

Greek Minority of Turkey



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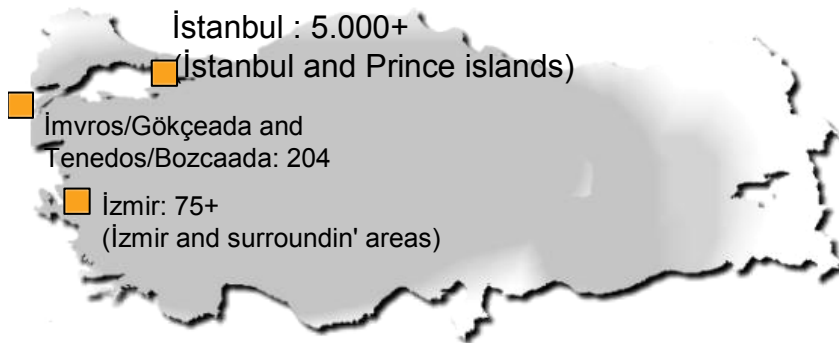


Here you can find some brief information based on research and live documentaries for life of the Greek Minority of Turkey, one of the oldest Greek populations around the globe.

Greek minority today starts to export its fears from the past with a very strong confidence and sense of responsibility among its members and its country.



Brief of the Greek minority



Various majority of the Greek population within Turkey are in İstanbul metropolitan area, İzmir and the Aegean islands of İmros (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada).

Except the impressive population's decline cause of the historical facts of the last 50 years slowly since 2008 there is a stable - but low increase of the population in terms of new greek new comers -especially from Greece and abroad for business or permanent staying in the country.

İSTANBUL and surroundings

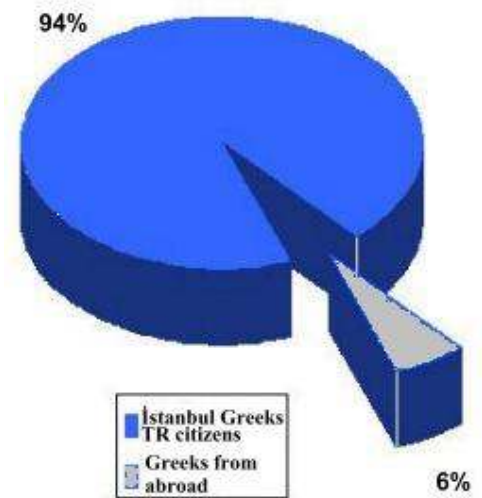
Once's vibrant greek community of Turkey -and the most populous one, nowadays they are about 5.000 people when we include single greek families, mix marriages, greek Istanbul diaspora Greeks who stay here for more than six months. Population nowadays seems to be stable with some small increase for macrotime figures.

İmros/Gökçeada and Tenedos/Bozcaada

In İmros island there are about 187 Greeks most of them elderly. During summer days the population increases thanks to the coming back of the Greek-İmrian diaspora. In Tenedos only 17 people still live there and same as İmros population increases during summer when abroad's Tenedians come back to their home land.

Izmir/Smyrni

Around and within Izmir's property they are still 75 people -most of them personel of the Greek Consulate which locates in the city. They are also 8 families which are in the city since 1922 era.



History

The Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey is a small community made up of the descendants of those who were permitted to remain in Turkey after the massive and compulsory exchange of populations agreed under the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Greece and the Ottoman Empire had been in dispute over territories periodically during the nineteenth century and Greece had declared war on Turkey in 1921 in an attempt to secure the Ottoman territories it had been awarded under the Treaty of Sèvres. The Greek forces were driven from Anatolia by Kemal Atatürk in 1922 and much of the large Greek population fled, especially from Smyrna (Izmir), a largely Greek city. Under the Treaty of Lausanne Greeks were eliminated from Turkey with the exception of those in Istanbul, Imvros Turks were similarly expelled from all Greek territory except Western Thrace. The Treaty of Lausanne was partially designed as a means of finally ending a century of murderous feuding between the two communities.

Despite assurances of continued protection from the Turkish authorities there has been a steady increase in restrictions on Greeks in Turkey. In September 1955 a Turkish mob destroyed much of the Greek business quarter of Istanbul, Greek churches, cemeteries, schools and historical monuments. Shops and warehouses were looted and burnt to the ground.



Greeks in Turkey have to live with many prohibitions such as that on the use of Greek in courts, purchase of land by social and cultural institutions and the establishment of any association based on race, language or religion. On the islands of Imvros and Tenedos land was compulsorily appropriated, schools closed and the islands declared military zones, making normal life virtually impossible for the Greek populations. In 1964 Greek Orthodox priests were forbidden to teach religion or conduct morning prayers in minority schools and Turks have since been appointed as teachers in all minority schools. Students were obliged to enrol in their nearest school rather than in a school of their choice and the teaching of the Greek language has been severely reduced. In 1971 the government closed down the Department of Advanced Religious Studies of Chalki, thus impeding preparation for office within the church. Passports are also being withheld from prominent members of the Greek Orthodox community despite the fact that they are Turkish subjects. Some of these people face restricted movement within Turkey itself.



Further restrictions were imposed after the Greek/Turkish dispute over Cyprus in 1974. At the height of the crisis the Turkish government adopted a secret decree which restricted property transactions by Greeks in Turkey, froze their assets and limited their income, although implementation of this decree appears to have begun after July 1985. Greece has protested strongly in European forums at Turkish treatment of its Greek minority.

*There has been a continuous decline in the Greek population most of which remains concentrated in Istanbul. From 100,000 in 1934 it has fallen to 6,000-8,000 today in general total around Istanbul, Prince islands, Izmir, Gokceada and Bozcaada (*Imvros and Tenedos islands). The Greek population of Imvros and Tenedos is reported to have fallen from 10,500 in the 1940s to 1,600 in 1977. However despite its decline and the restrictions it faces, the Greek minority in Istanbul is reported to be a prosperous one and, along with Armenian and Jewish minorities, to have played an important, although low-profile, role in the financial and commercial sector.*



Community nowadays

Greek Orthodox Community of Turkey nowadays populates Istanbul, Prince islands; small islands across the Anatolian side of the city, in Izmir and in islands of Imvros (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada) next to Aegean coast of Turkey.

Important fact was the Congress of the Istanbul Greek Diaspora which held place in 2006 in Istanbul. After the congress, they were decisions among the future of the tiny; that time Greek population of the country and especially of Istanbul.

During '90s the last families where immigrated to Greece and other places because of the instability of the Turkish political situation of that time.

Since 2006 a huge progress has began across country, with significant reforms of the government of Tayyip Erdogan and the European process among others.

Greek Minority's today position in Turkey starts to be important again, with many cultural –mainly- events and restoration of churches and old Greek schools.

The interest of the Turkish society among the old Greek community became a significant driver for brave reforms and plans for the future.



Important facts since 1999

The creativity of Internet and usage of new technologies, helped the Greek Minority to re-birth from it's ashes. Creativity of new websites, and cultural events and music facts with the new generation of the Greek communities especially in Istanbul gave the message; minority must re-born.

The 1999 earthquakes in Turkey and Greece warmed the ice political relations with the quake diplomacy which became very useful for the publication of issues of the Greek Minority in Turkey.

The congress of 2006 which created the new basis for emphasizing the demographic issue, and the actions could be done for positive reactions to the continuity of the Greek existence in Turkey.

The actions of Greek donors for continuing restoration of old Greek schools, churches and cemeteries of the Greek Minority of Turkey.

The held elections of Greek communities around Istanbul became the necessity for changing with positive reactions and results for the public feeling of equality.

The Creation of the RumVader, Union for the support of the Greek Institutions (in Istanbul) is the very first official representation of the Greek communities of Istanbul today with a very positive also reaction among Turkish society and media.



Education issues

Because of the population decline of the last decades, the pupil and student population of Greek Minority of Turkey considers as “tiny” and “small”. Nowadays they are open 7 primary and senior high schools, 3 high schools with around 250 pupils, and only 120 of them are identified as Greeks (the rest belong to the Syrian Arab Orthodox Minority of Turkey, whose clerical ownership belongs to Ec. Patriarchate of Fener and it’s children attend also the greek schools –however those pupils uses arabic and turkish as primary languages – then greek)

Restoration

They are actions for restoration a big amount of old greek schools which are still standing across Istanbul and other places with significant Greek population such as Imvros/Gokçeada and Tenedos/Bozcaada. Those actions are still ongoing from Greek donors and public services of the Republic of Turkey.

Pupils and limitations

However the last years there is a continuing wave of Greek immigration to Turkey, there is no ability for non Turkish citizen Greek pupils to attend the Minorital Greek Schools because of the limitations since the



Agreement of Lausanne in 1923.

The minority wants that issue to be solved by the State with an ongoing agreement for the better usage also of the buildings and the flexi limitations to be replaced by the needs of the nowadays conditions.



Education matters

The RUMVADER , official representative of the Greek communities around Istanbul has a master plan for the usage of the old Greek schools around the city which are closed and without pupils most of them since '70s. The plan provides restoration, different usages as cultural centers and accommodation needs for the community. The ongoing process is published very positively by the Turkish media.



Legacy

The greek minority today within Turkey is an interesting aspect for study and a remind of the rich and important cultural heritage of Turkey and the empires before the Declaration of the Independence.

The changing and challenges of the Turkish society and people who live within the national borders shows the necessity to solve the old problems and the racist old faces of our society.



Greek Minority extends and exports its needs and faces abroad with the message which everyone can recognise nowadays:

We still believe the future and the need of recovery.

The greek recovery in Turkey is possible and positive for all of us who are still living here. Cultural heritage, knowledge, and the rich legacy of churches, monasteries, old schools, archives with the significant role of the Greek society in the development of Turkey shows how important is to keep it and make it grow again.





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