

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europa Newsletter



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Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

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Turkish Minority of Western Thrace hosted FUEN 2015 Congress being one of the most important events concerning European national minorities



150 people representing 30 minority organisations in 20 countries took part at FUEN 2015 Congress which was a historical moment for Turkish Minority of Western Thrace

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party co-hosted Federal Union of European Nationalities' (FUEN) 2015 Congress during 13-17 May 2015. 150 representatives from 30 minority organisations in 20 countries took part at FUEN 2015 Congress that took place at Chris&Eve Hotel in Komotini.

FUEN President Hansen: "The conditions of minorities in one country indicates the level of democracy that country has"

The formal opening of the Congress took place on 14 May 2015 with the opening speeches of FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen and the President of Western Thrace Turkish Minority Advisory Board (WTTMAB) Chairman and Xanthi Mufti Ahmet Mete. FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen indicated that the conditions of minorities in one country showed the level of democracy that country had and continued as follows: "Show me your approach towards minorities and I tell you how democratic you are."

FEP Party President Mustafa Ali Çavuş: "3% election threshold for independent candidates is a highly anti-democratic practice"

President of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) Hunor Kelemen, member of the European Parliament Herbert Dorfmann (Italy) and

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member of the European Parliament Csaba Sógor (Romania) talked about the problems that their minorities faced in the field of political representation during the first session entitled “the Problem of Political Representation of National Minorities in Europe” and moderated by FUEN Vice President and International Secretary of Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania Loránt Vincze. Having delivered a speech in this session, FEP Party President Mustafa Ali Çavuş explained about the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and said that 3% election threshold towards independent candidates was a highly anti-democratic practice.

Current situation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was discussed during a separate session

Executive Director of the Culture and Education Foundation of Western Thrace Minority (P.E.K.E.M. - C.E.FO.M.) Pervin Hayrullah and Assistant Professor at Balkan Research Institute of Trakya University Dr. Ali Hüseyinoğlu gave information on the state of autonomy that Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has on education and religious affairs during the afternoon session entitled “Current Situation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace” and moderated by FUEN Vice President and Former Chairman of Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF) Dieter Paul Küssner. Besides, lawyer and member of the Hellenic League for Human Rights Halil Mustafa provided a speech on the former Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code that had been in force between 1955 and 1998 and caused the deprivation of citizenship of around 60 thousand Western Thrace Turks. The last panellist was economist and MA degree holder from International Economic Relations and Development of the Democritus University



of Thrace Onur Mustafa Ahmet who talked about the economic structure of Western Thrace and the socio-economic situation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

Director of HRWF 'Int Willy Fautré: “It is essential to assure mutual trust and respect in order to obtain a long-lasting solution between Greek state and the minority”

At the session on 15 May 2015 entitled “Minorities Rights Experts: Experiences and Proposals for Solutions” and moderated by FUEN Vice President and ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu, Director of HRWF 'Int Willy Fautré explained the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace that need to be solved urgently. Fautré underlined that it was essential to assure mutual trust and respect in order to obtain a long-lasting solution between Greek state and the minority. Having had a deep knowledge on Greek approach to minority rights and the situation of minorities in Greece, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Konstantinos Tsitselikis from the department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies of the University of Macedonia spoke about the legal statute of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace as well as the ideological structure behind the state policies implemented. Writer, columnist and member of the Greek Minority in Istanbul Hercules Millas highlighted the case of autonomy of both Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and Greek Minority in Istanbul having shared his personal experiences as a member of the Greek Minority in Istanbul.



Macedonian minority as well as Rhodes and Kos Turks presented their problems

During the 5th session entitled “Ups and downs from Flensburg to Komotini – One year of minority protection in Europe”, Chair of Educative and Culture Movement of Edessa Eugenia Natsoulidou talked about the problems of Macedonian minority while President of the Rhodes, Kos and Dodacanese Culture and Solidarity Association Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kaymakçı explained about the problems that Rhodes and Kos Turks face. The owner of the minority magazine “Rodop Rüzgarı ” İbrahim Baltalı made a presentation entitled “Destruction of Ottoman heritage monuments and artifacts in Western Thrace.”

FUEN took two final decisions on the problems of minorities in Greece

In their conclusion text presented as a delegation of Western Thrace Turks at FUEN Assembly of Delegates that took place on the 16th of May, ABTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party jointly demanded that Greek authorities had to undertake concrete steps to solve the chronic problems. Additionally, Greece was asked to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as well as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe and finally to set up a policy standard for the protection of national minorities according to the text presented by FUEN and adopted by the votes of delegates.

ABTTF on a working visit in Brussels

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe's (ABTTF) President Halit Habip Ođlu paid on 25 March 2015 a working visit to Brussels. Habip Ođlu accompanied by the ABTTF Brussels Representation Office met during his working visit with the MEPs Iskra Mihaylova (Bulgaria/ALDE) and Jordi Sebastia (Spain/The Greens-EFA).

[ABTTF President Habip Ođlu met the MEP Mihaylova from the Movement for Rights and Freedoms \(MRF\) in Bulgaria](#)



During his first meeting with the Iskra Mihaylova from the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), the political party of the Turkish minority living in Bulgaria, ABTTF President Habip Ođlu provided her with detailed information on ABTTF and the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece. Habip Ođlu stated the autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in the fields of education and religion has been destroyed today, adding Western Thrace is economically one of the most underdeveloped regions of Greece and there has been a serious inequality experienced by the Turkish minority not only in social and political life but also as regards of the opportunities in economic life. Mihaylova said she served in the past as Minister for Regional Development in Bulgaria and conducted a EU programme for regional cooperation between Bulgaria and Greece, and noted she knows very well Western Thrace and the Turkish minority living there



and provided information on EU programmes directly related to the economic development of Western Thrace.

[Habip Ođlu visited Co-Chair of the EP Intergroup for Minorities Jordi Sebastia at his office](#)

During his meeting with the Co-Chair of the European Parliament (EP) Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages Jordi Sebastia,

Habip Ođlu mentioned in detail the problems the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been facing in the fields of education and religion. Sebastia uttered he knows already the problems Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has in the field of education and with respect to the use of mother language, and noted the potential joint cooperation areas at the level of the EP, adding he will be ready to give support to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

The state of play and the future of minority languages in Europe discussed in the European Parliament

ABTTF raised the issues of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Rhodes and Kos at the conference where similar examples were discussed

An international conference entitled “Language, Identity & Power: What Future for Minority Languages in Europe?” was organised in the European Parliament on 24 February 2015 with the patronage of MEP’s Jill Evans (EFA/Greens), Herbert Dorfmann (EPP) and Csaba Sógor (EPP). The event was co-organised by Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), the European Free Alliance (EFA) and the Centre Maurits Coppieters (CMC). ABTTF was also represented at the conference by ABTTF Board Member Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman who delivered a speech on the particular case of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace and also in Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese, providing the audience with examples of linguistic and ethnic discrimination in education, health care and public spaces.

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu and ABTTF Board Member Sami Yusuf attended to the conference that hosted around 80 participants from various European minority groups, EU institutions, Council of Europe and human rights NGOs.

There is no bilingual kindergarten in Western Thrace and the schools giving Turkish education in Rhodes and Kos have been closed for decades!

ABTTF Board Member Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman performed his speech during the first session entitled “Language, Identity and Power” and stated that Greece recognised only one minority, which is



Muslim Minority. Therefore, Turkish Minority in Greece is recognised not on an ethnic but on a religious basis. Underlying the lack of any kindergartens giving bilingual education in Greece, Abdurrahman informed the audience that there are minority elementary schools providing bilingual education only in

Western Thrace, but their quality is rather poor. He also said that the schools giving Turkish education in Rhodes and Kos have been closed for decades. As for Turkish lessons being provided as selective courses at state schools, Abdurrahman insisted that there are Turkish lessons as selective courses at secondary schools in Western Thrace, but no Turkish courses are provided at state elementary schools in Greece.

Associations bearing a name that contains “Turk” are forbidden and Turkish signs are not allowed at public buildings as well as boards in the region

Abdurrahman stated that Turkish associations bearing a name that contains “Turk” are forbidden in Greece and the names of minority villages are only in Greek. Turkish names of the villages are not used in the boards indicating road directions in the region and Turkish signs are equally not allowed in public buildings and institutions of the regions even where the minority outnumbers the majority population.

Using Turkish in public space is problematic!

As an example to explain how the using of Turkish in public space constitutes a problem, Abdurrahman talked about the example of a football match in 2013 where one side was composed of Turkish minority while the other side of Greeks. The game was suspended on the grounds that the Turkish trainer was talking to his players in Turkish. Abdurrahman gave another example of an academic conference organised in 2013 in Komotini where a journalist from Turkish minority was not allowed to deliver a presentation in Turkish although it was informed in time and there was already a translator in the room.

The problems on freedom of association are on OSCE's agenda!

ABTTF and BTAYTD declared that Greece should comply with ECtHR rulings during OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension meeting

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated to the Supplementary Human Dimension meeting organised by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) unit of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the subject of "Peaceful Assembly and Association with Emphasis on Freedom of Association" on 16-17 April 2015. Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was represented during the meeting by Funda Reşit ve Bülent Apturahim from ABTTF's international lobbying group, Mehmet Memet who is secretary general and responsible of Human Rights Unit of Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (BTAYTD) and Pervin Hayrullah who is director general of Western Thrace Minority Education and Culture Company (BAKEŞ) as well as board member of BTAYTD. They all tried to voice the concerns over freedom of association in Western Thrace.

Pervin Hayrullah delivered her speech during the first day of the meeting that took place in Austria's capital city of Wien. Hayrullah expressed that although peaceful assembly rights and freedom of association are guaranteed by the 11th and 12th provisions of the Greek Constitution, Greek authorities have steadily been restricting such rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace by closing down the associations that bear the name "Turk" as well as prohibiting the establishment of new ones.

During the second day of the meeting



where the issues of non-discrimination, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association were discussed, the President of the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights Yuri Dzhiladze said that no one was superior to others underlining that Turkish Minority of Western Thrace have been totally ignored like many other minorities. Speaking at the same session, Greek Helsinki Monitor Spokesperson Panayote Dimitras also

stated that Greece didn't recognise the ethnic identity of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Funda Reşit from ABTTF's international lobbying group took the floor in this session and stated that ECtHR had ruled against Greece by 3 different decisions taken in 2007 and 2008 under the name of Bekir Usta. Insisting on the fact that The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has also been closely following the issue, Reşit said that Greece continued to ignore ECtHR rulings which resulted in the decision to try Greece again. Besides, Pervin Hayrullah reminded that every Greek citizen was equal before the Greek constitution and had right to set up non-profit organisations/associations. Therefore, she asked the Greek government to lift all restrictions on freedom of associations for Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. In its response to these questions, Greek representatives stated that there were around 50 associations belonging to minorities and other groups and that they were pursuing their works actively and freely. They insisted that Greece adopted no discrimination policy and fulfilled the requirements of all international agreements and institutions that it is part of.

The subject in the afternoon session was the participation of non-profit associations in decision-making mechanisms, Funda Reşit stated that Greece only recognised Muslim Minority in the Thrace and didn't allow the establishment of associations whose names bare the word 'Turk'. Therefore, it is impossible for minority associations to take part in decision-making mechanisms at local, regional and national level. Reşit demanded from Greek authorities that they should include our minority in the decision-making processes on an equal footing through establishing a dialogue mechanism at the outset.

Young ABTTF took part in “Diversity Festival” organized by YEN

Young ABTTF participated in “Diversity Festival” organised by Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) between 8 and 18 August 2015 in Bautzen, Germany. Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was represented in this programme by Fatma Ahmetcik who is the member of Young ABTTF as well as ABTTF International Affairs and Lobby Group. The event hosted by PAWK, the youth organisation of Sorbian minority in Germany, was the first in this size.

Around 50 youngsters from 6 different minority groups had the opportunity to present examples from their cultural elements during 5 workshops on folkloric dance, poem, theatre, cooking art and minority songs. The participants had also the chance to visit historical and cultural places in Bautzen and to meet with the local people. The Young ABTTF member Fatma Ahmetcik gave information to other participants and guests about Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and the region during the exchange market organised annually at Diversity Festival. The festival ended with charming dancing and theatre performances that took almost one week of preparation of the participating youngsters.



ABTTF's parallel report on the USA 2014 Human Rights Country Report on Greece

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) prepared a parallel report to the USA 2014 Human Rights Country Report for Greece that was released on June 2015 by US Department of State. Having it submitted to the relevant USA authorities, ABTTF provided detailed information on the matters that were either missing or inadequately explained concerning Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in USA Report. ABTTF also brought forward the views of the minority in its report.



The associations are not allowed to use the word “Turk” in their names!

It is mentioned in the US Report that although there were many people identifying themselves as Turkish, it was forbidden for associations to use the words “Turk” or “Turkish” in their names. Adding to this statement, ABTTF mentioned the cases where 3 Turkish associations, namely Evros Minority Youth Association, Cultural Association of the Turkish Women of the Rhodope Prefecture and Turkish Association of Xanthi, were either closed down or not allowed to be established and their case were brought to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). ABTTF declared in its report that ECtHR had announced to rehear the cases under Bekir Ousta Group in the near future.

Minority's direct political representation still remains a problem

In the US Report, it is affirmed that there are 3 representatives from “Muslim” minority in the Greek Parliament while there are no minority members within the government. ABTTF states in its report that Turkish Minority of Western Thrace

is not able to send its representatives directly to the parliament because of the election threshold of %3 applied throughout the country for independent candidates. Therefore, all minority parliamentarians present in the Greek Parliament are elected from majority parties. ABTTF also indicates that the sole Turkish Party (Friendship, Equality, Peace Party – FEP) could not send any representatives to the European Parliament during EP elections in 2014 because of the country-wide election threshold of %3, although it became the biggest party in Rhodope and Xanthi prefectures.

Minority is not able to elect its own religious leaders despite of its autonomy

US Report says that Greek government recognises the Islamic Religious Law regarding family and civil law issues of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, thus those Muslims whose marriages are approved by appointed Mufti's are subject to religious rules unless they want to bring their cases to state courts. It is also noted in the report that the National Human Rights Council had advised that the authorities of the appointed Mufti's should be restricted to

their religious tasks. ABTTF claims in its parallel report that Greek state unilaterally decided to appoint the Mufti's on the basis that they have authorities of religious law and therefore deprived the Turkish Minority of the right to elect its own religious leaders. ABTTF insists that the sharia authorities of the appointed Mufti's are based on 1913 Treaty of Athens and thus, the unilateral decision to abandon these competences is a clear violation of the Treaty of Athens.

Minority's autonomy in education was severely damaged by the recent legislation

There are no references to the legislation approved by the Greek Parliament with the number 4310/2014 on 27 November 2014. In contrast, ABTTF declares in its report that this legislation prepared without any consultation to the Turkish Minority severely damaged the Minority's autonomy in education. Having been approved despite objections from the minority parliamentarians, ABTTF states that this legislation will not contribute to solve the existing problems in education, but will rather increase state control and authority over minority education.

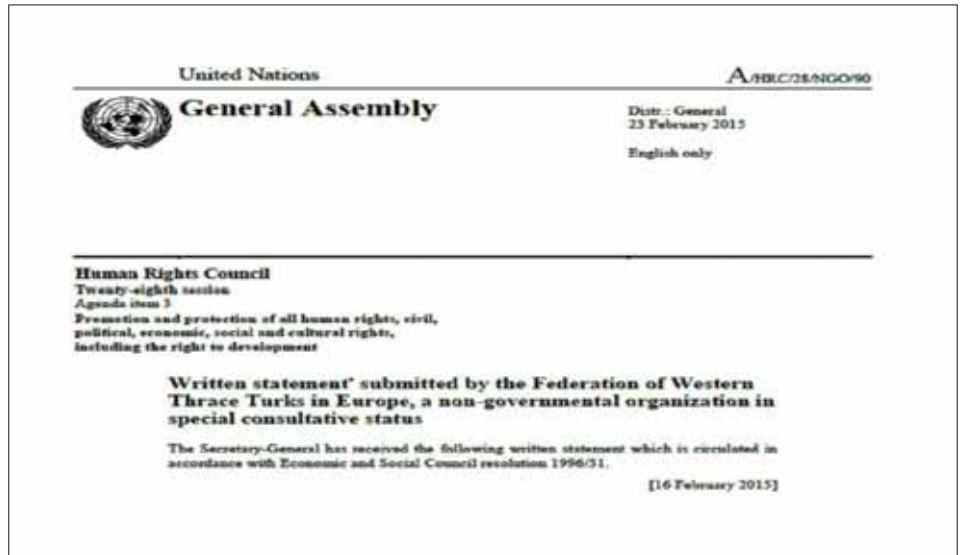
ABTTF's reaction against the new Greek law jeopardising educational autonomy

ABTTF asked for the annulment of the new law prepared without any consultation with the minority at the 28. Session of the UN Human Rights Council

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) presented a written statement on the recent legislation considered to be destroying the educational autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at the 28. Session of the UN Human Rights Council held at UN House in Geneva during 2-27 March 2015. Having demanded the annulment of this law prepared without any consultation with the minority, ABTTF asked the Greek government to constitute an official dialogue mechanism with the minority.

ABTTF underlined that although Turkish Minority of Western Thrace enjoyed autonomy on education on the basis of Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923, this statute has been severely damaged thanks to a series of regulations and implementations in recent years. Having recalled the results of the fact-finding mission to the Western Thrace in 2012 when the Director of Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l, Will Fautre had found that the Greek Government retained a comprehensive control at all levels of minority schools through the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, ABTTF insisted that the new law passed in the Greek Parliament last November constitutes another intervention in the educational autonomy.

ABTTF informed that Coordination Office for Minority Primary and Secondary Education was abolished and a new institution called Bureau for Minority Education incorporated to the Education Directorate of the East



Macedonia-Thrace region was established instead. ABTTF claimed that this kind of administrative amendments are paving the way for the state to enhance its role and control over the minority education instead of overcoming current fundamental problems in education.

While informing about the formation of Minority Programme of Teacher Education within Thrace Dimokritios University in Alexandroupolis, ABTTF explained that it was totally a wrong step to restrict the right to have an education in this programme solely to the minority members who have graduated from pedagogy departments in Greece. It was underlined that minority members who obtained diplomas on relevant departments from Europe or other countries and acquired equivalence for their diplomas should also be provided the same right to have an education in this programme. It was also indicated that a one-year education in this programme was not enough to provide a qualified instruction in Turkish at minority schools. ABTTF proposed opening up Turkish Language and Literature department for those who will be employed in minority schools and will teach based on Turkish curriculum.

The term of 'Greek Programme' is used in the legislation text while 'Minority Programme' is chosen for Turkish curriculum. ABTTF declared that non-reference to Turkish in the text reflected the same problem where Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was not allowed to identify themselves as Turkish and that the use of 'Turkish' is forbidden on association names. ABTTF also advocated that one of the provisions of the new law, which stipulates that minority members can no longer be employed as regards the Greek curriculum in minority schools, was against the equality principle of the constitution.

According to this new law, 2 school advisor positions at both primary and secondary schools of the minority have been created and one school advisor for teachers of religion at both Muslim seminaries and state schools has been formed with the law of 4115/2013. ABTTF claimed that this new law was prepared without any consultation with the minority and thus constituted an important blow to minority's autonomy in religious affairs. ABTTF also indicated that with this new legislation, the state clearly aims at enhancing its control over

the minority through religion.

Greek government claims that the law of 4310/2014 was created in response to a series of problems within minority school system while ABTTF criticised the lack of any solutions to the bilingual kindergarten question that had been voiced many times by the minority. While giving further details on bilingual kindergartens problem, ABTTF referred to the statements of former UN Expert on Minorities, Gay McDougall who affirmed that bilingual kindergartens will be a quite effective tool in learning both Greek and Turkish following his visit to Greece in 2008.



ABTTF urged the Greek government to comply with the Lausanne Treaty as well as other internationally binding agreements and therefore take necessary measures to reinforce the minority's autonomy on education.

You could reach the whole text of ABTTF's written statement at the 28. Session of UN Human Rights Council via the link: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/58275.7405936718.html>

ABTTF submitted a report to OSCE on the hate crimes in Western Thrace

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted a report to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on the hate crimes committed against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

ODIHR who prepares "2014 Hate Crimes Report" and calls for possible contributions to this report will publish its 2014 report on 16 November 2015, which is the International Day of Tolerance. AGIT reveals the hate crimes and attacks committed in its 57 member countries in its annual hate crimes report. The data on hate crimes and attacks as well as the reactions from governments and civil society organisations can also be found on AGIT's pertinent website of Hatecrime.osce.org.

Having presented its report to OSCE, ABTTF mentioned the attacks committed against the minority associations, religious institutions, places of worship and the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace



during 2014 and between January and April 2015. In this regard, ABTTF reported the incidents of arson of Mahmut Ağa Mosque in Yenice quarter of Komotini and the attack to the small mosque in Alankuyu quarter, both on the same day of 17 April 2015. Besides, ABTTF also indicated the attack to the Association of Education, Culture and Sport of Didymóteicho Muslims by unidentified person(s) on 7 March 2015.



ECRI released its fifth report on Greece

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe (ECRI) released a report on the fight against racism and intolerance in Greece on 24 February 2015.

ECRI released its fifth country report that was prepared after visiting the country in March 2014 and includes developments until June 2014 in Greece. Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was mentioned under the name of 'Muslim Minority of Western Thrace' in this report. The Greek government states in the annex published with the report that the use of the name 'Western Thrace' is misleading on the grounds that the region where Muslim minority intensely live is called East Macedonia-Thrace regional governance.

The negative outcomes resulting from the implementation of Article 19 must be eliminated

ECRI stated that around 60,000 people from Turkish Minority of Western Thrace had been deprived of their citizenship because of the problematic Article 19 of the former Greek Citizenship Code that was in force between 1955 and 1998. Those who lost their citizenship statutes must now apply again for Greek citizenship with the condition that they reside in Greece. ECRI suggests Greek authorities that the negative outcomes stemming from the implementation of Article 19 must be eliminated.

The quality of education at minority schools of Western Thrace should be brought to the same level as in state schools

Having given special importance to the problems in education, ECRI explains



that there are only 2 secondary schools providing bilingual education in Komotini and Xanthi while insufficient provision of educative content and materials result in poor education level, social and economic exclusion and marginalisation. ECRI also suggests that the quality of education at minority schools of Western Thrace should be brought to the same level as in state schools.

ECRI mentions the crisis at kindergartens in Echinus village and suggests solving similar problems by engaging in dialogue with minority representatives

ECRI states that the kindergarten education became compulsory by the act of 3518/2006 with no measures taken concerning Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Besides, Greek government rejects all demands to open

up minority bilingual kindergartens in addition to current state kindergartens where the instruction is only in Greek. ECRI also mentions the crisis at kindergartens in Echinus village that risks the right to education for pupils and suggests that similar problems should be solved by engaging in dialogue with minority representatives.

The President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) Halit Habip Oğlu stated that: "We will prepare a parallel report, as we did the same regarding US human rights and religious freedom reports, where we will present the opinion of our minority to ECRI on the issues that lack or are superficially mentioned in their report."

You could reach out the whole report through this link:

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Library/PressReleases/178-24_02_2015_Greece_en.asp

Two obscene attacks on a mosque and a masjid on the same day in Komotini!

ABTTF President Halit Habip Ođlu: “Since both of the attacks were carried out on the same day and at the same hours, it reinforces the suspicion that these were a threat-oriented provocation”



A mosque and a masjid belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Komotini, Greece were attacked. According to the daily Birlik, the Mahmutađa mosque in the Komotini's district Yenice was set on fire by an unidentified person or persons in the morning face on Friday, April 17, 2015. As a result of the arson attack, a fire broke out at the mosque's entrance, but thanks to the fire brigade operation did not spread to the other parts of the mosque and to the minority primary

school next to it.

Again at the same hours, there was another attack on a masjid (small mosque) in the Alankuyu district of Komotini. An unidentified person or persons uprooted ten cypress trees around the masjid and destroyed a grave stone.

“We strongly condemn the attacks on a mosque and a masjid in different districts of Komotini. Such obscene attacks directed against our religion are in no

manner acceptable. Since both of the attacks were carried out on the same day and at the same hours, it reinforces the suspicion that these were a threat-oriented provocation. We wish these obscene and hate motivated attacks would not set the thames on fire among our society, and call upon our minority to avoid such provocations and keep its calmness” stated Halit Habip Ođlu, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

*Photo: www.birlikgazetesi.info

Two Turkish referees in the Greek Super League

ABTTF President Halit Habip Ođlu: “We wish and hope the politicians of our country Greece take such positive experiences as an example and follow policies protecting and promoting the rights of our Turkish minority of Western Thrace that have been guaranteed by the treaties”



League.

“Assignment of two very successful referees belonging to our Turkish minority in the highest professional football league in our country Greece is a very positive development and one of the most beautiful examples for the peaceful co-existence of the minority and majority. The use of Turkish signs beside the Greek ones by Greece's largest toy store company Jumbo in its store in Western Thrace in the recent past and now this positive development in the sports through the assignment of Turkish

referees very much gladdened us as Western Thrace Turks and gave us hope for the future. We wish and hope the politicians of our country Greece take such positive experiences as an example and follow policies protecting and promoting the rights of our minority that have been guaranteed by the treaties” said Halit Habip Ođlu, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

*Photo: www.azinlikca.net



New education law further destroys the educational autonomy of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu: "The claim of our homeland Greece that the new education law has been adopted in November 2014 after prior consultation with the minority does not comport with reality. Quite the contrary, the real aim is to enhance through this law the state authority and control over the minority education"

The Association of Thessaloniki Special Pedagogical Academy (TSPA) Graduates Minority Schools Teachers of Xanthi criticized in its press release the claim of the Greek government the Law 4310/2014 on the education of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace has been adopted by the Greek Parliament in November 2014 after prior consultation with the minority teachers' associations, as stated in Greece's written reply to the Parallel Report submitted by the Spokesperson of the Greek Helsinki Monitor Panayote Dimitras to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) on the minority education in Western Thrace.



According to the daily Gündem, the Xanthi Minority Schools Teachers' Association does in no manner accept the said claim mentioned in the letter addressed to the association's chairman Nurettin Kıyıcı and underlines the Greek government did consult neither during the preparation process of the law nor after its adoption and implementation with the establishments, in particular with the teachers' associations of the Turkish minority.

"The adoption of the new education law 4310/2014 by the Greek Parliament on 27 November 2014 endorses once more our homeland Greece insists to ignore the Turkish minority of Western Thrace living within its borders. This law, which was nowise consulted with the minority during its preparation and

implementation process, represents another hit against the educational autonomy of our minority. During its adoption in the Greek Parliament, all the three MPs belonging to the Turkish minority voted against it, as it paves the way for the state authority and control over the minority education. The solution for the problems faced in the minority education system can only be attained when Greece puts an end to her delusive claims and immediately constitutes an official dialogue mechanism with our minority. As the Turkish minority of Western Thrace, we urge and expect of the Greek government to take this step" said Halit Habip Oğlu, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

*Photo: www.gundemgazetesi.com

ABTTF Newsletter

The ABTTF Newsletter in four languages, namely in Turkish, English, Greek and German, is celebrating its eleventh year.

The ABTTF Newsletter, in which the matters of grave concern to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, recent developments and current events in Western Thrace and Greece, in particular pertaining to the minority issues and policies, international activities and lobbying of ABTTF aimed at obtaining solutions for the for the problems of the Turkish minority through democracy and peace and information on the activities of the associations of the Turkish minority throughout Europe and the world are dealt with, is being followed with great interest not only by Western Thrace Turks, but also by large parts of the public.

To have more information on subscription to the ABTTF Newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

ABTTF

Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe
Föderation der West-Thrakien Türken in Europa
Ευρωπαϊκή Ομοσπονδία Τούρκων Δυτικής Θράκης
Fédération des Turcs de Thrace Occidentale en Europe

ABTTF Head Office

Wemerstr. 2, D-8454 Witten Germany
Tel.: +49 (0) 2302 91 32 91 - Fax: +49 (0) 2302 91 32 93

ABTTF Brussels Office

Square de Meeûs 38/40 B-1000 Brussels Belgium
Tel.: +32 (0) 2 401 61 98 - Fax: +32 (0) 2 401 68 68

Executive Editor: K. Engin Soyylmaz Editor: Mustafa Veli