European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages
Bureau européen pour les langues moins répandues

**Greek Member State Committee of EBLUL**

**ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΗ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟΥ ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΟΛΙΓΟΤΕΡΟ ΧΡΗΣΙΜΟΠΟΙΟΥΜΕΝΩΝ ΓΛΩΣΣΩΝ**

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## GREBLUL REPORT – MAY-SEPTEMBER 2003

The Greek Committee of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages was represented on the organization and reception committee for former refugee children who fled Greece during the 1946-49 Civil War. For the first time in 55 years elderly individuals from all around the world were granted a limited opportunity to see their birthplace in Greece and visit their family graves. For many of them, this was their first chance to meet their relatives. Despite the committee's pleas that these former citizens of Greece should be granted free passage across our borders, the frontier authorities refused to accept passports in which the place of birth was entered under the old Macedonian name – the only name they knew at the time when they fled the country. The Greek government had proposed that the passports be amended, stating Greece as the place of birth instead of the Macedonian place name. The whole affair has demonstrated once again the undemocratic attitude of the Greek government to minority languages and the cultural heritage of non-Greek-speaking citizens. The many who attended the ceremony of welcome held on 20 August in Florina-Lerin heard speakers address the crowd in the Macedonian language, while songs were also performed in the prohibited language for the first time at a public event. It is worth noting that for the first time the bulk of the Greek press did not take a hostile nationalist stance to an event of this kind.

With the assistance and support of the Greek Committee of EBLUL three CD's of Macedonian music and songs have been produced – a first in Greece – using material collected by a member of the Centre for Macedonian Culture and associate of our committee, the dentist Kostas Novakis.

During the summer months members of the Greek Committee have monitored and denounced a number of actions by departments and sections of the Greek state against the freedom of the Turkish linguistic minority in Thrace, northern Greece, to organize their own cultural events.
The Regional Governor of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace banned a dance troupe from performing at a festival in Thermes, Xanthe, because they were singing in the Turkish language. The Greek Ministry of Culture refused visas to cultural associations from Turkish eastern Thrace and the Republic of Macedonia who had been invited by Greek associations to participate in cross-border cultural events. The Greek authorities also refused visas to mayors from neighbouring Turkish municipalities who had been invited to attend same events.
A Greek policeman arrested and took to a police station the associate of the Turkish language newspaper issued by members of the Greek Committee because when the policeman accosted him he spoke to his companion in Turkish, his mother tongue. The incident has still not been resolved.

The Greek Ministry of Education has banned the use of classrooms in schools for cultural events in the area inhabited by the Turkish-speaking community of Thrace.

Our committee decided to reorganize the multicultural festival we've had planed for this autumn to the next spring time after the great interest we've received from many cultural associations all over Greece.
We are planning also, for next October, a wide meeting together with the representatives of the cultural associations. The task, of this meeting, will be the establishment of a federation and a committee for preparing this festival which will led in a spirit of creating, among the Greek society, friendly environment for cultural and linguistic diversity in Greece.