The European Union's Minority Rights Policy and Its Impact on the Development of Minority Rights Protection in Greece

Paper prepared for the 3rd Hellenic Observatory PhD Symposium on Contemporary Greece: Structures, Context and Challenges
Hellenic Observatory, European Institute, LSE
June 14-15, 2007

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Introduction

The issue of minority rights continues to be a critical matter for sustaining domestic peace and stability. Whereas the protection of minorities is often regarded as a domestic responsibility of states, internationalisation of minority rights gained significant momentum towards the end of the twentieth century. The contribution of institutions to this process has been particularly important in putting the issue on the international agenda and pushing states for the acceptance of universal standards. This paper suggests the increasing involvement of institutions as a key explanatory factor of the emerging trend in Europe of adopting various forms of multiculturalism and minority rights. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the European Union (EU) and attempts to analyse its influence mechanism on the policy choices of member states putting particular emphasis on the case of Greece.

The rights of minorities did not appear as a major policy concern in the EU's agenda before 1993. However, a substantive policy shift came with the inclusion of political conditions concerning minority rights protection in the 1993 Copenhagen accession criteria, initiating the EU's emerging minority rights mechanism, which later became a key component of the institution's democratisation programme in candidate states. Yet the mechanism's entire focus on candidate states has been under scrutiny as member states are not equally challenged by the EU in the area of minority rights. This paper aims to explain this internal inconsistency within the EU framework, highlighting policy patterns and shifts concerning minority rights from a new institutionalist perspective. Even though EU's pressures are less evident on member states, the latter are also challenged by related processes of internationalisation of minority rights and Europeanisation. Accordingly, focusing on the case of Greece reveals that since the early 1990s, series of policy reforms have taken place in the socio-economic area, and as well as in relation to legal, political and cultural rights of minorities. The study findings indicate that the EU membership has not only contributed to the socio-economic development of minority-inhabited areas in Greece, but also to the regionalisation of politics, encouraging minority participation in local/regional administrations. Internationalisation of minority rights norms are also seen to have influenced the Greek government policy towards its minorities, especially in the legal area, and to have acted as an external constraint against discriminatory measures.
For the purpose of this paper, it should be noted that previous policy practices and recent reforms in the area of minority rights are mostly analysed in relation to the Muslim/Turkish minority. Majority of this community lives in the border region of Western Thrace, the northeastern part of Greece. Their small but politically significant population of approximately 120,000 (Triandafyllidou and Anagnostou 2007) makes their case highly crucial as the Muslim/Turkish community is the only legally recognised minority group in Greece. Moreover, due to their strategic location between Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria, Western Thrace minority marks a particular kind of geographical and cultural-historical boundary (Anagnostou 2003,104).

The format of this paper is as follows. The first section presents a brief overview of internationalisation of minority rights and provides a perspective on the Greek state's adjustment to this process, focusing on some key legal and social developments that affected the protection of minorities in the country. The second section provides a more detailed account on the theoretical framework of the paper, focusing on the new institutionalist approaches to the policy-making at the EU level and explaining why forming a policy in the area of minority rights is becoming a common objective since the 1990s. The third section puts emphasis on the case of Greece with the aim of presenting some key socio-economic and political developments in the minority rights policy of a member state, highlighting the impact of Europeanisation process.
I. Internationalisation of Minority Rights: An Overview

As estimated in a recent study, the contemporary state system is composed of almost two hundred states that contain over five thousand ethnic groups speaking over three thousand languages (Sener 2004, 18). Such numbers indicate that ethnic and linguistic plurality are common aspects of many states, thus cultural diversity has become a fact of modern societies. Therefore, recognition and respect for these differences is thought to be essential for preserving domestic peace and stability within a state. However, it is a matter of question whether all different ethnic groups within a state could be characterised as minorities. From a sociological perspective, the answer would be yes, as the term minority can refer to any group within a society with a certain distinctive character from the majority (Oran 2004, 26). Minorities are described as representing a smaller portion of the population, having non-dominant status and in some respect differing from the total population. From a legal perspective, on the other hand, there are certain conditions to be categorised as a minority group. Most scholars acknowledge that the definition suggested by Special Rapporteur Francesco Capotorti provides the most comprehensive understanding of the term (Pejic 1997, 670; Thornberry 2001,70; Oran 2004, 26). According to Capotorti, a minority is a numerically inferior group to the rest of the population, in a non-dominant position, citizens of the State, and holding a distinctive ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristic from the rest of the population. While Capotorti's definition constitute the objective conditions of being a minority group, a subjective condition is also considered to be highly crucial, that is the self-awareness of the group to be defined as a minority (Kaya and Baldwin 2004, 5; Oran 2004, 26).

Provided that both conditions are fulfilled, in the most ideal form the respective state would employ strategies of recognition for the pursuit of peaceful coexistence of various culturally distinct groups. Thus the state would recognise the group as a 'minority' due to its religious, ethnic or linguistic distinctiveness from the rest of the population, and grant special legal rights that go beyond the basic civil and political rights guaranteed to all its subjects. The scope of minority rights can be very narrow depending on many factors, i.e. the political regime of the state, the specific state formation, the population of the minority group; whereas it can very broad. As Vermeersch describes, it could range from ‘the introduction of minority self-governments, the granting of territorial or cultural autonomy to minority groups, the funding of activities and organisations of national minorities’ to ‘guaranteed representation, or consultation of minorities in government institutions’ and ‘funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction’(2003,1).

Minority rights could be guaranteed through a state's constitution, by a particular law on minority rights

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protection, or by individual legislations on specific areas i.e. laws on minority language, laws on minority education, laws on minority media. As previously stated, the Muslim-Turkish community holds the only legal minority status in Greece, whose subjective rights are guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. The treaty established the minority rights protection system in Greece and Turkey taking 'principle of reciprocity' as its basis, defining both countries 'as custodians that could monitor and intervene in the affairs of their kindred minority across the border' (Anagnostou 2001, 38). The treaty's provisions include freedom of religion, the right to bilingual education and the use of mother tongue, the right to establish charitable, religious, social and educational institutions, and the right to preserve the distinctive characteristics of the minority. Nonetheless, it has been reported by prominent human rights institutions that until recent years, the minority encountered major difficulties in the implementation of such special rights (Human Rights Watch Report 1999; Greek Helsinki Report 2000). Indeed, until early 1990s, full enjoyment of citizenship rights, including freedom of movement and equal rights to business and professional life, were hindered by discriminative legal and administrative measures taken by the subsequent Greek governments. As stipulated in Decree 1366/1938 (condemned by the European Community Court of Justice on 30/05/1989), land transaction in border areas had to be authorised by the prefecture, which largely blocked Muslims' acquisition and selling of immovable property in Western Thrace (Interview NG030, 2007). Perhaps more significantly, Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code (no.3370/1938) had severe implications on the minority, which initially addressed the citizenship of Slavic-Macedonians, but later implemented to the Muslim-Turks due to deterioration of Greek-Turkish relations from mid-1960s (Interviews NG001, 2005; NG030, 2007). Following the implementation of the article, 46,124 Muslim-Turks were deprived from citizenship when travelling abroad and approximately 600 people became stateless despite the fact that they did not leave the country within these years. As indicated by legal experts from the Greek majority, further restrictive measures had a negative impact on the minority's daily life as obtaining licenses to build or re-build houses, and licenses to practice their profession and run businesses were also almost impossible due to bureaucratic difficulties (Interviews NG025; NG027, 2007). As noted by a minority member, who is currently working at the Prefecture Council in Komotini, after graduating from university he had to wait for 19 years for permission to practice his profession as a veterinarian and to sell veterinarian medicine (Interview NG023, 2005). While such examples help to illustrate the pre-1990s conditions of Muslim-Turkish minority of Thrace, several minority members regard the implementation of such measures as an extending part of the Greek state's policy towards minorities at the time, which in their opinion, aimed at sending away the educated members of the minority and assimilating the rest. It is acknowledged that discriminative measures

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2 Greek Citizenship Code (no.3370/1938) stipulates that "When a person of non-Greek ethnic origin goes abroad without the intention of returning, this person may be removed from Greek citizenship" by administrative decree.

3 Ilhan Ahmet, the current MP, requested from the Minister of Inferior the exact numbers of those who lost their citizenship [according to Council of Europe 'Follow-up Report on the Hellenic Republic 2002-2005, CommDH(2006-13) the precise figure: 46,124]
against the minority played an influential role in the social exclusion of Turkish Muslims from the society, which led to long years of mistrust within the minority towards the Greek state.

Minority rights could also be guaranteed by international law. Especially in cases where minority rights are not domestically guaranteed or violated, international instruments aim to provide additional protection for minorities. United Nations (UN) has been a credible institution in terms of creating a universal human rights regime, in which minority rights eventually became an integral part. The efforts of the UN concerning the protection of minority rights became more explicit with the Convention on Racial Discrimination (1965) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights⁴ (1966), which now has the status of international law. The efforts of regional institutions during the past fifty years have also been significant in promoting individual and group rights. The Council of Europe (CoE), European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) the European Union (EU) and its institutions became major promoters of human rights in Europe, and since 1989 they play a significant role in the development of a minority rights regime within the framework of human rights (Preece 1997, 345; Fleming 2002, 534; Hale 2003, 208). The CoE and the EU, in particular, have cooperated in the field of national minority rights, and, since the applicants to the EU must be members of the CoE, the CoE minority commitments extend to the EU members and applicants (Fleming 2002, 533). Perhaps most significantly, the CoE encouraged its member-states to sign the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe 1995), which is a legally binding international treaty for the CoE member-states. While some describe the convention as ‘the strongest’ and ‘the first legally binding international instrument’ on the issue of minority rights protection (Troebst 1999; Tsilevich 2001), some sceptic views are also prevalent in the literature questioning the effectiveness of its protection mechanism. Despite its explicit contribution to the internationalisation of minority rights⁵, one key deficiency of the convention is that it neither provides a comprehensive definition of the term minority nor indicates the scope of minority rights. As Gal addresses, this problem leaves a measure of discretion to the states when implementing its provisions and forming their minority rights policies since the Convention allows for flexible interpretation to which groups are entitled minority rights². The Dutch government, for instance, has limited the provisions of the Convention only to the Frisian minority by a national declaration in 2004 despite the existence of sizeable ethnic groups living in the country (Minority Rights Group 2005). Similarly, other contracting parties such as Denmark, German and Estonia ratified the Convention with declarations limiting the

⁴International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 27:
‘In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language’.

⁵Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Article 1:
‘The protection of national minorities and of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to those minorities forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights, and as such falls within the scope of international cooperation’.
number of potential minority groups who would benefit from the Convention (Minority Rights Group 2005). Thus, it could be assumed that after its ratification, Greece might adopt similar measures, thus limit the provisions of the Convention to specific minority groups. This issue becomes particularly important when the problematic cases of ethnic or linguistic minorities, such as the Slavic-Macedonian community or Greece’s Roma population are taken into account.

Since the early 1990s, however, there has been a remarkable change in Greek state’s policy towards minorities. Following the national elections in April 1990, Nea Dimocratia, the main centre-right political party, established a majority government under Constantine Mitsotakis, who served as the prime minister between 1990-93. Mitsotakis’s visit to Western Thrace in 1991 marked the government's new approach to the issue of minority rights, highlighting that 'mistakes have been made in the past'(Interview: Hulya Emin, 2007). Mitsotakis also announced government's new strategy for minority rights protection, including respect to the traditions of Western Thrace minority, equality in civic rights to all Greek citizens, improved socio-economic conditions and educational opportunities. The new policy initiatives were later materialised with Mitsotakis's statement to the Greek Parliament(18 October 1991) abolishing all restrictive administrative against the Muslim minority(Helsinki Watch 1992, 2).

While this shift could be related to number of internal and external dynamics, two major processes draw particular attention in terms of putting pressure on national governments for providing better standards in the area of minority rights protection. First, effective international measures addressing the problems of minorities6 have only become discernible towards the end of the century. The 1992 United Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities affirms that the promotion and protection of rights of minorities within a democratic framework based on the rule of law strengthens political and social stability within a state7. The 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities emphasises that the protection of national minorities is an integral part of the universal human rights regime, and therefore falls into to the scope of international cooperation8. Second, international and regional institutions have become major actors in this process by pushing their member states for the acceptance of universal standards in the area of minority rights, thus contributing to the internationalisation of minority rights.

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6It was firstly stated in the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities that the rights of national minorities are 'matters of legitimate international concern and consequently do not constitute exclusively an internal affair of the respective State’ CSCE, Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities, Geneva 1991 http://www.minelres.lv/osce/gene91e.htm
8Council of Europe, European Treaties ETS NO. 157 on 01 February 1995; http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/MINELRES/coe/fcnm.htm
All accessed 05/05/2007
In an attempt to analyse this changing international approach to the protection of minorities, I shall elaborate three main factors discussed by Kymclika to explain the emerging trend in the Western world of adopting various forms of multiculturalism and minority rights. Statistical data from the United Nations demonstrates that Europe is one of the regions with the highest percentage of immigrants, reaching over 7 per cent. Accordingly, demographics has been one crucial factor that pushed governments to take action on the issue since the populations of both minorities and immigrants have not declined in many western countries, indeed either remained the same or significantly increased due to high birth rates in recent decades (Kymclika 2002, 7). In the last twenty years, the periphery of Europe has also received a large influx of immigrants where countries such as Italy, Greece, and Spain have been experiencing a major immigration boom (Granitsas 2004). As indicated by Pavlou, immigrant population in Greece has increased four times its size since 1991, from 270,000 to 1,15 million persons (2007, 2). Indeed, it has been raised by number of informants that the Greek authorities are in the process of establishing a structured public consultation on the issue of immigration, thus major human rights organisations are now encouraged to be involved in the policy-making process, which in comparison has been non-existent in the area of minority rights (Interview NG029, 2007). It could be argued that the imminent problems related to immigration, such as growing tendencies of racism and xenophobia within the Greek society (EUMC 2006), is one crucial factor that pushes the Greek state to address the implementation of non-discrimination principle more effectively, which could have a spill-over impact on the minorities. Taking efficient measures for a gradual integration of immigrants is thought to be essential for sustaining domestic stability, and this appears to be a process where long-standing integration problems of existing minorities cannot be neglected.

Furthermore, members of minority groups have themselves become more active in pursuing their rights and interests in recent decades. The awareness to demand for equality as a fundamental right has grown increasingly with the establishment of a universal human rights regime in 1950s, which considerably increased the number of platforms where individuals can freely express their opinion concerning human rights violations. Accordingly, the concept of 'rights-consciousness' (Kymlicka 2002, 7) could be regarded as an influential factor in creating pressures on states for adopting various forms of multiculturalism and minority rights. Indeed, the role of 'rights-consciousness' could be better understood in relation to the third factor asserted by Kymlicka, the prevalence of democratic regimes in the western world (2002, 8), which not only led states to recognise their cultural diversity, but also provided the opportunity for minority members to freely pursue their claims and rights at different levels of governance. The significant increase in the number of democratic regimes since the mid-1970s has contributed to the raising global and institutional awareness in promoting individual and cultural rights in various ways. Democracy brings 'multiple and shifting points of access to power' (Kymlicka 2002, 9), implying that it encourages minority members to actively participate in daily politics at local, regional levels of
governance, thus defend their rights at various contexts. As will be discussed in relation to the Muslim-Turkish minority, rights consciousness could create a greater awareness of ethnic identity, leading minority members to demand recognition of their ethnic origin through supranational legal channels and mechanisms.

In addition to Kymlicka’s points, emphasising the prominent role of international and regional institutions is essential to explain the trend of adopting various forms of multiculturalism and minority rights in the Western world. They have been highly influential in raising ‘rights consciousness’, thus contributing to the internationalisation of minority rights. With particular reference to the case of Greece, for instance, it is highlighted by minority members that the accession to the EU provided number of new platforms to the Muslim minority and enabled the community to defend their rights at the European level (Interview NG017, 2005). While institutions such as the EU provide platforms for discussion of minority related problems, some others have the capacity to put international pressure on states in cases where implementation of minority rights are problematic or domestically violated. European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has dealt with numbers of minority-related cases concerning religious freedom, cultural rights, linguistic rights, education rights and its decisions are legally binding for the states concerned. As Medda-Windischler points out, even though there is no particular provision concerning minority rights in the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocols, certain general provisions, such as Articles 8 -the right to family life-, 10 -right to freedom of expression-, 11 -right to freedom of association-, and Article 14 have been interpreted by the Court in favour of the minorities (2003, 49). A number of minority-related cases recently reviewed by the ECHR clearly indicate the Court’s proactive approach in promoting basic freedoms regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural differences. Until 2000, Greece has been convicted ten times by the ECHR for violating the rights of minorities living within the country, including those of Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Catholics, Protestants and Macedonians. In relation to religious freedom, for instance, following the non-recognition of his status by the Greek state as the elected religious leader of the Muslim-Turkish community, Ibrahim Serif made a complaint to the ECHR. In 1999, the court sentenced the Greek government to pay compensation of 2.7 million drachmas to Ibrahim Serif on the basis of violating Article 9 of the European Convention concerning freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Interview NG019, 2005).

As mentioned above, findings also indicate that there has been a growing ‘ethnic-awareness’ among the Muslim minority since the early 1980s. Even though there is no particular evidence to demonstrate this as a direct impact of regional or international institutions, it is argued that unlike the nation-state, multicultural entities like the EU, appears to validate the minority cultural demands and ethnic claims for community self-determination (Triandfyllidou and Anagnostou, 2007, 7). Indeed, as mentioned by number of minority members, the EU is regarded as a safety net against
majority nationalism (NG019, 2005; NG020 2005; NG002 2005). Furthermore, legal bodies such as the European Court of Human Rights appears to be influential actors on dealing with ethnic awareness by providing a supranational legal context to the solution of ethnicity-related problems. Indeed, analysis of relevant cases illustrate that the ECHR decisions avoided further politicisation of ethnicity issues between the Greek majority and the Muslim/Turkish minority in early 1990s where ethnic tensions were prevailing in the Balkans. However, before moving on to the discussion of related developments, I shall briefly outline the significance of ethnic identity within the Greek majority-Muslim/Turkish minority context.

Due to the fact that nation/ethnic origin, language and religion are no more figured in censuses in Greece, different sources provide different numbers on the exact population of minority group living in Western Thrace (Rozakis 1996, 98; Koutoubas 2001, 13). Based on independent sources, the population of Western Thrace minority represents approximately thirty per cent (120,000) of the whole population of the region in which Ethnic Turks constitute the dominant community (70,000) followed by Pomaks (30,000) and Muslim Gypsies (20,000). It is argued that since there is no linguistic and ethnic homogeneity within the minority group, the strongest bond among its members has been their religious affiliation (Koutoubas 2001, 13), whereas some scholars claim that due to certain factors there has been a spread of Turkish language and Turkish identity amongst non-Turkish Muslim minority during late 1980s (Poulton 1993). The spread of Turkish language was anticipated since Turkish has been taught in all minority schools of Western Thrace in compliance with the 1951 and 1968 Turkish-Greek educational agreements (Koutoubas 2001, 15); however, the spread of Turkish identity has been an important issue in Greek state’s policy towards the Muslim minority of Western Thrace. In fact, it sought to sustain religion as the collective identity of the minority. Excluding the short-lived rapprochement (1947-53) between Greece and Turkey, it has refrained from referring to the minority group of Western Thrace as ‘Turkish’ and instead uses the term ‘Muslim’ (Human Rights Watch 1999). It is also argued that encouraging ethnic awareness within the Turkish-speaking minority, particularly within the Pomaks, has also been an important aspect of Greek state’s minority policy in recent years, which aimed at controlling the spread of Turkish identity (Demetriou 2004, 97). Nonetheless, despite Greek government’s counter-efforts, most minority members define themselves as ‘Turkish-origin’, which has been a growing phenomenon since the 1980s.

Even though the issue did not cause much tension until late 1980s, restrictions imposed on the Muslim minority by the Greek government on the acquisition of property, participation in administrative system, as well as poor economic conditions and insufficient work opportunities in the region led Turkish community to seek support of their kin-state Turkey. Accordingly, Turkey provided financial assistance and established networking with the minority members through the
Turkish consulate in the city of Komotini (Anagnostou 2001, 107). Closer ties with Turkey resulted in the growing demand of the community for self-determination as Turkish minority rather than Muslim minority, which unsurprisingly caused tension with the Greek government. As Oran notes, the three main civil society organs\(^9\) of the Turkish community were closed down in 1987 on the basis that referring to Muslim minority as ‘Turkish’ in their titles was threatening public order (2003, 104), which followed in 1990 by Greek High Court’s official prohibition of the use of word ‘Turk’ when referring to the Muslim minority (Koutroubas 2001, 17). According to Koutroubas, such insistence on defining the minority as a religious entity rather than recognising their ethnic difference costs Greece condemning decisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as of other human rights organisations (2001, 11). Self determination of the minority is still debated and in fact The European Court of Human Rights is still dealing with number of cases related to the issue; however, as previously emphasised, institutions played a significant role in preventing the politicisation of the issue. The presence of considerable pressures that changes the societal demands and priorities play an important role in reformulation of the interests of agents. As Struwe asserts, the set of rules and norms underlying a society are developed in the interplay of societal groups within a political sphere(1998,9). Accordingly, the policy choices of political actors are shaped by the interests of different groups that constitute the society. As will be discussed in the following sections, the Europeanisation process, in particular, shifted demands of the minority group to improvements in socio-economic and political conditions. Considering that Western Thrace is among the least developed regions of the EU in terms of per capita income and overall development (Anagnostou 2001, 101), in the last decade the foremost demand of the minority has been socio-economic development of the region.

To conclude, the formation of a universal human rights regime has been a successful achievement of the twentieth century, which has also triggered the development of norms and values concerning minorities within its framework. The growing global pressure on national governments has become more significant as the international and regional institutions have effectively pushed states for the acceptance of universal standards in the forms of international treaties, conventions and declarations, thus contributing to the internationalisation of minority rights. Their crucial 'behind-the-scenes' (Schmitz and Sikkink 2002, 527) role has strongly contributed to the process by putting the issue on the international agenda and pushing for the acceptance of universal standards. The increasing involvement of the international institutions has certainly provided a restraining mechanism in the area of minority rights; however, their influence on the policy choices of states on the area of minority rights requires a thorough analysis. Thus, the following section aims to provide a perspective on the EU's approach to the protection of minorities and its influence mechanism on the member states.

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\(^9\) The Xanthi Turkish Union (founded in 1927), the Komothini Turkish Union (1928) and the Western Thrace Turkish Teachers’ Union (1936)
II. Minority Rights and the European Union: An Emerging Policy?

Once founded on the objective of encouraging economic development in post-war Europe, the EU has steadily become one of the most efficacious international institutions of the twentieth century through initiating not only economic cooperation among its members but also creating the environment for collaboration in many aspects of political, social and cultural life. As Hix asserts, the EU has now become more than a regional organisation, a ‘political system’ with its enormous impact on member states in decision-making, as well as setting common values and norms in Europe through a broad range of policies from environmental issues to the emerging policies against racism and xenophobia (1999, 70). The area of human rights has become a clear policy objective especially since the Community’s transformation into the EU in 1993, which has subsequently progressed through the initiatives taken by the EU institutions, the inclusion of principle of non-discrimination in the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, the establishment of a Human Rights and Democracy Committee in 1999 and the recent adoption of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2000. The Union has also been active in promoting human rights and democracy in its external relations, most remarkably through the inclusion of a human rights clause in all association, partnership and cooperation agreements with third countries since 1995 and through aid programmes such as the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which funded human-rights related projects in thirty-two countries around the world in 2004 (Europa 2006).

Although the Union's commitment to protection of human rights has its roots in the early founding treaties of 1957, the Treaties of Rome\textsuperscript{10}, the rights of minorities, an integral part of the universal human rights regime, did not appear as a major policy concern in the EU's internal agenda until 1990s. Despite the existence of unresolved minority related disputes in member-states since the early stages of European integration, it could be argued that the EU did not play an active role in the settlement of such disputes. The case of France\textsuperscript{11}, for instance, draws particular attention due to the country's firm stance against granting minority rights to its sizeable ethnic and religious groups. The long standing dispute between France and its Corsican population regarding the latter's demand for greater autonomy occasionally raised tension in the country due to the violent campaigns of certain militant organisations since the 1970s. Spain is another significant example as the country has been dealing with problems of ethnic conflict for almost four decades. The separatist Basque group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna(ETA), in particular, engaged in campaigns of

\textsuperscript{10} Treaty Establishing the European Community: Article 130.1. Community policy in this area shall contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law, and to that of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms’ (25/031957).

\textsuperscript{11} France has been criticised by the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC) for its reservation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) Article 27 relating to minority rights” (Minority Rights Group Country Report, 10/11/2005)
violence in the country from the late 1960s until declaring a permanent ceasefire decision in March 2006. Nonetheless the ceasefire ended after ETA claimed responsibility for a bombing attack at Madrid Airport in December 2006, disrupting the peace process (Fuchs 2006). Dealing with these sorts of minority related disputes have been mostly considered as a domestic responsibility of respective states, thus policy practices among member states significantly varied since the EU did not set any common policy objectives regarding the rights of minorities.

In an attempt to analyse a policy change at the EU level, conceptualising institutional change and its impact on the policy preferences of actors from a historical institutionalist account provide useful insights. Thus, rather than describing institutional change as the breakdown of one equilibrium and its replacement with another, it is important to focus on intended and unintended consequences that occur due to the interaction of ongoing processes at the institutional level (Thelen 1998, 383-4). Accordingly, the process of eastwards enlargement has been a critical juncture in the sense that the lack of EU standards on minority rights has become a crucial matter with the decision taken to enlarge towards Eastern Europe in 1993\textsuperscript{12}. As Sasse notes, in the post-Cold War period many Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) prioritised the strengthening of central state capacity and the position of the majority nations, thereby running the risk of discriminating against minority groups (2005, 2). Furthermore, the violent ethnic conflicts following the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the possible escalation of further conflict in the region due to the presence of sizeable minorities in many Eastern European countries\textsuperscript{13} led to a growing awareness within the EU to tackle the issue more effectively. As a matter of fact, 'respect to and protection of minority rights' was included as a major political condition for EU membership in the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria, indicating a substantive policy shift in the process of policy-making over the issue of minority rights. The EU initiated an effective mechanism that would -perhaps for the first time- go beyond the rhetoric of promoting and protecting minority rights.

A considerable political or environmental pressure may be sufficient to create a suitable setting for institutional change, yet institutions can also undergo changes through learning from experiences of others and responding to new information (Peters 1999, 69). Institutions learn from their own and others' experiences when undertaking reforms in particular policy areas, which eventually affects the policy preferences of actors (Olsen and Peters 1996). This becomes particularly significant within the EU's institutional framework as multiple actors have acquired competencies and roles in the process of policy-making through working as mediators between the member states, thus enabling the articulation of common interests and policies. As Gropas argues, EU institutions have

\textsuperscript{12}For a general history on issue of minorities in Eastern Europe see R. J. Crampton, \textit{Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century – and After} (London: Routledge, 1994).

\textsuperscript{13} “In Latvia, the minority groups constitute approximately 42 per cent of the entire population, while countries like Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria have minorities between 7-10 per cent, and most CEECs have large Roma populations” (Sasse 2005, 2).
asserted their position as policy-actors taking initiatives and actively promoting the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the Union's internal and external policies (2006, 17). During the 1980s and early 1990s, the European Parliament took the initial steps in the area of minority rights through adopting series of resolutions concerning the protection of minority languages in member states in the fields of education, media and public life, emphasising the Community's responsibility to provide legal protection and necessary financial resources for minority languages and cultures. As Shuibne asserts, the resolutions stressed the need to preserve cultural diversity within the Community by undertaking a coordinating role for itself and encouraging its member states to be more proactive on the issue (2001, 67). A general reference to the promotion and protection of minority rights was also included in one of these resolutions. It could be argued that the initiatives taken by the EP contributed to the formation of a suitable strategic context at the EU level, enabling other actors to pursue more active policies in the area of minority rights, as well. As Struwe points out, the EP also played an important role in pressuring the European Council to strengthen its position as a contributor to the global protection of human rights and democracy (1998, 10). Accordingly, the Declaration of Foreign Ministers of the Community on Human Rights in 1986 and the subsequent Council resolution adopted in 1991, have been considerable steps in the development of EU's human rights policy, indicating the emerging consensus at the member-state level for further cooperation within the broad framework of human rights. The European Commission (EC) has also become a major actor within the new emerging minority rights mechanism as it was assigned the roles of managing negotiations with candidate states, to monitor their progress and to regularly report on the fulfilment of accession conditions including progress made in the field of minority rights protection. The EC also linked operating agreements, giving financial support to the candidate states to the achievement of expected human and minority rights standards, holding the right to suspend these agreements if the conditions were not fulfilled (Grabbe 1999, 9; Dimitrova 2002, 174). The EU's highly compelling 'democracy-promotion programme' (Vachudova 2005, 1) in candidate states attracted numerous applicants despite all the challenges and pressures of adapting their domestic structure to the multi-level EU governance system. The nascent minority rights


15 "...whereas the Community also has a duty in its relations with the governments of associated and third countries to draw attention to the rights of minorities and , if necessary, to support governments in finding ways of ensuring that these rights are safeguarded; whereas it must also condemn any deliberate denial of these rights," European Parliament Resolution on linguistic minorities in the European Community (OJ 1994 C/61- A3-0042/94)

16a "... The protection of minorities is ensured in the first place by the effective establishment of democracy. The European Council recalls the fundamental nature of the principle of non-discrimination. It stresses the need to protect human rights whether or not the persons concerned belong to minorities. The European Council reiterates the importance of respecting the cultural identity as well as rights enjoyed by members of minorities which such persons should be able to exercise in common with other members of their group. Respect of this principle will favour political, social and economic development
mechanism, in particular, has become a key component of this programme, yet its entire focus on candidate states has been under scrutiny as member states are not equally challenged by the EU in the area of minority rights. This internal inconsistency within the EU framework becomes more evident when certain standards and facts regarding minorities are compared in fifteen-old member states and ten-new member states. The Hungarian government, for instance, adopted a comprehensive minority rights policy during its EU candidacy stage recognizing the existence of thirteen minority groups living in the country and granted wide range of minority rights from cultural autonomy to political representation under the 1993 Minorities Act legislation (Vermeersch 2003,12). As indicated in the 2000 FCNM Advisory Committee's opinion on Hungary, despite certain shortcomings in the implementation of the Convention, the Hungarian government has made a substantial effort in providing legal standards for the protection of minorities. Following the ratification of the Framework Convention, the Dutch government, on the other hand, limited the provisions of the FCNM only to the Frisian minority by a declaration adopted in 2005 (Minority Rights Group 2005). Indeed, as highlighted by several human rights organisations the ongoing problems of Muslim and Jewish communities related to ethnic-discrimination and the rise of anti-Semitism within the Dutch society necessitates the adoption of a more proactive policy by the Dutch government. As Amato and Batt assert, the absence of standards that would also be imposed on member-states bring the question of 'double standards', or cause 'equivocation' since many candidate states have advocated that they have adequate-perhaps more extensive-provisions towards minorities when compared to member-states (1998, 3).

There are various perspectives on the EU's influence over the process of policy formation concerning minority rights in the CEECs. The literature on conditionality, in particular, raises crucial points as scholars highlight growing EU influence over candidate states, take into account the domestic structures of the latter and their responses to the pressures of the EU in the area of minority rights (Grabbe 1999; Checkel 2000; Dimitrova 2002; Anastakis and Bechev 2003; Schimmelfennig et al., 2003). Yet, it only helps to enlighten one side of the problem outlined above. It does not provide the necessary explanatory tools to understand whether or not such pressures also exist for member-states. Indeed, lack of comparative analysis also makes it difficult to assess the extent to which EU pressures affect minority rights policies of candidate states. Therefore, before opting to describe EU's impact on member and candidate states in the area of minority rights as 'differential' or 'inconsistent', our explanation requires a broader analysis than solely focusing on candidate states. In fact, certain groups living in EU member states, such as the Welsh and Scottish populations of the United Kingdom obtained range of minority rights including regional autonomy and linguistic rights since these issues have started to be dealt more effectively at the EU level. Furthermore, the demands of Corsican population also resulted in amendments to the French constitution, as the French Parliament agreed to grant greater regional autonomy to the

island's local government in 2003. In fact, having the reputation of being 'the least developed region of France', Corsica has considerably benefited from the country's EU membership by receiving large amounts of EU aid, €1.2 billion between 2000 and 2006, bringing the region's gross income above the limit for receiving any more structural funding that are available for less developed areas of Europe (James 2003).

My intention here is to draw attention to the factors that are operationalised within the EU context leading the governments of member states to re-evaluate their policies in the field of minority rights. Thus, approaching the EU-level policy-making from a historical institutionalist account enables to explore how the EU affects the sequence of interaction among actors, the choices available to particular actors, and its institutional impact on the final policy choices of actors in the field of minority rights. Moreover, historical institutionalism provides useful insights on the existing patterns in a particular policy area that actors take into account when making their choices. By shifting our focus to the changes in these policy patterns, historical institutionalism also draws attention to strong pressures that can play a significant role in reshaping policies both at the domestic and institutional level. Institutions make up the strategic context in which these actors make policy choices, pursue their goals and interact with each other. Accordingly, it could be argued that historical institutionalism provides the analytical context to assess the interplay between the actors and the structures. As indicated by scholars, the approaches to institutional analysis highly focus on the importance of structure in explaining political behaviour, yet agency factors are better integrated to structural factors in historical institutionalist analysis (Immergut 1998, 17; Peters 1999, 144).
III. The Case of Greece: An Overview of Policy towards the Muslim Minority

For historical institutionalism, to understand policy choices of actors the basic analytic departure would be focusing on their initial policy choices. The operative forces that have shaped the initial policies will be mediated by the contextual features of the new situation, thus having an impact on the subsequent policy choices (Krasner 1984; Peter and Hall 1996, Peters 1999). Once certain economic, social and political arrangements are in place, as Alexander argues, they appear to generate patterns of costs and benefits in which actors would prefer to maintain the status-quo, yet consistently calculate the probable benefits of change from the status-quo in the long run (2001,254). As previously mentioned, the minority protection system created under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne was a by-product of an agreement signed between Greece and Turkey. Due to its bilateral nature there has been no effective mechanism that would guarantee the implementation of its provisions, thus the protection of minorities was highly dependent on the relationship between the signing countries. Accordingly, it could be argued that Greek-Turkish relations played a major role in shaping Greece's initial policy choices towards its Muslim minority(Interviews NG025 2007; NG027 2007; NG030 2007; NG031 2007). Following the 1923 compulsory exchange of populations between the two countries, the Greek government undertook certain measures to facilitate the settlement of newcomers from the Asia Minor; however, it did not show the same interest in integrating the Muslim community to the Greek society. From 1924 to 1964 successive Greek governments implemented the policy of 'benign neglect' towards Muslims in Thrace (Alexandris 2003, 128), which resulted in a widening educational and economic gap between the Muslim minority and Christian majority. Thus, the long-standing isolation of the Muslim minority combined with their poor economic conditions and living standards has its roots in the earlier negligence policies pursued by the Greek governments.

Taking into account that Greek-Turkish relations suffered from series of bilateral disputes over the past decades, their respective minorities have constantly become the target of retaliation in which the latter encountered ‘physical, economic, social, educational and religious repression’ (Niarchos 2002, 2). The outbreak of inter-communal violations in Cyprus during 1960s intensified Greek-Turkish tension for long years. Its immediate consequence on the Greek minority in Turkey has been the removal of more than 30,000 Greeks who hold Greek citizenship (Niarchos 2002, 11). Following the expulsion, the Turkish government adopted a decree(6/3801) that prohibited transfer of the ownership of property and other titles belonging to all individuals of Greek nationality (European Parliament 2005) . According to the Turkish authorities, the decision was taken as a reciprocal measure to the decree (1366/1938) implemented by the Greek government since 1938.

18Ministry of Justice Report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey : 13 July 1995
As previously mentioned, the decree was concerning land transaction in border areas in Greece, which for long years highly blocked Muslims' acquisition of immovable property in Western Thrace.

While such examples reflect the shortcomings of the minority rights system created under the Treaty of Lausanne, efforts on the development of minority rights protection have increased in recent years as Greece and Turkey became parties to international conventions and treaties, which are gradually replacing their bilateral approach to the minority rights issue. Greece's accession to the EU, in particular, has created a crucial institutional pressure in the sense that greater obligations were undertaken to improve its respective minority rights standards. In relation to the above mentioned decree (1366/1938), following the decision of the European Community Court of Justice (305/87), the Greek government adopted a new decree in 1990 on property acquisition, which ended discriminatory measures against minorities into a large extent. In compliance with EU's demand again, a major social development has been the abolishment of Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code in 1998, which as already stated, imposed restrictions on the citizenship of non-Greek ethnic origins. (Koutroubas 2001, 18; Oran 2003, 106; Council of Europe 2004a). As Anagnostou asserts, the abolishment of such restrictive measures were deemed necessary as escalation of problems with the minority might have endanger its relations with the EU (2001, 103).

From a historical institutionalist perspective, institutions play a crucial role in producing policy paths and shape a state's response to the new challenges in certain ways. By providing 'greater or lesser degrees of certainty about the present and future behaviour of other actors', institutions enable the actors to shape their behaviour through 'strategic interaction' (Peter and Hall 1996, 7). Accordingly, whereas the analytical focus on policy patterns may indicate historical institutionalist emphasis on persistent policy preferences of actors, it is important to note that the way historical institutionalists conceptualise path dependency involves elements of both continuity and change (Thelen 1999, 384). As Immergut asserts, history is marked by accidents of timing and circumstance. While these may leave lasting legacies, such legacies are equally vulnerable to unexpected change and pressures (1998, 11). In the case of Greece, breaking away from the legacy of past policies in the area of minority rights occurred in a significant period where the mounting pressures of the EU membership became more evident through the country's democratisation process.

The acquisition of full membership status in 1981 has been a major step that would enhance political stability, strengthen democracy, guarantee external security as well as bring economic benefits. 

19 "Commission of the European Communities v Hellenic Republic: Failure of a Member State to fulfil its obligations - National legislation not in conformity with the obligations laid down in Articles 7, 48, 52 and 59 of the EEC Treaty". Judgement of the Court (Case 305/87), 30 May 1989.
prosperity, which as Tsoukalis asserts, would as a whole lead to the ‘modernisation of the Greek socio-economic system’ (1979 cited Ioakimidis 2001, 3). Accordingly, Greece undertook an ‘intended Europeanisation’ (Cassimati 2001, 3) process in which political actors purposefully copied the European model to develop their domestic systems rather than experiencing a spontaneous impact that would occur as a response to the pressures of European integration upon the political system. In other words, the process could be described as a conscious effort of the political actors ‘to introduce into political system the logic, norms and dynamics of EU’ (Ioakimidis 2001, 2), thus the EU membership became a slogan for modernity.

Notwithstanding an important starting-point, it would be misleading to assume that such institutional adjustments to the EU have been the only driving force shifting the policy pattern into a new path, thus led to major policy reforms in the area of minority rights. Instead, it would be plausible to adopt a more holistic approach, in which the role of domestic politics and actors, societal changes and as well as improvements in Greek-Turkish relations are equally emphasised when analysing policy reforms in the socio-economic and political spheres. The following sections aim to emphasise the developments in these two major areas, where the findings indicate that shortcomings of minority rights protection were most strongly felt by the minority community due to previous policy practices implemented by the subsequent Greek governments. Thus it is one major purpose of this paper to analyse policy changes in relation to Greece’s Europeanisation process, yet discuss other factors where the latter plays an equally important role.

1. Socio-economic and Political Developments in the Field of Minority Rights

The term Europeanisation has drawn considerable attention in recent scholarly attempts to analyse EU-level policy-making and its impact on the policy choices of member and candidate states. From one perspective, the term refers to the process of adapting domestic structures to the multi-level EU governance, thus creating considerable pressures on respective national governments. The Europeanisation process has crucial effects on the conditions of minority groups living in EU member and candidate states, most notably through the development of socio-economic conditions, regionalisation of politics -thus encouraging political participation at local and regional governances- and promotion of cultural and social rights. Yet, it could be argued that there is a stronger institutional pressure on candidate states in the area of minority rights due to EU’s effective monitoring mechanism during the candidacy stage, whereas member states have the advantage of having greater control of the institutional pressure over the process of policy making in the area of minority rights. In this section, the aim is to focus on certain socio-economic and
political policy reforms undertaken in Greece during 1990s and analyse their impact on the minority rights policy.

It is argued that Europeanisation process leads to considerable changes in domestic governance through limiting the ‘governing monopoly of the state’ and encouraging active participation of sub-national authorities. As Kapsi notes, the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht established the Committee of Regions, which aimed to create a consultative body between the member-states and EU citizens and decision making bodies of the Union regarding the issues that affect the European regions. EU's Regional and Cohesion Policy, in particular, aims to strengthen sub-national politics in highly centralised states (Anagnostou 2001, 100) through providing the framework for cooperation among between supranational, national, sub-national levels of governance, thus promote regional development (Baun 2001, 261; Tzoutzis 2001, 11; Cappelen et al. 2003, 640).

The structure of the Greek state and political system was often characterised as 'over-centralised'. Indeed, until 1990s, its centric character particularly revealed itself in the distribution of power and financial resources, which did not leave much space for the participation of local/regional governments in policy-making 20, thus caused significant socio-economic disparities between the regions of north and south (Siriopoulos and Asteriou 1996, 540; Ioannides and Petrakos 2000, 32). Major steps towards regional development were taken during the early 1990s, including the administrative division of Greek territory that would correspond to European regional and structural funds (Kapsi 2000, 10). Thrace, the north-eastern minority-inhabited region of Greece, became a part of the administrative region of East Macedonia and Thrace, which had crucial impacts on the socio-economic and political status of the Muslim minority. Resources from structural funds have been allocated to Thrace as a border region of strategic importance. Indeed, the region received the third largest fund in Greece from the 13 regional development programmes under the Community Support Frameworks for 1989-93, 1994-9, 2000-2006 (Triandfyllidou and Anagnostou 2007,3), which were mainly used for intensified development efforts and infrastructure investments. Construction of the Egnatia Highway, for instance, a major infrastructure project co-funded by the EU, the Greek government and the European Investment Bank (EIB) not only had a positive impact on the regional economy but also created employment opportunities for the society, including the members of the minority (Interview NG002, 2005). Apart from structural funds, individual-basis EU funds also appear to create a positive environment for regional development in Western Thrace. EU Development Programmes aim to bring equal advantages to different groups through encouraging their integration to the local economy. However, as some minority members claim, this has not yet been the case in Western Thrace due to the fact that distribution of such resources

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20The 1975 Greek Constitution (Article 101, paragraph 3):  
"The regional state authorities have a general competency of deciding over the affairs of their district, whereas the central administration, to the exception of specific competencies, have the general direction, coordination and control of the regional institutions, as prescribed by law."
and funds have not been fair among the minority and majority (NG020; NG022, 2005). There have been a few minority members who recently benefited from such funds and started small businesses (NG024, 2005), yet the number of applicants from the minority remains rather limited due to certain difficulties. It is indicated that due to lack of communication between the local administration and minority associations, there is insufficient announcement of available EU funds by the local authorities or the minority members are informed only before the closing dates. It is also raised that education-related problems play an important role as minority members’ Greek language knowledge remain insufficient for completing a difficult application process since they do not receive any assistance from the local authorities (NG019; NG020; NG023, 2005).

Moreover, being a rural community plays a crucial role in the socio-economic development of the Muslim minority. Europeanisation of the agriculture sector in many EU member-states appears to be a significant progress due to the fact that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is widely regarded as a central element of the EU’s multilevel policy-making structure. The general objectives of a common agricultural policy was defined as early as in the Treaty of Rome and its mechanisms came into force in 1962. CAP currently constitutes approximately 44 per cent of the entire EU budget\(^{21}\), thus it is defined as ‘the oldest, most integrated and expensive EU policy area since the EU foundation’ (Sevasti 2006,1). In the early years of Greek-EU relations, adopting the agriculture sector to the EU-level has been a major issue; however, due to strong institutional pressures and lack of domestic structures, the gradual decline of the agriculture sector has been inevitable. Despite receiving number of EU subsidies, agriculture is no more referred to as a prospering economic sector in Greece\(^{22}\), yet in terms of employment dynamics it remains to be crucial, constituting approximately 17 per cent of employment rates\(^{23}\). Indeed, it plays a particular role in the analysis of socio-economic conditions of the Muslim-Turkish minority as approximately 80 per cent of its population is currently working in this sector. Accordingly, the Europeanisation of the Greek agriculture policy through the adoption of CAP had and continues to have a direct impact on the Muslim-Turkish minority (Interviews NG017 2005; NG023 2005).

In recent years, the Greek government has been closely cooperating and taking initiatives together with the EU institutions (e.g. The Rural Development Programme 2000-2006) to strengthen the competitiveness of agriculture sector and to promote development of rural areas. However, one major issue stems from the fact that Greece is still a major tobacco producer within the EU, which


\(^{22}\)The agriculture sector accounted 8.3 per cent of GDP in 1998 and 6.9 per cent in 2002’, Economic and Social Data Rankings: Agriculture and Industry Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Sector ,2002.

could be directly linked to the Muslim minority as they are among the major tobacco cultivators in the country. In recent years, the northern EU member-states have been pushing for the minimisation of EU support to tobacco producers mainly due to 'anti-smoking campaigns'. Accordingly, the fact that EU incentives are only guaranteed until 2012 poses a serious economic problem for the near future. Although local authorities are working to facilitate the process for tobacco cultivators, such as providing training programmes on cultivating alternative products (NG023, 2005), the lack of communication and cooperation between the minority and the local authorities becomes once more problematic. Whereas some minority members assert that the Greek government has not been dealing with the issue efficiently, some highlight that self-criticism is necessary due to the problem's severe implications on the minority's socio-economic conditions. Indeed, it is argued that the minority is too concentrated on the long-standing problems, thus does not show any efforts in establishing an effective mechanism together with the majority that would push the Greek government to adopt more effective strategies (NG025, 2007).

Historical institutionalism locates institutions in a causal chain that accommodates a role for factors, notably socio-economic conditions and the diffusion of ideas. As Thelen asserts, changes in the political and socio-economic context not only encourages involvement of new actors, but also enable the latter to pursue their interests more effectively at the institutional level (1998, 383). Accordingly, growing dependence on structural funds followed a series of reforms of local, prefecture and regional institutions undertaken by Greek governments. EU structural funds contributed to the strengthening role of sub-national structures, thus provided the grounds and opportunities for local and minority groups to assert their interests vis-à-vis national authorities more openly than before (Anagnostou 2001, 100). Moreover, Greece's adoption to the multi-level EU governance affected participation and representation of the minority in the local administration. Decentralisation of the Greek state have been a major step since Thrace has become one of the thirteen administrative regions of the country, which opened the door for minority members to actively participate in the local administration. Particularly, following the reforms that established prefecture-level governance, the first elections at the level of prefectures took place in 1994 and it changed the earlier practice of their appointment by the central government (Kapsi 2000, 9). When compared to the earlier practice of appointment of prefecture members by the central government, it could be argued that the electoral process has been a crucial democratic step, thus there are currently more than thirty minority individuals working as mayors, members of municipal councils, and president of communes. As Anagnostou argues, it initiated a new period in local-central relations as well as inter-communal dialogue in Western Thrace (2001, 104), mostly because the local governors would be more aware of existing problems of minorities than their state-appointed predecessors (Human Rights Watch 1999). In 1996, for instance, one third of the Prefecture Council were minority members, which enabled the representation and participation of the minority in decisions of resource distribution and regional development made efforts (Anagnostou 2001, 110). Some minority members, on the one hand, refer to this development as a direct
consequence of the Europeanisation process and consider it as an important achievement (Interviews NG021; NG023, 2005); some others seem to be more sceptical and question the effectiveness of local administrations in policy-making at the national level on the other. It is also noted that, due to the nature of elections, local actors are more concerned with their own interests and achievements in the sense that a prefecture candidate easily refers to the minority as 'Turkish', or admits that government politics towards the minority have not been fair all the time. However, after the elections they seem to show less interest in minority affairs.

As Pierson argues (1996), social adaptation to institutions drastically increase the cost of exit from existing arrangements, because major institutional arrangements have major social consequences. Accordingly, adopting to the new rules of the game and making extensive commitments based on the expectation that these rules will continue increases the cost of exit from existing arrangements. The crucial factor is the presence of increasing returns or positive feedback, which encourages actors to focus on a single alternative and to continue movement down a particular path once initial steps are taken. Accordingly, despite the fact that Europeanisation process created the institutional framework for active participation of sub-national actors in Greece, the implementation is still not as effective as in other regions of EU member-states, because it still lacks an efficient communication network between local governments and the central government (Tzoutzis 2001, 127). It is further argued that these reforms would be effective, as long as local governments would feel less dependent to the central government through EU’s structural and cohesion policies, which would provide necessary financial sources to their regions. Moreover, minority members consider EU as a security blanket that would provide protection and promotion of their rights and most importantly reform the Greek system, ‘ensuring the irreversibility of the changes and preventing Greece from turning the clock back to the old system’ (Anagnostou 2001, 116). And it is assumed that in the following years the local government of Western Thrace with the participation of minority community will continue to become more active in policy making through communicating with the organs of EU and their counterparts in other member states (Ioakimidis 2001, 10). To conclude, Greece has undertaken series of reforms since the early 1990s, in which the country’s adaptation to the EU-level governance has been one crucial factor. Europeanisation process has had crucial effects on the conditions of Muslim minority most notably through the development of socio-economic conditions, regionalisation of politics and encouraging political participation at local and regional administrations. Nevertheless, the lack of communication and cooperation between the minority and the local authorities appears to play a negative role in the implementation process of the reforms.
Conclusion

Internationalisation of minority rights gained significant momentum towards the end of the twentieth century. The contribution of institutions to this process has been particularly important in putting the issue on the international agenda and pushing states for the acceptance of universal standards. This paper suggests the increasing involvement of institutions as a key explanatory factor of the emerging trend in Europe of adopting various forms of multiculturalism and minority rights. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the EU and attempts to analyse its influence mechanism on the policy choices of member states putting particular emphasis on the case of Greece.

The first section aimed to present an overview of internationalisation of minority rights putting particular emphasis on the Greek state's adjustment to this process, focusing on some key legal and social developments that affected the protection of minorities in the country. With the discussion on the restrictive administrative measures implemented against the Muslim minority, my attempt is to provide a better understanding of the Greek state's reform process initiated in early 1990s. While this policy shift could be related to various internal and external dynamics, I focus on the impact of two major processes in terms of putting pressure on national governments for providing better standards in the area of minority rights protection. First, the growing number of international legal instruments since the early 1990s has been a crucial attempt towards creating a universally applicable minority rights mechanism. Second, international and regional institutions have become major actors in this process by pushing their member states for the acceptance of universal standards in the area of minority rights. This growing trend of addressing minority rights protection more effectively at the international level could be related several factors. The increase in the number of democratic regimes since the mid-1970s not only contributed to the raising global and institutional awareness in promoting individual and cultural rights, but also provided the opportunity for minority members to freely pursue their claims and rights at different levels of governance. Accordingly, the members of minority groups have themselves become more active in pursuing their rights and interests in recent decades. Moreover, the implementation of non-discrimination principle is addressed more effectively both at the institutional and national level due to rising immigration levels in Europe, which appears to have a spill-over impact on the protection of minorities.

In my attempt to analyse a policy change at the EU level, conceptualising institutional change and its impact on the policy preferences of actors from a historical institutionalist account provides useful insights. In the case of EU, the process of eastwards enlargement has been a considerable political pressure that created a suitable context for institutional change as the lack of EU-level
minority rights standards became problematic leading the Union to tackle the issue more effectively. Thus, the inclusion of minority rights protection as a major political condition for EU membership in the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria highlighted a substantive policy shift in the area. Multi-institutional structure of the EU has also contributed to this process as the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission asserted their position as policy-actors and pursued different roles for the promotion of minority rights. Thus, EU's emerging minority rights mechanism appears to particularly challenge the governments of its prospective members during the accession stage. Whereas its pressures are less evident on member states, the latter are also challenged by internal and external dynamics related to the processes of Europeanisation and internationalisation of minority rights. Accordingly, the third section puts emphasis on the case of Greece with the aim of presenting some key socio-economic and political developments in the minority rights policy of a member state, highlighting the impact of Europeanisation process. With the contribution of historical institutionalist analysis, focusing on the initial policy choices of actors aims to depict the role of Greek-Turkish relations, hence the significance of 'principle of reciprocity' in the policy-making process towards minorities. While such operative forces led to a path-dependent policy pattern, in the case of Greece, breaking away from the legacy of past policies in the area of minority rights occurred in a significant period where the mounting pressures of the EU membership became more evident through the country's democratisation process. Thus, institutional adjustments to the EU led to series of policy reforms during 1990s, especially in the socio-economic and political spheres, affecting the conditions of Muslim minority. While this reform process should be analysed in consideration with other crucial factors, such as the role of domestic politics and actors, societal changes and improvements in Greek-Turkish relations, the Europeanisation process draws particular attention due to its key impact on the domestic governance. With the administrative division of regions, for instance, resources from EU structural funds have been allocated to Thrace as a border region of strategic importance, which were mainly used for intensified development efforts and infrastructure investments. This not only had a positive impact on the regional economy but also created employment opportunities for the society, including the members of the minority. Europeanisation process in general has had crucial effects on the conditions of Muslim minority most notably through the development of socio-economic conditions, regionalisation of politics and encouraging political participation at local and regional administrations. Nevertheless, the lack of communication and cooperation between the minority and the local authorities appears to play a negative role in the implementation process of these reforms.
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