

Newsletter

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

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Greece had annulled the citizenships of 46638 persons!

The state made public for the first time through official numbers

The state made public for the first time through official numbers: The citizenship of 46638 persons had been annulled!

The member of Parliament, Ilhan Ahmet, had asked in his question motion he had submitted to the Parliament on the 20. April in 2005 how many persons had lost their citizenship, and what kind of initiatives had been undertaken in these subject matters. The question had been addressed to the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

The Ministry of Interior Affairs answered Mr. Ilhan Ahmet through its writing dated 78400/8334 as follows:

1. 46638 Muslims from the Western Thrace and 12 Islands lost their citizenships till the year



1998, till the Citizenship Law numbered 19. N. 3370/55 was applied and abolished.

- 2. From these persons, who obtained the Turkish citizenship, and live in Greece, can have the "Stateless (Heimatlos)" identity card.
- 3. The persons, who find themselves in this

condition, can ask for their citizenships through applying to the Ministry of Interior Affairs with the necessary legal documents. The applica-tions are going to be evaluated according to the any case by Citizenship Committee; the wrong actions of administration are going to be investigated, and it is going to be decided by the Vice Minister of Interior Affairs at the end.

4. The ones, whose requests Greek obtain the citizenships are not accepted, can apply for the method of "Politography of obtaining the Citizenship" upon the Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the New Citizenship Law dated N. 3284/2004. This law was passed in the Parliament re-cently, and the redraft of the law is out of question ■

Green Light from the FUEN to the Membership of ABTTF

The green light was turned on for the membership of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) to the Federal Union European of Nations FUEN, which the Western represents Thrace Turkish minority through having attended to the meetings of the FUEN for the last two years.

ABTTF, which attended to the Nations Congress of the **FUEN** assembled Brussels on the 4th-8th May in 2005, has called the representatives the nations coming from different regions of Europe attending to the and meeting for support describing through problems of the Western Thrace Turkish minority. At the meeting, the president of ABTTF, Halit Habiboglu got the word on behalf of the Western Thrace Turkish minority, and stated that the Turkish identity of the minority was not being recognized in Greece, and Turkish Union Xanthi and the Cultural Association of Turkish Women in Rhodope could not perform their activities due to the word "Turkish" in their names. He said, "The Frame Agreement on Protection of Minorities, although Greece signed years ago, but has

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5.000 Signatures from Europe for the Turkish Union of Xanthi

By the end of the signing campaign carried out by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and 29 Europewide ABTTF-member foundations of Western Thrace Turks, the number of signatures collected has approached to 5.000.



The signing campaign, which has been carried out by ABBTTF through its member foundations Europe-wide, and parallel to the signing campaign started in the Western Thrace against the ban decision of the Turkish

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Harm the Integration

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe criticized (ABTTF) statements of Stefanie Vogelsang, the District President of CDU of Berlin-Neuköln and member of the Municipality Council, that the ones, who could not speak German, should be expelled from the country: "The immigrant minorities should not be pointed as target in order to have political advantage. Such seeds, which sowed for short-term advantages, gives the way to totalitarianism."

The statements of the CDU Stefanie member. which Vogelsgang, appeared in the German press in details, that the immigrants, who could not learn German, should be were expelled, harshly criticized by the ABTTF President, Halit Habipoglu. Mr. Habipoglu evaluated this as a misfortune that the political personalities were making such statements, pointing at immigrant minorities target in order to achieve political advantages before the national elections on 18 September, and said: "As members of immigrant minority living in Germany, we are aware that we should of course learn the language of the country where we live as perfect as possible, and I believe that we realize this in the best wav. However, the statements of Ms. Vogelsang shows that she speaks without embracing



the history of migration. In the history of the migration of workers, which has been going on over half of a century, the immigrants have become longest a part of Germany. It should not been forgotten that these have recognized as immigrants only at the beginning of this

Mr. Habipoglu stated that the idea of expelling people, since they could not learn the language, did have no place in the democratic and said: "The people concerning ordinary persons, who were embodied right after their arrival to the mill industry without any language course education. It is a sign of judicial ignorance that the expulsion, which could be applied to terrorists or criminal persons, are being proposed for such immigrant persons. Furthermore, such kind of thinking the real hindrance before the integration of the immigrants in this country"

Totalitarian Statements Call from the Organization of the Islamic Conference

Respect Call from the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) for the Identity of the Western Thrace Turks



At the OIC 32. Term Foreign Ministers Meeting which took place in Jemen, it was called that all the measures should be taken in order that the identity and rights of the Western Thrace Muslim Turkish Minority in Greece were preserved.

In the written proposal adopted unanimously at the OIC Foreign Ministers the repressions meeting, carried out against Muslim minority were stressed, and the "adjudication pressure" on the elected Muftis (the highest religious authority of a province) of Xanthi Komotini condemned and the official recognition of Muftis were appealed.

Furthermore, it was demanded that necessary steps were taken in order that the Muslim Turkish minority in the Western Thrace could elect their own executive boards in such a way that this

selfwould make the management the foundations possible.

Concerning the issue of the Turkish Union of Xanthi (ITB), one of the oldest NGOs of the Turkish unhappiness minority, about the ban of the foundation activities by the Greek Highest Court of Appeal due to the word "Turkish" in its name was and it expressed, stressed that it was that unacceptable the identity and rights of the Western Thrace Turkish minority being were ignored.

General The OIC Secretariat has also been assigned to prepare a report about the news of the destruction of the mosques and Muslim graveyards in the Western Thrace. It was that the stated report the Turkish related to minority in the Western Thrace would be presented at the next OIC Foreign Ministers Meeting ■

Ridiculous statement from Greece: The Western Thrace Turks quit their citizenship on their own will!

At the meetings of the 11. Working Group on Minorities in Geneva this year, the Greek delegation has continued its state's rejection policy through its response given to the representative of ABTTF, Cemile Giousouf, who stated the problems of the Western Thrace Turks there.

The meetings of the Working Group on Minorities, which have been organized by the United Nations specialists every year since 1995, and bring NGO's the and academicians together, were held for the 11. time at the beginning of July Geneva. While ABTTF is permanent a participant to these meetings, the member of the Working Group on Activities Political Lobby of the Federation, Cemile Giousouf, represented the Federation at the meetings.

At the meetings Cemile Giousouf held a speech, which stated the problems of the minority. touched on the subject matter of the rejection of the Turkish identity in the Western Thrace, and the state of the associations, which had been banned, or not get permission to establishment due to the word "Turkish" in their names through giving examples. Afterwards, she indicated the miserable condition of the minority education, and state's tries to block the education. She said that the



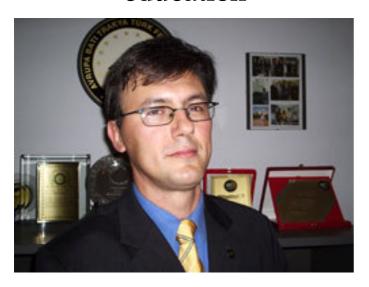
state tried to take the religious autonomy given them by the international treaties away from their through hands appointments to the posts at Müftülük (public body of the religious matters) by the state, and the minority could not determine the administrators foundations, which were actually its own possessions. The representative of the ABTTF underlined the fact that the region was one of the most under-developed ones in Greece and the European Union, continued that the ones deprived of the citizenship due to the Art. 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law, which had been abolished in 1998, lived still in the "stateless" status in the region. She said, "According to the official numbers made public by the Greek Ministry of the Interior, 46.638 persons were deprived of the Greek citizenship, except from those, who got the citizenships of countries. There are still many persons in the region living in the "stateless" status. Big difficulties are raised, when they want to re-obtain their citizenship, and they are forced to live in a way that they are deprived of all their social rights."

While Greece prefers leaving many claims without answers, and insists on describing the minority "Muslim", only as statement on the deprivations of the citizenship surprised minority and specialists of the subject matter deeply. In the oral and written statement made by representative of the Greek government, it maintained that the ones. who quit had the citizenship, had done this by not returning to the country, and on their own will. The President of the ABTTF, Halit Habiboglu, made a response statement related to the statement of government Greek representative, and said: government "The representative has not heard either of those, whose passports were taken from their hands at the entry to the country at the border; of the ones, who found out through a letter sent from the Consulate to their homes that they had lost their citizenship, when they had worked abroad; and much worse than these, of ones, who deprived of the citizenship, while they did their military service in the Greek army, or does not really have a good will, and not talk cooperatively for a dialogue. Because of the Art. 19, which discriminates among the citizens between the "ones from the Hellenic

ethnic origin" and "non-Greeks", and deprives the ones of the citizenship through an administrative decision, when they are non-Greeks, many of our people have to live in the "stateless" status. Art. 19 is the part of a much more comprehensive policy, which aims the emigration of our minority from the Western Thrace, and it is not possible to hide it under any cover."

Following to the meetings, Cemile Giousouf made an evaluation, and said: "It is unfortunately to observe that Greece has still the intention to continue a structural rejection policy against the Turkish minority and other minorities for a long time. We, as minority, do not follow a contrapolicy, and ask for special rights. Our only appeal is that our rights, of which minimum limits have been determined bv international treaties, are respected." Ms Yusuf stressed that the Working Group on Minorities did not have a sanction power on the states, and continued: "Although this organization, which brings the representatives of minorities and states together, does not possess a sanction power, builds already a discussion platform for governments and minorities today. I believe that the institution will play a more efficient role in the minority subject matters, and become more effective in arriving the goal through bringing minorities and governments closer" ■

We support the bilingual education



ABTTF announced that it would support the bilingual education campaign started at the Essen University with its entire strength. The President of ABTTF, Mr. Halit Habiboglu declared that ABTTF was ready to the cooperate with all concerning persons, associations and organizations in the subject matter of bilingual education institutions, and said: "According to the Lausanne Treaty, we, the Western Thrace Turks being a minority in Greece, have the right to form and continue our own education institutions. This education, which functions even today in spite of many problems, is indispensable for our minority. The education of our children in their native language, which is our very natural right, does not have to be luxurious anymore, and the schools, where Turkish is taught, ought to be opened." Mr. Habipoglu stated that as being a minority, they were not only the minority of Greece, but also of the EU, and continued: "The EU is not

only an economic area, but also a union of folks. In this togetherness, as much as the rights of the majorities, the rights of the classical minorities and of the immigrant communities having become real minorities in the real sense, but their existences are still not recognized by the states should not be ignored. As being the only minority of Europe recognized, appeal from all of the Western European countries, among them, from Germany particularly, where have settled in, and live today, that our minority rights, in the first instance, our right to education are given us here, too, and the reality that the Turkish living immigrants Germany also are minority of this country is accepted, and the education institutions, where teaching is bilingual, both in German and Turkish, are realized. As Federation, with its 29 member foundations, we are ready to support the campaign started with this aim"

The suffering of the tobacco producers doesn't go to an end

The President of the Federation ABTTF, of Halit Habiboglu, evaluated the deterioration of the economic conditions of the Western Thrace Turkish minority in the last months, of which 90% live on the tobacco production, and "Our producers should not be left to the justice arbitrary merchants."

Mr. Habiboglu evaluated the tension grew among the Turkish minority because of further lowering of the minimum prices by the common initiative of the tobacco merchants in the days, which last have already been low, and said: "Tobacco production is the main means of subsistence of the Turkish minority in Greece, and 15 thousand families are direct tobacco producers. When the ones, who join to the later levels of the production process are also considered, 90% of the minority economy maintains its livelihood through tobacco production. For many years, we have faced difficulties in realizing our basic production activity. Driving licence for tractor was not given us, in order that we could not plough our fields, or our lands were taken away from us through the pretext of confiscation. However, developments have been noticed in the last 15 years through the pressures coming from the European Union. Especially

post-earthquake

period, we hoped that an mutual environment of good will understanding would have begun to form. In spite of this, we observe regrettably that our country Greece could not have reached the sufficient competence in many fields yet. According to the news we have got, payment and minimum price applied to the producers in the regions in the Western Thrace, where the Turks don't live, are two times of the minority payment producers get. Our people being left to arbitrary justice of merchants at the expense of selling their production for almost nothing." Mr. Habiboglu continued his words by underlying their wish that the issue should be approached with good will, and they did not seek an evil intent, and said: "As citizens loyal to their country, who pay their taxes and do their military service, the only thing we want that our country European Greece, and Union do not neglect us, when they form their economy policies" ■



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The Visit to the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe

The Visit of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe to the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) went off successfully.

The delegation, which visited PACE in accordance with the decision taken by the Executive Board of ABTTF, passed on the problems of the Western Thrace Turks to the Members of Parliament (MoP) from 46 European countries through making several interviews.

The delegation composed of the president of ABTTF, Halit Hatioglu, and the vice-predident, Zevnep Adem, has expressed the current problems of the Western Thrace Turkish minority during its two-day Strasbourg visit through exchanging ideas and minds with the Council of Europe Secretaries, the Commission Presidents and the MoP. The 3 subject matters came to the foreground at the meetings, namely; the ban of the Turkish Union of Xanthi due to the only reason that it carries the word "Turkish" in its name, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women Rhodope, which could not the foundation permission due to the same reason, and the Art. 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law, because of which over 60 thousand Western Thrace have lost their Turks citizenships from 1955 till it was annulled in 1995.

"We call the European Members of Parliament to act for a political solution."

The delegation of ABTTF mentioned that the Art. 19 of the Greek Citizenship



Law, which had opened the way of dropping the citizenships of over 60 thousand people, was annulled through the pressures came from the West, especially from the European Union; added to that a substantial part of these citizenship victims had to still live in Turkey. Greece and Germany in the "stateless status", since the article annulled could not be traced back to the past. The president of ABTTF, Mr. Habipoglu, said that while the citizenship was easily issued to the immigrants coming from the ex-Soviet countries already at the entry to the country through filling out a form with the claim that they were from the Hellenic race, the "stateless status" of the Western Thrace Turks, who have been Greek citizens for years, were paying their tax, and doing their military service, did not comply with any justice and law criterion. He also said, "The "stateless

status" problem of the Art. 19-victims, who cannot even get their retirement salaries, although they paid their retirement payments, and cannot participate to the economical life due to their status, has become impossible to solve through legal means, which need big financial efforts. The political solution has become a necessity now. We call the European Members of Parliament to act for a solution of this problem."

Question Motion to the PACE

The Responsible for the Political Matters of the PACE, Klaus Schumann, with whom the delegation interviewed, said that it could be possible to carry the problem to the General Assembly of the PACE as a "question motion", when a report summarizing subject matter was prepared, and the signatures could be gathered from the adequate number

Members of Parliament. Schumann declared that he would offer the necessary support concerning this subject. The Human Rights Commissioner of Council of Europe, Alvaro Gil-Robles, with whom the delegation interviewed on the second day, requested after listening to problems of the Western Thrace that the problems were described in a written petition addressed to his post, and he was called for an action.

"We are the children of Europe"

After returning from Strasbourg, Mr. Habipoglu made an evaluation of the visits, and said, "We are the minority children which Europe, developing and growing day by day. We are facing with the repressions due to the archaic mentalities in our country, which is proud of being a member of the European Union. These repressions are nowhere else to be seen in Europe, in the geography of human and minority rights. The pressures of the European Union in the last years have partial secured improvement in our problems concerning the citizenship rights. However, we also want that this improvement spreads out to the minority rights, and for this reason, we are looking for the support from all of the European organizations in order to remedy this shame" ■

"Please put the Western Thrace on your agenda, too!"

The President of ABTTF, Mr. Halit Habiboglu made statements upon the news appeared in the press that the Turkish and Greek delegation heads in the PACE had reached gentlemanliness agreement to solve the possession problems of the Greek minority through the means of dialogue, and said: "We have been experiencing the problem of minority foundations for years much country more in our Greece, a member of the European Union, and on the other hand, this minority foundations' problem is being brought in front of Turkey again and again, which is a candidate country to the European Union. When the Lausanne Treaty was signed, the Western Thrace Turks possessed 85% of the land, and today they possess only 30% of it. Due to the nationalization, the land consolidations, the and encouragement Greek farmers by the state that they buy the lands of the minority, we have lost lands. When our consider that the minority has been recently entitled to right to acquire property, our properties have been taken away from us in a premeditated way. Today, however, we have to pay rentals in order to use our own lands, which have been nationalized with very low values and are not being used at all." Mr. Habipoglu made it clear that since the junta, which taken over government in 1967 in Greece, the administration

of the foundations, which were the basic part of our minority, had been taken away from the minority's control, and the executive boards were being formed through the appointments by the state, and discussed: "The administration of our foundations, which have very important missions ranging from building schools to the payment of the salaries of the teachers the religious functionaries. and the financing of social activities for the minority, has been taken away from control for almost 40 years. Since we cannot determine executives of institutions, we cannot also supervise them." Habipoglu said also while the Jewish and the Catholic foundations Greece did not face such problems, it made no sense that the Western Thrace Turks, who were also Greek citizens like the others, were being victimized because of the principle of reciprocity, and continued as follows: "Although the compromise in the PACE reached between the heads of the Turkish and Greek delegations reminds us the principle of "reciprocity" we do not really approve, demand the same ground of compromise and dialogue for the Western Thrace Turks, since we see a good will in this initiative. We from expect the Turkish and Greek delegations that they set the environment for peace and tolerance in the Aegean without ignoring our problems" ■

Terrorist Attacks in London

The Statement of the President of ABTTF, Halit Habipoglu, concerning the Terrorist Attacks in London



We have heard regrettably about the attack series which aimed the civilians travelling with the public transport means in London. We condemn severely the perpetrators who carried out the attacks after in Istanbul and Madrid now in London, too, and wish to the ones who lost their lives the grace of God, and their families patience.

There is no religion, behind which these brutal hide murderers can themselves who have selected the innocent persons continuing their daily lives as victims in public transport means and work places. The equation of Islam, which is also a religion of peace and tolerance like all the other religions, with terrorism is bothering us, the Western Thrace Muslim Turks, who has been living Islam in its most peaceful form for 600 years, of which for 85 years as a minority in Greece the majority where Christian, and immigrants in Germany. The scenario of the "Clash of Civilizations", which has been tried to be brought to the agenda after September

11th, should not be allowed. Islam and Christianity are not the conflict parties which aim to destroy each other. On the contrary, they are peace tolerance doctrines which complement each other mutually. The real conflict is between understanding of peace and tolerance and terrorism which aims to transform the world into a blood sea. We have seen this reality in its clearest form during the terrorist attacks in Istanbul.

What we have to do today that the Muslims, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, other religion members and the ones without religion meet around peace and tolerance, and develop an attitude in order to stop destroying mentality. The states have here also a big duty. The prevention of terrorism composed of not only increasing the defence expenditures, but overcoming the social inequality which lays the ground for the birth of terrorism, and improving the mutual understanding between the communities and nations.

We condemn severely again the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks, and call the states, mass media and especially the communities to the imperturbability, and instead of extermination, to the solidarity on the ground of tolerance

Green Light from the FUEN to the Membership of ABTTF (countinued)

not passed yet to the National Assembly ratification, gives not only to the minorities the right to determine and protect their own identities, but also brings obligations to the states to protect and develop these identities. Unfortunately, I cannot find a good will in the notratification of these international treaties by my country, Greece, although she is a party to them. To say, many behaviours of my country are just showpiece, and not really honest." He also touched on the problems of those, who lost their citizenships due the Art. 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law, and condemned the stateless the Western status of Thrace Turks, who have always been loyal citizens to their country.

Important steps have been taken towards the membership of ABTTF on behalf of the Western Thrace to the FUEN, which has been attending at the meetings of the FUEN



for the last two years as representative of Western Thrace Turks. The upper administration of the FUEN, which was holding the previous application on grounds that organization was not founded and is not acting in the Western Thrace, has taken a principle decision in the direction that the possibility of the membership can be guaranteed to a foreign representation, since the establishment or activities of foundations having the word "Turkish" in their names are not being

permitted in Greece. The FUEN, which had guaranteed membership to the foreign representations due to the restrictions before the organization and association in the "iron curtain-era", will have employed the concerning principle against Greece in the following days, if he membership of ABTTF is guaranteed.

After returning from the meeting at the FUEN, the delegation members of ABTTF, Halit Hatipoglu and Mehmet Hüseyin, evaluated the outcomes,

and said, "We find it crucial to announce our voice and ourselves introduce organizations such as the FUEN. Beside the wide vision we are getting through taking part to such organizations, the support of the other European folks for our just claim widens the basic of our struggle. Through making afresh application to concerning organization in the following days, we are going to possess more word and, be more active, since the organization, in which the minorities of countries are being represented, is becoming the only ground in Europe, where the minorities can express themselves voice loud. We hope that our country, Greece, will recognize the identity of our minority, and our outstanding foundations in Greece can be members to such organizations, and be active there. As ABTTF, we are always ready to carry this historical mission, till our problems are solved completely ■

5.000 Signatures from Europe for the Turkish Union of Xanthi (countinued)

Union of Xanthi taken by the Greek Supreme Court of Appeal in March of the last year due to the word "Turkish" in its name, is coming to an end. Through trilingual (English, German and Turkish) signing form of the foundations, all the superior institutions Europe are appealed to stop this injustice against the Turkish Union of Xanthi at once. During the signing campaign which comes to an end on the July 15th, 5.000 signatures have been

collected at the foundations.

The signatures, which have been collected during the campaign carried out by the 29 **ABTTF** member foundations, will be sent above all to the Council of Europe, European Parliament and European Court of Human Rights, and to great many of international institutions and human rights organizations.

The President of ABTTF,

Halit Habipoglu has made a statement concerning the theme, and said: "It is a great blemish of the European Union we have set our hopes on and are also members of that in a member state of European Union and in the 21st century, a foundation is closed down due to the only reason that it carries the word "Turkish" in its name. We appeal country Greece, which rejects our ethnic identity despite of the

international norms and recognizes us only "Muslims", to correct her faulty behaviour, and invite her to ratify eventually the "Frame Agreement on the Minority Rights" in her Parliament which she had already signed years ago. It does not comply with the state seriousness to sign the international documents due to only show, but not to put them into practice"

European Union Has the Solution Key for the Economical Problem in Western Thrace

The decision of the European Union, that it was going to abolish the subventions for the tobacco production, concerns the Western Thrace Turkish tobacco producers.

The EU declared that it would extend the restrictions on selling and tobacco tobacco products to the production stage, and abolish the subventions for the tobacco production in a few years completely. This declaration has made the minority farmers, whose only means of subsistence is tobacco production, brood. Moreover, the reality, that the support premiums for stock raising and other kind of productions are also going to be abolished in a few years, is reducing the alternatives.

The Only Means of Subsistence

Thrace The Western Turkish farmers have been living on the tobacco production in the region for a long time. The tobacco production, from which the vield highest can obtained in uneven and narrow lands, is almost an inevitability for the minority members, who live especially in the northern part of the region and on agriculture. Although the inclination of the EU first to reduce, and then to abolish the funds has visible, the become not been minority has informed about the alternative products necessarily and adequately. This and that the minority has been underdeveloped for years paved the way that the minority is dependent only one product. the intensive Moreover,



labour force tobacco production needs makes it impossible to do an additional job.

The EU Premiums Have Become Life Ring

development, The first which has caused financial misery for the minority, which could continue its production through subventions from the EU, has been that the fixed premium system, which had lasted till a few years ago, has been fixed to the production averages of the two years. minority, which could not get adequate harvest due to reasons such drought, hail etc., is also doomed to the low income the following year. Continuous decrease in the premiums has been the second negative phase of development. According to the statements of the Western Thrace Turkish minority farmers, the price of one kg. tobacco, which had climbed to 10€ a few years ago through the support premiums, decreased today under 5€. The abolishment of the premiums, which do not cover today even the

daily costs of a family, who tobacco busy with production the whole year, means leaving the minority to hunger. On the other hand, the minority farmers angry with cooperatives, which have been established to protect the minority farmers against hard free market conditions. The minority farmers complain that the protective decisions in the cooperatives are not taken without establishing dialogue with the farmers, and the cooperatives do not come out from the control of the merchants. who have farmers, continue their lives under very hard conditions, are made dependent on the merchants through agreements signed one year before the harvest, and in which the prices are not determined. This is also another complaint point, but unfortunately, there is no clause in the code of laws to hinder this practice.

Project from ABTTF for Alternative Products

ABTTF is preparing itself to publish a research project "Alternative called Agricultural Products Western Thrace" in order to rescue the minority farmers from the dilemma they have fell in. The ABTTF President Mr. Habipoglu stated that they would present concerning research to the attention of the minority farmers, when it completed ■