Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1867 (2012)[1]
Final version

The situation of the Greek citizens of Turkish descent in Rhodes and Kos

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that the inhabitants of Rhodes and Kos with a Turkish cultural background are generally well integrated into the multicultural societies of the two islands. They are proud to be fully fledged Greek citizens and to participate in the economic development of the islands.

2. The Assembly commends the Greek Government for its genuine commitment to maintaining and developing the two islands' cosmopolitan character, in particular by protecting their historical monuments without discrimination. The islands' multiculturalism is the fruit of their rich history, which includes four centuries of generally tolerant Ottoman Turkish rule.

3. The good level of understanding between the majority population and the different minority groups, including those with a Turkish cultural background, is an important asset for the economic development of the two islands, and in particular for their attractiveness for tourism, their main source of revenue.

4. The Assembly notes that supporting the Turkish language, heritage and culture, and promoting a better awareness of them, would benefit not only the inhabitants with a Turkish cultural background, but also their neighbours with Greek or other cultural backgrounds, given the proximity of these islands to major tourist areas on the Turkish coast and the still largely untapped potential for regional co-operation in the field of tourism and commerce.

5. It therefore welcomes the readiness expressed by the Greek authorities to facilitate, upon the parents' request, afternoon classes in Turkish language and culture taught by qualified teachers, under the supervision of the island's authorities and the Ministry of Education with the involvement of and funding (if necessary) by Turkish-speaking citizens. Moreover, the Greek authorities are invited to consider reopening Turkish language community schools.

6. Three other issues require the authorities' attention: the apparent lack of transparency and accountability in the administration of the Muslim religious foundations (wakfs), the unclear status of the Muslim religious leadership on the two islands and the restoration of monuments of the rich Muslim Ottoman heritage, which is an integral part of the islands' heritage.

7. The Assembly therefore invites the Greek authorities to:

7.1. conduct an information campaign among parents of all schoolchildren on the two islands to inform them of the possibility of offering classes in the Turkish language organised by the educational authorities in consultation with Turkish-speaking citizens;

7.2. ensure full transparency and accountability regarding the administration of the two public Muslim wakfs in Rhodes and Kos, which are legal persons of public law both before the Greek State and before the members of the local Muslim communities, including by renewing, in an open and transparent way, their councils by elections at regular intervals and securing to every member of the said communities the right to have full access to their public accounts;

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1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 9 March 2012 (see Doc. 12526, report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Gross).

7.3. ensure that the Muslim citizens in Rhodes and Kos are free to choose their religious preachers and leaders, whose rights and duties should be clarified;

7.4. continue the restoration program of Islamic and Ottoman monuments, which are an integral part of the cultural heritage of the two islands, in co-operation with Muslim associations and with all necessary respect for the integrity of the historic monuments;

7.5. intensify their dialogue with the representatives of the islands' Greek citizens of Turkish descent, in order to resolve the above, and any other, issues of concern (namely, property rights and citizenship problems) in the spirit of mutual respect and understanding that characterises the unique cosmopolitan nature of the islands of Rhodes and Kos.

8. The Assembly reiterates its invitation to the Greek authorities to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157).