

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

SECRETARIAT OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS
SECRETARIAT DU COMITE DES MINISTRES



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Meeting: 1280 meeting (7-9 March 2017) (DH)

Communication from a NGO (Greek Helsinki Monitor) (16/02/2017) in the Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases against Greece (Application No. 35151/05) and reply from the authorities (03/03/2017)

Information made available under Rules 9.2 and 9.6 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers for the supervision of the execution of judgments and of the terms of friendly settlements.

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Réunion : 1280 réunion (7-9 mars 2017) (DH)

Communication d'une ONG (Greek Helsinki Monitor) (16/02/2017) dans le groupe d'affaires Bekir-Ousta et autres contre Grèce (Requête n° 35151/05) et réponse des autorités (03/03/2017) **[anglais uniquement]**

Informations mises à disposition en vertu des Règles 9.2 et 9.6 des Règles du Comité des Ministres pour la surveillance de l'exécution des arrêts et des termes des règlements amiables.



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DGI

16 FEV. 2017

SERVICE DE L'EXECUTION
DES ARRETS DE LA CEDH

**The President of the Committee of Ministers
Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights
Council of Europe
Strasbourg
France**

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15 February 2017

***Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases against Greece (Application No. 35151/05) and
House of Macedonian Civilisation and others against Greece (Application No. 1295/10)***

Mr President

Under Rules 9(1) and 9(2) of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers for the supervision of the execution of judgments we submit the attached memo on the execution of *Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases against Greece (Application No. 35151/05)* and of *House of Macedonian Civilisation and others against Greece (Application No. 1295/10)* and request that the memo is also uploaded at your special website for the *1280 meeting (7-9 March 2017) (DH)*.

Yours faithfully

**Panayote Dimitras
Executive Director
Greek Helsinki Monitor**



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16 FEV. 2017

SERVICE DE L'EXECUTION
DES ARRETS DE LA CEDH

Submission on the execution of

Bekir-Ousta and others group of cases against Greece (Application No. 35151/05) and of House of Macedonian Civilization and others against Greece (Application No. 1295/10)

15 February 2017

1. Introduction

On 11 October 2007 and 27 March 2008 the **ECtHR** found **Greece** in violation of Article 11 **ECHR** due to the refusal to register associations (cases *Bekir-Ousta and others* and *Emin and others*) and to the dissolution of an association (case *Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and others*) on the grounds that their aim was to promote the idea that a Turkish ethnic minority existed in Greece as opposed to the religious minority recognised by the Lausanne Treaty in 1923. Hence, the **Committee of Ministers** has been supervising the execution of these judgments since 2008. Following failed judicial efforts by the applicants to reopen the domestic cases or launch a new registration procedure after the aforementioned judgments, that were followed by new applications to the **ECtHR**, the latter on 17 November 2015 and 13 December 2016 published decisions with which it rejected the three applications as inadmissible on the ground that their cases were pending before the **Committee of Ministers**, which was supervising their execution.

On 10 July 1998 and 9 July 2015 the **ECtHR** found **Greece** in violation of Article 11 **ECHR** due to the double refusal to register the association **House of Macedonian Civilization** (respectively cases *Sidiropoulos and others* and *House of Macedonian Civilization and others*) suspected of undermining the country's territorial integrity and on the grounds of the use of the word "Macedonian." **Greek Helsinki Monitor** represented the applicants of the second judgment before the **ECtHR**. With *Resolution DH (2000) 99*, the **Committee of Ministers** on 24 July 2000 declared that it had exercised its functions under Article 54 of the Convention in the first case, satisfied with the **Greek Government's** information about the measures taken preventing new violations of the same kind as that found in that judgment. These measures were a **Supreme Court** circular to the local **Florina** courts with a translation of the judgment, the publication of the judgment in one Greek-language legal review, a comment on it in another legal review, and finally a reference to it in a book on **ECtHR** judgments. The **Committee of Ministers** has launched the supervision of the second judgment in 2016. It is obvious that any domestic effort of the applicant association to seek registration will fail based on the aforementioned domestic court case-law and any ensuing application to the **ECtHR** will also be rejected as inadmissible based on the aforementioned **ECtHR** case-law.

The **Committee of Ministers** should take note that **Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis** was founded in 1927 and was dissolved in 1983, while the other three associations were refused registration in 1990 (**House of Macedonian Civilization**), 1995 (**Minority Youth Association at the Evros Prefecture** – case *Bekir Ousta and others*) and in 2001 (**Cultural Association of Turkish Women at the Rodopi Prefecture** – case *Emin and others*). So, for a period of 16 to 34 years, the members

of the ethnic Turkish and ethnic Macedonian minorities have been denied one of the most fundamental rights, their freedom of association. The only way to put an end to that discrimination is an interim resolution concluding that Greece has systematically and deliberately failed to comply with its legal obligation to remedy these violations and prevent similar ones. In such resolution, the **Committee of Ministers** is urged to give formal notice of its intention to bring infringement proceedings, unless the **Greek Government**, implementing **Recommendation No. R (2000) 2 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the re-examination or reopening of certain cases at domestic level following judgments of the European Court of Human Rights**, promptly remedies the very serious negative consequences the applicants –and the Turkish and Macedonian minorities in general- have been suffering because of the outcome of the domestic decisions at issue, which are not adequately remedied by the just satisfaction and cannot be rectified except by re-examination or reopening of the domestic proceedings.

2. Parliament's rejection of an amendment allowing the reopening of domestic proceedings

According to information available on the **Committee of Ministers'** website:¹ *"At the 1172nd meeting (June 2013) (DH), the Greek authorities provided information according to which other avenues were being explored, including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the Code of Civil Procedure to allow the possibility of re-opening of proceedings."* The claim of such an amendment had not been made by the **Greek authorities** before that June 2013 meeting, according to all available documentation on the same website. On the contrary, it was repeated in October 2013, which led the **Committee of Ministers' Deputies** on 2 December 2013 to "...2. note, however, that the avenue consisting of amending the code of civil procedure in order to implement the individual measures of the present judgments appears to be still under consideration." As the **Committee of Ministers** knows, the **Greek authorities** did not make any submissions after that date until 21 December 2016. In their submission on that recent date, there was no reference to any legislative amendment allowing the reopening of the proceedings.

In fact, the aforementioned information provided by the **Greek authorities** to the **Committee of Ministers** between June and December 2013 was deliberately and successfully misleading. As the applicants' representative had informed the **Committee of Ministers** on 3 June 2013: *"In March, there has been a legislative attempt by the smaller coalition partner for adopting an amendment to the Code on Civil Procedures, which would enable the re-opening of civil proceedings upon a ECtHR judgment. However this attempt did not result in success due to the opposition of the right and far-right parties, although the amendment introduced a limited redress which would not be applicable for the older judgments of the ECtHR, including the Bekir Ousta group of cases."*² It was **after** that submission by the applicants' representative that the **Greek authorities** first submitted information on an allegedly forthcoming amendment without countering, or having been asked to counter, the applicants' claim to the contrary.

In fact, in the *"Draft law on drugs and others provisions"* tabled before Parliament on 24 January 2013,³ Article 62 had the title *"Reopening – Compliance with ECtHR judgments"* and was an amendment to Article 544 of the **Code of Civil Procedures** on reopening of cases in civil procedures, adding an eleventh possibility to reopen cases after **ECtHR** judgments. Article 63 had the title *"Deadlines"* and was an amendment to paragraph 3 of Article 545 of the **Code of Civil Procedures** on deadlines for filing applications to reopen cases according to Article 544, adding a ninth deadline of one year after the **ECtHR** judgment became final. In Article 83 of the same draft law, with the title *"Application to reopen proceedings,"* there was also an amendment to the **Code**

¹ <http://hudoc.exec.coe.int/eng?i=004-15567>

² <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168063dab6>

³ http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Nomothetiko-Ergo/Anazitisi-Nomothetikou-Ergou/?law_id=e0ab521f-fceb-4d77-b88d-97a165ba95e5

of the **Council of State (Presidential Decree 18/1989)** introducing Article 69A allowing the reopening of cases in the supreme administrative court within 90 days after **ECtHR** judgments became final. During the review of the draft law by the competent **Parliamentary Committee**, on 26 February 2013, there was a heated debate exactly because the first two amendments were accurately evaluated as allowing the reopening of the cases of the Turkish minority associations to which the majority of MPs (of the conservative **New Democracy (ND)** –then a government coalition party; of the extreme right **Independent Greeks (ANEL)** –currently a government coalition party; and of the neo-Nazi **Golden Dawn - GD**) were vehemently opposed. The **Minister of Justice** who defended those amendments came from the government coalition party **Democratic Left**. MPs from the socialist **PASOK** –at the time a government coalition party- and the left **SYRIZA** -currently a government coalition party- remained silent though they were backing these articles. As the three parties opposing them formed the majority of the MPs, the articles were rejected and the **Minister of Justice** withdrew them from the draft law when it came before the **Plenary**. Before doing so, however, the **Minister of Justice** had offered an amendment that would have excluded the cases of the minority associations from the reopening but that too was rejected.⁴ The **Committee of Ministers** is requested to take into consideration that the current **Greek Government** very recently successfully reintroduced the amendment for the reopening of cases before the supreme administrative court with Article 16 of Law 4446/22-12-2016 (adding Article 69A to the **Code of the Council of State**), but took no similar action for the reopening of cases before civil courts, even though the three parties that opposed such amendments in 2013 (**ND, ANEL, GD**) are now in a minority in Parliament. The exact texts of the two articles introducing the reopening of the cases in the **Code of Civil Procedures** (which are in effect the exact legislative measures necessary for the reopening of the cases) that were rejected in 2013 are appended below in facsimile from the site of the **Hellenic Parliament**.

3. Greek authorities' December 2016 submission

For three years (late 2013 – late 2016), the **Greek authorities** failed to provide any information on these cases, despite the **Committee of Ministers' Interim Resolution CM/ResDH(2014)84 and Decision** at the 1250th meeting in March 2016.

Only on 21 December 2016, did the **Greek Government** provide some information. In the submission there is one key and telling omission: the absence of any reference to a legislative amendment that would allow the reopening of the proceedings in civil cases. That omission makes the remaining information, even if it were accurate and not misleading, pretextual.

In that submission, the **Greek Government** informed that with Law 4443/2016 a special structure to allegedly secure the execution of the judgments was created. First, it is important to stress that with that Law the structure was merely legislated. To date it has yet to be actually established, which requires a decision of the **Minister of Justice**. Moreover it has no mandate or any capacity to secure the execution of the judgments contrary to what the **Greek authorities** claim. As its title indicates («**Εθνικός Μηχανισμός Εποπτείας της Εφαρμογής των Αποφάσεων του ΕΛΔΑ**») it is only a monitoring body. As stated in the corresponding legal provisions invoked (but not quoted) by the **Greek authorities**, that mechanism is a “*collective consultative body*” that, when created, will meet once every two months to “*monitor*” and “*make recommendations*” on the execution of the judgments. There is no provision in the law as to the fate of these recommendations. It is interesting that the **Greek authorities** failed to mention in their submission that since 2014 there is also a

⁴ See indicative press coverage (as the minutes from the Parliamentary Committee meetings are not published): <http://www.skai.gr/news/politics/article/224738/aporripsi-diataxeon-roupakioti-kai-apo-ti-nd-/>
<http://www.kathimerini.gr/482182/article/epikairothta/politikh/tropologies-anastatwnoyn-th-voylh>
<http://www.kathimerini.gr/481870/article/epikairothta/politikh/mini-antarsia-apo-voyleytes-nd>
<http://www.tanea.gr/printed/tanea/article?premium=1&d=20130215&aid=24737782>
<http://www.tovima.gr/PrintArticle/?aid=500234>

Parliamentary Committee to monitor the **ECtHR** judgments («Ειδική Μόνιμη Επιτροπή παρακολούθησης των αποφάσεων του Ευρωπαϊκού Δικαστηρίου των Δικαιωμάτων του Ανθρώπου») which, in the three years since its establishment, has held just eight meetings with the sole agenda to elect its officers and discuss procedures.⁵

The remaining of the 21 December 2016 submission by the **Greek Government** concerns the domestic courts' decisions examining requests for registration by associations in the **Thrace** region as requested by the **Committee of Ministers**. The **Greek Government** claims that there is a total of 200 minority associations registered, whether active or not, and states that it provides a list of 50 active associations of the **Muslim minority** registered in **Thrace** or elsewhere. It adds that several associations have in their titles the terms "*Muslim minority*" or "*minority*." The list is however not available on line at the site of the **Committee of Ministers** because the **Greek authorities**, knowing that documents in Greek are not uploaded, submitted the list in Greek so as to minimize possible access and scrutiny.

Since the **Greek authorities** had previously made similar claims without providing any documentation during August 2016 review of **Greece** by the **UN CERD**, **Greek Helsinki Monitor** formally asked from the head of the Greek delegation to the **UN CERD**, the **General Secretary for Transparency and Human Rights**, on 28 September 2016, for a copy of the list with these fifty associations. On 11 November 2016, the **General Administrative Director of the Ministry of Justice** replied that "*for the data requested it is the local competent courts that are competent.*" **GHM** wrote back to the **General Secretary for Transparency and Human Rights** on 7 December 2016 reminding her that since the **Greek Government** has been referring to these 50 minority associations before **UN** bodies it does have the data and is obliged to give them to anyone who asks for them by the Constitution, the Code of Administrative Procedures (within five days from the request), as well as general principles for transparency and good faith in the relations with the citizens. **GHM** has to date not received any answer. Finally, **GHM** made a similar request to the **Greek Delegation to the Council of Europe** on 20 January 2017, which also remained unanswered. For the failure of these two institutions to provide the information, **GHM** filed two complaints with the **Ombudsman** on 20 and 31 January 2017. On the contrary, **GHM** requested a copy of the list from the **Department for the execution of judgments of the ECHR** at the **Council of Europe** which promptly provided **GHM** with a copy. The list has now been uploaded at the **GHM** website⁶ to be available to anyone else interested in consult and/or scrutinizing it.

The first comment on that list is that the **Greek authorities'** claim that there exist some 130 cultural or youth minority associations is evidently unfounded. If that were the case, the list should have included all of them and not only some 50 associations, some of the latter listed as inactive therein even by the **Greek authorities**. The second comment is that the **Greek authorities'** claim that several minority associations have in their titles the terms "*Muslim minority*" or "*minority*" is partly false and generally exaggerated. There are ten organizations listed with the term "*minority*" in their title but **NONE** with the term "*Muslim minority*." On the contrary, there are thirteen organizations with the adjective or noun "*Muslim*" (but without the suffix "*minority*") in their titles.

However, the most important observation is that there is **NO** organization with, in its title, the adjective "*Turkish*" or the noun "*Turks*" that would indicate the members' ethnic identity. On the contrary, the **Committee of Ministers** is requested to note that, to inflate the figures of minority associations that would reflect a thriving civil society as **Greece** has been claiming, **Greek authorities** included in the list six associations of **Roma** and three associations of **Pomaks**: all nine have indeed their members' ethnic characteristic (**Roma**, **Pomak**) in their titles, unlike the

⁵ <http://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Koinovouleftikes-Epitropes/Synedriaseis?search=on&commission=4742dd94-c817-45dd-b1ab-6355b1416bd1>

⁶ <https://greekhelsinki.wordpress.com/2017/02/13/1-30/>

associations whose members are **ethnic Turks** that cannot use their members' ethnic characteristic in their titles lest these associations are not recognized or are dissolved, as was the case with the *Bekir Ousta and others group of cases* associations. The **Greek Government** has in fact provided through that list solid evidence to document the institutional discrimination between on the one hand the persecuted **ethnic Turkish associations** and on the other hand the legal, and often promoted by the **Greek authorities, ethnic Pomak and ethnic Roma associations**.

In its June 2012 **Decision**, the **Committee of Ministers** “*noted with interest that, in another recent judgment, the **Greek Court of Cassation** (No. 24/2012) overturned a judgment of the **Thrace Court of Appeal** that had refused the application for registration of the “**South Evros Cultural and Educational Association of Western Thrace Minority**” referring to Article 11 of the Convention and underlying that a mere suspicion resulting from an ambiguity in the title of this association “**Western Thrace Minority**” could not in itself establish a danger to public order and, therefore, there was no imperative social need to refuse to recognise the association in question*” [emphasis added]. Indeed, in the **Greek Government** list that association is included (number 42). Yet, it took four years and four some very costly trials including the **Supreme Court** one for that association to be registered. Moreover, that **Supreme Court** judgment did not completely overturn its case law, but partly changed it only for associations with the terms “*Western Thrace minority*” in their title, and not for associations with the term “*Turkish*” in their title.

This is why new associations with the term “*Turkish*” in their title continue to be refused registration. The most characteristic example is the **Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Xanthi** whose application for registration filed in 2010 was rejected by the **Single-Judge First Instance Court of Xanthi** with its **Judgment 59/2011** and by the **Single-Judge Appeals Court of Thrace** with its **Judgment 89/2014**. Both courts considered the association's title “*misleading*” as its members are not and cannot be proven to be “*Turks*” which would indicate the presence of a “*structured Turkish minority*” in **Xanthi**. The **Emin and others ECtHR** judgment invoked by the association's members was according to the courts irrelevant as in that judgment the **Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Rodopi** was refused registration because its aims were opposed to public order, a legal argument that was not according to the courts related to the case of the **Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Xanthi**. The association's appeal for cassation was heard by the **Supreme Court** on 13 January 2017, with the judgment expected to be published later on in 2017 or even in 2018.

4. UN Treaty Bodies recommendations

In October 2015 and August 2016 the UN's **Human Rights Committee (HRC)** and **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** reviewed Greece's compliance with the corresponding international treaties and issued recommendations that included specific references to the banned **ethnic Turkish and ethnic Macedonian minority associations**. Greece had claimed that it intended to register the associations, without providing however any concrete evidence, which led the two **Committees** to urge **Greece** to comply with the judgments.

CERD also recommended the establishment of a dialogue with civil society organizations. This recommendation was also ignored: **Turkish minority NGOs** along with **GHM and Minority Rights Group – Greece** on 4 October 2016 formally asked the **General Secretary for Transparency and Human Rights** to establish such a dialogue with them and to inform them on the steps to implement the recommendations. The **General Secretary for Transparency and Human Rights** never replied. On the contrary, the **General Secretary for Transparency and Human Rights** excluded these **NGOs** from the conference it co-organized on 13 February 2017 on “*Greece before the International Human Rights Institutions*” to debate on the implementation of such recommendations.

Human Rights Committee

Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Greece⁷

3 December 2015

Freedom of association

39. While the Committee notes the State party's expressed intention to proceed with the registration of associations of groups claiming minority group status, in accordance with European Court of Human Rights decisions of 2008 and 2015, the Committee expresses concern about the pace of implementation of those decisions (art. 22).

40. **The State party should expedite its measures to register associations of distinct communities, including those claiming minority group status, in accordance with article 22 of the Covenant.**

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Concluding observations on the twentieth to twenty-second periodic reports of Greece⁸

3 October 2016

Situation of minorities

10. The Committee is concerned that Muslims living in Thrace region covered by the provisions of the Treaty of Peace, signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923, and who belong to various ethnicities are recognized only as a religious minority by the State party. The Committee is also concerned that other Muslims, including those living in the islands of Rhodes and Kos and not covered by the Treaty of Lausanne, may be denied the right to self-identification and therefore cannot fully enjoy their rights under the Convention. As a result, the effective enjoyment by persons belonging to ethnic minorities of their rights to preserve their language, culture and freedom of association is curtailed (arts. 1, 2 and 5).

11. **Notwithstanding the explanation provided by the State party that ethnic groups are not considered as minorities, the Committee believes that, in a multi-ethnic society, recognition of ethnic groups of smaller size may help them to protect their existence and their identity. The Committee also notes that the Treaty of Lausanne neither prohibits the consideration of other groups as minorities nor prevents persons belonging to various ethnic groups to exercise their right to self-identification. The Committee therefore recommends that the State party review its position and consider recognizing other groups that may qualify as being ethnic, or religious minorities, and encourages the State party to implement the relevant decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.**

⁷ http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CCPR/C/GRC/CO/2&Lang=En

⁸ http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD/C/GRC/CO/20-22&Lang=En

Consultations with civil society

29. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to consult and increase its dialogue with civil society organizations working in the area of human rights protection, in particular those working to combat racial discrimination, in connection with the preparation of the next periodic report and in follow up to the present concluding observations.

Appendix

The amendments introducing the reopening of civil court cases rejected by Parliament in 2013

ΚΕΦΑΛΑΙΟ Β΄

ΤΡΟΠΟΠΟΙΗΣΕΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΩΔΙΚΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗΣ ΔΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑΣ

Άρθρο 62

Αναψηλάφηση - «Συμμόρφωση» προς τις αποφάσεις του ΕΔΔΑ

Στο άρθρο 544 του Κώδικα Πολιτικής Δικονομίας προστίθεται περίπτωση 11 ως εξής:

«11. αν με απόφαση του Ευρωπαϊκού Δικαστηρίου των Δικαιωμάτων του Ανθρώπου κρίθηκε ότι η προσβαλλόμενη απόφαση εκδόθηκε κατά παραβίαση δικαιώματος, που αφορά το δίκαιο χαρακτήρα της διαδικασίας που τηρήθηκε ή διάταξης ουσιαστικού δικαίου της Ευρωπαϊκής Σύμβασης Δικαιωμάτων του Ανθρώπου».

Άρθρο 63

Προθεσμία

Στην παράγραφο 3 του άρθρου 545 του Κώδικα Πολιτικής Δικονομίας προστίθεται περίπτωση θ ως εξής:

«θ. στην περίπτωση του άρθρου 544 αριθ. 11 μετά την πάροδο ενός (1) έτους από την ημερομηνία που η απόφαση του Ευρωπαϊκού Δικαστηρίου των Δικαιωμάτων του Ανθρώπου κατέστη οριστική, σύμφωνα με τα οριζόμενα στο άρθρο 44 της Ευρωπαϊκής Σύμβασης Δικαιωμάτων του Ανθρώπου.»



PERMANENT REPRESENTATION OF GREECE
TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

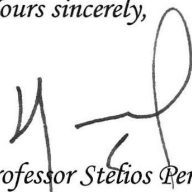
The Permanent Representative



Strasbourg, March 3rd, 2017
F. 6705/AS 244

Further to your letter dated February 20th 2017 on the communication received by the Greek Helsinki Monitor relating to the Case Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece (Appl. No.35151/05) and in view of the forthcoming CM-DH session (07-09.03.2017), I wish to enclose herewith the Greek Authorities' response to be disseminated and published following the procedures laid out in the amended Rule 9.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Stelios Perrakis
Ambassador

*To: Mrs. Genevieve Mayer
Head of the Department
For the Execution of Judgments
Of the ECHR
Directorate General
Human Rights and Legal Affairs*

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
Case Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece
(Application No.35151/05)
1274th Meeting of the CM-DH (07-09.03.2017)



We have read with interest the submission by the Greek Helsinki Monitor regarding Application 35151/05, to be discussed at the 1280th meeting of the Committee of Ministers. We would like to note that the said submission contains a series of false or unsubstantiated allegations and comments, distorting the reality on the ground, which, also have no relevance to the specific case monitored by the Committee of Ministers. We would therefore restrict ourselves to the following comments:

1. Freedom of association (Art.11 ECHR) is a human right fully enjoyed by persons belonging to the Muslim minority in Thrace, as it is unequivocally, firmly and broadly protected by the Greek Constitution.

As it has repeatedly been stressed the Greek State is examining legal ways to implement the ECtHR judgments in question. In the meantime the Greek Courts take fully into consideration the ECtHR standards, so that, since the above-mentioned judgments tens of minority associations have submitted their application and have been established and recognized in accordance with the ECtHR case law.

2. With regard to what the Executive Director of the NGO "Greek Helsinki Monitor" has mentioned on the debates in the Hellenic Parliament, it is a matter of course that no government can be held accountable for the deeds of its parliament: as in every democratically elected Body, the Hellenic Parliament is an institution where political conjuncture is determined by numerous factors determining its effectiveness, as it happened with the proposed amendments.

Nevertheless, the need for an appropriate legal formula which would enable the ECtHR decisions to be fully implemented is topical and in this context, the establishment and function of both the new national Mechanism for the Supervision of the implementation of the European Court's judgments and the Special Permanent Committee of the Hellenic Parliament for the implementation of ECtHR judgments are an initial but necessary step to this end.

3. It is surprising that the representative of the NGO "Greek Helsinki Monitor" insists on making an issue out of how to count or classify tens of minority associations (or hundreds), under uncertain criteria. For example, in Greece there is no specific legal procedure in order to confirm which association is really active or not. Regarding their titles, indeed there are some associations in Thrace which use the term "Muslim", others that use the term "minority" and they normally constitute a part of the group of associations from the Muslim minority.

The existence of at least one minority association (*"Sport and Cultural Association Solidarity-Development of Greek Muslims with Turkish as a mother tongue in the municipality of Alexandroupoli"*) which uses the adjective "Turkish" in its title demonstrates the alignment of the Greek authorities to the ECtHR case law.

4. Regarding the alleged exclusion of the NGO from the conference of 13 February 2017 "Greece before the International Human Rights Institutions", it has to be stressed that access to the conference was open and free to the public, without any identity control for the participants. The representative of the NGO communicated with the General Secretary's Office¹ and the General Secretary herself prior to the event, being informed about organization details. Moreover, interested parties were appropriately informed through social media platforms about the live streaming of the conference through the YouTube channel of the co-organizing General Secretariat of Information and Communications.

¹Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights, General Secretary for Transparency and Human Rights.