been replaced since 1991 with a series of measures ensuring the non-discrimination of minority members by the state and the full respect of their individual rights, the Greek state tenaciously refuses to recognise their existence as an ethnic (Turkish) community and is particularly sensitive to any assertions of collective ethnic rights on the part of the minority.*

*Apart from the above officially recognised minority, there is a Slav-speaking population of northwestern Greece, widely known along Greece as Slav-Macedonians. These latter had mobilised politically in the 1990s, raising claims of cultural and linguistic recognition. During the last decade however the issue has largely disappeared from the public debate. In any case, the Greek state has so far refused to recognise officially this group as a minority and to satisfy any of the claims of the Slav-speaking activists mobilised.*

*A native minority group that is worth special attention is the Roma population of Greece, i.e. the Roma that are not part of the Muslim minority of Thrace and thus are neither officially recognised nor protected in any specific way. The Roma live scattered throughout mainland Greece and make a living through metal and other garbage recycling, petty trade and farm work. Their phenotypical features*



*and their particular life style (often nomadic and tent-dwelling, under age marriages, patriarchal extended families) set them apart from the majority population. Roma children are not welcome in mainstream schools and although segregated schooling is forbidden often local authorities and parent's associations try to separate Roma children from their children at schools. Having dwelled in Greece for several centuries, the Roma challenge from within the dominant view of a Christian Orthodox Greek-speaking white and modern nation that Greeks have of themselves.*

*Contrary to the native minorities, co-ethnic migrant populations are considered as integral part of the nation and are seen as relatively easy to integrate into the mainstream national culture. **Co-ethnic migrants** include Pontic Greeks and ethnic Greek Albanians who have arrived in Greece largely in the 1990s as a result of the 1989 debacle of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The former used to live in the Southern Republics of the former URSS (mainly along the Black Sea), while the latter were members of the recognised Greek minority in Southern Albania. Both the above groups do not pose any ethnic diversity challenges to the dominant Greek majority, since they are considered as co-ethnic or omogeneis in Greek (meaning of the same the same genos, i.e. of the same descent). Still, they certainly pose cultural and linguistic challenges even if overall they are well-accepted by and in the Greek society mainly thanks to their Greek origin.*

*'Other' immigrant populations in Greece include Albanians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians and Georgians, who actually form the oldest and largest immigrant groups in Greece and who challenge Greek society with their cultural or linguistic otherness but not really religiously as they are largely Christian (or non practicing Muslims). Romanians and Bulgarians technically are not considered migrants any longer as they have become EU citizens. Some of the more recently arrived groups, notably Pakistani and Bangladeshi citizens pose a great challenge to Greek society because of their different phenotype and Muslim religion even if numerically these communities are still relatively small.*

*At the face of a 10% immigrant population Greece is slowly and to a certain extent reluctantly adapting its education and citizenship policies. A first step in this direction has been the reform of the citizenship law which took place only one year ago (in March 2010). This reform has provided for the nearly automatic naturalisation of children born in Greece of foreign parents provided their parents live legally in Greece. It has included provisions also for the naturalisation of children who have arrived in Greece at an early age and have attended for six years or more a Greek school. Last but not least the law has also facilitated the naturalisation of foreigners who live for 7 years or more in Greece. In education there have been efforts to train teachers in intercultural pedagogy and receptions classes are provided for non Greek speaking pupils but overall there is no concerted effort to accommodate cultural and religious diversity in school life. Difference is mainly seen as a 'problem' of the foreign children. The ideal outcome is their assimilation into the rest of the school population.*

*Indeed overall there is as yet no re-consideration of what it means to be Greek in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The still dominant definition of national identity does not embrace minority and immigrant groups, who are largely considered to be (and at a certain extend remain indeed) outside the Greek society. The recent citizenship law reform is actually seen with suspicion by many majority Greeks who disagree with the opening up of citizenship to people of non Greek descent.*

*In the public and political discourses on minorities and immigrants, the tolerance of their cultural diversity is understood in Greece as liberal tolerance, meaning that one refrains from interfering with practices, individuals or groups that one does not approve of. Unlike the on-going discourses in Northern and Western Europe, concepts and norms such as liberalism or pluralism are not used in Greece. Besides, while multiculturalism is gradually being accepted as a fact, multiculturalism is seen as a normative approach that predicates the co-existence of different communities. It is thus understood as a descriptive state of affairs signalling the parallel existence of several ethnic and cultural groups that are not integrated with one another into one whole. By contrast, Greek policy makers and scholars tend to favour intercultural dialogue meant as the integration of individuals – and certainly not communities – into Greek society. Interculturalism is thus understood as a normative*

*approach that allows for individuals of different cultures to enter into mutually respectful dialogue. In the public debate, the intercultural approach is seen as favourable to societal cohesion. In practice, however, there is little change in education, anti-discrimination or political participation policies towards this direction.*

*All in all, the main concept and perspective adopted in Greece to deal with cultural, ethnic and religious diversity is that of integration, while notions such as tolerance, acceptance, respect or recognition are more or less absent from the relevant debates. Yet, integration is used rather loosely to refer more often than not to **assimilation** and much more rarely to a mutual engagement of the different groups to form a cohesive society. Interestingly, the long-existing native minorities of the country are not seen as relevant to this debate as if the two types of diversity – the native and the immigrant – cannot be addressed with the same type of policies. The report questions this artificial division between native and incoming diversity and proposes how notions of liberal or egalitarian tolerance could provide answers to the diversity challenges that Greece is facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

### **Keywords**

National identity, cultural diversity, ethnic diversity, religion, tolerance, integration, Muslims, Greece, Europe, minority, migration

## 1. Introduction

Geographically, Greece is located at the southeastern corner of the European continent, indeed closer to the Middle East, Turkey and the Balkans rather than to what is today defined as the ‘core’ of the Europe, notably countries like France or Germany. This geographic position of Greece at the fringes of the European continent is to a large extent matched by a geopolitically and economically peripheral character of the country within the European Union, despite the fact that the successive enlargements of the EU to the East in 2004 and 2007 have made Greece more central both culturally and politically. The position of Greece however may also be seen as a pivotal one, between East and West. Dominant discourses on Greek national identity reflect a geopolitical and cultural ambivalence between being ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ (Roudometof, 1999; Tsoukalas, 1993).

References to the ‘East’ in the Greek national narrative reflect a notion of ‘eastern danger’ (Heraklides, 2001; Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou, 2002; Triandafyllidou 2002) that is generally projected to modern Turkey, reflecting both past experiences of subjugation to the Ottoman Empire and current tense relations with this country. References to the West and Europe are also ambivalent. Modern Greece carries the ‘honourable burden’ of being the heir of ancient Greece, identified by modern European intellectual and political elites as the cradle of European modernity. This glorious past is both a source of national pride and inspiration and a heavy symbolic burden to the extent that modern Greeks cannot stand up to the level of cultural, political or scientific excellence of their ancestors.

Even though the national narrative managed to incorporate classical Greece with the Byzantine tradition creating a unified national history from the 6<sup>th</sup> century b.c. to this day, the tension between Greece’s western and eastern cultural and geopolitical influences remains an important feature of Greek identity today (Tsoukalas 2002). Indeed, Greeks have found themselves trapped between *Hellenism* (the western prototype of classical Greece) and *Romiosyne* (the historical experiences of Greece in the last five centuries under the Ottoman Empire) (see also Tziovas, 1994).

Although politically Greece has been firmly anchored in western Europe in the post World War II period, the cultural positioning of Greece remains ambivalent, modern Greek-ness being of but not in Europe (Triandafyllidou, 2002a). While the European-ness of modern Greece has been officially confirmed by its accession to the European Communities (later European Union) in 1981, the geopolitical, cultural and economic relations between Greece and its fellow member states are often fraught with misunderstandings. During the 1990s, the confrontation between Greece and its fellow partners in the EU on the *Macedonian question*<sup>1</sup> as well as Greece’s unpleasant position as the only country who had striven but could not make it to the first phase of the European Monetary Union have been two obvious expressions of these tensions.

The 21st century has brought new developments and new challenges for Greece and its national self-understanding. The inclusion of Greece in the first phase of the Euro zone implementation, on 1 January 2002 has confirmed the Europeaness of the country at the monetary but also at the symbolic level (Psimmenos, 2004). Moreover, the 2004 and 2007 enlargements to Central and Eastern Europe and the shifting of the EU geopolitical, cultural and religious borders farther East has made Greece inevitably more central geographically and religiously (since other Christian Orthodox countries have joined the EU) even though geopolitically it remains quite peripheral (Triandafyllidou and Spohn, 2003). The economic crisis though that Greece is undergoing at the time of writing (spring and fall 2010), the risk of a national bankruptcy and of quitting the Euro zone have on one hand emphasised the firm anchoring of political elites and citizens to the EU but also greatly shown the weakness of Greece as an actor in the European economic and political system.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. the question of recognition of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as an independent Republic, the name that this last would take, as well as its nationalist claims to what the Greeks deemed as ‘their’ national heritage (Triandafyllidou et al. 1997; Roudometof 1996).

The expansion of the EU to the east which continues, even if with a slower pace, with a view to incorporating Croatia, the western Balkans and Turkey poses new identity and geopolitical challenges. Enlargement is desired as a factor of stability, democracy and peace in the region, but also for economic reasons, since many Greek firms are highly oriented towards the Balkan markets. Greek public opinion has marked an interesting shift between 2006 and 2008 regarding EU enlargement to southeast Europe and especially to Turkey. In 2008, 47% of Greeks declared in favour of the entry of Turkey in the EU (Eurobarometre, 2008: 30), contrary to the respective 33% registered in 2006 (Eurobarometre, 2006). The possible future accession of Turkey to the EU certainly keeps stirring unsolved identity and geopolitical issues, not least the Cyprus question.

In light of these considerations, this paper first offers a brief excursus on the main factors that have conditioned the development of the modern Greek state and the dominant conception of Greek national identity. The second part of the paper concentrates on the internal Significant Others (Triandafyllidou 1998) of Greek society over the past 30 years with a view to identifying which have been the important minority groups that have challenged with their diversity the cohesion and homogeneity of Greek society during the last three decades. We cover three distinct time periods: the 1980s and the end of the Cold War, the 1990s and the rise of multiculturalism in Western Europe but also the debacle of Communist regimes and the rise of nationalism in central Eastern Europe, and the last decade with the expansion of the EU to the east, the rise of international terrorism and the financial and economic crisis of the last couple of years.

In the second part we shall seek to highlight the aspects of 'difference' of specific groups that have been particularly contested. Those aspects that the groups advocate as important for their identity and that the state or the majority group consider 'intolerable' or at least difficult to accommodate. Pointing to such challenging differences will help locate different instances in which 'tolerance' has been an important concept or practice with a view to allowing for diversity to exist. Naturally we shall also take note of the competing concepts in favour of a more active accommodation and respect for diversity or concepts and behaviours that call for the rejection of diversity and the imposition of not only unity but also homogeneity within Greek society.

## Definitions

In order to clarify the focus of this paper we propose here a set of working definitions of the terms nation, national heritage, national identity, nationalism and also integration and assimilation. Even though in the scholarly literature there is considerable polyphony regarding when a group qualifies to be a nation, we consider here a nation as a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or "homelands", create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardised laws (Smith 2002: 15). A nation presupposes the notion of 'national identity' of a 'feeling of belonging' to the nation. The notion of **national heritage** is defined as a set of cultural forms that characterise a specific nation and which provide for the framework within which the members of the nation are socialised.

In sociology and political science the term integration is considered a fuzzy term and for this reason quite problematic. A minimal working definition adopted in this work for integration is the following: integration is a social, economic and political process that regards the insertion of immigrants into their country of destination. Integration requires both the effort of migrants to adapt to the new reality and the effort of the host population to adapt to the presence of migrants and the changing character of the host society. In common parlance, integration is often confused with assimilation. Assimilation is a social process by which the immigrants completely adapt to the traditions, culture and mores of the host country, and eventually become part of the host nation gradually abandoning their own ethnicity, culture, and traditions. Assimilation is indeed a one-way process that involves the effort of immigrants to 'assimilate' in the destination country and its dominant culture and is in this sense a distinct concept and term from integration

This report focuses on cultural (customs, mores, life style, language), religious, and ethnic (cultural as before or phenotype, related to a specific ethnic descent of a group of people) diversity of

minority groups that have lived in Greece since the creation of the modern Greek state in 1831 and of immigrant populations that have arrived in the country during the last twenty years. Terms like tolerance, acceptance, respect and recognition as well as multiculturalism and interculturalism are discussed in the paper as their definitions in the Greek context are one of the objectives of this study.

## **2. Greece and Europe**

### ***2.1 National identity and state formation***

While the foundations of Greek nationalism in the late eighteenth century were based on European Enlightenment and its civic ideals (Veremis, 1983: 59-60; Kitromilides, 1990: 25-33), the Greek nation has eventually been defined in strongly ethno-cultural terms. Common ancestry, culture and language have been the main tenets of the development of the modern Greek national identity (Veremis, 1983; 1990; Kitromilides, 1983; 1990: 30), together with Christianity – a heritage of the Byzantine Empire (constructed essentially as Greek and related linearly to the Greek classical past.) The dominant national narrative concluded with Greece's subjugation to the Ottoman Empire, the national resurrection in 1821 and the creation of a small independent Greek state in 1831. A unified national consciousness was successfully instilled in Greek society through state policies in military conscription, education and culture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The state and the political and intellectual elites propagated however for several decades an irredentist view of the Greek nation that extended further north to Macedonia and Thrace and further east to Minor Asia. This 'Great Idea' – to unite all the territories where people who were of Greek ethnicity or who spoke the Greek language and shared the Greek culture – dominated Greek politics and the successive enlargements of the Greek nation state until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was only in 1923 and after the debacle of the Greek forces in Minor Asia by the Turks that irredentism was largely abandoned. Nonetheless the modern Greek state took its present territorial form after World War II when the Dodecanese islands were incorporated into Greece in 1948 (Divani 1997). It is this difficult and gradual path to the territorial integration of modern Greece that has marked Greek nationalism making the conception of Greek citizenship predominantly ethnic, religious and cultural (much less civic and territorial) (Christopoulos 2006; see also for a review Triandafyllidou 2001, Chapter 3).

Although territorial and civic features have gained importance through the expansion and consolidation of the national territory, the essence of Greekness is still often defined as a transcendental notion in Greek public discourses (Tsoukalas, 1993). The link between the modern institutions of the Greek state and the traditional Greek society remains even nowadays puzzling (Diamandouros 1983: 47-50). The late and limited industrial development of Greece in conjunction with the early introduction of parliamentarism resulted in the distorted functioning of the political system through the preservation of traditional power structures under the cover of Western-type institutions (Diamandouros 1983; Mouzelis 1986; 1995).

Modern Greek identity thus developed in a web of complicated relationships that evolved around two main contradictions or dilemmas. These contradictions have been articulated in the following characteristics of modern Greek identity: a national pride for a unique past; a frustration of grandeur 'lost' as the modern Greek state emerged into independence as a poor, agricultural economy and an incomplete and fragile democracy; an ongoing attempt to bridge the competing universalisms and fundamental antagonisms between the secular and rational interpretations of Hellenism advocated by Western Enlightenment on the one hand, and by the Byzantine Empire legacy and the conservative religious conformism of a strong and very present Eastern Orthodox Church on the other (see Tsoukalas 2002, Tziovas 1994); and last but not least a perpetual need to 'catch up' with the rest of Europe as there was much ground to cover in terms of Greece's industrialization, modernization, and democratic consolidation.

The intertwining of such contradictory elements has resulted in an ideologically confusing notion of 'Helleno-Christianity' and an underlying East–West tension in Greek identity and politics. Greece's Ottoman past is presented as responsible for the country's personalized, clientelistic political

culture and a mentality of state patronage; while Great Power politics that were played out across the Balkan peninsula throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have engrained perceptions of threat of foreign intervention as regards national independence, territorial integrity and the cohesion of national identity.

## 2.2 Citizenship in Greece

These features of Greek national identity have marked the definition of Greek citizenship which has been based (until 6 months ago) almost exclusively on the *jus sanguinis* principle<sup>2</sup>. The previews to the 3838/24.3.2010 laws (voted on March 2010) provided for a separate procedure for acquiring Greek nationality (the so called procedure of nationality definition) that has been reserved for people who could prove that they were of Greek descent and 'behave as Greeks'. The terms used for this procedure imply that Greek descent and national consciousness exist prior to the acquisition of Greek nationality (Christopoulos 2006: 254). This rule refers to people of Greek ethnic origin, the *omogeneis* (meaning those of the same *genos*, i.e. of the same descent).

There are two broad categories of *omogeneis* in Greece currently: the Pontic Greeks (numbering a little over 150,000), notably people of Greek descent that resided in the former Soviet Republics. The Greek state has adopted a generous naturalisation policy allowing the large majority among them to naturalise through a simplified citizenship definition procedure called 'specific naturalisation' (Christopoulos 2006: 273). The second group of *omogeneis* (co-ethnics) are ethnic Greek Albanians or else known as *Voreioipirotes*<sup>3</sup>. These held until recently Special Identity Cards for *Omogeneis* (EDTO)<sup>4</sup> issued by the Greek police which gave them full socio economic but no political rights in Greece. As of November 2006, a joint decision by the Ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs facilitated the naturalization procedure for them, waiving the fee and the discretionary character of the judgment, encouraging thus ethnic Greek Albanians thus to naturalise. Indeed this change of policy has led to an exponential increase of naturalisations from two-digit numbers each year to several thousands. While in the period 1998-2006 only a handful of people had naturalised, in the period between 2007 and 2009 approximately 45,000 foreigners, in their vast majority of Albanian nationality, have acquired Greek citizenship.

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<sup>2</sup> Until March 2010 when law 3838/24.3.2010 was voted, second, or even third-generation immigrant children were not entitled to Greek citizenship at birth unless their parents had been naturalised. Law 2130/1993 foresaw that immigrants who wished to become Greek citizens had to be residents in Greece for more than ten years in the last twelve calendar years. This was one of the longest residence requirements for naturalisation in Europe. Law 2910/2001 (articles 58-64) had made the conditions and procedure even more cumbersome, introducing an application fee of 1,500 Euro. In addition to that, authorities were not required to reply within a specified period of time and need not justify a negative decision to the applicant. A special circular of the Home Affairs Ministry (Circular 32089/10641/26.5.1993) stated that such obligations of fair administration are not valid when the matters treated refer to the acquisition, recognition, loss or re-acquisition of the Greek nationality, rendering thus the whole issue truly exceptional and outside the normal work proceedings of state administration.

<sup>3</sup> According to Dodos (1994: 119-121), the term "Vorios Epiros" (Northern Epirus) is a diplomatic and political designation that appears after 1913. It has come out of the opposition of the Greek inhabitants of Greece's border regions to the international agreements that determined the borders of the country together with those people's national fate decided against their will, since the areas where they were living in were granted to the new Albanian state. As a geographical term, it does not cover anything specific, because the limits of the northern borders of the "Northern Epirus" have never been clearly established. In addition, since 1919, even by the most favourable to the Greek positions tracing of borders, the importance of the Greek population is not so obvious (Kokkali, 2010).

<sup>4</sup> There were 197,000 EDTO holders on 31 December 2009, according to data released by the Ministry of Interior in December 2010.

The distinction between co ethnics and ‘other’ migrants that Greek law had introduced as early as 1997 had been subject to severe criticism by NGOs, the liberal press<sup>5</sup> and international organisations (ECRI 2004) for being discriminatory and unfair<sup>6</sup>. ECRI in particular had raised concerns regarding the preferential path to citizenship available to individuals of Greek origin, noting that there are subjective elements in the assessment of such origin, making the applicants liable to discrimination.

It was only in March 2010 that the Greek Parliament voted a new law (law n. 3838/2010) on citizenship and naturalisation which introduced provisions for the second generation of migrants, notably children born in Greece of foreign parents or children born abroad of foreign parents but who have completed at least 6 years of schooling in Greece and live in Greece. In either case, these children can naturalise by a simple declaration by their parents when they are born or when they complete their sixth year of attending a Greek school. The new law also lowers the requirement for naturalisation from 10 to 7 years of residence, provided the foreigner has already received the EU long term resident status which can be acquired after 5 years of legal residence. The new law also introduces local political rights (both passive and active) for foreign residents (living in Greece for 5 years or more). The new law has made a breakthrough by Greek standards introducing a substantial element of *jus soli* in the concept of Greek citizenship. Nonetheless, it remains clear to this day that Greek citizenship (like Greek national identity) remains strongly defined by ethnic, cultural and religious elements rather than by civic or territorial ones.

## **2.2 The role of Europe and the “West”**

In the pre-World War II period, Europe played an indirect role in national self-understandings of Greekness: it was part of the classical Greek heritage but also perceived as alien and threatening. Culturally speaking, Greece and Europe were constructed by Greek historiography as part of the same classical Greek/European civilization. From a political viewpoint however, other European countries were seen as – and indeed were actually – ‘foreign powers’ which imposed their interests on Greece and interfered with domestic affairs. While European foreign powers were perceived also as economically and culturally more advanced than Greece, they were also despised because they could not ‘compete’ with Greece’s glorious classical heritage.

Since the end of World War II Greece has been politically and ideologically part of Western Europe. This largely determined the outcome of the Greek civil war (1944-1948) as well as its post WWII political history. Western military, trade and energy interests held Greece firmly within the Western part of Europe and pulled the country out of its isolation and away from Communist and left-wing tendencies. Greece joined NATO in 1952 and in 1962 signed a pre-accession agreement with the European Communities (EC).

During the post war period the stance of Greek social and political actors towards Europe has alternated between ‘Europhilia’ and ‘Europhobia’ given the role that various western actors have played in Greece’s political history (particularly the UK and the USA), and the way this has translated in a deep polarization of domestic politics – between the pro-western right and centre-right and the communist and left political forces. The foreign influence over the outcome of the civil war; the 1960s political instability and the Colonels’ military coup (1967-1974); the importance of the Marshall Plan for the country’s economic recovery; the importance of participating in NATO’s southern flank in the context of the Cold War confrontation; Cyprus and the Greek-Turkish dispute, are all factors and events that determined Greece’s relationship with the rest of Europe and the West.

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5 See, Ios tis Kyriakis, Athens daily, Kyriakatiki Eleftherotipia, 4 January 2004, [www.enet.gr/](http://www.enet.gr/) and Athens Anglophone daily Athens News, 7 January 2004, Citizenship backlog, by Kathy Tzilivakis, [www.athensnews.gr](http://www.athensnews.gr). Also Greek Helsinki Monitor at [www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/index.html](http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/bhr/english/index.html).

6 Greek authorities are generally required to respond within specified time limits to applicants addressed to them and to provide justification for their decisions.

At the level of public attitudes, Kokosalakis and Psimmenos (2002: 24-26) show (on the basis of Eurobarometer survey data) that Greeks have been overall positive as regards their country's participation in the EC and later EU, saw no conflict between their national and their European identity, and were overall supportive of European unification which they perceived as economically and politically advantageous for the country. However, qualitative studies have shown that Greeks tend to look at other Europeans as 'others' and as 'different' to the foundations of Greek tradition and collective identity (Anagnostou 2005; Kokosalakis 2004). Indeed, legacies of the past, territorial insecurities and antagonistic identities in Greece's immediate neighbourhood the Balkans, have not been easily understood by Western and Northern EU member-states, and have at times been exaggerated in Greek politics, largely for domestic political reasons. Indeed, during the 1990s, the feeling of alienation that Greeks at times expressed towards the West (Tsoukalas, 1993; 1995) was further accentuated by the controversy between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), the failure of resolving the Cyprus question, and the inability of other EU countries to appreciate Greece's sensibility on these issues (Roudometof, 1996; Triandafyllidou *et al.*, 1997, Triandafyllidou 2007).

In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century a more flexible understanding of Greek national identity seems to emerge, mainly due to the increasing salience of European policies and symbols, such as the European currency. Besides, the actual experiences of belonging to the European Union reinforce a civic and political value component in Greek national identity (Triandafyllidou *et al.* 1997; Kokosalakis 2004; Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou 2007).

### **3. Cultural diversity challenges during the last 30 years**

The new European context at the end of the twentieth and early twenty-first century has raised new challenges to Greek national self-understandings and the country's geopolitical positioning within its immediate neighbourhood and of course within the EU and Europe writ large. These challenges are related to the continuing (even if slower) expansion of the EU to the Balkans and Turkey.

Moreover, during the last two decades, Greece has had to make room – even if hesitantly and only to a limited extent – for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity within the nation. These developments have had to do with two different population groups: native, historic minorities and immigrants. Regarding minorities first, regional legal and institutional frameworks—such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)—have furthered progress in promoting the recognition and protection of minorities (linguistic, ethnic, religious, racial) across Europe (Psychogiopoulou 2009). This progress has also increasingly influenced debates and policies on the position and rights of minorities in Greece, which for long has been a sensitive matter in Greek political life and society. Nikiforos Diamantouros (1983: 55) had described this 'sensitivity' as an indication that the process of national integration is incomplete.

Regarding migrants, even since the early 1980s, Greece can no longer be described as an emigration country. The country's population has increased by 10-12%, with large numbers of migrants mainly from the Balkans (Albania, Bulgaria and Romania), ex-Soviet Republics (Georgia, Russia and Ukraine) and, increasingly, Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and China). Immigration poses a challenge to dominant Greek nationalist discourses; there has been a gradual recognition on behalf of state institutions and public opinion that Greek society has become *de facto* multi-cultural and multi-ethnic (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009). Tables 1, 2 and 3 below present an overview of the size and composition of the immigrant and native minority population in Greece.



**Table 1 Immigrant Stock in Greece, on 31 December 2009**

	<b>Size of immigrant stock</b>	<b>% of total resident population</b>	<b>Source of data</b>
<b>Legal immigrant population</b>	636,258	5.86%	Stay permits valid at least for 1 day during 2009, Ministry of Interior
<b>Co ethnics from Albania</b>	197,814	1.82%	Data from Ministry of Interior, for 31 December 2009
<b>Estimate of irregular immigrants</b>	280,000	2.58%	Maroukis (2008), CLANDESTINO project <sup>7</sup>
<b>Total stock of foreigners</b>	<b>1,114,072</b>	<b>10.26%</b>	
<b>Total population of Greece</b>	10,856,041	100%	LFS, 4th trimester 2009
<b>Co-ethnics from the Soviet Union</b>	154,000	1.42%	Secretariat of Greeks abroad, Special Census, 2000
<b>Total stock of immigrants and naturalized co-ethnics</b>	<b>1,268,072</b>	<b>11.68%</b>	

Source: Triandafyllidou and Maroufof (2010) SOPEMI report for Greece, December 2010.

<sup>7</sup> The estimate of the illegally staying aliens offered by Maroukis (2008) is the most recent scientific estimate of its kind. For more information see: <http://clandestino.eliamep.gr>.



**Table 2. National Composition of the Migrant Stock in Greece, 31.12.2009**

Country of Origin	LFS 4th Tri. 2009		Third Country Nationals (TCN) Valid Permits December 2009		EU Citizens Valid Permits December 2009		All foreigners (EU and non-EU)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Albania	501,691	59.74%	414,445	70.65%			414,445 <sup>8</sup>	56.64%
Bulgaria	54,492	6.48%			51,006	37.46%	55,909	7.64%
Georgia	33,870	4.03%	17,655	3.00%			17,655	2.41%
Romania	33,773	4.02%			38,388	28.19%	41,954	5.73%
Pakistan	22,965	2.73%	17,097	2.91%			17,097	2.33%
Russia	19,522	2.32%	13,512	2.30%			13,512	1.84%
Ukraine	13,748	1.63%	21,644	3.68%			21,644	2.95%
Bangladesh	12,533	1.49%	5,910	1.00%			5,910	0.80%
Syria	12,401	1.47%	7,962	1.35%			7,962	1.08%
Armenia	12,339	1.46%	6,277	1.07%			6,277	0.85%
Cyprus	11,773	1.40%			5,972	4.38%	5,972	0.81%
Poland	11,204	1.33%			10,876	7.98%	11,258	1.53%
Egypt	10,289	1.22%	14,732	2.51%			14,732	2.01%
Iraq	7,849	0.93%	1,183	0.20%			1,183	0.16%
India	7,654	0.91%	13,127	2.23%			13,127	1.79%
UK	7,539	0.89%			7,811	5.73%	7,811	1.06%
Germany	7,270	0.86%			5,914	4.34%	5,914	0.80%
Moldova	4,682	0.55%	12,217	2.08%			12,217	1.66%
Netherlands	3,548	0.42%			2,201	1.61%	2,201	0.30%
Philippines	3,302	0.39%	9,668	1.64%			9,668	1.32%
OTHER	47,262	5.62%	31,161	5.31%	13,983	10.27%	45,144	6.17%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>839,706</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>586,590</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>136,151</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>731,592</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Triandafyllidou and Maroufouf, 2010, SOPEMI report for Greece. Based on data from National Statistical Service of Greece, Labour Force Survey 4<sup>th</sup> trimester; Ministry of Interior Affairs, Valid Stay Permits on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2009; Ministry of Citizen Protection. Registered EU citizens on December 31<sup>st</sup> 2009.

<sup>8</sup> This number referring to valid stay permits does not include ethnic Greek Albanians holding EDTO cards



**Table 3. Native Minorities in Greece**

	<b>1961-1991*</b>	<b>1999/today</b>	<b>1999/today</b>
<b>Native Minorities</b>	<b>Absolute numbers</b>		<b>% of the total population of Greece</b>
<b>Catholics, Protestants, Jews and new religious movements</b>	<b>150,000</b>		<b>1-1,5</b>
<i>Jews</i>	5,000		
<i>Catholics</i>	50,000		
<i>Protestants</i>	25,000		
<i>Jehovah's Witnesses</i>	70,000		
<b>Muslims of Western Thrace*:</b>	<b>80,000-120,000</b>		<b>0,5</b>
<i>Turkish-speaking</i>	36,000-54,000***		
<i>Pomaks</i>	28,800-43,200***		
<i>Roma</i>	14,400-21,600***		
<b>Roma (all over Greece)</b>	<b>300,000-350,000****</b>		<b>2-3</b>
<b>Arvanites/Arberor</b>	<b>200,000****</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Macedonians (Slav-speaking Greeks)</b>	<b>10,000-30,000****</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>Vlachs/Aromanians</b>	<b>200,000****</b>		<b>2</b>

**Source:** Compilation and treatment of data from different sources/estimations (see notes below).

\* The Muslims of Western Thrace according to the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations (Treaty of Lausanne), in 1923, counted for 106,000 individuals. According to the Greek census of 1928, 1940 and 1951, there were registered respectively 126,000 individuals, 140,090 individuals and 112,665 individuals (Human Rights Watch, 'Greece: The Turks of Western Thrace', Vol.11, No.1, 1999/January; available at

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/greece/index.htm#TopOfPage> [consulted on the 02/11/2010]. It is to note that the report on Muslims of Thrace does not distinguish between the sub-populations that are included in this category (that is to say Roma and Pomaks), referring thus to all as 'Turks of Western Thrace'.

\*\* Unlike the 1951 census, more recent censuses have not addressed issues of national/ethnic origin, language and religion (GHM, Report about Compliance with the Principles of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1999, available at [http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/Minorities\\_of\\_Greece.html](http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/Minorities_of_Greece.html) [consulted on the 02/11/2010]). Therefore, no official data is available and we can only rely on estimations.

\*\*\* Estimation of Alexandris (1988) for the numbers in 1981, according to which from about 120,000 individuals 45% are Turkish-speaking, 36% are Pomaks and 18% Roma. According to an estimation of GHM (at <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/english/reports/pomaks.html> [consulted on the 02/11/2010]), the Pomaks nowadays count for 30,000 (i.e. the minimum estimated by Alexandris above mentioned).

\*\*\*\* Estimation of GHM, Report about Compliance with the Principles of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 1999, available at [http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/Minorities\\_of\\_Greece.html](http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/Minorities_of_Greece.html) [consulted on the 02/11/2010].

In this section we shall briefly outline the main native and immigrant minority groups of Greece. We shall discuss their history, size, main features and investigate the nature of their diversity. We shall thus identify the main diversity challenges that they pose to Greek society and seek for challenging events that have taken place in recent years. We shall discuss such events and the ways in which Greek institutions and society have dealt with them with a view to identifying the relevant practices, norms, institutions and the use, if relevant, of concepts such as tolerance, acceptance, respect, pluralism, national identity and national heritage.

In table 2 below we present schematically the main native and immigrant minority groups and identify the diversity dimensions on which they challenge the dominant conception of Greek citizenship and national identity.

**Table 4: Main Minority and Immigrant Groups in Greece and their Dimensions of Difference**

Dimensions of difference	Citizenship	Racial	Ethnic	Religious	Cultural	Linguistic
<b>Co-ethnics</b>						
Pontic Greeks					X	X
Ethnic Greek Albanians	X				X	
<b>Native minorities</b>						
Turks/Muslims of Western Thrace			X	X	X	X
Slav-speaking Macedonians			X			X
<b>Immigrants</b>						
Albanians	X		X	X	X	X
Georgians	X		X		X	X
Ukrainians	X		X	X	X	X
Asian Muslim migrants*	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sub Saharan Africans	X	X	X		X	X

Source: Author's compilation.

\* Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Afghani citizens mainly.

Minority groups in Greece can actually be classified into three broad categories in terms of their closeness to the majority group. The term 'national majority' is here to identify Greek citizens born of Greek parents, in Greece, who are Christian Orthodox (at least via a familial affiliation). In terms of the national identity and citizenship conception, *omogeneis*, that is *co-ethnics*, are the minority groups that differ less from the national majority. There are two populations within the larger category of co-ethnics: Pontic Greeks and ethnic Greek Albanians.

The second category of minority groups are *native minorities*, that is people who are ethnically, culturally, religiously different from the national majority but which have formed part of the modern Greek state since its creation. These include the Muslims of western Thrace (which may be further sub-divided into Pomaks, Muslim Roma and ethnic Turks) who are Turkish-speaking, Muslims and largely self-identifying as ethnic Turks. There are also however three more native minority groups that may be relevant for the ACCEPT PLURALISM study, and these are the Macedonians of Greece, Greek Jews and Greek Roma who are Christians.

The third category of minority groups in Greece are *migrant populations*. We identify here five different populations: Albanians, as the largest group; Georgians and Ukrainians as the second and third largest nationalities among immigrants; Asian immigrants and asylum seekers (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Filipinos and Afghanis) who are Muslims from southeast Asia; and last but not least

Sub-Saharan Africans who come from many different countries and are Christians in their large majority.

### ***Omogeneis/Co-ethnics***

The Greek national identity and citizenship definition asserts not only the distinction between citizens and foreigners but also between *omogeneis* (*co-ethnics*) and *allogeneis*. *Omogeneis* are the co-ethnics who are of Greek ethnic origin – belong to the Greek Christian Orthodox ‘genos’ – and *allogeneis* are those who are of another ‘genos’ (Christopoulos 2006: 253). Thus there are ‘allogeneis’ who are Greek citizens, e.g. members of the native minorities or naturalised foreigners. And there are ‘omogeneis’ who are not Greek citizens, e.g. members of the Greek diaspora abroad or emigrants. The first category of minority groups that we shall discuss in this report are the ‘omogeneis’, the co-ethnics.

According to the decision of the State Council<sup>9</sup> no. 2756/1983, the legitimate criterion for one to be characterized as a co-ethnic is ‘to belong to the Greek Ethnos’. That is ‘to have Greek national consciousness’, which is ‘deduced from characteristics of personality which refer to common descent, language, religion, national traditions and extensive knowledge of the historical events of the nation’. It may thus seem that having a Greek national consciousness suffices to be a co-ethnic although in practice this is not the case. The two criteria: that of ethnic ancestry and that of national consciousness are used cumulatively and in the absence of one, it is the ethnic descent criterion that prevails (see also Christopoulos 2006).

### **Pontic Greeks**

Pontic Greeks are ethnic Greeks who either emigrated from areas of the Ottoman empire (the southern coast of the Black Sea in particular) to the former Soviet Union in the beginning of this century or left Greece in the 1930s and 1940s for political reasons (Glytsos, 1995). The right of Pontic Greeks to return to their ‘homeland’ (Greece) has been conceded by presidential decree in 1983. Pontic Greeks are defined by the Greek state as members of the diaspora community<sup>10</sup> who ‘return’ – even though most of them had never lived in Greece before – to their ‘homeland’ and are, therefore, given full citizen status and benefits aiming to facilitate their integration into Greek society. Pontic Greeks naturalised under the ‘definition of nationality’ procedure foreseen by the Greek legislation for people of ethnic Greek origin (Christopoulos 2006: 254).

The peak of their flow was in the early 1990s. Pontic Greeks were citizens of the former republics of the Soviet Union who declared an ethnic Greek origin, and on that base were given Greek citizenship. In 2000 there were 155,319 Pontic Greeks in the country. More than half of them (about 80,000) came from Georgia, 31,000 came from Kazakhstan, 23,000 from Russia, and about 9,000 from Armenia (General Secretariat of Repatriated Co-Ethnics, 2000).

Despite the fact that Pontic Greeks acquired Greek citizenship literally upon arrival and, also, that their education level is higher than that of native Greeks<sup>11</sup>, they faced serious problems in finding jobs, mainly because they did not speak Greek at a good level, but also because the state did not recognise their educational diplomas. The highest percentage of returnees worked as unskilled workers. Other common occupations were those of constructors, cleaners and – especially for women – housekeeping (General Secretariat of Repatriated Co-Ethnics, 2000). In December 1990, the

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9 State Council is the Supreme Administrative Court of Justice in Greece.

10 With regard to Pontic Greeks see also Journal of Refugee Studies, 1991, Special Issue, 4, 4.

11 This becomes apparent by comparing the educational level of the Greek population according to the data of the national census of 2001 for people over six years old with the data from the census of the General Secretariat of Repatriated Co-Ethnics, conducted in 2000 (p. 64). For example 10% of the repatriated co-ethnics have graduated from a Technological Educational Institute while the correspondent percentage for Greeks is 3%. Also 12% are University graduates while the correspondent percentage for Greeks is 8%.

government set up the National Institute for the Reception and Rehabilitation of Emigrant and Repatriate Co-Ethnic Greeks (*E.I.Y.A.II.O.E.*) (on the basis of art. 8, law 1893/1990) to manage the conditions of entrance, residence and work of Pontic Greek returnees. Accommodation, food, education for children and for adults, specialized courses of Greek language and professional training have been provided within the context of this Institute's (Kassimati, 1993). EIYAPOE has been dissolved in March 2003 and Pontic Greeks have largely 'disappeared' sociologically to the extent that there is no special monitoring of their socio-economic situation any more.

*Diversity challenges:* Pontic Greeks are considered to be similar to native Greeks as regards their national consciousness, culture, and religion. They only differ from natives in terms of their language (as at least the first generation of returnees spoke Russian and/or *Ποντιακά* (Pontian language) as a mother tongue) and at least the first generation in terms of the socio-economic system that they had been brought up in. Representatives of EIYAPOE interviewed by the author in the mid 1990s considered that the main problem for Pontic Greeks' socio-economic integration was their excessive reliance on the state to provide for anything and their inability to adapt to a free market economy. There are unfortunately not enough recent studies to assess this claim however it is clear that the cultural and linguistic difference of the Pontic Greeks is still present in Greek society even if on the whole it is not perceived as challenging the national unity. Indeed, Pontic Greeks (together with other ex-Soviet nationals, such as Georgians, Russians, and in a lesser extent Armenians) dispose a non-negligible 'ethnic infrastructure', this is to say their own shops, mini-markets, cafés, festivity halls, dentists, churches, at least in the city of Thessaloniki where they have mainly settled in the 1990s (Kokkali 2010).

#### Ethnic Greek Albanians

The second large group of co-ethnics that has recently 'returned' to Greece are ethnic Greek Albanians, widely known as "Vorioepirotēs" (*Βορειοηπειρώτες*). The State Council (judgement no. 2207/1992) attempted to provide a description of their status: co-ethnics from Albania are the people that descend from Greek parents and their place of birth (theirs or their parents) is "Vorios Epirus" (*Βόρειος Ηπειρος*)<sup>12</sup>.

As regards Greek Albanians, law 1975/1991, on the basis of article 108 of the Greek Constitution, provided them with a preferable legal status as people without the Greek citizenship but with the Greek nationality (article 17). Because of their ethnic minority status in southern Albania, they were perceived as refugees who suffered persecution and discrimination because of their Greek nationality and Christian Orthodox religion. The legal provisions in issues of stay, social security, retirement coverage and medical care were of a discretionary positive character as opposed to those concerning other categories of foreign immigrants (article 24).

Even though the law provided for the preferential treatment of Greek Albanians, in practice they have not been as privileged as the Pontic Greeks. The Greek government did absolutely not want the evacuation of the minority in Albania, and, thus, was very reluctant to the settlement of ethnic Greeks from Albania to Greece (Tsoukala, 1997; Dodos, 1994: 142). And that is the reason why the Greek state has adopted a different approach towards co-ethnic repatriated Pontic Greeks and co-ethnics from the Greek minority in Albania. While the former are accepted as refugees, the latter are instrumentalized by the Greek foreign policy: their presence in southern Albania is considered as vital for the promotion of the Greek interests there (Pavlou, 2003; Kokkali, 2008: 78, 173 and 2010).

The legal status of ethnic Greek Albanians has been clarified in detail with the Presidential Decree 395/1998. Following from this decree, Greek co-ethnics who are Albanian citizens (*Vorioepirotēs*) hold Special Identity Cards for *Omogeneis* (EDTO) issued by the Greek police. On 31 December 2009 there were 197,814 Special Identity Cards for Co-Ethnics issued, of which over 150,000 were of 10-year duration. As of November 2006, holders of these Identity Cards were encouraged to apply for citizenship. They were exempted from the high citizenship fee and were

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12 See above, Dodos, op.cit.



generally granted citizenship if they satisfied the requirements (in other words, no negative discretion was exerted). Indeed during the past 3 years more than 40,000 Albanian citizens of ethnic Greek origin have acquired Greek citizenship.

*Diversity Challenges:* Ethnic Greek Albanians differ from native Greeks mainly in their citizenship and to a lesser extent in their language. Contrary to Pontic Greeks, the use of Greek language, especially among the older generation, was more widespread<sup>13</sup> in southern Albania. Also the geographical and cultural proximity was higher – native Greeks of Hesperus in northern Greece and ethnic Greeks born in southern Albania had many cultural similarities. Overall ethnic Greek Albanians' public image has also been constructed as 'positive', contrasted to that of 'other' Albanians whose image was negative (Triandafyllidou and Veikou 2002), at least during the 1990s. The ethnic, religious and cultural proximity of ethnic Greek Albanians with native Greeks makes them a minority group that is gradually assimilating into Greek society and poses no strong cultural diversity challenge to the country. At the same time their presence forces to clarify how national and cultural unity and homogeneity is pretty much constructed rather than given depending often on beliefs of common genealogical descent more than actual cultural proximity. It is interesting how the cultural diversity of Voreioiopiotes has been treated during the 2000s by contrasting to how the cultural diversity of 'other' Albanians has been perceived at the same time. Actually, however, such distinctions seem to have faded, since Albanian citizens (either *omogeneis* or *allogeneis*) are largely considered as very well integrated to the Greek society, while other – more recently arrived – foreigners (such as Afghani, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants or asylum seekers) monopolise the public discourse.

### ***Native minorities***

There are a number of native minorities in Greece whose population however is rather small (Clogg 2002). According to the data provided by international and Greek NGOs the following national, ethno-linguistic and religious minorities are present in Greece (percentages refer to the total resident population): Roma 3.3%; Arvanites 2%; members of the Macedonian minority 2%; Vlachs 2%; Turks 0.5%; Pomaks 0.3<sup>14</sup> (Lenkova, 1997; Minority Rights Group (MRG), 1994). Religious minorities, which include Catholics, Protestants and new religious movements, make up nearly 1% of the citizens of Greece. Among these minorities, the Greek State only recognises the existence of the Muslims of western Thrace, the Roma population and Greek Catholics and Protestants.

Since official recognition of other minorities of any kind is withheld, these groups are subjected to discriminatory treatment, whether at the collective and individual level. The recent mobilisation of the Macedonian minority (during the 1990s) has been dealt with by refuting its existence and persecuting its activists (Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), 1998; Kostopoulos 2000). In this report we shall only discuss the two numerically important native minorities in the country: the Muslims of western Thrace and the Macedonians in northwestern Greece.

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13 Even though the use of Greek language was mainly confined to private homes and only in southern Albania in the Greek inhabited villages. Often ethnic Greek Albanians were moved to Tirana and other areas for work where they could not speak the Greek language and hence many of them were no longer fluent in it.

14 Arvanites are a Christian Orthodox minority that originates from northern Albania and migrated to continental Greece in the late middle ages. Vlachs are a Christian Orthodox minority native of Greece. There are however important Vlach populations across the Balkans and even in Central Europe. Vlachs are sub-divided in several ethnic sub-groups and are predominantly Christian Orthodox. Both populations (the Arvanites and the Vlachs) are considered today to be totally assimilated to the dominant Greek national identity and culture even if Vlachs in particular may have their group-specific cultural festivities. Pomaks are a local Muslim population that lives in the Rhodope mountains on both sides of the Greek Bulgarian border. In Bulgaria they are considered Bulgarian Muslims while in Greece they are seen as part of the larger Muslim population of Western Thrace (see also Clogg 2002 and Rozakis 1996; 2000).

## Muslims of western Thrace

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>15</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.<sup>16</sup>

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 (including Islamic law (*shari'a*) for family and inheritance matters).<sup>17</sup>

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

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

Alarmed by tumultuous conditions in Thrace at the turn of the decade, the Greek government decided in 1991 to abolish the discriminatory measures and announced a new approach towards the minority to be guided by 'legal equality – equal citizenship' (*isonomeia-isopoliteia*). Such an approach was for the first time put to practice through a new regional development strategy for border regions, which was launched with the *Findings of the Inter-party Committee for Border Regions* submitted to the Greek Parliament in 1992.<sup>18</sup>

Recent research (Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou 2007) shows that overall ethnic identification matters less today in Thrace than it used to 20 years ago. However, past divisions and

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15 The overall (resident) population of Thrace is 358,426 (www.e-demography.gr, 2010). 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).

16 For a detailed discussion see the research project EUROREG, Anagnostou and Triandafyllidou (2006), [http://central.radiopod.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/case\\_study\\_report\\_thrace.pdf](http://central.radiopod.gr/en/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/case_study_report_thrace.pdf), last accessed on 14 June 2010.

17 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. For a critical discussion of the Islamic law system in Thrace see Ktistakis (2006) and Tsitselikis (2004).

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

discrimination, although much attenuated now, often persist. They may persist less in the form of institutional discrimination but they do in the form of attitudes and implicit favouring of majority members at the expense of minority ones. Turkish and Greek nationalism remains salient among minority and majority leaders and social-political actors, yet, it has become significantly moderated over the past 15 years. Exclusive conceptions of national-ethnic identity and solidarity are not as pervasive but are subject to alternative and diverse understandings, as well as more subject to intra-communal challenge among both minority and majority.

A number of individuals, particularly among the younger generation of the minority, are critical of Turkish nationalism in so far as its politics involve and depend upon the patronage of Turkey. At the same time, they support the right to self-determination as an ethnic Turkish minority. In a parallel fashion, despite opposition to the demand for minority recognition as ethnic Turkish, nationalism among Greek Christians also seems to have lost some of its exclusive quality and political rigour of the previous decade. Greek elites and Greek public opinion however remain largely worried that the minority's claim to define itself collectively as Turkish is a national claim, re-opening the question of state borders between Greece and Turkey and allowing for Turkey to interfere in Greek internal affairs.

*Diversity challenges:* The Turks of Thrace pose an important ethnic and religious diversity challenge for Greece as they question its ethnic and religious homogeneity. They share with other Greek citizens neither their genealogical descent nor the religion – they differ in the two fundamental elements that define the dominant vision of Greek national identity and citizenship. Their claims for collective recognition of their ethnic identity have generally been met with intolerance and rejection. At the same time Greece has been pressurised by the policies of the Council of Europe and by the European Court of Human Rights to adapt and update its policy towards its largest native ethnic minority. It has thus abolished the infamous article 18 of the Greek Nationality Code which had been used discretionary to deprive members of the minority from their Greek citizenship unilaterally.

Overall Greek policies towards the minority have become more liberal, defending the equality of individuals before the law and the state no matter what their collective affiliation is in terms of religion. These policies however have been defended in the name of the common, compact and unitary national interest, that is the Greek Christian Orthodox majority's interest (Anagnostou 2005) not by reference to human rights norms. There is no re-consideration or re-definition of what it means to be Greek or a sort of collective level recognition of the existence of minorities that are part of the Greek nation state. There is as yet no room for these minorities to contribute to the definition of what it means to be Greek in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Interesting key events, where the tolerance and intolerance of the Greek state institutions, the norms applied as well as everyday practices adopted can be tested, is the quest of two different cultural associations to include the word Turkish in their title, the rejection of this request by the Greek Supreme Court (decision of January 2005) and the condemnation of Greece on this issue by the European Court of Human Rights in 2007 (Human Rights Papers, 2008). Additionally, it would be interesting to explore the political juxtaposition and the reactions of the society arisen after the announcement of Gulbeyaz Karahasan's (a young Muslim woman) candidature in the 2007 regional elections by the leader of the socialist party (PASOK) and current Prime Minister George Papandreou (Skoulariki 2009: 69-93).

#### Members of the Slavic-speaking Macedonian minority

When the southern part of the geographic region of Macedonia was incorporated into Greece, as the Greek region of Macedonia, in 1912, a large part of its population was neither Greek-speaking nor identified as of Greek ethnicity (Slavic speakers at 1903 were estimated at 500,000, accounting for 60% of the local population, Kostopoulos 2002: 25). The Slavic speaking population in Greece has been declining in the inter-war period (as a result of the Balkan wars (1912-14), the first World War (1914-1918) and the compulsory exchange and/or 'voluntary' ethnic unmixing of populations that ensued). After the Second World War and the civil war that ravaged Greece in 1946-48, this population was further reduced. In 1951, the national census of Greece found that there were 36,000

Slavic-speakers living in Macedonia but a classified document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (Kostopoulos 2002: 223, footnote: 2) estimate the same population to be 120,000-150,000 strong.

The Slavic-speaking population of Greek Macedonia was and still is characterised by an ethnic and cultural consciousness related to the speaking of the Macedonian language, also referred by local people as 'our language', the 'local language', or the 'old' language. The Macedonian Slavic language is a Slavic tongue which resembles more to Bulgarian than to Serbian. It has been heavily influenced by the languages of the neighbouring states and includes a variety of slightly different local dialects (Kostopoulos 2002: 33, 43).

Following the civil war and as part of a policy of forging a common national consciousness and identity based on the Greek language, the dominant Greek culture, and the suppression of cultural, linguistic and religious minority identities, the Slavic-speaking minority of Greek Macedonia underwent a process of forced cultural assimilation. Its members were largely obliged to assimilate culturally as well as to adopt a Greek national consciousness. By contrast, the language and local customs survived to a certain extent within the homes and in everyday communication in many of the villages of the Florina and Pella prefectures.<sup>19</sup>

*Diversity challenges:* Following the implosion of the Communist regimes in Central Eastern Europe and the Balkans in 1989 and the ensuing (re-)awakening of nations in the region, the federal Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia proclaimed its independence. The formation of an independent Macedonian Republic (and no longer a federal one) was met with outrage by Greece (by both Greek governments and Greek citizens, see Roudometof 1996, Triandafyllidou et al. 1997) and contributed to the emergence of a strong current of defensive Greek nationalism. At the same time, the creation of the new independent state and its claim for the existence of a Macedonian nation led a part of the Slavic-speaking populations in northern Greece to ask for their recognition as a cultural and ethnic minority living in Greece. It asked for the Macedonian language to be introduced in schools and for the local culture to be recognised and cultivated (see the Rainbow party platform at the European election of 1994). Interestingly the existence of a Slavic speaking Macedonian minority in Greece was mentioned in the State department report on human rights in the world in 1990, which stated that Greece was suppressing this and other ethnic and linguistic minorities living in its territory.

Nonetheless, Greek authorities refused to recognise that such a minority exists and sought to suppress the Macedonian ethnic movement by, for instance, refusing to recognise the foundation of a cultural Macedonian association (in 1994). Greece was later (in 1998) condemned by the European Court of Human Rights for this refusal. The Greek Macedonian minority organised into a political party, the Rainbow party, which obtained 7,263 votes in the national election of 1993 of which 2,250 in the prefecture of Florina (corresponding to 5% approximately of the total vote). At the European election the same party gathered 26,000 votes approximately.

During this last decade the question of the Slavic speaking minority in Greek Macedonia has lost much of its fervour. Macedonian identity is still celebrated at local fairs but political mobilisation has diminished. The Greek state has continued to deny the existence of the minority (with the support of the majority of Greek intellectuals, see also Kostopoulos 2002: 329ff.).

While the case of Slavic speaking Macedonians of Greece poses clearly questions of (in)tolerance of cultural diversity in Greece as well as the question of how plural or indeed mono-cultural and mono-ethnic is Greek national identity and the definition of Greek citizenship, this group cannot be said to have raised important challenges in terms of public policy or everyday practice during the last years.

## Roma of Greece

Roma populations are believed to be of Indian origin arriving in Europe in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Fraser, 1995). In line with the general confusion regarding the identities of different Roma/Gypsy

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19 See also Mackridge and Yannakakis (1997), Karakasidou (1997)

populations, there is uncertainty about this issue in Greece too<sup>20</sup>. Greek historians' attempts to account for the Roma presence in Greek history have often contributed to the negative stereotyping of their behaviour and ways of life, often stirring thus anti-Romani discourses in Greece (ERRI and GHM, 2003).

Racist stereotyping of the Roma can already be traced already under the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, under the Ottoman rule, the Roma were differentiated by their ethnicity from the rest of the population, not falling thus under none of the two categories of the Empire's population, the 'true believers' and the 'infidels' (*raya*). Both the Ottomans and the *raya* are thought to have been looking down on the Roma (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001: 46-47, cited in ERRI and GHM, *op.cit.*). However, unlike the rest of Europe, the Ottoman administration was the only one to spare the Roma from persecution (Fraser, 1995).

Following the typical urban organisation of the Ottoman cities in which people were segregated according to ethnicity and faith (Karadimou-Gerolymou, 1997: 22-30, 87), the Roma had their own neighbourhoods. The newborn Greek state (1830) put an end to this ethnic plurality – social and spatial. As any other ethnic minority in Greece, the Roma were subjected to homogenisation, to the imposition of the dominant Greek identity and history and to the misrecognition of their cultural difference. During World War II, the Roma of Greece suffered persecution from the Nazis and, in some cases, even deportation and concentration into camps in Germany, although accurate figures are not available (ERRI and GHM, 2003; EODM, 2002: 2-3).

According to the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (NAPSI) 2008-2010, Roma are considered Greeks with no separate ethnic identity (NCHR, 2009). They are not recognized as a national minority by the Greek State (Abdikeeva et al. , 2005; Pavlou, 2009: 33)<sup>21</sup>, which accepts this term only for those groups explicitly mentioned in bilateral treaties – namely the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, according to which there is a 12,000-person Roma population, as part of the recognised Muslim minority of Western Thrace. Roma people outside Thrace are not considered by the Greek authorities as members of a minority, but as a 'vulnerable social group' (CommDH, 2009; cited in Pavlou, *op.cit.*).

The 1951 census registered 7,429 individuals with Romani as their mother tongue in Greece (Tsitselikis, 1996), but this number appears to comprise only Roma who lived in Western Thrace (Zenginisis, 1994: 20; cited in Alexandris, 2004). Given that since 1951 the Greek censuses do not collect data on ethnic affiliation, language or religion, there is no official registration of the Roma populations in Greece.

The size of the Roma population in Greece is actually unknown and it seems to vary according to source and purpose<sup>22</sup>. Yet, recent estimations<sup>23</sup> concord into the number given by the Minority Rights Group-Greece, i.e. 300-350,000 people, half of whom are tent-dwelling Rom.

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<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on the origins of the Roma populations see also Matras (2002). For the origins of the Roma populations in Greece see EODM (2002: 1-3) and also the DIKADI-ROM (Network for fighting discrimination against Rom) website at: <http://www.rom.net.gr>

<sup>21</sup> The UN Human Rights Council, McDougall report (2009) highlights that the Greek government does not consider the Roma a minority within Greece, rather a vulnerable social group consisting of 250,000 to 300,000 persons. According to the government, this viewpoint is shared by Roma who consider themselves an integral part of Greek society (cited in Pavlou, 2009: 33). According to Pavlou (2009), the choice of the Greek state (based also on the self-identification of Greek Roma as 'Zingani') to use the denotation 'gypsies' for Greek Roma is related to its reluctance to accept that Roma constitute a 'minority' as a social group, protected by international legal instruments.

<sup>22</sup> Rinne (2002) suggests that when raising funds from the European Union for the improvement of the Roma situation, Greece officially presents a Roma population of 300,000 individuals, which otherwise decreases to some 100-120,000 or less.

According to a Statement by the Greek Delegation in the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, in Warsaw, 17–27 September 2001, Roma in Greece count for to 120,000–150,000 individuals (cited in Abdikeeva et al., 2005 and available at: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/hdim2001/statements.php3?topic=4a&author=23>). In 2003, according to the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation (Response of Greece to the MG-S-ROM questionnaire on the rights of Roma in Council of Europe member states, Doc. Ref. No. 30823, 31243, 8 August 2003, p. 1), there were

Despite their centuries-long presence in Greece, most Roma were stateless until 1955 and were regarded as ‘aliens of Gypsy descent’. On the contrary, the Muslim Roma of the western Thrace<sup>24</sup> (covered by the provisions of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty), obtained citizenship in the 1920s, despite their later settling in Greece (compared to those that had already settled in the Helladic space long before 1923). Those later exempt, the rest were issued with a residence permit from the Aliens Department of the Greek Police that had to be renewed every two years. Law 3370/20-9-1955 has been the first effort made in Greece to provide citizenship to the many stateless Roma. Despite the enactment of the new law and an amendment adopted in 1968, the majority of Roma remained stateless, what then prompted the Greek authorities to issue Decrees 69468/212 and 16701/51 (respectively in 1978 and 1979) in order to facilitate the acquisition of Greek citizenship by those who had not benefited from the 1955 law (Alexandris, 2004; Roughieri, 2000; Abdikeeva et al., 2005: 6).

Even after citizenship acquisition, the Roma of Greece still face marked discrimination and social exclusion<sup>25</sup>, the main types of which include:

*Spatial segregation, appalling housing conditions and eviction from their settlements:* All national and international reports on Greece agree that Roma live under heavy spatial and social segregation (Pavlou, 2009: 12-13). Allegedly, Pavlou (op.cit.) suggests that the only regulatory framework providing for Roma settlements promotes segregation and ghettoisation<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, Roma in Greece are frequently faced with forced eviction (and/or the threat of forced eviction), the subsequent demolition of their homes, destruction of property, etc. Many evictions are linked to major sport or cultural events, in which cases Roma must be made invisible or removed at any cost (Pavlou, op.cit.). A telling example of this is the 2004 Olympic Games of Athens that have been exploited by the region’s local authorities as a pretext for evicting Roma (ERRI and GHM, 2003). The brushing up of the capital’s image in view of the 2004 Olympic Games is only one among the reasons for the forced evictions. According to Alexandris (2004) and Rinne (2002), the traditional hostility of the local authorities, who perceive the existence of Roma in vicinity to their localities as a threat to public order, as well as a source of crime (drug dealing, thievery, etc.), is another reason behind their frequent evictions.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has noted, already in its Second Report on Greece (1999), that Roma living in settlements often face extremely harsh living conditions. Similarly, the more recent report of HLHR-KEMO/i-RED on the ‘Housing conditions of Roma and Travellers in Greece’ (October 2009)<sup>27</sup> suggests that ‘inhuman and degrading conditions, as well as the deprivation of a wide range of their fundamental rights is the common conclusion met in different national and international reports on housing of Roma minority in Greece [...]. Roma live in tragic conditions right next to dumps, in shacks, without water and electricity, without basic hygiene, among rodents, and at the mercy of extreme weather conditions and phenomena, affected by epidemic diseases, mainly caused by the trash they are paid to collect and remove’.

*Police violence towards Roma and persistent identity-controls in their settlements:* Abusive police behavior towards Roma is a major issue when considering this particular population (Pavlou, 2009: 13; ERRI/GHM, 2003; ECRI, 2009: 32), and one of the main issues raised in the complaints that have been handled by the Greek Ombudsman in recent years. More precisely the complains are

(Contd.)

70,000–80,000 Roma people in Greece (Abdikeeva et al., 2005). Mavrommatis (2004) refers to 150,000-300,000 persons, pointing out that the Greek state accepts the number of 80,000 of whom 25,000 (or 4,000 families) are travellers/nomads. According to DIKADI-ROM (Network for fighting discrimination against Rom), Roma in Greece count for 160-200,000 individuals (see <http://www.rom.net.gr/node/3>).

<sup>23</sup> See for instance, the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government (2001: 45; cited in Abdikeeva et al., 2005: 6); Pavlou, 2009; ERRI and GHM, 2003). For an exhaustive list of Romani communities in Greece, see the Annex.

<sup>24</sup> For a critical overview of their situation, see Troumpeta (2001 and 2008).

<sup>25</sup> For a selection of discriminatory incidents against Roma people, see the special edition of the quarterly *Roma Rights* (March 2001) Focus: Roma in Greece, referred to herein as Cahn (2001).

<sup>26</sup> According to Pavlou (2009: 12), there are no official or unofficial quantitative data available on regulated or unregulated encampments, ownership, social housing, private renting or household types.

<sup>27</sup> This report is referred to herein as Pavlou, 2009.

related, first, to misbehavior on the part of the police in individual cases, as well as excessive use of force, ill-treatment and verbal abuse; second, to the excessive use of force and illegal massive controls in camps, where all residents are treated as suspicious or even guilty of specific crimes or offences; third, to the Police involvement in the evictions of Roma from their camps in co-operation with the local authorities. The illegal character of the procedure of investigation followed by the police was one of the main issues on which the Greek Ombudsman has been focused (Lykovardi, 2006). It should be stressed, however, that, according to Kalliopi Lykovardi, Senior Investigator in the Greek Ombudsman's Office/Human Rights Department, since 2001, the Greek Ombudsman has received no reports indicating that massive investigations and controls in Roma camps continue (op.cit.).

*Exclusion of Roma from the Educational System:* A combination of racial discrimination and extreme poverty makes that very few Romani children complete even the basic primary education<sup>28</sup>. The children are all too often subjected to segregation in ghetto schools and Roma-only classes that – most of times – provide inferior education<sup>29</sup>. Municipal and school authorities have actively hindered access of Romani children to education by refusing to register Romani students in local schools and dispersing them to schools far away from their places of residence as well as by failing to provide school transport for Roma (ERRI and GHM, 2003; Marantzidis and Mavrommatis, 1999; ERRI, 2003; ECRI, 2009).

*Barriers to Access to Health Care and Other Social Support Services:* It is not exceptional for Romani individuals to lack basic identity documents, what then makes it impossible for them to claim necessary health care and state social benefits. ERRI and GHM (2003) report that, in a number of Greek municipalities<sup>30</sup>, local authorities have refused to register factually residing Roma as residents, effectively precluding them from access to public services (such as hospitals) necessary for the realisation of a number of fundamental social and economic rights (such as enrollment to school).

As a consequence Romani people and most particularly children are entrapped in a vicious circle, in which lack of official documents affects their health, education and living conditions (ERRI and GHM, *op.cit.* ; ECRI, 2009. See also Divani, 2008). Romani children are not sufficiently vaccinated because they fail to attend school regularly, but also because of the lack of readily-understandable information available to their mothers. But, the insufficient vaccination hinders their enrolment at school anyway.

*Employment:* Only few Roma are employed in the mainstream labour market, and this is mainly related to discrimination and prejudice, but also to their lack of qualifications (as a result of a low education). Most Roma living in settlements earn their income from scrap and garbage collection, while Roma in rural settlements occasionally earn a living by seasonal agricultural work. All above types of work are usually informal, thus not giving access to health or social insurance. It seems that many claim it is difficult and expensive to obtain the necessary permits, what then may lead to problems with the authorities (Abdikeeva et al., 2005).

According to the National Commission on Human Rights (NCHR, 2008), due to low levels of education and illiteracy, only an estimated 40 per cent of Roma have a job from which they can make a living. However, apart from education and housing, Roma suffer serious discrimination also in

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<sup>28</sup> Dropping out rates are very high. A 1998 survey of school-aged Romani children in a number of Greece's more exposed Romani settlements by DEPOS revealed that only 23% of Romani children of secondary school age in settlements have ever been to school and only 4.3% of this number attend regularly. Similarly, only 21% of Romani children of primary school age in settlements have ever been to school and just 13% of those who had started had continued to attend (ERRI, *op.cit.*). The same source offers an overview of the situation in different regions of Greece based on several empirical studies. All the findings consent on that the overwhelming majority of Roma children remain in practice illiterate. For more on the exclusion of Romani children in education, see also: <http://www.rom.net.gr/node/105> , as well as Gotovos (2004) that presents research findings from the Research Project "Roma children education" carried out by the Department of Education of the University of Ioannina.

<sup>29</sup> See the press release of the ERRC, on 10 August 2010, at: <http://www.erc.org> and <http://cm.greekhelsinki.gr>. In the same, see also a list of the schools involved in such practices all over Greece.

<sup>30</sup> For instance, ECRI reports that, in Spata and Aspropyrgos of the Athenian agglomeration, Roma living in settlements do not benefit from the requisite attention from the local social services. (ECRI, 2009: 32).

employment from members of the majority group, without exempting public officials and officials at the local level (ECRI, 2009: 31). This is a key issue to their unemployment or under-employment.

*Diversity challenges:* The Roma have always posed important ethnic and cultural challenges for Greece.<sup>31</sup> Their phenotypic features (colour of skin, face traits) and their traditions and way of life (tent-dwelling, nomadic, traditional dress code for women, under age marriages, patriarchal extended families) make them appear alien to the Greek nation despite their centuries-long presence in the country. Even though a large part of the Roma populations in Greece are Christian, religion does not seem to matter here as a bridge between the majority population and the Roma minority. The Roma in western Thrace are also a more complex case as they are also discriminated against within their own Muslim community (Troumpeta, 2001).

### ***Immigrants***

The third category of minority groups that live in Greece are economic migrants that arrived in the country during the past two decades. We have identified here the three largest groups (see table 2 above), notably Albanians, Georgians and Ukrainians and also two smaller immigrant populations, notably southeast Asians and sub Saharan Africans, mainly because these last have been increasingly visible during the last year (although they have been present in relatively small numbers in the country for at least 2 decades) and because of their religious (in the case of southeast Asians) and racial (in the case of sub Saharan Africans) difference from the national majority population.

#### **Albanians**

Albanian migration to Greece took massively place basically in two periods: in 1991 (following the collapse of the Albanian economy and polity) and in 1997 (after another crisis due to the implosion of the financial pyramid schemes). The availability of various access points from the difficult to guard mountainous north-western border of Greece and the proximity of this latter to Albania, together with the reactivation of existent post-WWII societal networks of kinship, friendship, partnership, etc. (that stayed ‘frozen’ for nearly 50 years due to the isolation Enver Hoxha imposed to Albania in the 1950s) (Kokkali 2010 and 2008: 214-218, Sintès 2002) were among the main factors that qualified Greece as by far the major migratory destination for Albanians during the 1990s. In addition the attraction of Greece’s large grey economy to undocumented immigrants (who saw in this a rapid economic integration) played a role (Kokkali op.cit.).

Gradually, during the last twenty years, a substantial part of Albanian migrants have settled in Greece. Still, different patterns of migration and various ideal-types of the immigrant can be distinguished among Albanians, basically those who have brought their families in Greece and those who did not. Generally speaking, the former enjoyed much more acceptance from the local communities than the latter, who – in many cases – remained isolated from the “autochthones” and enclosed themselves in exclusively male Albanian-speaking milieus with poor linguistic abilities in Greek (Kokkali 2010). By offering cheap, unqualified labor thus filling the gaps of the Greek economy, Albanians were firstly employed in any possible job. They have been working mainly in construction, agriculture, small industries and a number of other sectors (commerce, transport, hotels and restaurants). Gradually, some have started their own little business of cleansing or slight-repairing of apartments, in which they have been employing other Albanians, mostly relatives. Albanian women work as domestic workers, in the food and catering industry, in tourism and in agriculture. Lyberaki and Maroukis (2004) also showed that Albanian women are progressively moving out from unskilled work and cleaning services to become housewives, if they can afford it.

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31 Unsurprisingly, Greek language and culture had an important impact on Romani language and culture. Words derived from Greek make up by far the largest component of the so-called “inherited lexicon” of Romani (ERRI and GHM, 2003).



It is very difficult to talk of integration (if integration is defined as a binary process that involves both the immigrant and the society of settlement). Greek public opinion, Greek media and the state have viewed immigrants and Albanians in particular firstly with suspicion and resentment, harshly stigmatising them<sup>32</sup>, then with a paternalistic and utilitarian spirit (since, according to the post-2000 campaign in politics and the media, immigrants are beneficial to the Greek economy, while Albanians in particular have largely contributed in the construction works needed for the organization of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens) (Pavlou 2009). The adaptation strategies that many Albanians have used in Greece, i.e. name-changing and, in some cases, christening (especially of the children belonging to families of Muslim affiliation), offer an exemplary indication of how the Albanians' otherness is silenced or at least dissimulated so as to fit in Greek society<sup>33</sup>.

Their cultural difference from Greeks is however rather small concerning mainly language and religion. Albanian immigrants are generally fluent in Greek, even the older generation which may not write or read Greek properly but generally speak it quite well. In terms of religion, there are many migrants who declare themselves atheists<sup>34</sup>. Yet, it is important to stress that, before the total abolition of all religious practice in Albania, the population was divided into four major religions (Sunni and Bektashi Islam, Orthodoxy and Catholicism), 70% being Muslim. But for Albanians, the religious affiliation is more a form of social organization than religious belief. As such, religion is seen as inseparable from a certain 'nature', what then means that a person cannot flee the belonging represented by his/her religious affiliation, even if s/he was converted (De Rapper, 2002). In other words, since religion is intrinsic to origin and birth, display a different religion or declare oneself atheist is a merely superficial act that changes nothing, and, in any case, cannot alter the person's 'nature' (Kokkali 2010).

During the 1990s and the early 2000s, there have been marked incidents of xenophobia, racism, even more than intolerance towards Albanians. A well known example are the problems that had arisen at the beginning of this decade when Albanian pupils excelled in their classes and were entitled to carry the Greek flag in the national independence day during the school parade. While the law was clear: the best pupil in the class should carry the flag, in many schools parents, first and foremost, of native children and secondarily teachers and other local actors contested this right of the Albanian pupils arguing that the flag could not be carried by foreigners. While the Ministry of Education insisted that the law be respected and that the nationality of the children was not a criterion, several Albanian children conceded their place to the second best native Greek under the moral pressure of the school environment.

As Pavlou (2009) points out, this kind of incidents and tensions has been smothered with time and, today, a new generation with multiple cultural references and identities has arisen. Still, he recognises that this is not an irreversible conversion, to the extent that the actual discourse on immigrants is widely based on utilitarianism and the maintenance of socio-economic correlations of power between autochthones and immigrants. Besides, the on-going economic crisis in Greece will probably invalidate the arguments of the immigrants' positive contribution to the national economy, what then might lead to the reappearance of wide-spread racist discourse and violence (2009: 54).

Research material drawn from a recent research project reveals interesting facts about Albanian immigrants' housing patterns (Kotzamanis 2006). Overall, only few are those who seem to live under very poor conditions (e.g. in temporary structures or hotels), while the majority lives in a house or apartment. With time, important improving in their housing conditions is registered. Usually, migrants share their home with members of the nuclear family (spouses and children) or other relatives or Albanian friends. Rents are considered high

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32 During the 1990s, Albanians have been generally faced with negative stereotyping in the media (presented as 'criminals', 'backwards', 'uncivilised' – often in stark opposition to the good, honest, hard working ethnic Greek Albanians) (Pavlou 2001, Triandafyllidou 2002)

33 Those strategies constitute, however, a more complicated issue, since they are also related to Albanians' cultural characteristics and history (Kokkali 2009; 2010).

34 These ones might either be truly atheists or just people who do not desire to reveal their religious beliefs and/or religious origin. Let us remind that Albanians have been subjected to twenty years of forced atheism, during the harsh regime of Enver Hoxha. In 1967, there was an official abolition of all religious activities, which, since then, became subjected to severe persecution'

compared to the living standards in Greece, but also compared to the quality of the residences, which are mostly old and dilapidated, located on ground floors or basements. Many landlords refused to rent a house to the interviewees in question because they were Albanians. This was so for almost one person out of two, while for almost one person out of five renting a house was a problem because of a foreign origin in general (not specifically Albanian). In other words, almost 6 out of 10 persons interviewed had difficulties in purchasing or renting a house because they were not Greeks (Kokkali 2011b; 2008: 239-40).

As regards intermarriage with Greeks, percentages are very low. In 2007, for instance, in a total of 61,377 marriages all over Greece, 53,943 marriages either religious or civic were held among Greek nationals that is 88%. Intermarriage between Albanians and Greeks in particular, in the same year, counted for 1,16% of all marriages what is then a low percentage compared to the volume of the Albanian population living actually in Greece which is estimated at 5% of the total resident population.

### Georgians and Ukrainians

According to the 2001 national census, there were approximately 30,000 Georgian and more than 13,500 Ukrainian citizens living in Greece. Georgians were mainly concentrated in the region of Macedonia (70%) and smaller parts of this population lived in the Athens metropolitan area (14%) and Crete (6%). The largest share of Ukrainians (about 60%) live in Athens and others are scattered across the country. However, data from stay permits show that in 2007 about 40% of Georgians lived in Athens and another 40% in Thessaloniki. Marouf and Nikolova (2010) argue that this change in their geographical distribution is related to both new arrivals and to an internal movement of Georgians from smaller cities to Athens where it is easier to find work.

Marouf and Nikolova (2010) estimate that in 2008 Georgian citizens living in Greece (both under legal and irregular status) numbered 80,000 while Ukrainians were about 30,000. More interestingly, Ukrainian immigration to Greece is a typical case of female post-Communist migration. Women account for 3/4s of all Ukrainians living in Greece. However during the last few years new arrivals of Ukrainian women have slowed down and it is rather members of their families that join them in Greece. By contrast among Georgians women account for slightly more than half of all migrants. Both groups are in their vast majority (81% of Georgians and 92% of Ukrainians) in an economically productive age (between 15 and 65 years of age) and more than half were between 20 and 45 years.

Both Ukrainians and Georgians migrated for economic reasons to Greece. However, Greece is a secondary destination for Ukrainians who can be actually found scattered all over Europe, both in southern countries such as Italy, Spain and Portugal and in northern and western ones (Germany, Poland, the UK, Ireland). Greece thus was part of the global migration patterns of Ukrainians almost by accident. Once Ukrainian migration started, the networks continued feeding it albeit without massive increases. By contrast Greece is a primary destination for Georgians (after Russia and the USA) not least because of the large number of Pontic Greeks that lived in Georgia before 1989 (Marouf and Nikolova 2010).

Georgians are for the most part Christian Orthodox while Ukrainians are Catholic, Orthodox or Uniates. Many among them have revived Greek Orthodox churches by attending Sunday mass. However, relations between Greece and Georgia or Ukraine were quite limited before 1989 and both Georgians and Ukrainians were faced with a foreign environment upon arrival in Greece. Their difference is linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and less markedly religious.

Ukrainians in particular are also white, with fair complexion and tall, a phenotype that is appreciated in Greece as a sign of beauty. Indeed, Ukrainian women are considered as among the most beautiful women in Greece. But this goes beyond a simple positive or neutral stereotype, since it has been closely associated, first, to prostitution and paid services of the sex-industry<sup>35</sup>, and lately to marriages of young Ukrainian women to middle-aged Greek men. In 2002, the mayor of Zaxaro

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35 This was also the case of Russians: the 'Russian-woman-prostitute' stereotype.

(village in Peloponnesus), in his electoral campaign, has promised to the unmarried middle-aged male residents of the village to find them brides from Russia, as a solution to the deficit of women in the whole region. The event has inspired the film director Kimon Tsakiris to do his very successful film "Sugartown". Overall, the stereotyping on Ukrainians (and especially women, who are the main representatives of the Ukrainian migratory group) seems to have moved from the 'Ukrainian/Russian prostitute' to the 'Ukrainian/Russian (potential) bride', who comes to Greece to get married, as a means of survival.

#### Southeast Asians (Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Afghani)

The influx of Pakistani immigrants in particular began during the 1970s but their population augmented significantly during the period between 1991 and 2003. According to the 2001 census the Pakistani community of Greece numbered more than 11,000, 92% of which came to Greece in search of employment. According to the same census, 96% of the Pakistanis in Greece were men who work mostly in manufacturing industries but also in the fields of construction and services. Based on data of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) there were at least 23,000 Pakistanis residing in Greece on 31 December 2009.

Bangladeshis are a more recent community since they began migrating to Greece after 1991. Based on the data of the last census of the National Statistical Service, 94% of about 5,000 migrants from Bangladesh who resided in Greece in 2001 came with the purpose of working and were mostly employed in small shops and restaurants while 97% of them were men. Data from the Labour Force Survey however suggest that there were 13,000 Bangladeshis living in Greece at the end of 2009. Lazarescu and Broersma (2010) estimate that there are between 30,000 and 60,000 Pakistanis and approximately 20,000 Bangladeshis living in Greece today.

Both groups are characterized by a stark gender imbalance: in their overwhelming majority Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants are men. Indeed qualitative research (Lazarescu and Broersma op.cit.) suggests that most of them are married but only 20% live in Greece with their families. They are generally unable to ask for family reunification because their income is too low and probably too unstable.

Afghanis in Greece are very recent arrivals. They are not included in high ranks in the labour force survey or in the database of the Ministry of the Interior, we know however that they have been among the top three nationalities among those apprehended at the Greek Turkish borders in the period 2008-2010. Actually only in 2010 there were more than 20,000 arrests of people with Afghani citizenship at the Greek Turkish border. We therefore assume that there may be as many as 40,000 Afghanis in Greece at this time. Further research is of course needed to confirm this number.

*Diversity challenges raised by immigrant groups:* All immigrant groups raise important identity challenges to the Greek majority to the extent that they are ethnically alien to the Greek nation. However, these challenges have been most acutely felt in relation to Albanian citizens for a number of reasons: because Albanians are by far the most numerous immigrant community in Greece, they are visible in the labour market, in schools, in leisure, among youth, in culture and the arts. Albanians also challenge Greek identity and culture because they are very close to it: the two groups share a common history (of conflict and coexistence), common culture and traditions (of the wider Balkans). Albanian immigration touches the most sensitive points of Greek national identity as it challenges the authenticity of the Greek nation and its symbolic boundaries with its neighbouring nations. Thus, it forces the Greek Christian Orthodox majority to re-consider both its internal and external boundaries: it obliges public opinion and a variety of social institutions such as the school, the welfare state, the labour market, state authorities defending equality in the labour market and in society to re-consider what it means to be Greek today (when 10% of the population is of immigrant origin, a vast majority of whom Albanian) and what are the rights of immigrants in Greek society and polity. It is interesting to note that the religious diversity of Albanians (when it was the case) has been largely invisible or indeed blurred not least because they have opted for an assimilatory path in this (but also in other) respect(s). By their silenced otherness they did not challenge the values and the

practices of the dominant society. They are thus actually considered – and in this respect they are indeed – the most integrated migratory group in Greece (Kokkali, 2011b).

The debate that has arisen in December 2009 and January through March 2010 with regard to the citizenship law reform is an interesting point in question which highlights the predominantly ethnic diversity challenges that immigration raises for Greece.

Other groups of immigrants from Eastern Europe (Ukrainians, Georgians) have not posed important ethnic or religious challenges to Greek society because they largely share with the Greek majority the Christian Orthodox faith.

The immigrant groups that have most recently raised important diversity challenges in Greece by their visibility in the urban space are Asians. While Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Afghani immigration has been largely male only (and hence has not yet posed issues in school life for instance) and is overall numerically rather small, their largely illegal entry to Greece (crossing the Greek Turkish borders with the help of migrant smuggling networks), their concentration in downtown Athens, in crammed apartments where each room is inhabited by an entire family, and most importantly their instrumentalisation during the past few years (2007 onwards) by the Greek authorities has converted them (in the media and policy discourses) to the epitome of the ‘migration evils’ that Greece suffers. Interestingly the question of irregular Asian migration through Turkey was related even to the discussion of the citizenship law reform in Parliament in March 2010 (see Gropas, Kouki and Triandafyllidou 2010). Indeed while the new naturalisation provisions did not concern of course irregularly staying and recently arrived aliens, several MPs used the argument of controlling and combating irregular migration to argue in favour or against the relaxation of naturalisation provisions. Indeed, in the parliamentary debate Greece was presented to be in danger because it is the ‘door to Europe’ for millions of destitute and war-ravaged Muslims. Thus, while there has so far been only one major public issue (the construction of an official mosque in Athens, see Gropas and Triandafyllidou 2009) Asian Muslims have now started raising important religious and ethnic diversity challenges for Greek society.

#### 4. Definitions of tolerance in Greece

The minority issues for long have been treated in Greece as taboos; they have thus stayed outside the public sphere and the public debate, what then permitted the emergence of non-transparent, arbitrary and oppressive regulations. Even if some NGOs and politicians (mainly of the left) support minority rights, the public discourse is dominated by fearful attitudes on “national dangers” that correlate any claim of a particular linguistic and/or religious identity to foreign interests and irredentist aspirations (Heraklides 1997; 2004).

According to Skoulariki (2009: 69-70) after 1990, the political discourse on the minorities in Greece has been characterised by:

- A formalistic invocation of the principle of fairness and egalitarianism.
- An obsession with national homogeneity and the fear for otherness.
- Suspicion towards minorities, which *a priori* are thought to be the “Trojan Horse” of foreign interests and a threat for the country’s territorial sovereignty.
- A legalistic approach: only minorities recognised by international treaties, such as the Muslim religious minority of Thrace, are officially recognised by the state.
- A selective reference to the ethnic dimension. For example, while the Slavic origins of the Pomak language are emphasised with a view to distinguishing the Pomaks (who are Muslims) from the ethnically Turkish majority of the Muslim minority in Thrace, the Slavic language and cultural identity of the Slavic-speaking Macedonians of Greece is not recognised by the Greek state.

Despite the above situation regarding minorities, the linguistic and religious difference comes unavoidably into light, imposed by the undeniable socio-demographic changes that migration has brought to Greece. Indeed, given that in some schools of the Athenian city-centre, such as Petralona

and Gazi, the foreign pupils in a class reach 50%<sup>36</sup>, there is not any doubt that issues of otherness are here to stay.

As a result, in recent years, there is an increasing debate going on – especially among teachers, education practitioners, associations dealing with educational issues (e.g. OLME/ Federation of Officers of Secondary Education) – on interculturalism, multiculturalism and cultural difference. Interestingly this debate and the related education policies put in place by the Greek state do not associate in any way the education and other integration measures targeting immigrants with those targeting the Turkish Muslims of Thrace or the Roma population. Native and immigrant minorities are kept distinct in education policies and in all policy discourses.

Besides, despite the ongoing discourse on the necessity for an intercultural education aligned with the new realities of the de facto multicultural Greek society, the understanding of Greekness (and, thus, of the Greek national identity) as mono-cultural and mono-ethnic seem to impede the ‘opening’ of the Greek educational system to the cultures of its foreign pupils. Indeed, as Gropas and Triandafyllidou (2011) point out, a frequent understanding of what intercultural education is, especially among educational practitioners, implies the foreigners’ assimilation to the Greek culture without involving any redefinition of this latter. Therefore, the so-called intercultural education policies are plural in the letter of the law but rather assimilatory in their daily practice, thus reflecting more strongly the dominant understandings of what is Greek national identity than the more general principles of respect for and recognition of cultural diversity in spite of the fact that those later are currently referred to as integral parts of a liberal democracy such as Greece.

More generally, while multiculturalism in Greece is gradually being accepted as a fact, multiculturalism is seen as a normative approach that predicates the parallel (but not integrated) co-existence of different ethnic and cultural communities. By contrast, Greek policy makers and scholars tend to favour intercultural dialogue: notably the integration of individuals (not communities) into Greek society. In the Greek debate, the intercultural approach is seen as favourable to societal cohesion and as a normative and policy approach that is in line with modernity and liberalism<sup>37</sup>. In practice, however, there is little change in education, anti-discrimination or political participation policies towards this direction (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009).

The debate on the 2010 law on citizenship and the immigrants’ brand-new right to vote in the local elections is telling of this discordance, which is again related to the understanding of Greekness. While an attempt to differentiate national identity from citizenship sees gradually the light in the public discourse the reference to Greek ideals and turbulent history (1821 war of independence, Asia Minor refugees, etc.) is dominant<sup>38</sup>. Indeed, as Kouki, Gropas and Triandafyllidou (2010) show in

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36 “In the battle for grades without equal opportunities”, *Ta Nea*, 18 March 2010.

37 See for instance the speeches on the national celebration of 28th October of both the Prime Minister Kostas Simitis [27-10-2003], (<http://www.hri.org/news/greek/mpegrb/2003/03-10-27.mpegrb.html#02>) and the president of the main opposition party at the time, K. Karamanlis, ([http://www.nd.gr/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=26372&Itemid=242](http://www.nd.gr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=26372&Itemid=242)).. The former declares: “and, on the occasion of the national celebration of 28th October, I urge all Greeks to fight together for [...] Greece's progress and prosperity. [...] For a Greece that respects human rights and diversity – a Greece that leads the chorus of modern democratic countries”; while the latter stress that “there aren’t any citizens of 2nd class in Greece of the 21st century” (referring to Roma populations). “Our goal must be to integrate the immigrant element – a progressive and creative integration into Greek society. With mutual respect and understanding. With acceptance of the religious beliefs, the cultural heritage, the culture in general... And, of course, on the condition that they must respect the place that hosts them, the place where they live, will study and will make family and children...”.

38 Similar to the parliamentary debate, is the discourse in the press. We read, in the conservative quality broadsheet *Kathimerini*: “The issue of the ‘corruption’ of the national identity came several times into debate [...]. It has been even attempted to negatively correlate this to the granting of citizenship to some social groups that live permanently in Greece. The granting of political rights (citizenship) does not necessarily require a certification of ‘Greekness’. Modern Greek society has shown through its long-term coexistence with other groups (Roma, Muslims of Thrace) that the dominant components of the Greek national identity such as language, religion and traditions, do not constitute the necessary and sufficient condition for political and inclusion of ‘others’”, “Citizenship and national identity”, *H Kathimerini*, 31 January 2010. It is interesting how the ‘modern Greek society’ referred to in this quotation is perceived as separate of (though coexisting with) ‘other groups’ such as the Greek Roma and the Muslims of the recognised minority in Thrace, as if those

their analysis of a recent parliamentary debate on the new law, while there is a clear right-left wing rift as regards the dominant views on modern Greek identity, both views are based on the same elements of reference: national history and tradition and the national heroes. In this respect, the role of education is again put into debate. For those in favour of a civic citizenship, education is the means for becoming Greek, whereas, for those in favour of an ethnically based Greek nation, education should reinforce the existing ethno-religious conception of the nation but cannot convert to Greeks those who were born 'foreigners', that is to say of foreign parents.

In the above discourses, but more generally in Greece overall, the cultural difference is understood as ethnic, linguistic and religious, all three echoing the ethnic conception of the nation. The ethno-linguistic difference refers to the genealogical aspect of the nation related to the common language and ancestry, whereas the religious part refers to Orthodoxy, which is also considered as intrinsic to Greekness.

The media and parliamentary debates regarding the construction of a mosque in Athens, on the occasion of the 2004 Olympic Games, are indicative of the dominant understandings of difference in Greece and of how religious difference, in particular, should be accommodated. In their analysis of the debates in the press, Triandafyllidou and Gropas (2009) point out that, while it is generally considered that constructing a Mosque is not only a reasonable religious freedom but also a necessary venue for the needs of the Muslims who desire to practice their faith, a significant underlying unease still exists. This latter partly concerns geopolitics and identity, thus linking the religious aspects of Islam (the construction of a mosque) with the question of national security and the relationship between Turkey and Greece. As such, the question of the mosque becomes intertwined with Greece's most significant Other (Turkey) and the West's most significant threat (violent Islamic fundamentalism) rather than being treated as part of internal arrangements within Greek society. In other words, cultural and religious differences are defined as coming from outside and/or necessarily related to a sense of threat – both military and symbolic – to the nation and its well-being (*op. cit.*, 966-968). The analogies with the discourses held on the internal minorities of Greece as "Trojan horses" of foreign factors are more than evident.

In the above debate, another central issue was the disassociation of religious and national identity. Here again, exactly as in the discourses on the intercultural education, "modernity" was at stake, meaning that the establishment of a temple of worship for another faith was considered necessary in a 'European' and democratic country like 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece. The terms 'tolerance' and 'democracy' were thus repeatedly mentioned. However, as Triandafyllidou and Gropas (2009: 969) maintain, diversity (and the tolerance of it) were recognised only as an individual private matter and not as an issue associated with the recognition of collective rights.

Similarly, in her analysis of the press discourses and the political juxtaposition that followed the announcement of the candidature of Gulbeyaz Karahasan (a young Muslim woman from the Minority in Thrace) in the 2007 regional elections by the leader of the socialist party (PASOK), George Papandreou, Skoulariki (2009: 69-93) stresses the tenacity with which the Greek state considers the auto-definition as a strictly personal issue, refusing thus – even with judicial decisions of first degree – the auto-definition of citizens organised in associations, syndicates, etc.

In the public discourse, the limits of tolerance (that is to say what and who is tolerated or considered as intolerable), apart from the above mentioned issue on the '*individual vs collective*' recognition of diversity, are also set from what is said to be the democratic values of a modern state, 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece that is. In this respect, the main argument has been that, in the name of tolerance, we cannot abort basic civil rights as for instance equality in front of the law. The case of the Muslim minority of Thrace, where the Islamic law of the shari'a is valid instead, was abundantly cited<sup>39</sup>.

(Contd.) \_\_\_\_\_

latter do not constitute integral parts of the former. In the same issue of Kathimerini (devoted to migration), 57% of Greeks believe that migration alters the national identity of Greeks, while 45% are for and 45% against the right to participate to the elections and acquire the Greek citizenship ("Divisions on a vote of immigrants", H Kathimerini, 31 January 2010).

39 See: "Holy apartheid for the women of the minority", Eleytherotypia, Ios, 24 December 2006 (and in <http://www.iospress.gr/ios2006/ios20061224.htm>); "Jurists for the abolition of the Sharia in Thrace", 06 March 2010 in <http://tvxs.gr/news>.

Another issue raised even if hesitantly, probably inspired from the western-European and north-American discourses on terrorism, is the Islamic veil of women. A number of articles have recently dealt with whether the veil is a symbol of fundamentalism or of culture, as well as if it is compatible with the multiculturalism experienced in Greek schools<sup>40</sup>. Despite its democratic, liberal and modern coverage, this discourse is undoubtedly intertwined with the same unease that has characterized the debates on the construction of a Mosque in Athens. The apparent affirmation of the religious diversity – and in particular the Muslim otherness – appears indeed to bother the public opinion.

In the above debates, the term *tolerance* is either not used at all or very scarcely. In the Greek context, tolerance (*ανοχή / anohi*) corresponds to *liberal tolerance*, notably the will to tolerate practices, beliefs or behaviours with which one does not agree although one has the power to suppress them. The use of the Greek term for tolerance is so far not connected to any sense of egalitarian tolerance, notably to acceptance, let alone respect of cultural diversity.

Terms such as *pluralism* (*πλουραλισμός*) or *liberalism* (*φιλελευθερισμός*) are not used in the Greek political debate on migrants and minorities. There are no arguments made in the name of pluralism (let alone religious pluralism) nor in the name of liberalism. Liberalism is understood in the sense of right-wing neoliberal ideology not as regards diversity. The terms national heritage, national identity and the nation are often used and hotly debated as we have noted above and indeed in relation to issues pertaining to migrant diversity accommodation, integration or assimilation.

Indeed, it is the term *integration* (*ένταξη*) that is mostly used in Greek political and policy debates on ethnic minority and immigrant diversity. Conveniently, its meaning is often not clarified and hence can range from

- integration in a multicultural perspective (of both individual and group diversity, reconsideration of the meaning of national identity, pluralisation of national identity – but these views are held by a very small minority of left wing parties and intellectuals), to
- integration in an intercultural perspective (integrating individuals as bearers of specific cultures, view of culture as a box, promotion of dialogue between cultures, acceptance and respect of ‘other’ cultures, but no reconsideration of the Greek national culture and identity, nor of the fact that for instance migrant or minority children are of ‘hybrid’ cultural upbringing), and/or to
- assimilation understood as the peaceful and welcoming but still total cultural, ethnic and linguistic assimilation of immigrants and minorities into the dominant Greek national culture and language.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

Massive immigration flows towards Greece and the consequent shift of the country from an emigration to an immigration pole bring into light and stir old, unsolved issues of the Greek national identity. Moreover, given that the majority of those new immigrants are either nationals of neighbouring states or countries related to Greece’s not-so-distant past, it becomes clear that the newcomers, with their presence and their potential claims for respecting their cultural diversity, disturb old equilibriums and established orders. They challenge the idea of national security and territorial sovereignty, as well as the up-to-now crystallized idea of Greekness. Therefore, important parts of the Greek society tend to interpret any minority/immigrant claim of rights as a territorial claim of a neighbouring state that seeks to interfere in the domestic affairs.

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40 “How much backtracking is the State willing to do in the sake of respecting diversity?” [...] “the burqa is consistent with the democratic achievement of gender equality” (“The crisis has exacerbated tensions in Europe”, H Kathimerini, 31 January 2010). “Do we prefer protecting the culture of [...] the mullahs or engaging with the hundreds of Muslim women who are struggling to overcome the reactionary traditions of Islam and gain their freedom? Do we support the mixing of races or their separation and ghettoization?” (“The culture of Sabine”, Ta Nea, 8 August 2005. See also “Who is afraid of Islam?”, To Vima, 28 May 2006; “Hijab: a symbol or a terror?”, Ta Nea, 14 May 2009; “Conference on the Muslim woman in Europe”, 8 November 2008 in <http://www.ert3.gr/news/et3newsbody.asp?ID=428206>

Greece's main immigrant groups are not complete "strangers" to Greece: Albanians and "Vorioepiroti" are added to the albanophone Arvanites, by now completely assimilated by the Greek element, but who have - for long - been a distinct community (18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>41</sup>); their descendants can still be found in Greece and are – in many cases – conscious of their (or at least of their fathers' and grandfathers') ethno-linguistic difference. Bulgarians are linguistically very close to a part of the recognised Muslim minority of Greece, the Pomaks, but also to the unrecognized minority of the Slavic-speaking population of the Greek region of Macedonia. Besides, the geographic proximity of this minority to the state of (the Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia (in which the dominant spoken language is quasi identical to the one spoken by the Slavic-speaking Greeks) stirs up identity and territorial fears of various kinds.

Those fears substantiate the existing (traditional) suspicion towards minorities, but also nourish the unease of the Greek society regarding cultural diversity, and in particular religious – and most specifically Muslim – diversity. Despite the recent apparent changes in the general social climate (the media and parliamentary debates on diversity, the recognition of the need to implement changes in the educational system, the 2010 law on citizenship and the migrants' participation to the local elections) and the undeniable fact that in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century a more flexible understanding of Greek national identity emerges (especially among elites), there seems to be little room for the accommodation of ethnic and religious diversity in practice.

The current acute economic crisis certainly does not make things any easier. Immigrants become easy scapegoats as impoverished Greeks start competing with them for jobs in the low skill sector and any claims for special measures (for Roma or immigrant children in schooling for instance) is seen through the lens of the budgetary constraints even more than before. The obvious arguments include: we have hardly enough money to provide for decent schooling for our own children. Can we really afford the extra effort for migrant children? We can hardly save our jobs and make ends meet, how can we bother about the special problems that migrants and their families face? And if Afghans suffer persecution in their own country, does this mean that they have to come here to be fed? We cannot stand any more foreigners. The country has reached its limits.

In this negative climate the notion of tolerance can provide for a fruitful normative and policy basis because it allows for different groups and claims to be treated differently. Liberal tolerance can be defended for a variety of diversity claims that do not necessarily require a whole-hearted embracement by the majority population but just their tacit approval for letting be. Such issues include the codes of dress, the customs and life choices including issues of gender equality of minority and immigrant people, to the extent that these habits do not infringe Greek civil law. In addition there can be a claim for egalitarian tolerance, that is for acceptance and recognition of specific claims to cultural and religious diversity that require public recognition and state support to be satisfied. Such claims include the construction of one or more official Muslim temples in Athens; the introduction of alternative religion classes in schools; and the recognition of the native and immigrant populations' contribution to the Greek history and to society and economy today. Last but not least, the principle of non-tolerance can also provide for a good basis for forbidding practices that are against the Greek Constitution and Greek civil law (for instance some provisions of shari-a family law that treat daughters and wives as unequal to their male counterparts, marriages at the age of puberty, and female circumcision). Ultimately the issues that will be subject to non-tolerance, liberal tolerance and egalitarian tolerance will have to be decided on a case by case basis and in relation to their specific context. It is worth noting that deciding what is tolerable and intolerable is also a way of drawing boundaries between 'us', the ingroup, and 'them', the outgroup(s).

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41 Circa 1850, there was still a sizable albanophone population in Greece, located mainly in Attica, north of Euboea, etc. According to the 1928 census, the ethnic Albanian population reached 19,000 people, but it seems that this figure is underestimated and that we should instead consider a figure around 65,000 people (Poulton, 1991)



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