RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA

An overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU Member States, 1995-2000

on behalf of the

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, Vienna (EUMC)

by
European Research Centre
on Migration and Ethnic Relations
(ERCOMER)

Edited by Jessika ter Wal

Vienna, February 2002

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PREFACE

The research interest in analysing the way mass media report on ethnic issues has increased in the Member States over the last decades. And for this reason the EUMC decided to bring together the major research reports and their findings over the last five years in this report "RACISM AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MASS MEDIA - an overview of research and examples of good practice in the EU Member States, 1995-2000".

The project has been carried out by Dr Jessika ter Wal, at Ercomer, Utrecht University, the Netherlands. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to her for her excellent work. The report underlines the importance of media research in the area of racism and diversity.

The mass media, and especially the news media, have an unequivocal position in society when it comes to establishing and disseminating common cultural references. The mass media have an influence on people's attitudes as well as our common knowledge, but not always in the expected and desired ways.

The active democratic role of the mass media in society can be influenced by a number of factors. The way the mass media represent, focus and give voice to different actors and incidents in society could have the unintentional result of strengthening a racist discourse instead of fighting against it. Mass media reporting is especially sensitive when it comes to ethnic, cultural and religious relations in our society.

The mass media organisations in the Member States take different initiatives to promote cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, such as developing codes of conduct, recruiting broadcasters from the migrant and minority communities and training the personnel from multiethnic societies.

The report has already attracted a lot of interest from researchers, from journalists as well as from media organisations. I hope that the report will be of practical use to all those interested in the fight against racism and especially those working in the media.

Beate Winkler

Director of the EUMC

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4.4 GREECE (EL)

Anna Triandafyllidou Robert Schuman Centre, European University Institute

Greece is a small country at the fringes of the European Union surrounded by non-EU countries. The majority of Greek citizens are ethnically and culturally Greek Christian Orthodox. Several small ethnic and cultural minorities are also present in the country, in total representing just over 10% of the total population. Overall, Greek media, the right-wing press, and private TV channels in particular, show little sensitivity towards cultural difference and tend to stigmatise and discriminate against minorities, claiming that they threaten the presumed cultural and ethnic 'purity' as well as the welfare of the Greek nation. A few dissenting voices, including state TV channels and mainstream and left-wing newspapers, adopt a more careful and sensitive approach when reporting on ethnic issues, but fail to react to and criticise the racist attitudes and behaviour exhibited by the majority of the ruling political class. Albanian immigrants and members of the Macedonian and Turkish minority are the main targets of verbal harassment and racist discourse in the Greek media, followed closely by the Roma population and, occasionally, religious minorities. Nonetheless, the late 1990s have been characterised by some efforts to improve the coverage of cultural and ethnic diversity, which resulted in more balanced accounts of immigration and minority issues, albeit side-stepping the issue of minority rights.

This report aims to give a concise overview of the media coverage on racism, cultural diversity, and anti-racist initiatives in Greece. The report is organised into five sections. The first section introduces the Greek socio-political scene, with particular reference to minorities and immigrant communities. In the second, general media practices in reporting on ethnic issues are reviewed, and their evolution during the period 1995-2000 is highlighted. The third section concentrates on the stereotypes most frequently used by the Greek media in reporting on specific minority groups. Section four summarises the initiatives recently undertaken to pro-

mote cultural diversity and combat racism. The findings are discussed briefly in the last section and suggestions are offered in order to improve the current situation.

4.4.1 A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO GREECE AND ITS MINORITIES

The view that Greece is a relatively homogeneous country, in terms of culture and ethnicity, has been dominant in the country until the late 1980s, if not still today. Indeed, a large majority of Greek citizens are Christian Orthodox and consider themselves as culturally and ethnically Greek. The 'homogenisation' of the Greek population was a result of the minority population exchange between Greece, on the one hand, and Turkey and Bulgaria, on the other hand, during the 1920s following the provisions of the Lausanne Treaty (1923). Moreover, the Greek State pursued a systematic policy of nationalisation of ethnicity and culture, particularly in the region of Greek Macedonia (Karakasidou, 1993, 1997a; Mackridge and Yannakakis, 1997). Furthermore, the country had not experienced any significant immigration flows in the post-WWII period until the late 1980s. On the contrary, both at the beginning of the century and during the post-war period, it was characterised by emigration. Hundreds of thousands of Greeks emigrated, mainly for economic reasons, to North America (U.S.A. and Canada), northwestern Europe (Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and elsewhere) and Australia. These elements contributed to the relative demographic and cultural homogeneity of the remaining Greek population. Furthermore, the national education system and cultural policy promoted the idea that there are no ethnic or cultural minorities in Greece. In fact, the Greek State only officially recognises the existence of the Turkish minority in Thrace; a group that is considered a linguistic and religious minority and is duly identified as the Muslim Turk-speaking population of Thrace. Without neglecting the importance of international relations between Greece and Turkey in considering the status of this minority, it is worth noting that the negation of its nationality confirms that there is no place in Greek citizenship for non-ethnic Greeks. In other words, the state refuses to recognise that some Greek citizens may belong to some other ethnic, cultural, or national group.

According to the data provided by international and Greek NGOs the following national, ethno-linguistic and religious minorities are present in Greece (percentages refer to the total resident population): Roma 3.3%; Arvanites 2%; members of the Macedonian minority²⁰ 2%; Vlachs 2%; Turks 0.5%; Pomaks 0.3 (Lenkova, 1997; Minority Rights Group (MRG), 1994). Religious minorities, which include Catholics, Protestants and new religious movements, make up nearly 1 per cent of the population. Among these minorities, the Greek State only recognises the existence of Turkish Muslims, the Roma population and Greek Catholics and Protestants. Since official recognition of other minorities of any kind is withheld, these groups are often subjected to discriminatory treatment, both at the collective and individual level. The recent mobilisation of the Macedonian minority (during the 1990s) has been dealt with by refuting its existence and persecuting its activists (Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), 1998).

During the last decade, Greece has also become the host of a large immigrant population, which, according to recent data and estimates amounts to over 600,000 people or nearly 6.5 per cent of the total population (Triandafyllidou, 1999; Triandafyllidou and Veikou, 2000). The vast majority of immigrants, until recently, was undocumented. However, a recent regularisation programme (1998) enacted by the Greek state resulted in the legalisation of the status of nearly 400,000 immigrants (for a number of them, however, the administrative process is still underway). Among those: 240,000 are Albanian citizens; 25,000 Bulgarians; 17,000 Rumanians; 11,000 Pakistanis; 10,000 Ukrainians; 9,000 Poles; and a few thousand Georgians, Indians, Egyptians, Filipinos; in addition to smaller numbers from other Asian, African and Eastern European countries (Kavounidis and Hatzaki, 1999). Pontic Greeks and Albanian citizens of Greek ethnic origin did not take part in this regularisation programme; they were provided with a preferential path in regularis-

In this report I use the term 'members of the Macedonian minority' to refer to those Greek citizens who identify with a Macedonian ethno-cultural identity that they perceive as distinct and separate from Greek ethno-cultural identity. I shall use the double term 'Macedonia-FYROM' to refer to the former Yugoslav and now independent Republic of Macedonia, in an effort to avoid offending either Greece or Macedonia-FYROM. The term 'Macedonians' will be used to refer to the latter citizens.

ing their status on the basis of their Greek ethnicity and Christian Orthodox faith (Triandafyllidou and Veikou, 2000).

Thus, during the 1990s Greece has faced some important changes in the ethnic and cultural composition of its population. First, the arrival of over half a million immigrants from Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa. Over half of these people are Albanian citizens. The second aspect of change concerned the (re-) awakening of ethno-cultural or indeed, national consciousness²¹, among members of the Macedonian minority in northern Greece. This increasingly complex situation was a novelty for the Greek government, the media, and the people. The following sections of this report will review how the media dealt with cultural diversity and racism or anti-racist initiatives. Moreover, I shall seek to assess their (doubtful) contribution to promoting racism or integration of diversity. In the pages that follow, I distinguish between 'minorities' and 'immigrants'. The former term refers to populations that have historically resided in Greece and view themselves as ethnic, cultural, or linguistic minorities. The term 'immigrants' refers to people who arrived in Greece mainly during the past decade and who are of diverse national or ethnic origin. I consider this distinction necessary and important because of the different social, cultural, economic, and political features of the two types of populations.

4.4.2 MEDIA PRACTICES IN REPORTING ON ETHNIC ISSUES

4.4.2.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE AVAILABLE MATERIAL

Given the recent character of immigration into Greece and the prevalent perception held by Greeks that their country is culturally and ethnically homogeneous, there has been little interest among

²⁰ It is worth noting that there actually exist two distinct tendencies among members of the Macedonian minority in the north of Greece. On the one hand are those who view their ethno-cultural identity as Macedonian but their nationality as Greek. On the other hand, there are others who feel that both their nationality and ethno-cultural identity is Macedonian and, therefore, feel closely related to 'Macedonia-FYROM', which they perceive as their 'mother-country'.

scholars and journalists concerning studies on racism and cultural diversity. Even less attention has been paid to the media coverage of such phenomena. Thus, the existing studies aim mainly at presenting the current situation, - criticising racist and discriminatory talk in the media - without however engaging in any in-depth analysis of the phenomena. In fact, scholarly research²² has been very limited up to now and there are only two recent studies that looked at the media in the period covered by this report (Pavlou, 2000; Petronoti, 2000).

The material collected for this study may be divided into four categories:

- a) NGO reports monitoring the media coverage (forming part of regular NGO activities or projects funded by international bodies), published in print as books or articles or in electronic format;
- b) Scholarly publications;
- c) NGO archives of primary source material concerning the coverage of specific minorities by the media;
- d) other material that indirectly supports the research such as press releases, opinion articles, NGO statements, conference papers by NGOs or trade unions, letters to the editor, letters to the minister, and other documentation.

There is a series of reports monitoring the Greek media coverage of internal minorities and neighbouring peoples that can be found on the website of the Greek Helsinki Monitor (see appendix). This site also features the Balkan Human Rights website and other articles, studies and press releases concerning human rights, minority treatment, and the relations between Balkan countries. Overall, the material covers the daily press and, to a lesser extent, the private or

²¹ A number of studies on the Greek press and its representation of the Greek nation and foreigners or immigrants have been conducted in the mid-1990s (Mikrakis and Triandafyllidou, 1994; Petronoti, 1998; Triandafyllidou and Mikrakis, 1995; Triandafyllidou, 1998). Findings from these studies have been excluded from this report because they refer to the period prior to 1995. Their purpose was to identify xenophobic and racist attitudes in the press and the connection of these with Greek national identity and/or the representation of 'Greek-ness' promoted by the media.

public TV channels. There is no data on either public or private radio channels.

4.4.2.2 MEDIA PRACTICES

Greek media are new to the field of ethnic issue reporting. In this respect, my research of the state TV channels and the Journalists' Union of Athens Daily Newspapers (JUADN) - the country's largest journalist association - was revealing. The respective agencies claimed that there was no code of practice regarding ethnic minorities, racism, cultural diversity, or related issues. The only relevant codes were the general codes of practice issued by JUADN²³ and the Code of Ethics of the National Radio and Television Council (1 December 1991). The latter stated that it is the duty of the journalist to 'confer the information or news without being influenced by her/his personal political, social, religious, racial or cultural views or beliefs'. Another article of the same code says that the journalist has the right, and also the duty, to 'deal with citizens equally, without discriminating on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, 'race', religion, political beliefs, economic situation or social status'. It is worth noting that this code of practice was introduced only recently in 1998. Besides, the power of the association in regulating its members' behaviour is limited because participation in it is not obligatory for journalists (Greek Helsinki Monitor, 2000, Report on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Greece). As regards the Code of Ethics of the National Radio and TV Council, article 5 forbids

The discrepancy between the code and the practices is evident in an intervention made by members of the JUADN in a conference organised by the International Federation of Journalists in Ohrid (Macedonia-FYROM) on June 24-26, 1999 on Conflict Reporting and the Media: The role of journalism in the prevention and resolution of conflict. The text presented by the JUADN delegation included a declaration against propaganda, ethnic cleansing, intolerance of minorities, and in favour of freedom of expression and information. It provided a commentary on the coverage of the NATO raids in Kosovo and concluded with a statement about how Greek journalists see their mission as providing fair and objective information. In conclusion, it was stated: 'In Greece, no different ethnic media exist since the Greek nation is single. Moreover, it is unique in Europe, reaching 100% homogeneity according to findings by international organisations Citizens of the Greek state are all who bear Greek nationality, irrespective of origin and religion' (for the full text of the intervention, see GHM press release, 1 July 1999). This text is eloquent as to the range of views and practices adopted by Greek journalists, despite the general principles stated in the JUADN code of practice.

the presentation of a person in a way that may lead to his/her social isolation or discrimination due to, inter alia, his/her 'race', nationality, or language.

These codes of practice cover the general area of racism and ethnic prejudice and ask that differences be respected. However, everyday reporting on ethnic issues and racism or anti-racism involves more subtle matters concerning the extent and modality of coverage, the representation of minority actors, the language used, the positive or negative stereotypes permeating reporting, the non-reporting of certain events and more fundamentally the news-making routines of different types of media. The general provisions cited above do not provide answers to such detailed questions. The journalist is thus left to her/his own knowledge and experience in reporting on ethnic or cultural diversity. Furthermore, the lack of explicit rules in this area makes it easier for media owners to encourage racist or discriminatory reporting of minority or immigration issues, if they so wish.

My analysis of the existing studies and other available material reveals a number of features that characterise media reporting on minority and immigration issues. First and foremost, a distinction should be made between two main categories of newspapers and TV channels²⁴ and their respective attitude towards minority issues. A large part of the daily press and private TV channels adopt an extremely nationalist, xenophobic, and racist²⁵ standpoint, promoting a view of Greece as culturally and ethnically 'pure' and homogeneous. A smaller proportion of the daily press and few TV channels show a sensitive approach towards minority and immigration matters, a certain openness to cultural and ethnic diversity,

The objective of this report is not to identify and accuse specific radio or TV channels and newspapers that adopt racist and discriminatory attitudes when reporting on minorities or immigrants. My aim is rather to describe the overall situation and draw conclusions that may be useful for the design of new policies, which will enhance media sensitivity and good practice in Greece. For this purpose I do not cite specific newspapers or TV channels by name. Nonetheless, my findings are based on studies, reports, and articles or books, which are available for consultation by the interested reader, where the various channels and newspapers are identified.

The author elaborates the distinction between 'xenophobic' and 'racist' attitudes and behaviour in Mikrakis and Triandafyllidou (1994).

and only a mildly nationalist viewpoint. Generally, the media characterised by an extremely nationalist-xenophobic discourse have also, in the majority of cases, a right-wing orientation while the mildly nationalist, more-sensitive media belong to the centre and left-wing of Greek politics. Granted, there are exceptions to this rule; for example, the nationalist camp includes also left-wing newspapers, while traditional right-wing newspapers are also found in the moderate side.

A common practice is to report events or news concerning minorities from the perspective of dominant political actors, such as the government, state authorities, or the police. Reporters usually stick to the official version of events even when this is blatantly inaccurate (Citizens' Movement Against Racism, 1998: 64-5). The minority viewpoint, if and when reported, is presented as 'inferior' and serves only to justify the dominant views. More rarely, a sympathetic though paternalistic attitude towards minority claims is adopted. It is worth noting, however, that there are very few studies analysing directly and in detail the language used in news or commentaries on minority issues (Pavlou, 2000; Petronoti, 2000). Furthermore, there are no studies or reports as yet that examine the ways in which news-making practises and routines affect the content and form of minority and ethnic issue reporting.

Overall, reporting on minorities, immigrants, and also neighbouring countries related to internal minorities (such as Albania, Macedonia-FYROM and Turkey) is couched in *conspiracy theories rhetoric* and an overall perception of *national threat*. More specifically, the Greek nation's 'cultural or ethnic purity' and well being is presented to be threatened by internal or external 'enemies'. The common feature of the various enemies identified in different points in time and with regard to different issues or events is their non-Greek origin and culture. They are either historical enemies (e.g. Turks) or national traitors (e.g. members of the Macedonian minority). In other words, reporting concentrates more on the presumed threat for the country and the people than on the actual matters at stake. This becomes a distorting lens for reading and interpreting the actions and words, often taken out of context, not only of the presumed 'enemies' but also of any third parties inter-

vening in a given matter. Such third parties include fellow EU member-states, European or other international bodies, the U.S. government, and even Greek non-governmental organisations defending minority rights.

Indeed, another interesting feature of media reporting of minority issues is the almost complete *absence of any reference to anti-* racist actions and initiatives. On the contrary, NGO activists who stand up for minority and immigrant rights are sometimes represented as national traitors, people serving their own self-interests or 'agents' of some foreign power²⁶. Their views and actions are thus discredited.

The general media discourse is characterised by the common use of overtly racist and offensive language. 'Political correctness' or minority sensitivity is rejected out-of-hand, especially by tabloids and newspapers adopting extreme nationalist views. Accusations of racism are denied and any anti-racist argument is turned on its head; authors are not racist, they simply point to the danger or damage inflicted to the country and its people by foreigners. Pavlou (2000) points to the invented reality of the press discourse, which reproduces the police bulletin and systematically 'recycles' criminal news, so that they seem more frequent than they actually are. Overall, the media do not bother to define concepts such as 'racism', 'anti-racism', or 'cultural diversity'. Diversity is simply represented as 'a deleterious thing', 'hybridisation', a loss of 'purity' or both cultural and political autonomy, while homogeneity and nationalism are praised as 'a desirable thing'.

It is worth noting that the more moderate media adopt a more open and sensitive stance. They report the arguments of the different parties involved in minority or immigrant matters, and avoid the use of offensive terms such as 'barbaric', 'inhuman', or outright

An example of such verbal abuse, not only of minorities but also of NGOs defending their rights, is provided by the coverage on the public appeal for the recognition of the Macedonian and Turkish minorities, which was sent to the Speaker of the Greek Parliament, on 23 July 1999, signed by all three Turkish minority MPs, seven Turkish, and three Macedonian minority organisations, and three NGOs (cf. GHM, 2000, Report on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Greece, pp. 25-6).

'silly'. Their accounts are, to the extent that this is possible, more even-handed and a realistic approach to the issues or events reported tends to be adopted. Nonetheless, they *never* criticise other newspapers or TV programmes for using racist language and/or inciting ethnic hatred. To a certain extent, their presumed 'impartiality' masks a discriminatory viewpoint. *By failing to stand up for minority rights and individual civil rights, the moderate media indirectly aid and abet intolerance and racism.*

During the period studied, media practices of reporting on ethnic issues may be said to have improved. News reports and commentaries show an increased sensitivity towards minority and immigrant problems, an increasing acceptance of diversity within Greece, and a tendency to give voice to minorities themselves as well as to NGOs active in the field. These trends mainly characterise the moderate segment of the press and TV channels. Critical accounts of the poor social and economic conditions of specific minorities (mainly Roma and Muslim Turks) and immigrant labourers (Albanians in particular) are given, and related state policy is criticised. Nonetheless, minority or immigrant rights are never on the media agenda as collective political rights. The coverage concerns mainly the improvement of their living or working conditions, their access to education or work, but not their politicisation as non-Greek cultural or migrants and minorities that comprise a part of Greece. The underlying assumption is that 'Greece belongs to [ethnic] Greeks [of Christian Orthodox faith]', who - in the name of humanism or in defence of their own interests - may tolerate foreigners and minorities residing in their country.

The modest positive change in the media coverage of minority and immigration issues may be related to the *improvement of international relations* between Greece and neighbouring countries. It is also linked to *cultural initiatives* undertaken by known artists and media people promoting understanding and receptiveness towards diversity as well as the mobilisation of NGO activists and a small number of intellectuals to whom the more moderate newspapers occasionally give access. Last, but not least, the more balanced accounts of immigration issues in particular are related to a slow dawning pragmatism dealing with the presence of large numbers

of immigrants in Greece. The positive role that immigrants play in the national economy (catering, among other things, to labour shortages in low status and low paying jobs in agriculture and the service sector) has made the Greek people and media more open to them.

It is worth noting that although Greek NGOs - in cooperation with European and international organisations - make extensive use of electronic media in the production and diffusion of their work, the use of the internet in itself does not seem to play a significant role in the improvement of media reporting on ethnic and cultural diversity.

4.4.3 THE REPRODUCTION OF ETHNIC AND RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN THE MEDIA

In this section, I shall briefly outline the stereotypes most commonly used by the Greek media in reporting on the most important minority groups and immigrant communities. Among the minorities residing in Greece, those that attract the most media attention are the Roma population who live scattered throughout Greece, the Turkish Muslim minority of Thrace at the northeastern part of Greece, and the Macedonian minority in northwestern Greece, at the region of Florina.

4.4.3.1 THE ROMA MINORITY

Coverage of the Roma minority has improved significantly during the period studied. Thus, while in 1996 negative stereotypes portraying Roma as criminals, dirty, sly, and dangerous prevailed, there has been an important change in reporting during the most recent years. The media have started to recognise their cultural specificity and to ask for state action to improve their working and living conditions. More specifically, sensitivity towards the plight of the Roma population in Greece seems to have been triggered by an unjustified and brutal police raid of a Roma camp in Aspropyrgos (near Athens), in February 1996. Most newspapers and TV channels condemned that raid even though others (notably the nationalist rightwing ones) concentrated on the alleged violent and criminal

actions and habits characterising the minority's lifestyle in general. Over the years, however, studies reveal an increased sensitivity towards this group that has gained further positive visibility due to a TV series produced by a famous Greek film director.

The main negative stereotypes related to the Roma population are the following: they are involved in drug trafficking, they sell their babies, they oblige their children to beg in the streets, they are dirty and they do not want to integrate into Greek society. Racist and hate speech undercurrents have appeared in the recent past in both national and local newspapers, without any legal action having been taken against them however^{27.} Paradoxically, however, there is also a set of positive stereotypes attached to the Roma, which have gained visibility in the Greek media most recently: they are passionate and romantic, they have a great musical culture, and they enjoy life. Positive or neutral reports often adopt a paternalistic attitude towards the minority. However, the Greek State's indifference towards the socio-economic hardship endured by the Roma population is also severely criticised.

It is worth noting that the improvement in Roma reporting occurred not only in centre and left-wing moderate newspapers and TV channels, but also in some of the more nationalist, right wing ones. Overall, in recent times, the media coverage of Roma issues encourages their integration in Greek society without negating their cultural and ethnic specificity.

4.4.3.2 THE TURKISH MUSLIM MINORITY

The character of this minority as a national - and not merely a religious and linguistic one - is even today denied by a large part of the Greek media. Moreover, its portrayal is closely linked to the negative stereotypes and reports concerning Turkey as a neighbouring country. Media coverage on Turkey reached a peak of hysteria, hostility, and offensive language in early 1996 after the Imia-Kardak

²⁷ It is important to note that hate speech is not generally prosecuted in Greece, even though Law 927/1979, (published in the State Gazette no. 139, 1979) on punishment of actions promoting racial discrimination provides the legal basis for it. The law foresees that charges are filed under the private complaint procedure.

controversy between Greece and Turkey²⁸. Such hostility has been occasionally revived in relation to the affair surrounding the Kurdish leader, Ochalan, the Cyprus question and, not surprisingly, the political mobilisation and claims raised by the Turkish minority in Greece. Throughout the period covered by this study (1995-2000), this minority has been portrayed as ignorant, uneducated, backwards, culturally inferior, mere victims at the hands of its religious leadership and manipulated by Turkish propaganda. This last point is argued to be behind any claims raised by the Turkish Muslim minority concerning local administration, education, or employment. According to most Greek newspapers, the minority is not Turkish; 'they are Pomaks, Gypsies and citizens of Turkish origin'. In recent years, the minority's socio-economic problems have attracted the attention of the moderate media and some mild criticisms about the inadequacy of the Greek State's policy in local administration and education have been raised. Nonetheless, any collective demands or political mobilisation of the minority are presented as Turkish expansionism. Occasionally, discrimination against the Turkish minority is admitted by the media and justified on the grounds that Turkey oppresses the Greek minority living in its territory.

4.4.3.3 THE MACEDONIAN MINORITY

Like the Turkish minority, negative stereotyping and hostile treatment is also reserved for the recently (1990s) mobilised Macedonian minority. The media largely denies its existence and its mobilisation is attributed to foreign agents who try to harm the [Greek] 'national interests' and promote Greece's 'cultural and ethnic disintegration'. Overall, the Macedonian minority issue and, in particular, the trial of some members of its party "Rainbow" have been downplayed by the media. However, when the media²⁹ report on the minority initiatives, they represent the activists as national traitors. Furthermore, they refer to citizens of Macedonia-FYROM as

NGO studies show the media's contribution in the escalation of the crisis and the near hysteria of public opinion in Greece and Turkey (cf. GHM, 1996; Hadjidimos 1999; Lenkova, 1998).

²⁹ In this trial the party members were accused of 'provoking and inciting discord among the citizens of the area [of Florina]'. The suspects were eventually acquitted.

'Skopjans', fuel fears of foreign-initiated conspiracy against Greece, and promote a stereotypical view of the country as ethnically and culturally homogeneous and 'pure', whatever such 'purity' means. Besides, the press uncritically reported the racist and offensive language used by the Greek foreign minister himself in December 1998. Ultimately, the members of the Macedonian minority simply see their existence and rights being denied by the Greek media.

4.4.3.4 RELIGIOUS MINORITIES: CATHOLICS, PROTESTANTS, JEWS, AND NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

Religious minorities in Greece are numerically small and attract little attention by the media, except in relation to some event that hits the headlines. On those rare occasions, however, hostility towards other faiths, including non-Orthodox Christian churches, is expressed. Thus, coverage on Greek Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church in Greece, on the whole has been characterised by prejudice and hostility; Catholics were seen as 'agents' of the Pope, hostile to Greek Orthodoxy. Generally speaking, however, the press coverage has grown increasingly more positive and less prejudiced. Little (if any) attention is paid to Protestant churches, while new religious movements (followers of the Church of Scientology, in particular) are usually portrayed as cults that brainwash their followers (October 1996). Last, but not least, there are a few instances in which overt anti-Semitism on the part of the media has been tolerated. Here the media failed to explicitly criticise the offensive use of the term 'lew' by a well-known Greek singer (February 1998) and also the incitement to racial prejudice and hatred by a Greek MP of the Conservative Party, who tried to discredit the policy of a Secretary of State by accusing him of concealing his supposed Jewish origins (November 1996). The Greek newspapers on various occasions (June-August 2000) have also uncritically reported the anti-Semitic sentiments expressed by Bishops and the spokesperson of the Greek Orthodox Church. These episodes were characterised not only by the anti-Semitic stance of the right wing and extreme nationalist newspapers, but also by the failure of the progressive and moderately nationalist press to react and condemn such rhetoric categorically.

4.4.3.5 IMMIGRANTS: 'ALBANOPHOBIA'

The recent stream of immigrants towards Greece has often attracted the attention of the media during the past decade. Initially the coverage was relatively positive, based on principles of humanism and solidarity. More recently, however, the persistence of undocumented immigration and the visibility of hundreds of thousands of foreigners living and working in the country appeared to spark a significant rise in xenophobic and racist attitudes both in the media coverage and in public opinion (Mikrakis and Triandafyllidou 1994; Triandafyllidou and Mikrakis 1995). Studies that concentrate on the first half of the 1990s (Triandafyllidou 1998a; 1998b) reveal a tendency in the press to categorise immigrants on the basis of their nationality and to link their national culture with some criminal activity. More recent studies on the media coverage of immigration (Pavlou, 2000), which concentrate on the period examined in this report, indicate that Albanians are the primary targets of negative stereotyping by the Greek media.

Among the different nationalities residing in Greece, Albanians represent over half of the total immigrant population. While media coverage on Albanian immigrants has improved during the past couple of years, overall it remains particularly negative, due to overtly racist language, calls to (physically) deport Albanians from Greece, general incitement of prejudice and hatred, and stereotypical portrayal of them as dangerous criminals or 'animals'. A smaller portion of the media coverage has adopted a more humane and informed approach towards this group, commenting on their poor working and living conditions, their exploitation by Greek employers, and their inhuman treatment by the police. The coverage of Albanians in Greece is also linked up with the Greek minority in Albania, which is reported to suffer oppression by the Albanian State. To a certain extent, this oppression offers an alibi or a justification for the debasing treatment of Albanians in Greece.

Albano-phobia reached its peak in 1996-97, when most of the media coverage focused on criminal offences, ranging from petty theft to organised crime, whereby Albanians were viewed as 'deprived of intellect, food and money, seeking revenge for the

years of communist oppression'. At first, a handful of articles appeared in the summer of 1997, commenting on the positive role of cheap [Albanian] immigrant labour for the Greek economy. It was followed by a more positive media view (during the winter of 1997-98, after the collapse of the financial pyramid schemes in Albania) that depicted Albanians (both in Albanian and Greece) more favourably. The rage and despair of Albanians who endured severe poverty was presented in the media with compassion. This more positive stereotype of the poor suffering Albanians did not, of course, erase Albano-phobia from the Greek media. Daily news continues to report a number of criminal offences of various types where the protagonists and usual suspects are of Albanian nationality.

4.4.4 MEDIA INITIATIVES TO COMBAT RACISM

During the period studied, there have been some cultural and educational initiatives undertaken by individual artists, private TV channels, and the state aimed at promoting the acceptance of cultural diversity in Greece and informing the public on the matter. Thus, initiatives such as the TV series "Whispers of the Heart", narrating the love story of a Greek Roma woman with a non-Roma Greek businessman in northern Greece (based on a true story) alerted the public to the discrimination endured by ethnic minorities, especially the Roma population. Likewise, the televised coverage of the inhuman treatment of minorities played in some cases (though not always) a positive role in informing public opinion and raising awareness and sensitivity of these issues. An example is the televised police raid of the Roma camp in Aspropyrgos in February 1996, which shocked the public for its unnecessary violence.

Moreover, there have been occasional roundtable discussions or other programmes on both private and state TV channels on the topic of immigration, which brought together representatives of the main political parties, academics, NGO activists, and members of immigrant associations. Unfortunately, I have been unable to trace any studies or other reports on such programmes, except for the information that was given to me by colleagues and other NGO activists. Most recently (February 2000), the state radio ERA has

introduced a series of news programmes in twelve different languages aimed at catering to the needs of immigrants and minorities. Also, it is reported (Pavlou 2000, and personal communication, October 2000) that the public TV channels have consciously changed their language from 1998 onwards, eliminating overtly racist and discriminatory terms when referring to immigrants. Furthermore, the National Council for TV and Radio has suggested that journalists omit reference to nationality when an individual is arrested. A non-profit organisation called Institute of Training and Development (DIMITRA), based in Larissa (capital of the region of Thessaly in central mainland Greece) is active in two international programmes. These promote cultural diversity through radio programmes (www.mmc2000.net) and repatriated Greeks' employment in the media through training courses and other initiatives (www.multicultural.net/onlinepresent.htm). On the whole, however, it can safely be said that there are few (if any) initiatives undertaken by the Greek press and TV channels to combat racism and promote cultural diversity.

4.4.5 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this report reveals a rather gloomy picture concerning the coverage of minority issues and racism by the Greek media. Not only is negative stereotyping of minorities and immigrants pervasive, but also moderate and progressive media fail to castigate and criticise the explicitly racist language often used by politicians and the press or TV channels. Any sympathetic reporting on minority issues focuses on their poor living and working conditions and their limited access to education and the job market. The quest for action on these issues, however, is reported as a generous concession of the majority rather than as a response to the rights of the minority. These topics, by and large, remain off-limits. In addition, although the Government is generally reported to condemn racist and xenophobic attitudes and behaviour, it also engages in controversial statements and policies that violate the civil rights of immigrants (for example, by the occasional 'sweep' operations, as if immigrants were some kind of 'garbage' that needs to be swept from the Greek 'floor'). These policies aim to appease public opinion, usually fuelled by racist and xenophobic media coverage.

Naturally, the media are again present in this vicious circle to report the repressive actions of the government and appeare the public feeling of insecurity while enhancing the stereotypical portrayal of immigrants, especially Albanians, as criminals.

Overall, immigrant and minority stereotyping is closely related to Greek nationalism and fears of foreign 'conspiracy' against the country, coupled with fears of 'contamination' of the nation's supposed cultural and ethnic 'purity'. Discriminatory attitudes towards immigrants in media reporting are usually matched by statements concerning the cultural and national 'superiority' of Greeks. Criticism of such extreme nationalist views and of the related racism towards minorities and foreigners does not seem to be voiced as strongly as it should.

Nevertheless, NGOs active in the field of minority and human rights point to a number of new policy measures introduced by the government in the past few years. These include the creation of the Greek Ombudsman's Office that purportedly goes out of its way to sensitise the Greek administration to the need to respect different cultures and avoid discrimination against minorities. Other important measures include the introduction in 1995 of a 0.5% university entrance quota for Turkish Muslim students to help offset the almost insurmountable obstacle of insufficient knowledge of Greek and the development and completion (in 1999) of educational materials for the Turkish Muslim schools, that are up-to-date, elaborate and respectful of their culture (Parallel report on Greece's Compliance with the UN CERD, March 2000).

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- Greek Ombudsman's Office, Hadjiyanni Mexi street, no. 5, Athens, 11528 Greece, tel./fax: 01 7289712 or 718.
- Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), http://www.eliamep.gr/default.html
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