

RETHINKING EU-TURKIYE RELATIONS: A MULTICULTURAL APPROACH TO GREEK MINORITIES¹

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) approach to multiculturalism has resulted in legal framework based both on texts from other international organizations and on the mission conferred by the Copenhagen Criteria's emphasis on respect for minority rights. The requirement for EU candidate states to meet the Copenhagen criteria became binding on Türkiye in 1999, putting pressure on it to adapt its policies to EU standards, particularly with regard to cultural diversity and the protection of minorities. This paper examines the EU framework for multiculturalism in light of the Copenhagen Criteria and then discusses the subsequent legal and policy reforms in Türkiye. The study outlines the evolution of the Turkish minority regime, which has its roots in the Lausanne Peace Treaty, with a special focus on Orthodox Greeks, drawing on EU progress reports, publications by international organizations and secondary sources. It also looks at the milestones and policies that have oppressed the Greek community in Türkiye and analyses what the EU expects from Türkiye in terms of reforms in this area. While the study shows that Türkiye has made great strides in its approach to minority rights, it also points out that challenges remain on the road to full equality. The study is important for improving knowledge of EU integration and the protection of minority rights, while helping to further clarify EU-Türkiye relations. It also provides an indication of the international community's pressure for domestic reform and discusses the complexities of integrating multicultural policies into Türkiye's evolving legal and social framework.

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Introduction

The European Union's (EU) approach to multiculturalism is the result of various political, historical and social factors and has manifested itself in social inclusion and respect for minority rights. Although the issue of minorities is a sensitive one for EU member states, the EU's emphasis on cultural diversity and the protection of differences has, over time, given rise to legal bases. These legal bases were based both on texts from other international organisations and on the legitimacy conferred by the emphasis on respect for minority rights in the Copenhagen Criteria.

The requirement for EU candidate states to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria became binding on Türkiye, which officially became a candidate country in 1999. As a result of EU harmonisation pressure, Türkiye, whose minority regime is based on Articles 37 to 45 of the Lausanne Peace Treaty, has made a number of commitments to the minorities living within its borders. Moreover, these commitments apply not only to non-Muslim groups officially recognised as minorities, but are also designed to include diverse groups with ethnic and linguistic differences.

Türkiye's minority rights reforms on the road to EU membership have been implemented since the early 2000s. In this context, the aim of this study is to show how and what kind of changes the EU has made with regard to minority rights in Türkiye within the framework of the multiculturalism approach. The scope of the study is limited to the Greek minority in Türkiye. The study used EU progress reports, which provide a roadmap by tracking Türkiye's progress in the EU accession process, reports published by international organisations and secondary sources. The study first provides a framework for the EU's approach to multiculturalism and its legislation on minority protection. It then presents a conceptual framework for the Turkish minority regime. It then explains the status of Greek minorities in Türkiye and the main events and policies that have led to the decline in the number of Greeks over time. Finally, a framework of the EU's expectations of Türkiye regarding minorities is presented and Türkiye's reforms in this process are analysed.

EU Multiculturalism and Legal Framework for Protecting Minority Rights

According to Britannica, multiculturalism is the view that, within a prevailing political culture, cultures, races, and ethnic groups—especially those of minority groups—deserve special recognition for their distinctions (Britannica). Multiculturalism, in other words, is the acknowledgment, acceptance, and encouragement of cultural diversity in a community. Proponents of multiculturalism advocate an ideal in which members of minority groups are able to maintain their distinctive collective identities and practices and reject the melting pot model in which members of minority groups are expected to integrate into the dominant culture (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy). Modern states are structured based on the language and culture of the dominant groups from which they historically emerged. As a result, members of minority groups face obstacles in exercising their social practices in ways that are not the case for members of dominant groups. Some argue that minority groups should be spared from government interference; while others argue that recognition represents a positive accommodation to minority group practices through additional rights.

The approach of the EU towards multiculturalism has evolved with time and has been molded by various historical, political, and social factors combined. There is no unified framework within which the EU pursues multiculturalism; its policy has been a diverse set of policies and initiatives that advance social inclusion, promote diversity, and address migration and demographic challenges in its member states. Multiculturalism in the understanding of the EU is deeply rooted in the spirit of social cohesion and tolerance. It's not about the recognition of cultural differences only, but about the actual equality of rights and chances for all.

The EU's basic policies to prevent social exclusion and protect minority rights were formulated as an expression of the multiculturalism approach. Accordingly, the EU has made the protection of minority rights a fundamental principle of the multiculturalism approach and, in this context, has taken measures to help minorities to be better protected and accepted in society. However, due to the objections of some member states about the possibility of a violation of their national integrity, the EU was unable to take a direct initiative on minority protection and to provide a fundamental text on the subject. It therefore relies on other principles recognized in international law for the protection of minority rights and expects member states to

cooperate in this regard. For example, the Commission, as the EU's executive body, is not responsible for minority affairs, but nevertheless closely analyzes the reports and decisions of bodies such as the Venice Commission and the European Court of Human Rights, as well as documents from other international institutions (Oran, 2018). However, the EU member states refrain from delegating decision-making powers over minorities to a supranational organization. Since they retain the main competence in this area, each member state has its own system of minority protection.

Although the EU *acquis* contains no regulations regarding minorities, a number of documents produced by the EU take into account the fundamental human and minority rights principles recognized throughout the EU. The Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992 and ratified in 1993, is the first of these. Article F(2) of the Treaty ensures that the Union respects fundamental rights (Baydarol, 2023). The Maastricht Treaty was significantly modified by the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into force in 1999. A human rights regime was also added to the Union's founding documents (Baydarol, 2023).

The most important regulations regarding minorities were made within the framework of the Copenhagen Criteria, the foundations of which were laid at the Copenhagen Summit in 1993. These criteria, originally developed for EU accession candidates, require regulation in three main areas. These include economic criteria that require a functioning market economy; Harmonization criteria requiring compliance with the EU *acquis*; and political criteria that ensure respect for the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as minority rights in the candidate country. As can be seen, this is the first time that minorities have been explicitly mentioned in an EU regulation and a condition for membership has been introduced that candidate countries respect minority rights.

Work on minorities has continued in subsequent periods. Article 21 of the Declaration of Fundamental Rights, published in 2000, entitled "Prohibition of Discrimination", states: "*Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, descent, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion. Opinion, membership of a national minority, peculiarity, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation is prohibited*" (İnsan Hakları Derneği, 2023). As can be seen, this article explicitly prohibits discrimination against minorities. The 2009 Lisbon Treaty states that the EU is committed to the fundamental freedoms and principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. This means that the declaration, which has become the main

source of EU law, has become legally binding (Metin and Kaygısız, 2011). However, although there are EU-wide rules on the protection of minorities, which impose responsibilities on the acceding countries, there are no concrete obligations on the member states. This situation is interpreted as an indication that more powerful states, unwilling to enforce the provisions on minorities in their own territories, do not break with their centuries-old traditions and continue to apply double standards (Oran, 2018).

Minority Regime in Türkiye

The Turkish minority regime is based on the Lausanne Peace Treaty. The main text of the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed on July 24, 1923, six months after the forced migration agreement between Greece and Türkiye. Since it was concluded six months after the exchange agreement that created a Greek minority in Türkiye and a Muslim minority in Greece, it should not be assumed that the minority regime created in the Treaty of Lausanne extends only to Greeks (Akgönül, 2016). During the negotiations in Lausanne, the parties struggled to agree on the definition of minorities. While the Allies, following the general trend of the time, introduced minority criteria based on ancestry, language and religion, Türkiye sought to introduce a minority system that protected only non-Muslim groups under the Millet system adopted from the Ottoman Empire. At Türkiye's insistence, the Allies defined minority groups as non-Muslims rather than Christians or Jews, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter III of the Lausanne Peace Treaty on the Protection of Minorities. In this context, all non-Muslim citizens of the Republic of Türkiye are entitled to the protection regime established by the Treaty of Lausanne (Oran, 2018).

The multinational structure of the Ottoman Empire was largely influenced by the Greeks and other Christian minorities. Under the Ottoman Empire's millet system, numerous ethnic and religious groups were allowed to live freely, and each religious group was allowed to maintain its distinctive religious and cultural identity. However, with the Republican era, major changes occurred in the social structure in Türkiye, as it developed a narrow interpretation of the relevant articles when formulating its minority policy. Since the governments acted selectively in this regard, they allowed only Greeks, Armenians and Jews to benefit from the rights provided for in Articles 37 to 45 of the Treaty of Lausanne and did not allow other non-Muslim communities of Turkish nationality such as Catholics, Syrians , Protestants and

Yazidis should benefit from the rights recognized in the treaty.

Türkiye's preference for a narrow interpretation of the minority approach is analyzed in three subcategories, including historical, political and ideological reasons. For historical reasons, the founding fathers of the Republic of Türkiye did not accept the view that the newly founded nation-state was a continuation of the Ottoman Empire. However, they directly reflected the millet system that formed the basis of the Ottoman social order in Türkiye's minority system. Although this system began in 1453, immediately after the conquest of İstanbul, and lasted until the promulgation of the Tanzimat Edict in 1839, it became the model upon which the newly founded nation-state formed its own nation.

The second reason is based on political grounds by Baskın Oran (2018). Accordingly, during the period of the Muslim-majority Ottoman Empire, minorities were placed under the protection of Western states, which over time led to the weakening and destruction of the empire. Thus, non-Muslims, who after a while became the "others" in society, were seen as a threat to national integrity, and this tendency continued in the Republican period. Kızılkın-Kısacık (2010), who deals with the topic in the same context, analyzes this situation under the title cognitive reasons. According to the author, the political reasons are explained by the desire to create a homogeneous national state of the Young Turks who emerged at the end of the Ottoman Empire and the military elites who founded the Republic as a continuation of the Union and Progressive Party. In this context, while the emphasis is on the idea of creating a unified national identity centred on Türkiye's ethnic identity, protecting the unique characteristics of groups with different ethnic and religious identities is pushed into the background (Kızılkın-Kısacık, 2010).

Finally, Oran underlines the ideological justifications (Oran, 2004). Accordingly, the Republic of Türkiye has deliberately limited the scope of the definition of minority by making reservations to some international conventions to which it is a party. By defining the limits of its ideological approach to the protection of minorities, it has taken precautions against the possibility that the rights established in the conventions to which it has acceded cover situations prohibited by the Turkish constitution or grant special rights to groups other than those considered eligible for the Treaty of Lausanne.

Demographically, the exact figures on the religious composition of minority groups in Türkiye are not available. However, according to the US Department of State - Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Report on Türkiye, 2022, the number of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christian population is estimated at approximately 90,000 persons. This group includes an estimated 60,000 citizens and 30,000 migrants from Armenia without legal residence. Furthermore, the Jewish community in Türkiye is said to number around 16,000 people, while the Greek Orthodox Christian population is estimated at around 2,000 to 2,500. These figures highlight the demographic diversity of the country's religious minorities, although the lack of accurate data highlights the challenges in producing accurate statistics about these communities (US Department of State, 2023).

Greek Minorities in Türkiye: A Historical and Demographic Overview

Greeks are among the indigenous groups of Anatolia, with marked ethnic, religious, and linguistic features. The majority are Orthodox Christians, while a smaller number are Protestants and Catholics. The Modern Greek Orthodox communities in Türkiye include the Greek Orthodox of İstanbul, the Arab Greek Orthodox from Antakya, and the Greeks of Gökçeada and Bozcaada. When the Sanjak region, Hatay, joined Türkiye in 1939, the Arab Greek Orthodox of Antakya became its minority groups. They belong to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antakya and the entire East, not the Greek Patriarchate of İstanbul, and were not covered by the minority protections of the Lausanne Peace Treaty since Hatay was outside of Türkiye's borders at the time. Whereas this community has gained some religious freedoms through the EU accession process of Türkiye, their situation is not the focus of this study.

The present research focuses on those Greeks who belong to the Greek Patriarchate of Fener, living in İstanbul, Gökçeada, and Bozcaada. Their exemption from the Convention and Protocol concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Peoples preserved their minority status in Türkiye. In return, approximately 1.2 million Greeks settled in Greece, and the ones who had lived in İstanbul, Gökçeada, and Bozcaada stayed in Türkiye as they were excluded from the exchange. Still, the Greeks living in Gökçeada and Bozcaada have different traditions, customs, and ways of dressing from the Greeks in İstanbul and they speak different Greek dialects

(Karimova and Deverell, 2023).

Whereas it is estimated that 110,000 Greeks remained in Türkiye after the population exchange, many Greek citizens had to leave due to pressures from government policies that will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 2,500 Orthodox Greeks are registered with the Fener Greek Patriarchate, though exact figures are unavailable (Oran, 2018). Of these, about 17 live in Bozcaada, and around 190 reside in Gökçeada. In addition, groups of Greeks, mainly elderly, travel to Gökçeada on the day of the Feast of the Assumption (Panayias) on August 15. The pilgrimage serves not only religious purposes but also as a means to preserve the history and memory of the island, driven mostly by the associations of Gökçeada people in Greece (Tsimouris, 2013).

Greeks in İstanbul, Gökçeada and Bozcaada have foundations, churches, ayazmas and monasteries. There is a small Greek community in İzmir, composed of Greek citizens who went there to work. They are active in the Dutch Church (New Hagia Fotini), which is leased by the government of the Netherlands for 99 years. Furthermore, religious services are allowed in the churches and ayazmas in neighbouring municipalities, such as İzmir and Selçuk. It had since 2010 offered services on the occasion of religious holidays such as Easter. Greeks are also allowed to conduct church services on Sundays.

Since churches cannot obtain legal personality, Greek Church foundations ensure the continuation of their places of worship. These foundations also support Greek schools and cemeteries. However, in 1927, against the Treaty of Lausanne, Greek education was banned in Gökçeada and Bozcaada, and instruction in Greek was suspended for 49 years. A primary school reopened its doors in September 2013, while secondary education restarted in 2015 (Oran, 2018). Moreover, the Greek community in Türkiye issues two daily newspapers, *Iho* and *Apoyevmatini*, and also established *Istos Publications* in 2017, which has published several works both in Turkish and Greek.

When Helsinki Watch representatives visited Türkiye in October 1991, they found that the Turkish government was violating the rights of Greek citizens by denying their ethnic identity, placing restrictions on religious freedom, practicing discrimination in schools, and permitting police violence. Today, the Patriarch emphasizes other pending issues, such as the refusal by the Turkish government to recognize 'Constantinople' or 'Ecumenism', the postponed reopening of the Halki

Seminary, and the lack of legal personality for the Patriarchate. The Lausanne negotiations allowed the Greek Patriarchate of Fener to stay in Türkiye on the condition that it would not use the ecumenical title and would deal exclusively with the religious affairs of the Greek community. However, the Treaty of Lausanne had left this issue unmentioned and referred it to Turkish domestic law. When the Treaty was ratified by the Turkish Grand National Assembly, no decision was made regarding the problem at hand (Fırat, 2005).

The Causes of the Decline in Türkiye's Greek Population

This section of the study examines the circumstances that led to the decline of the Greek minority in Türkiye. This section lists the events that were specifically directed against the Greek population, but these events and the policies pursued were the result of fundamental approaches in the history of the Republic, such as the nationalization of capital, the threat of wars and tensions with Greece and The belief that minorities posed a threat is not limited to the incidents addressed here. Chronologically, the first of these events is the "Speak Turkish" campaign, an initiative taken by university students in İstanbul in 1928 to promote the use of Turkish in public life as part of broader nationalist efforts following the establishment of the Turkish Republic (Lamprou, 2013). With wide public and media support, it sought the dominance of Turkish in various social and institutional spheres of life, strictly limiting the rights of minorities to use their languages, which was against Article 40 of the Treaty of Lausanne (Yıldız, 2015). This influence of the movement on the language policy of Türkiye continued through the beginning of the 1940s, and the repercussions were seen in the marginalization of minority languages.

Another milestone in the ongoing persecution of non-Muslim minorities in Türkiye, particularly Greek citizens, was the Incident of the Reserves in 1941. These discriminatory policies, including forced labour and exclusion from military service, undermined the rights of non-Muslim citizens and contributed to the marginalisation of minority groups. The decline of the Greek population within Türkiye led many Greeks to emigrate.

The 1942 Capital Tax Law, by which local tax commissions imposed much higher rates of taxation on non-Muslims, was the most powerful tool that Türkiye wielded in an attempt to redistribute what was perceived as the ill-gotten wealth of its non-Muslim minorities. This law aimed at the redistribution of the wealth of the non-Muslim communities and weakening their economic power was the cause of decline in the Greek population in Türkiye (Akar, 2005). Besides the financial consequences, the capital tax also became the most blatant example of a state-led, politically veiled attack on minority rights. This development contributed to accelerating the cultural erosion and demographic decline of Türkiye's non-Muslim communities.

The İstanbul Pogrom of September 1955 was the violent answer to the Greek bombing of the Turkish consulate in Thessaloniki, birthplace of Atatürk. In İstanbul, a Turkish mob attacked the Greek community and destroyed businesses, churches, cemeteries, schools, and historical monuments (Aktoprak, 2010). Greek shops were also looted and set on fire, leaving a city in ruins. The pogrom caused substantial material damage and instilled feelings of fear and insecurity into the Greek minority. The violence that was carried out by nationalist and political motives further deepened ethnic and religious hostility, re-marginalizing the non-Muslim communities and thus contributing to the decline in the population of Greeks in Türkiye (Güven, 2005).

Last but not least, the deportation of Greeks from Türkiye in 1964 over the growing tensions over Cyprus was one of the sad chapters in the way Türkiye dealt with its Greek population. The Turkish government started evicting Greeks who were Greek citizens for security reasons on March 16. In excess of 1,000 Greeks had to leave hurriedly with just \$22 and one suitcase, having to forsake their houses and enterprises (İstanbullu Rumların Evrensel Federasyonu, 2014). This displacement, fuelled by geopolitical conflict over Cyprus, led to the permanent emigration of another 30,000 ethnic Greeks. Beyond its immediate social and economic impact, the deportations deepened insecurity, fostered long-term resentment, and damaged intercommunal relations.

Other Facts Leading to Decline in Greek Population

The above events outline the systematic discrimination and oppression of the Greek minority in Türkiye, which led to its decline throughout the 20th century. In addition to the events mentioned above, some of the most draconian measures taken were the banning of the use of the Greek language in the courts and restrictions on non-Muslim community foundations (wakıf). Until 2003, these foundations were not allowed to purchase property or build new places of worship. This policy severely hampered the social, cultural and religious life of the Greek community. Greek schools were financially neglected, while Greek Orthodox priests were banned from teaching religion or praying in minority schools from 1964 (Aktoprak, 2010). Land was confiscated, schools were closed and military zones were declared in Gökçeada and Bozcaada, severely disrupting the normal lives of the local Greek population (Tsimouris, 2013).

Besides these institutional barriers, Greeks in Türkiye faced many restrictions on their mobility and economic activities. A government decree froze their assets, restricted property transactions, and restricted their income, further exacerbating their economic marginalization. The implementation of the Religious Endowments Act of 1936 further resulted in discrimination against non-Muslim minorities by classifying them as "foreigners" and making their acquisition of property illegal after 1936. The 1974 ruling of the Court of Cassation, which barred non-Muslim foundations from acquiring real estate, further disenfranchised the Greek community. The closure of Halki Seminary in 1971 and the decline of religious and academic institutions such as the Armenian Patriarchate underscored broader state efforts to suppress the religious and educational autonomy of minorities (Macar, 2003).

EU's Impact on the Position of Greek Minorities in Türkiye

The 1980s, however, saw Türkiye change its policy toward religious minorities with the growing openness of the country to the international community and the desire for accession into the EU. Such a general shift in tendency enabled the adoption of even liberal policies that were responsive to European standards for smooth accession into the EU. Indeed, it was at the Helsinki Summit in 1999 that Türkiye was

declared officially an EU candidate. This process brought issues of the rights and protection of non-Muslim minorities to the fore in political debate.

The EU's involvement in Türkiye's minority rights reforms was filtered through the Copenhagen criteria stipulating that candidate countries must respect the principles of political and human rights, including minority protection. Although the EU has no binding standards on minority rights, its influence on reforms has been at play. Progress reports for candidate countries, in this case, Türkiye, highlight the areas of improvement that include legal recognition and property rights of non-Muslim community foundations, training of clergy, the attempt for reopening of Halki Seminary, management of minority schools, and easing of cultural restrictions. Other key issues involve lifting barriers to non-Muslim minorities in administrative and military positions, and recognition of the title "ecumenical" for the Patriarch in İstanbul (Türkiye 2023 Report).

Because of its political, normative and economic power, the EU has had more influence on minority rights reform in Türkiye than other international organisations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the Council of Europe. Unlike the non-binding decisions of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the EU's influence, particularly through the promise of membership, has provided a strong incentive for Türkiye to implement reforms. Over time, Türkiye has made progress on many issues related to minority rights, although challenges remain. Indeed, the EU's pre-accession push for compliance with European human rights standards has changed Türkiye's very strategy for protecting minorities, especially its non-Muslim citizens. However, full implementation is still in the process of being worked out due to pressure from the EU and domestic politics.

Reforms on Minority Policies under the Harmonization Packages

Since 2002, Türkiye has taken significant steps towards improving minority rights, especially through the reforms linked to its EU accession process. Restrictions on minority language media have been lifted, and the ban on broadcasting in languages other than Turkish was lifted, allowing greater freedom to express their culture and identity (T.C. Başbakanlık Avrupa Birliği Genel Sekreterliği, 2007). The new legal framework allowed people to form associations based on ethnicity, religion or sect, and granted the right to build places of worship other than mosques,

expanding religious freedoms (Resmi Gazete, 2003). The Law on Foundations facilitated the return of property previously confiscated from religious communities, allowing them to recover, register and restore their property (Dayıođlu, 2012). In addition, reforms addressed the issue of private schools for religious minorities, improving educational opportunities.

Recent developments included the restoration of the Virgin Mary Church in Bozcaada and a legal change giving churches and synagogues the same public service privileges as mosques, including free water and electricity. Foreign Orthodox archbishops were given dual citizenship to ease the administration of the patriarchate (Dayıođlu, 2012). The Fener Boys High School was given compensation for land previously confiscated. A major reform in identification policy introduced new national ID cards that did not require the person to state their religious status. These steps, together with the abolition of the Higher Council of Minorities, promoted inclusiveness and decreased state interference in minority affairs. There was also a more consultative dialogue between representatives of minorities and state officials (Bebirođlu, 2015).

Yet despite these advances, major challenges persist. Important reforms have come up short in addressing the problems minorities continue to face. Religious and ethnic minorities' daily life is still marked by the heritage of previous policies, and their road to complete legal equality is very long. Major areas of concern include the "ecumenical" title of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, obstacles to high-level military and administrative positions, and property rights. These barriers continue to hamper the complete integration of non-Muslim communities into Turkish society. The ongoing challenges that face Türkiye include sustained reform and making sure that minority rights are fully protected both in law and practice.

Conclusion

The issue of minorities is important on Türkiye's path to EU membership. According to the Copenhagen criteria, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and respect for minorities are among the basic principles that the EU requires of candidate countries. At the Helsinki Summit in 1999, Türkiye, which was granted candidate status, was expected to align itself with the EU *acquis* within these criteria. However, the EU, which does not have its own domestic law on the protection of minorities, has

determined the reforms to be carried out in this area based on the dynamics within the countries themselves.

The Lausanne Peace Treaty of 29 October 1923, which defined the borders of the Republic of Türkiye, also defined the minority regime of the newly established nation-state. By limiting the definition of minorities to Greeks, Armenians and Jews, the government continued the minority paranoia inherited from the Ottoman Empire. In this context, the perception of minorities as a threat to the territorial integrity and unity of the country has long persisted. In this process, non-Muslim citizens did not fully benefit from the protection guaranteed by the Lausanne Peace Treaty and, as part of the aggressive policy against them, they were silenced and their numbers reduced through emigration. It also referenced the regulations of organizations.

This study accordingly has examined the influence of the EU's multiculturalism framework on minority rights reforms in Türkiye, with a focus on the Greek minority. Despite notable progress, particularly since the early 2000s, in the legal system and policies relating to minority rights, difficulties remain. The challenges of integrating multicultural policies into Türkiye's legal and social framework are reflected in the continuing problems faced by the Greek minority, particularly with regard to representation, property rights and religious freedom. Moreover, although the EU has played a very important role in promoting reforms, full equality for non-Muslim minorities is still an ongoing process, and there is still a gap between proposed legislation and its full implementation.

Overall, this study underlines once more the complex interdependence between the EU integration processes and domestic reforms of minority rights in Türkiye. It stipulates that international pressure would be an important factor that determines domestic policies of Türkiye while marking how far Türkiye has still got to go in adjusting legal and social structures to the spirit of multiculturalism. Minority rights in Türkiye will further continue to change along with internal and external dynamics; their future will depend upon the political will which has been sustained, backed by international cooperation.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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