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Ministerial Decree

Ref. Number 134382/02

on educational visits of students of Islamic Medresses in Thrace to Mecca and Medina and performing Umrah

The Minister of Education, Research and Religious Affairs

having regard to:

1. The provisions of:
 - a) article 4 of Law 2621/1998 on "Regulating matters of organization and operation of Technical Educational Institutions and other provisions" (Official Government Gazette 136 A'),
 - b) article 42(2) of Law 4186/2013 "Restructuring of Secondary Education and other provisions (Official Government Gazette 193 A'),
 - c) article 40A of Law 3536/2007 "Specific arrangements on matters of immigration policy and other matters of competence of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization" (Official Government Gazette 42 A'),
 - d) article 2 of Law 3966/2011 "Institutional framework of Model Experimental Schools, Establishment of Institute of Educational Policy, Organization of Computer Technology Institute and Press "Diophantus" and other provisions (Official Government Gazette 118 A'),
 - e) indent a' of article 18(1) of Law 4547/2018 "Reorganization of support structures for primary and secondary education and other provisions" (Official Government Gazette 102 A'),
 - f) articles 36 to 39 of Law 3536/2007 "Specific arrangements on immigration policy matters and other matters of competence of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization" (Official Government Gazette 42 A'),
 - g) articles 61, 63 to 65 and 68 of Law 4310/2014 "Research, Technological Development and Innovation and other provisions" (Official Government Gazette 258 A') and indent a' of article 7(2) of Law 4452/2017 "Regulating matters of the State Certificate for Language Proficiency, the National Library of Greece and other provisions" (Official Government Gazette 17 A'),
 - h) Article 20 of the Code of Administrative Procedure (Law 2690/1999, Official Government Gazette 45 A'),
 - i) Article 57 of the Presidential Decree 18/2018 "Organization of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs" (Official Government Gazette 31 A'),
2. Ministerial Decree Ref. 84455/02/25-5-2016 "Teaching Schedule of Islamic Medresses in Thrace (Official Government Gazette 1651 B'),

3. Ministerial Decree Ref. 33120/ΓΔ4/6-3-2017 “Field trips – Educational visits of students of public and private secondary schools within the country and abroad (Official Government Gazette 681 B’),
4. Ministerial Decree Ref. 10645/ ΓΔ4/22-1-2018 “Enrollment, transfers, attendance and organization matters of school life in schools of secondary education” (Official Government Gazette 120 B’),
5. The need to organize educational visits to Islamic pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for students of Islamic Medresses in Thrace and performing Umrah as well as establishing the competent bodies and the authorization procedure.
6. Document 128231/Θ2/27-7-2017 by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs to the Institute of Educational Policy and the extract of the Record 36/14-9-2017 of the Institute of Educational Policy,
7. Document 127604/Θ2/26-7-2017 by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs by which the opinion of the Supervisory Council for Medresses in Thrace was requested and the fact that no opinion was delivered within a reasonable time,
8. The provisions of article 90 of the code of legislation for the government and the governmental institutions ratified by article 1 of the Presidential Decree 63/2005 (Official Government Gazette 98 A’),
9. The fact that these regulations entail no expenditure under the national budget,

We decide:

Article 1

Scope

1. Islamic Medresses in Thrace may carry out an educational visit to pilgrimages to Mecca (Umrah) and Medina in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The visit may take place during the school year, excluding the time between a week before the beginning of school exams and Panhellenic exams until the exams are finished.
2. Students of second and third grade of Lyceum of Islamic Medresses in Thrace may participate in the visit, following a reasoned decision by the Board of Teachers and their parents’ or guardians’ consent in writing.
3. All participants shall follow precisely the particular directives issued by the Hellenic Center for disease control and prevention for the pilgrims going to Hajj and Umrah (e.g. preventive vaccination), in accordance with the health standards and conditions set by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and shall arrange for issuing their visa.
4. The duration of the visit shall be determined by a reasoned decision by the Board of Teachers and it may not exceed 12 days.

Article 2

Conditions

1. A decision by the Board of Teachers of the Medresse is required for the educational visit referred to in paragraphs 1-4 of article 1. The decision shall be issued no less than 30 days before the visit.

2. By decision of the Board of Teachers the following are set out:
 - a) The leader of the trip and his/her alternate who must be permanent teachers with specialization on Islamic religion subjects,
 - b) The chaperones and their alternates who must be teachers, permanent or substitutes of full time, teaching subjects of Islamic religion specialization or Islamic religion teachers as referred to in articles 36-39 of Law 3536/2007 who serve in the relevant Medresse,
 - c) The dates of departure and return,
 - d) The destination,
 - e) The detailed program of the visit which must be strictly followed in order to achieve the educational aim of the visit as well as the safe transportation of students. The detailed program must contain the precise time of departure and arrival at the destination, the means of transportation, the flight numbers etc., as well as the daily program of activities at the destination, for each day separately,
 - f) The participating students
3. The minimum number of chaperones is set out on the basis of one chaperone per fifteen students without counting the leader. In case that the visit is co-organized by more than one Medresse, the chaperones are assigned for the total body of participating students and a teacher from the Medresse with the largest number of participating students is designated as leader. Without prejudice to article 6, no other person may accompany students other than the ones referred to in indents a) and b) of paragraph 2 and the competent Mufti.
4. Parents/ guardians shall submit a solemn declaration to the School Principal and Vice-Principal of the Medresse, in person or by a solemn declaration, with certified authenticity of signature, consenting or not to the participation of their child in this educational visit. Parents shall be previously informed in writing about the detailed visit program and they shall agree on complying with it and on the students' obligations. Additionally, in the same solemn declaration the parent/ guardian shall inform of any chronic health issue that the student may have. In this case, an information note shall be attached on the solemn declaration indicating: a) the medication that the student needs to take (sufficient quantity for the total duration of the trip needs to be checked), b) what needs to be done in case of emergency, c) the phone number of the attending physician. The solemn declarations shall be submitted within the deadline set by the Principal and the Vice-Principal of the Medresse. Adult students shall sign and submit the solemn declaration themselves.
5. If the visit takes place in a period other than school vacation, the non-participating students shall stay in school campus and attend a special schedule upon decision of the Board of Teachers.
6. All necessary measures must be taken by the Principal and the Vice-Principal in order to limit the impact that the visit may have to the proper functioning of the Medresse and to avoid any expenditure for the State. They shall also send a written attestation to the Head of Office for Minority Education that the school shall function properly during the visit.

Article 3

Organization

1. The educational visit shall be organized by the Medresse under the responsibility of the Principal and the Vice-Principal. In case of co-organization, the Medresse with the larger number of participating students shall be in charge of organizing the visit.
2. The Principal and Vice-Principal shall be informed by the competent Muftiate about the travel agencies which have been assigned with a “pilgrimage organizer’s code number” by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and they shall address a call for expressions of interest to these agencies.
3. The following information is compulsorily included in the call: a) destination(s), b) intended number of participants, c) means of transportation and any additional requirements d) accommodation rating, e) other services (participation in events, visits etc.) f) liability protection, in accordance with the applicable legislation and g) deadline for submission of tenders which must be at least seven days after the announcement of the call. It is noted that the tenders must be qualitatively and quantitatively comparable in order to ensure the selection of the most economically advantageous one. It is recommended to request additional optional insurance covering expenditures in case of accident or sickness. The final total price of the organized trip including the aforementioned services as well as the price per student must be required. The tender submitted by the travel agency must include an explicit reference to the rating of the accommodation proposed. The sealed tenders shall be submitted to the Medresse. A solemn declaration shall be submitted by the travel agency declaring that it has a valid special authorized license and that it meets the conditions set by the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of Saudi Arabia regarding the organization of pilgrimage visits (Hajj and Umrah).
4. In the case where no tender has been sent by the deadline, as it is set by the call, a new call for expressions of interest shall be sent with a new deadline, provided that there is enough time. In the case where the time frame is not sufficient, the tender is declared inconclusive and the Medresse shall contact any of the travel agencies, referred to in paragraph 2, after having informed the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education and the Office for Minority Education with the relevant extract of the Record Book.
5. In order to evaluate the tenders and to select the most economically advantageous, a Committee is set up with an act by the Principal and the Vice-Principal of the Medresse. The Committee shall comprise the Principal, as Chairman, the Vice-Principal, one chaperone appointed by the Board of Teachers, one representative of the Parents and Guardians Association, if such an association exists, or, if it does not, one representative of the School Inspectorate, and of representatives of the five-member or the fifteen-member Student Councils participating in the visit who shall have one vote. The Committee is responsible for the selection of the travel agency which shall undertake the visit. The name of the selected travel agency as well as the selection criteria are clearly recorded in the act. The act shall be immediately posted on the website of the Medresse and on the website of the Regional Directorate for Primary and Secondary Education of East Macedonia and Thrace. Objections against the selection may be submitted within three days from the posting of the act.

6. Following the evaluation of the tenders and the consideration of possible objections, the travel agency that will take on the trip is selected and the Medresse shall draw up a package tour contract in accordance with the legislation in force, signed by the contracting parties. It is noted that after the tender is awarded to a travel agency no changes can be made in the terms of the contract and the services agreed upon. The contract shall comprise the following:
 - i) the detailed schedule of the visit approved by the Board of Teachers
 - ii) the name of the hotel, the rating, the number of rooms and beds and services provided
 - iii) the civil liability
 - iv) the total cost of the visit and the cost per student
 - v) the general conditions for participation
7. The Medresse must post the tenders of the travel agencies, the signed package tour contract and the number of civil liability on its website and on the website of the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education of East Macedonia and Thrace.
8. The Principal and Vice-Principal of the Medresse are responsible for registering the educational visit in the information system "MySchool" of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs so that other Ministries, the Regional Directorates of Education and the Regional services of the areas of transit may be informed in order for the necessary measures to be taken for safe transportation of the students and compliance with the provisions laying down the operating conditions of the residential premises, restaurants and recreational areas.
9. Students' transportation may take place by air, by sea, by road transport and/ or by rail transport, in accordance with the legislation in force, provided that the safety conditions for each means of transportation are complied with. For air travels, direct flights from Greece to Saudi Arabia and back should be preferred.
10. For the students' safety, the meeting point to start the journey shall be the Medresse or another location set out by the Board of Teachers, the journey will not start before 6:00 a.m. and the arrival at the destination or the return to the Medresse or to the location set out by the Board of Teachers shall be no later than 10 p.m. when it is a road trip. These time limits for departure and arrival may be differentiated by decision of the Head of Office for Minority Education. Additionally, students may only move about according to the approved program during the visits at the destination place.
11. Before departing, the Medresse Principal and Vice-Principal as well as the field trip leader and the chaperones shall emphasize to the students the need for the program of the visit to be scrupulously followed and for them to demonstrate an exemplary behavior in order to ensure safe transports, stay and recreation as well as to achieve the educational objectives during the visit.
12. In case of transport with coach buses, the leader of the field trip shall have a sign reading "School Field Trip – Islamic Medresse of Komotini or Xanthi" to be clearly displayed on the front and rear of the vehicle which will remain there until the end of the journey.
13. The leader and chaperones are responsible for the program to be respected and for the students' safety during the trip from departure until return. In case that the journey takes place by coach bus, the Principal and Vice Principal of the Medresse shall notify in

writing the traffic police department in order to conduct inspection of the vehicles (suitability documents, professional driving license, drivers' documents etc.) before departure. The chaperones shall be in charge of the observance of speed limits and if they see fit they shall contact the police at the place of destination and ask them to repeat the inspection.

14. The places selected for accommodation, for food and recreation must have a valid authorization to operate and comply with the safety and hygiene conditions.
15. In case of an emergency or insurmountable difficulty that may occur during the journey and visit, the leader shall contact the Secretary- General of the competent Decentralized Administration or the local authorities to ask for assistance for any incident within the country; regarding incidents that may occur abroad, the competent Coordinator on Education abroad shall be asked to assist; the relevant addresses and telephone numbers will have been acquired before departure.
16. Throughout the entire journey and stay, insurance coverage is necessary for the participants. If a student has private insurance, the parent or guardian must submit a solemn declaration and attach a copy of the contract or confirmation of the insurance agency.
17. The Principal and Vice-Principal shall immediately inform the Embassy of Greece in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and shall send the approval to travel to the E1 Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
18. The Committee referred to in paragraph 5 shall make the final control of the money spent in the educational visit originated from the student council funds.
19. Following the educational visit, the leader and the chaperones shall draw up a detailed report regarding the visit, the program and the extent to which it was followed, as well as the extent to which the objectives were met. Additionally, an evaluation form will be drawn up and completed regarding the services provided by the travel agency, based on objective evidence, and it shall be posted on the website of the Medresse. The report and evaluation form shall be submitted to the Principal and Vice-Principal of the Medresse for the Board of Teachers to see and shall be notified to the Office for Minority Education and the Directorate for Religious Education and Interfaith Relations of the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs.
20. A precondition for the application of this article is that this will entail no expense to the State.

Article 4

Approval

1. The travel request shall be submitted for approval to the Head of Office for Minority Education at least thirty days before the departure date, after the supporting documents have been checked and a recommendation of the Medresse Principal and Vice-Principal has been addressed. The Decision shall be notified to the

Directorate for Religious Education and Interfaith Relations of the General Secretariat for Religious Affairs on the same day.

2. The travel request shall be accompanied by:
 - a) A certified copy of the Decision of the Board of Teachers referred to in paragraph 2 of article 2,
 - b) An attestation of the Medresse Principal and Vice-Principal regarding the signed solemn declarations referred to in paragraph 5 of article 2,
 - c) An attestation of the Medresse Principal and Vice-Principal that there shall be no impediment of the proper functioning of the Medresse as referred to in paragraph 5 of article 2,
 - d) The package tour contract (private contract) with full contact details of the travel agency.

Article 5

Parents'/ Guardians' participation

Students participating in the educational visit may be accompanied by their parents/guardians upon Decision by the Board of Teachers and approval by the Head of Office for Minority Education. The total traveling and accommodation cost shall be assumed by themselves. The terms and conditions of accepting their participation shall be laid down in detail in the Decision of the Board of Teachers.

Article 6

This Decree must be published in the Official Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic.

Marousi, August 9, 2018

The Minister

Konstantinos Gavroglu