



Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

# Newsletter

NUMBER 4 | AUGUST 2006



NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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## ABTTTF Got The ECOSOC Consultative Status



**Federation of Western Thrace Turkish Minority in Europe (ABTTTF), roof organization of 29 Western Thrace Turkish associations throughout Europe, got the representation right at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ABTTTF is the seventh member Turkish organization at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).**

► Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, the seventh member Turkish organization at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), has been the voluntary representative of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members since its foundation in 1988. ABTTTF is the first Western Thrace Turkish members' organization that is recognized by the United Nations. Federation has the right to open representative offices in New York, Vienna, Geneva where United

Nations has centres. ABTTTF, special status NGO, has the right to give consultancy to United Nations in the scope of minorities and the themes relating Western Thrace Turkish Minority members. With the new status, ABTTTF can attend international meetings and make presentations.

### The Best Answer to Greece

"All Turkish names are forbidden in the public area and moreover, the organizations that have Turkish names do not have legal permit to carry on their activities in Greece. The best answer to Greece is given by United Nations when Turkish organizations have been recognized and given the consultative status at ECOSOC." said Habipoğlu and continued "Our country, Greece, has presented our efforts to get our basic rights as marginal actions in the international platforms and tried to blacken our peaceful activities. We achieved to express

our demands at Council of Europe and United Nations. United Nations has declared ABTTTF as the special status NGO and this is the most important affirmation in the international platform for us and for our peaceful activities to get our basic rights. We hope, this will a sigh for Greece to change its policy towards Western Thrace Turkish Minority members."

ECOSOC is the supreme international platform among the international NGOs and has given 2719 NGO the representative status throughout the world. The NGO that can have the representative status in ECOSOC must be non-governmental, non-profit, pacifist and must have democratic decision-making mechanisms. Members of ECOSOC can use the expression "Non-Governmental Organisation in a Special Representative Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations" which gives the members a special international legitimation power.

# ECOSOC Membership And Its Effects

**Halit Habipoğlu, Chairman of ABTTF  
Witten, 06.09.2006**

► Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), become United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) member NGO in July 2006. ABTTF, special status NGO, has the right to give consultancy to United Nations in the scope of minorities and the themes relating Western Thrace Turkish Minority members. With the new status, ABTTF can attend international meetings, make presentations and inform the world public in means of Western Thrace Turkish minority and their problems.

ABTTF was established to defend the rights of Western Thrace Turkish minority in 1988 and as time passed ABTTF broke new ground and had great success. When ABTTF was first established, it had only 7 member associations and now it has become the roof organization of 29 associations.

Federation accelerated its international activities after 1990's. We began to participate various international meetings like HABITAT and AGIT to inform the world public about the problems of our minority. We made presentations to convey information about the difficulties that our minority had and those presentations attracted the attention of the international participants. Our country, Greece, rejected our identity but at international meetings, our

Turkish identity was welcomed. We thought that ECOSOC membership contributed more strength to our rightful action and we applied for ECOSOC membership in 1998.

You must fulfill some conditions to be able to become an ECOSOC member. For example, international activities play a very important role in this sense and in 2002, when I was elected as the chairman of ABTTF, we decided to accelerate our efforts to become an ECOSOC member.

Our federation has been making important studies on human rights, democracy, education and legal problems of our minority. We address a big group of Western Thrace Turkish minority members, Greece, Turkish and international organizations via our web site of four languages (Turkish, English, German, Greek). In addition to our multi - language web site, we issue monthly newsletter and press releases in four mentioned languages and they are appreciated by the related parties.

Justness of our case, transparency of our organization, our publications, web site and our international activities played an important role in becoming an ECOSOC member. ABTTF is the first Western Thrace Turkish members organization that is recognized by the United Nations. Federation has the right to open representative offices in New York, Vienna,

Geneva where United Nations has centres. ABTTF, special status NGO, has the right to give consultancy to United Nations in the scope of minorities and the themes relating Western Thrace Turkish Minority members. With the new status, ABTTF can attend international meetings and make presentations. ECOSOC is one of the outcome of our long lasting efforts. We plan to accelerate our activities from now on. We are going to tell the untouched problems of our minority. Minority rights, migration, international law, religion, human rights, local authorities, education, culture, economics, development, family, gender, children and youth are the themes that we are going to touch upon and make studies as a United Nations ECOSOC member.

Under the mentioned scope, our first action program covers the youth. At our latest executive meeting, we decided to form a work group of Western Thrace Turkish minority youth who are university graduates and want to work with us. We are going to invite the interested young people to apply ABTTF via our web site and press releases.

Our main objective is to ensure the basic human rights of our Western Thrace Turkish minority in the borders of Europe where democracy and human rights carry the uppermost importance. We believe that our achievements are guarantee of our coming achievements.

## ABTTF and FUEN

► Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) is the biggest umbrella and pool organization that takes on a significant role in lobbying for national minorities in European countries and peaceful dialogue.

FUEN, supports the national minorities who exercise minority rights problems with the majority in one state or region. Beside democratic and citizenship rights, FUEN

considers and takes a stand against violations of language and religious rights that are faced by national minorities.

ABTTF has been in cooperation with our organization for years, we have common interest areas as ABTTF has been making effort to solve the problems of Western Thrace Turkish minority.

Leading aim of ABTTF concentrates on ensuring the legal arrangements of language, religious and ethnic rights of Western Thrace Turkish minority in the framework European

standards and carrying these legal arrangements into real life. ABTTF carries on its activities with great self - sacrifice and defends the rights of Western Thrace Turkish minority on international platforms.

As an organization for national minorities like ABTTF, we wish that Western Thrace Turkish minority members are going to get their basic human rights, that are recognized on international platforms, with the help of long lasting efforts of ABTTF.

**Romedi Arquint, Chairman of FUEN**

# Echos of ABTTF's ECOSOC Membership at Greek Press

## They Provoke!

Hronos, Komotini (Gümülcine)  
3 August 2006

**After United Nation recognized Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and accepted its application to become a member of Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it is demanded that the associations in Thrace are recognized by Greek Government.**

► Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) demanded the minority candidates not to forget the situation and problems of the so-called Western Thrace Turkish Minority members living abroad but specially in Middle Europe before the local elections.

Halit Habipoğlu, the chairman of the mentioned federation, said that the candidates were determined before the local elections and a very important part of the Turkish minority lived in Xanthi and Komotini so they had the power to elect their own governors. He emphasized that this chance should not be missed and he wanted the Turkish minority members to vote for the Turkish candidates. The mentioned chairman said that they would organize some events to get the attention of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members and inform them about the importance of their votes in affecting the result of the coming election. "Local authorities have an increasing importance in the globalising world and institutionalizing process of European Union.

Therefore, local elections should be taken as seriously as the general elections so even a vote should not be wasted" said the mentioned chairman of the mentioned federation. The mentioned federation, ABTTF; that announces itself as being the roof organization of 29 Western Thrace Turkish Minority associations founded throughout Europe, got the representation right at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

According to the newsletter of ABTTF; it has been representing Western Thrace Turkish Minority for 18 years and now it became the firstly recognized Western Thrace Turkish Minority Organization at United Nations and it is accepted as the seventh Turkish Non Governmental Organization (NGO) by ECOSOC.

The mentioned federation has the right to open representative offices in New York, Vienna, Geneva where United Nations has centres. ABTTF has the right to give consultancy to United Nations in the scope of minorities and the themes relating Western Thrace Turkish Minority members. With the new status, ABTTF can attend international meetings and make presentations.

"All Turkish names are forbidden in the public area and moreover, the organizations that have Turkish names do not have legal permit to carry on their activities in Greece. The best answer to Greece is given by United Nations when Turkish organizations have been recognized and given the consultative status at ECOSOC." said Habipoğlu and continued "Our country, Greece, has presented our efforts to get our basic rights as marginal actions in the international platforms and tried to blacken our peaceful activities. We achieved to express our demands at Council of Europe and United Nations. United Nations has declared ABTTF as the special status NGO and this is the most important affirmation in the international platform for us and for our peaceful activities to get our basic rights. We hope, this will be a sign for Greece to change its policy towards Western Thrace Turkish Minority members."

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Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations" which gives the members a special international legitimation power.

The most important thema to consider is what the Greek authorities do about the steps that the mentioned federation has taken and will take while they must be very careful and take precautionary actions against the possible coming actions of this federation. It is so clear that the mentioned federation is going to create very crucial problems in the framework of Greece Western Thrace.

**Eleftheri Thraki-Alexandroupoli (Dedeğaç)  
2 August 2006**

**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) is recognized formally as the Turkish Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) by United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the supreme international platform among the international NGOs.**

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Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs evaluating this new situation as the application to get the right to be able to use Turkish names for the Western Thrace Turkish Minority Associations after İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Association was closed by the Greek Supreme Court of Appeals. To object the Greek Supreme Court of Appeals decision, Western Thrace Turkish Minority members resorted to European Court of Strasbourg and ABTTF's membership urged Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs to evaluate this new situation and the decision of Greek Supreme Court of Appeals once again.

# Education and Residential Problems Discussed HABITAT Meetings

**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) attended HABITAT meetings in Vancouver, Canada, between 18 and 23 June. ABTTF conveyed all structural, local authorities and education problems to world public opinion as 6 thousand representatives from all over the world participated the meetings.**

► In addition to political lobbying efforts about the problems of Western Thrace Turkish minority, Halit, chairman of ABTTF, and Barış Hasan, Lobby Group and former secretary of Ankara Western Thrace Turkish Minority, attended United Nations HABITAT meetings to inform the international public and convey all structural, local authorities and education problems of Western Thrace Turkish minority to world public opinion.

"HABITAT has a very important role in the development problems of developing countries and in this framework, HABITAT is the right address to convey the structural, local authorities and education problems" said Halit and continued as " We had the opportunity to meet delegates from all over the world and as well we met the United Nations commissioners. During meetings, we told them the pressures that Greece imposed on Western Thrace Turkish Minority and human rights violations. Other problems like structural, local authorities and educational were also conveyed to the related parties. We got a promise from all the delegates and commissioners to boost our minority at national and international platforms.

Halit Habipoğlu called attention to the fact that United Nations has many conventions to protect cultural and human rights of the minorities and in this framework he continued as "Western Thrace is announced as socio economically least developed area of the European Union in the reports of the European Commission. Greece signed the United Nations conventions and as the following result, we can claim that the lobbying efforts in the framework of United Nations imply great importance for us."



Barış Hasan mentioned the 19th Article of the Greek Citizenship Law during the meetings and he informed the related parties about the unjust treatment of Greece to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority as a result of the political implementation of the mentioned law.

HABITAT delegates were unable to keep their confusion and condemned the implementation when they were informed about the unjust treatment of Greece to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members for 43 years. This unjust political implementation of Greece authorities victimized 80 thousand Western Thrace Turkish Minority members and their fraud has been cured yet although the mentioned law has been abolished.

**UNESCO Canada Commissioner Promised to Boost ABTTF**

Halit indicated that the meetings were very positive and he emphasized their continuing effort to carry the problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority on to international platforms.

"During our meeting, Bernard Combes, UNESCO Canada Commissioner, promised to support ABTTF specially in the framework of our minority's education problems." said Halit.

**Historical Artifacts Belonging to Turkish Culture Should be Protected**

During the meetings, ABTTF also called attention to the problems of protecting historical artifacts belonging to Turkish culture in Western Thrace. Those historical artifacts carry great importance for the Western Thrace Turkish Minority cultural wealth but they are abolished and dilapidated. Local authorities can not do anything due to financial scarcity and Greece does not take any precautionary action. In 1996, ABTTF participated HABITAT meetings in Istanbul for the first time in spite of all objections of Greece. After that participation, ABTTF became a member of United Nations' non-governmental organizations. In 2004 ABTTF was invited formally to HABITAT Barcelona World City meetings. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all since its establishment in 1978.

UN-HABITAT contributes to the overall objective of the United Nations system to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. Its partners range from governments and local authorities to a wide international cross-section of Non-Governmental Organisations and civil society groups.



# Attack to Hikmet Cemilođlu, Chairman of İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Union

**Our country, Greece, does not evaluate the different cultures living in his borders as cultural wealth and we hope this bothersome event will not repeat again.**

► Hikmet Çetinođlu has been subject to many worrisome events and has been under attack since he announced his candidate for the chairmanship of İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Union. Recently, he came under attack again. Dr. Hikmet Cemilođlu was subject to death threats and his surgery was razed on 29 June, Friday after he participated death day of Journalist - Mehmet Hilmi ( he was one of the founders of İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Union) in Ruşanlar Village on 25 June, Sunday. Authorities of İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Union evaluated this attack not as an attack to

Dr. Hikmet but rather as an attack to İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Union as well as to Western Thrace Turkish Minority. They worried about possibility of such attacks in the future and they condemned such events in an European Union country.

Halit Habipođlu, Chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) called Dr. Hikmet Cemilođlu and wished him to recover as soon as possible. Halit Habipođlu issued a press release about the bothersome event and he continued as "Every time such attacks to Dr. Hikmet Cemilođlu effected us deeply. In such a period of increasing importance of democracy and human rights as well as improving intercultural peace and friendship, it is so bothersome to be subject

to such attacks in Western Thrace. This attack carries a special meaning as it was committed after the death day of Mehmet Hilmi, one of the founders of İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Union and also committed against the chairman of İskeçe Turkish Solidarity Union" said Halit Habipođlu and he continued "Our country, Greece, does not evaluate different cultures as cultural wealth and does not give minorities their basic democratic right to live as they deserve. They prohibit all organizations that carry Turkish names and this is a serious problem. Such an undemocratic policy affects also the public as an expected natural result so we can claim that the attack to Dr. Hikmet Cemilođlu is not a simple attack but rather carries racist elements. We hope we will not live such bothersome events again."

## Mehmet Emin Aga, Mufti of Xanthi, Won Two Cases Against Greece

**Mehmet Emin Aga, elected Mufti of Xanthi, commenced two cases against Greece at European Court of Human Rights, and Greece was convicted. 3000 Euro will be paid as Mufti's court expenses.**

► The legal status of the Muftis who are elected by Western Thrace Turkish Minority, is still not repudiated. Greece was convicted in three cases commenced by Ibrahim Şerif, elected mufti of Komotini, and Mehmet Emin Aga, elected mufti of Xanthi. In addition to this, Greece was convicted in two cases commenced by Mehmet Emin Aga, elected mufti of Xanthi, at European Court of Human Rights.

European Court of Human Rights declared the legal decision in the same logic of the previous



cases. Legal investigations can not be initiated against elected Muftis, such investigations can not be named as requirement of a democratic society" and these investigations constitute a clear violation against the 9th Article of European Convention on Human Rights according to the declared legal decision of European Court of Human Rights. Greece is convicted to pay 3000 Euro for Aga's court expenses.

Halit Habipođlu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, commented the legal decision of European Court of Human Rights as "Religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority living in Greece was repudiated in the Lausanne Treaty in 1923 and the guarantee of this religion autonomy, the status of Muftis,

was repudiated in Athens Agreement in 1913. Our country, Greece, signed these two agreements but disregards them and does not let the Turkish Minority use their right to elect their Muftis but rather nominates the Muftis since 1985. This is a very clear violation against religion freedom that the legal status of our elected Muftis are not repudiated and in addition to this, legal investigations against them were initiated.”

He continued as “After the court decisions of European Court of Human Rights; the legal investigations against elected Muftis came to an end but still the status of the elected Muftis



have not been repudiated by Greece. The previous court decisions about Muftis gave a hope to the Turkish Minority members, but we regret to see that there have been no improvement about these problems. We hope to see some improvements in the near future.”

“Council of Europe should give more emphasis to the legal proceedings of the problems to be able to get a concrete solution to the legal status of the elected Muftis. Our country, Greece, should see the minorities as a cultural wealth rather than a threat and give us our basic rights without being imposed to any international pressure.” said Habipoğlu.

## Don't Forget The Western Thrace Turks Living in Europe



**Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, ABTTF, called attention of the Turkish candidates in the local elections before the coming local election in Greece and re-quested them to add Western Thrace Turks into their programs.**

► Candidates are being determined before the coming local elections in Greece. A lot of Turkish origin candidates have announced their candidature especially in İskeçe (Xanthi) and Gümülcine (Komotini) for the municipality and governorship elections. The Turkish candidates are continuing their election campaigns fast until the election date, 15 October 2006.

Halit Habipoğlu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), emphasized the importance of that election for the Western Thrace Turkish Minority in means of expressing their political basic rights. Halit Habipoğlu continued as “Western Thrace Turkish Minority have the right to elect their local governors as a result of their population power and now we must consciously use this chance and give our votes to the Turkish candidates in the election.” ABTTF organized some election organizations during the previous general election and Western Thrace Turkish Minority members affected the result of the elections with their votes. Halit Habipoğlu continued as “Local authorities have an

increasing importance in the globalising world and institutionalizing process of European Union. Therefore, local elections should be taken as seriously as the general elections and we must consciously use our votes. Western Thrace Turkish Minority members in Europe have identified themselves with the region and specially the ones in Germany, England, Netherlands and Austria have some expectations from local authorities. We are going to support the Turkish candidates in the elections but specially the ones who take the demands of Western Thrace Turkish Minority members in Europe into considerations and give special importance to their problems in their political programs.”

# Lauf Western Thrace Turks Solidarity Union is The Winner of The Tournament

**Lauf Western Thrace Turks Solidarity Union is the winner of the twelfth Dr. Sadık Ahmet Football Tournament in Feuchtwangen.**

► This year the winner of the Traditional Federation of Western Thrace Turks twelfth Dr. Sadık Ahmet Football Tournament which was organized by Feuchtwangen Western Thrace Turks Solidarity Union is Lauf Western Thrace Turks Solidarity Union that defeated Bonn Western Thrace Turks Solidarity Union.

Halit Habipoğlu, Chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), could not attend the tournament due to Minority Executive Committee meeting. Zeynep Adem, Vice Chairman of ABTTF, Sebaytin Mümin, person in charge of Youth and Sport of ABTTF, Sami Yusuf, Engin Ahmet and Engin İsmail, members of ABTTF Executive Committee represented ABTTF: Levent Sadık Ahmet, son of Dr. Sadık Ahmet participated the tournament. Feuchtwangen, Lauf, Münih and Bonn teams were successful and went on to the semi finals. Bonn and Lauf teams played the final match and Feuchtwagen, after the penalties, defeated Bonn and the score was 3 - 0. Levent Sadık Ahmet and Sebaytin Mümin, person in charge of Youth and Sport of ABTTF gave the cup to Feuchtwagen team.

## **Results of Twelfth Dr. Sadık Ahmet Football Tournament Matches**

### **Group A**

Feuchtwangen  
Lauf II  
Münih F. Association I  
Herzogenaurach  
Bavyera BTDD II  
Bonn

### **Matches of Group A**

Feuchtwangen - Lauf II 1 - 1  
Münih F. Association I - Herzogenaurach 0 - 4  
Bavyera BTDD 2 - Bonn 0 - 3  
Lauf II - Münih F. Association I 3 - 0  
Herzogenaurach - Bavyera BTDD II 4 - 0  
Feuchtwangen - Bonn 0 - 1

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Lauf II - Herzogenaurach 2 - 3  
Feuchtwangen - Münih F. Association I 4 - 0  
Lauf II - Bonn 0 - 5  
Feuchtwangen - Bavyera BTDD II 6 - 0  
Münih Family Association I - Bonn 0 - 1  
Lauf II - Bavyera BTDD II 0 - 2  
Münih Family Association I - Bavyera BTDD II (Not Played)  
Feuchtwangen - Herzogenaurach 3 - 1  
Herzogenaurach - Bonn 1 - 1

### **Group B**

Lauf I  
Münih F. Association II  
Schwabach  
Bavyera BTDD I  
Schweinfurt

### **Matches of Group B**

Lauf I - Münih F. Association II 3 - 0



Schwabach - Bavyera BTDD I 0 - 0  
Münih F. Association II - Schwabach 0 - 2  
Bavyera BTDD I - Schweinfurt 1 - 2  
Münih F. Association II - Bavyera BTDD I 0 - 2 (By Verdict)  
Lauf I - Schwabach 2 - 0  
Lauf I - Schweinfurt 2 - 0  
Münih F. Association II - Schweinfurt 0 - 2  
Lauf I - Bavyera BTDD I 10 - 2  
Schwabach - Schweinfurt 1 - 0

### **Semi Final**

Lauf - Feuchtwangen 3 - 1  
Bonn - Bavyera BTDD 6 - 0

### **Third Place Match**

Feuchtwangen - Bavyera BTDD 3 - 2

### **Final**

Lauf - Bonn 3 - 0



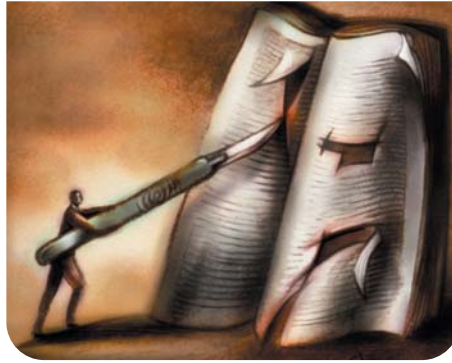
# The Unique Way to Dialog Crosses Through Education

In some selected districts where the population concentration rate of Turkish minority in Western Thrace is high, government of Greece announced that Turkish language would be elective course in some Greek public schools and Halit Habipoğlu, chairman of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) announced a press release and said "The unique way to dialog crosses through education."

► In some selected districts where the population concentration rate of Turkish minority in Western Thrace is high, government of Greece announced that Turkish language would be elective course in some Greek public schools. Until now there has been no further press announcement neither about this new initiative nor its details although it is going to be implemented in the coming winter semester of 2006 - 2007.

Lausanne Treaty gives the minority members living in Greece the right to establish and administer their own minority schools. Until the end of 1950's there was not so many problems concerning education. With Cyprus problem, educational problems began to gain serious weight in the political relations between Turkey and Greece.

As time passed, Turkish minority lost their control over the Turkish minority schools and Greek's pressure is worth mentioning here. The schools that did not have the ability neither to select their staff nor curriculum lost their education quality gradually.



## On The One Hand Gradually Decreasing Education Quality of Turkish Minority Schools and On The Other Hand Elective Turkish Language Courses

The above mentioned leading educational problems of Turkish minority forced Turkish minority children to go to Greek public schools as emphasized by Halit Habipoğlu and he continued "Turkish Minority families preferred to send their children to Greek public schools due to low level education quality of Turkish minority members. In Turkish minority schools,

teachers are able to speak neither Turkish nor Greek and as a result students have low level of Turkish and Greek languages." Habipoğlu analysed that recent decision of government of Greece as " Government of Greece wants to deliver the finishing blow to Turkish Minority schools by putting Turkish elective course at Greek public schools and like this there will be no demand for Turkish Minority schools anymore.

"Government of Greece plans to prevent the new Turkish Minority school openings with this new initiative" said Habipoğlu and continued "Government of Greece claimed that this new initiative is planned to help students to improve their language skills when communicating with Turkey and neighbour countries but this is not so logical for our Turkish Minority children living in European Union while their mother language is already Turkish and foreign languages for them are English, German, French but not Turkish. Greek Ministry of Education should improve education quality of Turkish Minority schools as well."

Neither opinions nor comments of none of the Turkish Minority establishments were asked about the mentioned initiative and this is one of the main critiques of Habipoğlu and he said " The way to good education crosses through dialog. In Germany, at some public schools Turkish language courses are elective in addition to other foreign languages and although they are state schools there is always healthy dialog between the administration and families."



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