

# 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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## 2013 FUEN Congress witnessed Western Thrace Turkish Minority undersign a historical accomplishment



**ABTTF President has been elected  
FUEN Vice-President Our  
Minority's Party, Friendship,  
Equality, Peace (FEP) Party has  
become FUEN Member**

Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Congress 2013 has taken place in South Tyrol, Italy, on 19-23 June. At the Congress hosted by South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), the Western Thrace Turkish Minority has been represented by ABTTF, Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party. ABTTF participated at the congress with an 8-person delegation including ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu, Vice-Presidents Cengiz Ismail and Engin Ismail, General Secretary Gökhan Kocaveli, ABTTF Management Board members Mustafa Kasap and Dr.

Sebahattin Abdurrahman as well as ABTTF Management Board former member Sebaytin Mümin. FEP Party participated at the congress a long with a 4-person delegation of FEP Party President Mustafa Ali Çavuş, Advisor to the President Aydın Ahmet and FEP Party representatives Leyla Salihoğlu and Şerif Osman. The editor of daily Gündem, Cemil Kabza attended the Congress on behalf of WTMUGA. Ms. Pervin Hayrulah, General Director of Western Thrace Minority Culture and Education Foundation (PEKEM) has followed the congress alive in South Tyrol.

The day of arrival, 19 June, at Brixen in South Tyrol, "Minority Market" offered a warm welcome to the congress participants. FUEN Member minority representatives introduced culinary specialities of their cultures at the Minority Market, which is organised each year on

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the occasion of FUEN Congress. The tastes of diverse cultures presented at the event brought Europe's minority's together and provided room for closer friendships.

On the second day of the Congress, 20 June, FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen made the official opening of the Congress. Following the official opening, keynote speeches on autonomy models in Europe has been delivered by Luis Durnwalder, Prime Minister of South Tyrol and Martha Stocker, FUEN Vice-President and Member of the executive of the region Trentino /South Tyrol. The second session hosted a discussion on models of cultural autonomy with contributions of Carinthian Slovenes, Germans in Poland, Welsh and Lusatian Sorbs.

## “1 Million Signatures for Diversity” Campaign official took off!

On Friday, 21 June, FUEN led European Citizens' Initiative with partnership of South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), Democratic Alliance of Hungarians of Romania (RDMSZ) and Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) has been presented. At the FUEN Congress Declaration Member of the European Parliament Herbert Dorfmann and Member of the European Parliament and Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages Intergroup Co-Chair Csaba Tabajdi have taken floor to address minority representatives.

The ceremonial inauguration of the 1 Million Signatures Campaign has officially been announced as “Minority SafePack” at the Cathedral Square in Brixen. With participation of the three members of the seven members of Citizens' Committee to lead and operate the campaign, FUEN President Hans-Heinrich Hansen, RDMSZ President Hunor Kelemen and Prime Minister of South Tyrol Luis Durnwalder have sent campaign balloons to sky along with the slogan “You are not alone!”



## FEP Party became FUEN Member

At the Assembly of Delegates on 22 June, the political representative of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, FEP Party has been voted and approved as FUEN member. Along with FEP Party, two other members have joined FUEN, too: Party of the Hungarians in Slovakia (Magyar Közösség Pártja) and National Breton Party in France (Strollad Breizh).

Together with FEP Party's membership, Western Thrace Turkish Minority will be represented by WTMUGA and ABTTF at FUEN.

## ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu has been elected to FUEN Presidium

The elections at the assembly of delegates brought out new composition of FUEN Presidium. ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu has been elected as FUEN Vice-President for a term of three years. The FUEN Presidium members are composed of President Hans-Heinrich Hansen, German North-Schleswig's Union), Vice-President Martha Stocker (SVP), Vice-President Bernhard Ziesch (Domowina), Vice-President Lorant Vincze (RMDSZ), Vice-President Olga Martens (IVDK), Vice-President Dieter Küssner (SFF) and Vice-President Halit Habipoğlu (ABTTF).

## The Assembly of Delegates discussed hate motivated attacks to and violations of fundamental rights of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority

The Assembly of Delegates was submitted a draft resolution on Greece violation of internationally recognised rights and freedoms of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority by ABTTF and WTMUGA. The resolution, voted on the same day, has been adopted.

Secondly, the joint resolution submitted by ABTTF and WTMUGA regarding the rise of extreme right in Greece, in particular Golden Dawn, has informed the delegates on increasing number of hate motivated attacks towards minority members and called for common action to fight against hate crimes. Equally, this resolution of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority has been welcomed and adopted by delegates following the voting at the assembly.

# “1 Million Signatures” Campaign has been presented in Komotini and Xanthi

The “One million signatures for diversity in Europe” campaign within the framework of “European Citizens’ Initiative of the minorities” pioneered by Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) has been presented in Komotini and Xanthi. In partnership with the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (RDMSZ), South Tyrolean People’s Party (SVP) and Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), the FUEN-initiated European Citizens’ Initiative for minorities, which will be the first step for safeguarding the rights of national and linguistic minorities in Europe, has been introduced to Western Thrace Turkish Minority.

At the meeting jointly organised by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and Friendship, Equality, Peace Party (DEB) in Komotini, the RDMSZ Vice-President László Borbély expressed support to Western Thrace Turkish Minority by stating “You are not equal citizens in Greece”. Further to his acknowledgements on policies towards minorities, Borbély stressed thanks to the one million signatures campaign, the Western Thrace Turkish Minority will not anymore be the minority of 150.000 people but will be backed by and rely on the solidarity of European minorities, which amount to a population of 100 millions.

On behalf of FUEN, Director Jan Diedrichsen revealed they expect DEB Party’s approval as a member and ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu be elected to FUEN Presidium at 2013 FUEN Congress to take place in Brixen, South Tyrol.

RDMSZ International Secretary Lorant Vincze pointed out their goal as to secure the support of one million signatures at least from seven EU Member States within one year time.



June 2013. RDMSZ Vice-President László Borbély addressed the minority members at the festival and stated “As the minorities of Europe, we make up an enormous cherry tree when we get together”. Jan Diedrichsen raised FUEN represents 90 minority association. Furthermore, Diedrichsen underlined that “one million signatures” campaign would endow a greater visibility to European minorities.

## “1 Million Signatures” Campaign has been presented in Xanthi, as well

A hearing on one million signatures campaign has been held on Saturday, 8 June 2013, during the meeting organised at Xanthi Elena Hotel. FUEN Director Jan Diedrichsen expressed his observations that the visit organised to Western Thrace assured him on Western Thrace Turkish Minority be the most vulnerable one among other European minorities. Diedrichsen further expressed his appreciation and support to the minority, which he described as peaceful and open to dialogue. From there on, Diedrichsen maintained that Western Thrace Turkish Minority is not alone; FUEN, the representative of 90 minority organisations in Europe, is devoted supporter of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority.

Vincze, while providing further details on initiative, emphasized the initiative in its final terms will constitute the first step to form a legal framework in order to guarantee the rights of national minorities throughout Europe on a far-reaching basis.

## Borbély and Diedrichsen explained “One Million Signatures” Campaign at the Cheery Festival

The delegation joined Cherry Festival organised by Iasmos Municipality and took place in Asomatos, Komotini on 7

## The Cooperation of ABTTF and DEB Party goes on with strengthening pace

Representatives of the Hungarian Minority in Romania and Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Director visited Western Thrace

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and Friendship, Equality, Peace (DEB) Party have jointly hosted a delegation composed of Federal Union of European National (FUEN) Director and Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (RDMSZ), as a FUEN member minority organisation, during their visit to Western Thrace on 7-8 June 2013.

Accompanied by ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu and ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kirmacı, FUEN Director Jan Diedrichsen, RDMSZ Vice-President and member of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies László Borbély, RDMSZ International Secretary Lorant Vincze and Borbély's media advisor Hilda Fleischer obtained first-hand data and in-depth analysis regarding problems of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority.

### The delegation has met minority representatives in Komotini and Xanthi

Upon arrival at Komotini on Friday, 7 June 2013, the delegation has paid a visit to DEB Party Headquarters, where the minority's problems in the field of political representation was communicated to the attention of high representatives within the delegation. Later on, the delegation met Komotini Elected Mufti Fehim Ahmet, whereby it was informed on minority's problem in terms of religious freedom, i.e. the dichotomy between appointed and elected Mufti and 240 Imams Law. In follow up with this, a visit has been paid



to Rodopi SYRIZA Deputy Ayhan Karayusuf, who uncovered problems the minority encounters, especially with regard to education. Given his tight agenda, Xanthi SYRIZA Deputy Hüseyin Zeybek could only meet in the evening of 6 June for a very short time with ABTTF and DEB Party, when the details of "one million signatures" campaign and its potential benefits to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority has been discussed.



Following the departure of representatives of the Hungarian minority of Romania on Saturday, 8 June, FUEN Director Jan Diedrichsen, assisted by ABTTF and DEB Party continued his visit in the region. The delegation has first met Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (BTAYTD) President Mehmet Emin. Upon its visit to Western Thrace Turkish Teachers Union, the delegation exchanged views with the President of the association Ali Sami Toraman. The delegation has also paid a visit to Komotini Turkish Youth Union

(GTGB) and had a meeting with GTGB President Hasan Koray, who transmitted the problems association has been facing throughout its history.

### Delegation heard minority's problems from first and genuine source

On Saturday, FUEN Director Jan Diedrichsen visited Xanthi Elected Mufti Ahmet Mete in his premises in Xanthi. Diedrichsen reiterated FUEN's support to Western Thrace Turkish Minority for the settlement of problems in general and as for religious freedom. The visit to Xanthi elected Mufti was followed by Sminthi village where the delegation had a meeting with the Mustafa Çukal, Mayor of Myki Municipality. The kermis organised at Xanthi Minority School on the very same day has been another interesting destination throughout delegation's visit in Xanthi.

Further to this, Xanthi Turkish Union (ITB) had been visited and the delegation was provided in-depth information by ITB Vice-President Ahmet Çitak on the legal procedure the association has been going through after its dissolution on the ground of bearing the word "Turk" in its name and the minority members' lodging complaint to European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) due to violation of freedom of association.

# The dissolved minority associations bearing the word “Turk” in their names were discussed at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

Greece's non-execution of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decisions on associations founded by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority was discussed at PACE Side Event organised by ABTTF



The problems faced by associations of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, which were previously dissolved on the grounds of bearing the word “Turk” or “Minority” in their titles, were discussed at the side event organized on 25 April 2013 by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

The event, hosted by Latvian Parliamentarian Boriss Cilevičs at the PACE 2013 Spring Session, brought together more than 50 participants from different political groups, Council of Europe (CoE) Member States and civil society members, which stressed Greece's pertinacious attitude in non-executing with the ECtHR decisions favouring the re-establishment of the three associations founded by Western Thrace Turkish Minority members; Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi and Evros Minority Youth Association.

European Nationalities (FUEN) President Hans-Heinrich Hansen, the event was joined also by representatives of the Turkish Press. In his opening speech as the hosting parliamentarian, Boriss Cilevičs stated non-execution of ECtHR decisions by the CoE Member States constitutes a fundamental problem. Cilevičs backed his statement by releasing Greece as CoE Member State with poor records of compliance.

Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi, of which the ECtHR decided in favour. Habipoğlu furthermore expressed the general expectations to see this event catalysing Greece's approach to implement the respective ECtHR decisions. Being optimistic in this sense, especially after the previous experiences is difficult, said Habipoğlu.

Following the opening speeches, FUEN President Hans-Heinrich Hansen shared his observations from the fact-finding mission to Western Thrace in October 2012. Hansen transmitted the first-hand information; he was reported during the interviews on freedom of association with minority members.

**ABTTF President Habipoğlu: “We hope to see this event being received by Greece instrumental for the execution of ECtHR decisions”**

**Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi Chairwoman Emin: “In 1986, the associations bearing the word “Turk” in their names, were dissolved; from 1986 on no association bearing the word “Turk” in its title has been registered”**

**PACE member Boriss Cilevičs: “Non-execution of ECtHR decisions by the CoE Member States is a fundamental problem!”**

ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu reiterated gratitude to hosting parliamentarian Mr. Cilevičs for his inexhaustible and gracious support to the Western Thrace Turkish Minority. Habipoğlu pointed out the memorable aspect of the event by referring to the presence of chairpersons of the two associations, Xanthi Turkish Union and

Moderated by Federal Union of



Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi Chairwoman Hülya Emin, in her speech, stressed the fact that Greece denies minority's ethnic identity, which brought out the closure of associations founded by the minority. The foundation of the Northern Cyprus Turkish Republic in 1983 exacerbated this tendency, which set a barrier to each association to be established by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority. Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi, as the very concrete case of this issue, has not been authorised for re-establishment despite the ECtHR decision favouring the association.



Emin, following the introduction of the case, has informed the participants on the judicial procedure of the complaint lodged at the ECtHR.

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### **Xanthi Turkish Union President Ahmet Kurt: "With reasoning on non-binding nature of international court decisions, Xanthi Turkish Union was not authorised to official re-establishment"**

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Xanthi Turkish Union President Ahmet Kurt, who is a lawyer in profession, provided an historical overview about the association and added association was founded initially in 1927 as "Home of Turkish Youth of Xanthi", adopted the name "Xanthi Turkish Union" in 1936 and was dissolved in 1986 on the grounds of having the word "Turk" in its name. Following a national judicial procedure for 20 years, which finalised in 2005 in contradictions, the same year the Xanthi Turkish Union lodged a complaint at the ECtHR, which decided for Greece's conviction in 2008, said Kurt. Upon the ECtHR decision, Xanthi Turkish Union applied to national court for retrieving its official status, yet the request was refused by the respective court of appeal, which was approved by the court of cassation, informed Kurt the

participants. Kurt furthermore indicated that upon the approval of court of cassation, Xanthi Turkish Union has for the second time lodged a complaint at the ECtHR in September 2012.

After the speakers' sessions, the parliamentarians, who participated at the event acknowledged that Greece violates the freedom of association of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority and called on Greece to urgently implement the three ECtHR decisions that concerns freedom of association of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority.



# ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu was on mission to Brussels

ABTTF President Habipoglu discussed the problems of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority with MEPs Nils Torvalds and László Tőkés at the European Parliament

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habipoğlu was on mission to Brussels on 23 April 2013. Within the course of his working visit, President Habipoğlu had meetings with MEP Nils Torvalds and MEP László Tőkés.

President Habipoğlu: Despite the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) verdict on annulment of national decision for the closure of associations, which bear the word 'Turk' in their names, Greece has made no attempts to step back

President Habipoğlu, accompanied by ABTTF Brussels Office, had a meeting with MEP Nils Torvalds, who he transmitted gratitude for participation at the ABTTF presentation on minority education at Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages Intergroup session on 14 March 2013 in Strasbourg. Beside the education problem, in particular the lack of bilingual minority kindergartens in Western Thrace, Habipoğlu specified the main reason leading to subsequent problems as Greece's denial of minority's ethnic identity. Further to this, Habipoğlu expressed the ever-lasting problem with closure of associations, which bear the word "Turk" in their titles, and the impasse that forbids the re-establishment of suspended associations. Habipoğlu, referring to Greece's non-compliance with the ECtHR verdict on the annulment of national decisions, which had previously suspended three associations founded



by the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, informed Torvalds on an upcoming ABTTF event which will address this problem at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) through a side event on 25 April 2013 in Strasbourg.

## ABTTF: Western Thrace Turkish Minority has become the target of extreme right in Greece

ABTTF President Habipoglu, at his meeting with MEP László Tőkés, informed on rising extreme right backed by the Golden Dawn members and



supporters' hate speeches and hate motivated attacks towards minority groups and migrants in Greece. Among recent incidents, Habipoğlu pointed out a member of Western Thrace Turkish Minority heavily beaten, thus seriously injured, by Golden Dawn supporters in Xanthi.

## Launch of the two world reports by Human Rights Without Frontiers International (HRWF) on the state of freedom of religion or belief in 2012 was also attended by ABTTF

President Habipoğlu's working visit to the EP also included participation at the launch of HRWF reports on the state of freedom of religion or belief in 2012 hosted by MEP László Surján. At the reception followed by the launch of reports, in addition to reiterating congratulations to HRWF Director Willy Fautré and providing updates on the situation of the minority, President Habipoğlu held discussions with European politicians and civil society representatives.

Earlier, in October 2012, HRWF visited Western Thrace and met with minority members for interviews to obtain first-hand data, which constituted input for HRWF report on human rights violations against Western Thrace Turkish Minority.

## ABTTF met with Members of the European Parliament in Brussels

ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu and ABTTF Vice-President had meetings with Euro deputies Kinga Göncz and Iuliu Winkler

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habipoğlu and ABTTF Vice-President Cengiz İsmail were on working visit to Brussels. Within the mission taken place on 30 May 2013, Habipoğlu and İsmail had meetings with MEPs Kinga Göncz (Hungary) and Iuliu Winkler (Romania).

The rise of extreme right in Greece leads to increased tension between Muslims and the majority in the country

Accompanied by ABTTF Brussels Representation, ABTTF President Habipoğlu briefed Kinga Göncz on Western Thrace Turkish Minority and informed about the minority's education and religious autonomy, which is defined and guaranteed by Lausanne Peace Treaty signed in 1923. Yet, given several practices initiated at different phases of history, the autonomy of the internationally recognised minority has been undermined and eventually has been out of order, said Habipoğlu.



Further to this, Habipoğlu transmitted recent developments regarding the increasing number of hate attacks perpetrated by members and

supporters of neo-Nazi political party, Golden Dawn to the Westerns Thrace Turkish Minority members.

At his meeting with MEP Iuliu Winkler, President Halit Habipoğlu expressed concerns on increase of the number of hate motivated attacks to Western Thrace Turkish Minority. The Golden Dawn members and supporters chanting racist slogans on motorcycled convoys generated anxiety and frustration at villages populated by ethnic Turkish citizens, informed Habipoğlu. Habipoğlu reported on a deliberate movement, which targets to increase tension between Muslims and the majority in the country, and presented the hatred and insult filled letter, sent to Muslim Association of Greece (MAG), to the attention of Mr. Winkler. Iuliu Winkler, while acknowledging the severe situation in Greece, expressed his worries to Mr. Habipoğlu and told the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and Serbia suffers from hate crimes as well. Upon these facts, Winkler stated the best and most efficient means to fight with racism and xenophobia is awareness rising through publishing attacks on social media, voice them on political arena and bringing this reality to public agenda.





# ABTTF and BTAYTD were at OSCE High Level Conference in Tirana

The conference also discussed discrimination and intolerance against Muslims with participation of Komotini Elected Mufti İbrahim Şerif and Xanthi Elected Mufti Ahmet Mete



Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) attended Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) High-Level Conference on Non-discrimination and Tolerance on 21-22 May 2013. Komotini Elected Mufti İbrahim Şerif, Xanthi Elected Mufti Ahmet Mete, Western Thrace Minority Culture and Education Foundation Pervin Hayrullah, ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık and ABTTF International Affairs and Lobby Group Member Nabi İbrahimcik represented the Western Thrace Turkish Minority at the conference organised by Ukrainian OSCE Chairmanship and hosted in Tirana in cooperation with Albanian Government.

## Western Thrace Turkish Minority has become a target of extreme right

In her speech on racism, extremism and xenophobia during the first session of the conference, Melek Kırmacı underlined that Western Thrace Turkish Minority had become target of extreme right in Greece. In response, Secretary General of the Minority of Interior of Greece, Evangelos Syrigos, contended the hate motivated attacks against Western Thrace Turkish Minority as being individual and personal incidents.

Kırmacı, during her speech at the session on discrimination against Muslims, backed her statements with US Report on Religious Freedom 2012, which confirmed xenophobic violence

against Muslims in Greece. Further to this, Kırmacı exemplified the findings of the report with evidence on March 2012 when "The best Turk is the dead Turk" was written on the wall of Bektashi tomb by extremist circles in Greece.

At her intervention during the last session on the role of political leadership legislation and law enforcement in combating and preventing intolerance and discrimination, Kırmacı noted on verbal insults of Golden Dawn political party to PASOK Deputy of Rodopi Prefecture Ahmet Haciosman upon his reaction to the adoption of 240 Imams Law, which stipulates appointment of 240 Imams to the region by state-composed commission of Christians.

## Greece does not recognise our elected Muftis

Pervin Hayrullah, at her speech on behalf of Komotini Elected Mufti İbrahim Şerif, Xanthi Elected Mufti and Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association, provided and in-dept explanation on the situation in terms of religious freedom that Greece does not recognise the Muftis elected by Muslim minority in Western Thrace, conversely the Greek state appoints the Muftis upon its unilateral decision. Further to this, Hayrullah pointed out the additional

regulation adopted in 2013 enables the state to appoint Muslim religious clerks (imams) to minority's institutions, including mosques and minority schools for performing teachings of Qur'an.

Greece, in response, brought up the arguments that on the election of Muftis there is no common/agreed practice within the Muslim countries and reiterated that the Muftis in Turkey are appointed by state instead of being directly elected. Further to this, Greece claimed that the regulation does not pose any modification on the status of imams thus; this case does not constitute an intervention of state to religious affairs.

At her intervention during the session on the role of political leadership legislation and law enforcement in combating and preventing intolerance and discrimination, Pervin Hayrullah uttered Greece's comment and explanation on election of Muftis in Turkey is a misinterpretation. Hayrullah backed her statement by indicating that the Turks in Western Thrace are in minority status and any comparisons to be made are only possible with Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey. Hayrullah called on Greece to enable Western Thrace Turkish Minority to exercise its right to elect its own religious leaders as guaranteed under international treaties.

## ABTTF attended OSCE

### Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting



ABTTF voiced the problems Western Thrace Turkish Minority encounters as for right to self identification, freedom of association, freedom of religion or belief and right to education

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) has attended Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on “Rule of Law in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights” organised by the Office of Democratic Institutions of Human Right (ODIHR) of the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on 11-12 July 2013. ABTTF International Relations and Lobby Group members Funda Reşit and Fatih Hafız Mehmet participated at the meeting on behalf of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority.

The civil society shall be encouraged to participate at decision making mechanisms

ABTTF International Relations and Lobby Group member Funda Reşit, at her speech during the first session on the role of legislative regulatory and institutional frameworks as well as

governments and civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights, pointed out the significance of OSCE standards regarding human rights and national minorities and drew attention on national minorities' under representation within the decision making mechanisms. Emphasizing diverse and independent civil society as key element to ensure the protection of human rights in the long run, Reşit expressed urgency on all OSCE participating states to encourage civil society in participation at the decision making mechanisms.

ABTTF: Western Thrace Turkish Minority should be able to enjoy its rights which are guaranteed by international agreements

At the second session of the meeting “Effective National and International Instruments to Protect Human Rights and Prevent Human Rights Violations: Best Practices, Current Challenges and Solutions”, ABTTF International Relations and Lobby Group member Funda Reşit has again taken floor and reiterated Western Thrace Turkish Minority's problems in terms of right self-identification, freedom of religion or

belief, freedom of association and right to education and uttered the Minority's recommendations to Greek Government in the view of resolution of the respective problems.

Having underlined Greece's obligation to respect its liabilities stemming from the Lausanne Treaty and to urgently take necessary measures in order to reinstate the religious and education autonomy of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, Reşit stated that the Minority, without being subject to any derogations or any other restrictions, shall be able to benefit from all the rights conferred upon by bilateral and international agreements.

Through an intervention in response, Permanent Representation of Greece to OSCE claimed that the associations belonging to the Minority in Western Thrace could freely pursue their activities furthermore; the legally dissolved ones among those associations still can carry on their activities. Regarding education, the Greek Permanent Representation indicated that there were 107 primary schools, 2 secondary/high schools and 2 medrese (high schools to raise Islamic scholars). The Greek Permanent Representation claimed that all Greek citizens had right to self-identification yet, notwithstanding the common religious identity, the Minority was composed of different ethnic groups and pressure could not be applied on people to force them accept any certain ethnic identity.



# ABTTF participated in 6th Fundamental Rights Platform Meeting

Anti-discrimination policies in the EU were discussed along with participation of more than 200 civil society representatives, Eurocrats and MEP

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated at 6th Fundamental Right Platform meeting on 24-26 April 2013. Taken place in Vienna, the meeting was attended by Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman, ABTTF Executive Board member in charge of foreign affairs and Melek Kirmacı Arık, ABTTF International Affairs Director.

## Hate crime is a daily reality throughout the EU!

The annual meeting, which hosted more than 200 specialists including NGO representatives, Eurocrats and Euro deputies, centered on anti-discrimination policies in the EU. Hate crime was the subject of agenda for the second day of meeting when Joanna Perry, Hate Crime Officer from Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), underlined the shortcoming in data collection, which obliges OSCE to



solely depend on reports from the civil society in times when the member states do not provide with official input.

Judith Sunderland, Senior Researcher at Human Rights Watch, put forth that in Greece unregistered immigrants and Roma are subject to hate crime at highest levels among others. The monitoring and prosecution of the perpetrators fail to a great extent given the shortcomings in the legal system, according to Sunderland.

## ABTTF: Western Thrace Turkish Minority has become a target for extreme right in Greece

ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kirmacı raised the current issue by referring to increasing number of hate motivated attacks to Western Thrace Turkish Minority in Greece. The supporters of Golden Dawn, extreme right political party in Greek Parliament, attacked in September 2012 to a member of the minority, which led the perpetrator's being sentenced to a 8 months of imprisonment with an eventual suspension of the fine for 3 years, indicated Kirmacı. Upon this case, ABTTF, confirming the previous findings about Greece's not providing sufficient official input on hate crimes, asked for an elaborated explanation on how FRA and OSCE would coordinate their works on advanced data collection.



In response to ABTTF, Sunderland stressed the obligation of Greece for protecting and safeguarding all minority groups and every member of the society against hate crime. FRA Head of Department on Freedoms and Justice Joanna Goodey, upon ABTTF's remark on the subject, asked if the Western Thrace Turkish Minority was covered by the EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS). In follow up with the negative answer, Goodey attested upcoming editions would address the minority groups that were not covered in the previous studies.

## ABTTF met with Human Rights Watch in London

ABTTF expressed Western Thrace Turkish Minority has become target of extreme right in Greece since Golden Dawn entry to the Greek Parliament

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) has met Human Rights Watch (HRW), the global organisation in defence of human rights, on 20 May 2013. The meeting took place in HRW London office and was attended by ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu, ABTTF Vice-President and President of the Association of Western Thrace Turks in UK Rıdvan Hacıbedel, ABTTF External Affairs Correspondant Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman and ABTTF International Affairs and Lobby Group member and England Western Thrace Turks Association Executive Board member Ercüment Mustafaoğlu. The rising extremism and hate crimes in Greece upon Golden Dawn having seats in the Greek Parliament was discussed with HRW Research Assistant on Europe and Central Asia Eva Cosse and HRW Senior Legal Advisor Clive Baldwin.

ABTTF President Habipoğlu, assisted by ABTTF delegation, introduced the



Federation and its activities. Eva Cosse, in charge of the file on Greece, provided an overview on HRW activities. Cosse indicated the HRW report "Hate on the Streets: Xenophobic Violence in Greece" published in 2012 as a result of the input and figures they obtained from hate motivated attacks directly or indirectly perpetuated by Golden Dawn party and its supporters. Furthermore, Cosse precisely stated that preparation of the report witnessed several serious and worrying incidents, which convinced HRW that there is severe negligence in preventing hate motivated attacks against migrants in Greece. Following

the publication of HRW report, though few developments were observed there is still serious need for precautions, said Cosse.

ABTTF President Habipoğlu informed the hate motivated attacks initially targeting migrants have shifted their focus to Western Thrace Turkish Minority. The ongoing situation causes anxiety and unrest within the minority, which is exacerbated by insufficient action in preventing hate crimes.

### ABTTF President met Association of Western Thrace Turks UK Executive Board Members



ABTTF President, on the occasion of his visit to London office of Human Rights Watch, has met the executive board members of the Association of Western Thrace Turks in UK in the evening of 19 May 2013. The dinner meeting, taken place at Steakhouse Guaca by executive board members Ercüment Mustafaoğlu and Eyüp Hacıbedel, was attended by President of the Association Rıdvan Hacıbedel as well as by former President, currently holding the vice-presidency, Necmi Hasanoğlu and İsmail Uzun, as one of the senior managers of the association.

# Problems of the minority associations dissolved on the grounds of bearing the word “Turk” in their titles has been reported to United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

A report on Greece's persistent non-execution of European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) decisions has been submitted to UNHRC

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted a written statement on problems of Western Thrace Turkish Minority's freedom of association to the 23. Session of United Nations Human Rights Council

Having reiterated problems in Greece deny Western Thrace Turkish Minority the right to self-identification on collective basis, ABTTF uttered that Greece dissolved the associations bearing the word “Turk” in their titles and refused the petitions on re-establishment of the associations. ABTTF, having informed on Xanthi Turkish Union, Komotini Turkish Youth Union and Western Thrace Turkish Teachers Union closure in 1986 with a reasoning that there were no Turks in Greece, on the contrary the members of the Muslim Minority are Greek Muslims, reported that from then on no association bearing the word “Turk” in its title was



authorised for official registry.

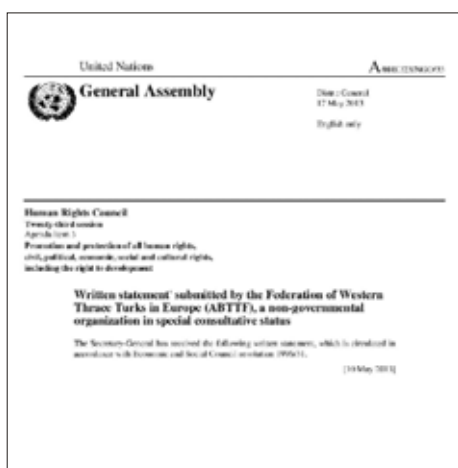
ABTTF informed on Greece's non-execution of ECtHR decisions despite the five-year time period by providing details on the judicial procedure went through by the three associations, Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Women of Rodopi and Evros Minority Youth Association, upon their lodging a case against Greece on violation of freedom of association in 2005 and resolution of the case in 2008, which stipulates their reestablishment.

ABTTF stated Greece perpetuates to violate freedom of association of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority by providing the example of Evros Minority Youth Association as though it bears only the word “minority” in its name it is dissolved and denied re-registry stressing its international attempts for the resolution of the problem, ABTTF revealed Greece's reluctant attitude to act though the case is revised by the Department for the Execution of Judgements of the ECtHR and the

Committee of Ministers. With regard to the case, ABTTF informed UNHRC on the latest event organised at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 25 April 2013.

ABTTF reported on the problems and judicial procedure Cultural Association of Women of Rodopi and its President Hülya Emin and Xanthi Turkish Union and its President Ahmet Kurt went through in terms of non-execution of the ECtHR decisions, which were publicly discussed during ABTTF side event at PACE. Lastly, ABTTF called on Greek authorities to urgently execute the ECtHR decisions about Western Thrace Turkish Minority and asked for elimination of restrictions for the establishment of associations bearing the word(s) “Turk” and/or “Minority” in their titles.

You can access the written statement submitted to 23. Session of the UNHRC here: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/137/42/PDF/G1313742.pdf?OpenElement>



## ABTTF Parallel Reports on 2012 US Reports on Human Rights and Religious Freedoms in Greece



bilingual minority schools, ABTTF provided details on the recent incident that in the fall of 2012-2013 school year in Echinis village of Xanthi, a group of pupils had been denied to registry to minority primary school on the grounds that they had not attended public school. ABTTF, having informed the situation has been temporarily settled, indicated that minority pupils are persecuted for their rights to education in mother tongue.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) has prepared and submitted two parallel reports regarding US Department of State 2012 Human Rights Country report on Greece and 2012 Religious Freedoms Report. ABTTF raised the point and brought clarifications where missing points on the respective reports had been detected as for citation of the problems of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority. Further to this, ABTTF expressed the opinion of the Minority on the ongoing problems of human rights and religious freedom.

**The associations bearing the word "Turk" in their titles still have no permission for (re) establishment**

In its report ABTTF expressed that despite the 5 year elapsed, Greece still does not execute the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decisions regarding the dissolved associations on the grounds of bearing the word "Turk" in their titles. Having reiterated that it follows the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' monitoring Greece execution of the ECtHR decisions, ABTTF informed on its address to the Committee of Ministers to ask Greece to

submit a timetable showing which measures would Greece take in order to ensure the execution of the ECtHR decisions.

ABTTF noted the positive development that Western Thrace Minority South Evros Culture and Education Association, which had been pre-empted from establishment given the word "Minority" in its title, has received recognition from Thrace Court of Appeal in July 2013. ABTTF, on the other hand, reported that Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi, which is denied establishment despite the ECtHR decision, has received the second refusal to establishment from the Court of Cassation.

**The minority pupils are persecuted for their rights to education in mother tongue**

ABTTF pointed out that the legislation 3518/2006 rendered pre-school education mandatory in Greece, however the lack of any special clause in the respective legislation compels the minority pupils to attend public schools with medium of instruction only in Greek. Having informed on the "no go" regarding the establishment of the

**240 Imams Law is an intervention in religious freedom!**

In its parallel report to US 2012 Report on Religious Freedom, beside the Mufti problem, ABTTF expressed the minority's criticism regarding 240 Imams Law as a recent and predominant problem in terms of religious freedom. As an outcome of the legislative bill (3536/2007) adopted in 2007, ABTTF informed that given the minority's reaction the law has so far not been implemented as it foresees the appointment of 240 imams for duty in mosques thus, poses an intervention to the religious freedom of the minority. ABTTF, having reported that despite the minority's reaction Greece has adopted a further details regulation (4115/2013) in order to tackle the shortcomings of the previous legislation, informed the corresponding authorities that the current legislation has a wider outreach and foresees state appointment for imams not only in duty at mosques but also at the public schools. ABTTF expressed concern that with the new legislation the state aims to increase control on minority's religious affairs, which means a clear intervention in the religious freedom as it has been condemned by some international organisations as well.

# Council of Europe Committee of Ministers reviewed Bekir-Ousta Group against Greece

ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu: Despite the five-year time passed, our country Greece does not execute ECtHR decisions; it furthermore stalls Committee of Ministers' action with several pretexts

Council of Europe Committee of Ministers reviewed Greece's progress on executing the ECtHR decisions regarding the dissolution of the three associations on grounds of bearing the name "Turk" in their titles. The Committee of Ministers, at its 1172th Meeting on 6 June 2013, made an analysis in relation to three cases: 35151/05 Bekir-Ousta and Others, dated on 11.10.2007; 34144/05 Emin and Others, dated on 27.03.2008 and 26698/05 Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis and Others, dated on 27.03.2008.

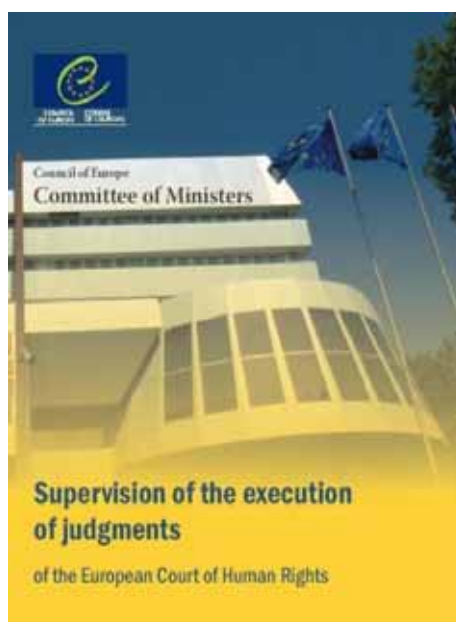
Committee of Ministers expressed that the developments in relations to these cases, which are under the supervision of Committee of Ministers since January 2008, are closely followed. The Committee recalled the commitment reiterated by the Greek authorities to implementing fully and completely the judgments under consideration and without excluding any avenue in that respect.

Committee: Since the judgement of the Court of Cassation on Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis association, no precise and concrete information has been presented

The Committee has revealed since the judgment of the Court of Cassation (No. 353/2012), published on 24 February 2012, dismissing the appeal in cassation of the Tourkiki Enosi Xanthis association



on procedural grounds, no precise and concrete information has been presented to the Committee neither on the measures taken nor envisaged regarding the individual measures in this group of cases. Equally, the Committee informed that with interest it noted the information provided during the meeting according to which other avenues are being explored, including an amendment to the non-contentious procedure provided in the code of civil procedure. With regard to the time that elapsed since the Court's judgments became final, the Committee urged the Greek authorities to communicate written information, which would include an indicative timetable on measures that they are currently exploring so that the associations' requests for registration could now be subject to an examination



on the merits.

At its meeting in December 2013, the Committee will examine measures Greek authorities will adopt by then

The Committee decided to resume the discussion on developments in Bekir-Ousta Case and the individual measures taken by Greek authorities at its 1186th meeting in December 2013.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habipoğlu elucidated "The Committee of Ministers examines Greece's execution of ECtHR decisions on Evros Minority Youth Association, Xanthi Turkish Union and Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi with their final verdict in 2008. Our country strives for delaying the execution, while making no concrete steps for a solution. Currently, our three associations are closed on the grounds of having the word "Turk" in their titles and our country still denies registry to associations bearing the word "Turk" in their titles. By also stalling the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, which brings together 47 member states, our country is seeking to delay the process. As our country failed to submit tangible input to, the Committee decided to re-review Bekir-Ousta Group in 6-months. Under these circumstances, it is self-evident that as well as us, the Council of Europe's faith on Greece has been betrayed, too. These conditions are always and inevitably at the expense of the minority.

You can access the decision on: [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/OJ/DH\(2013\)1172/8&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/Del/OJ/DH(2013)1172/8&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864)



# Western Thrace Minority South Evros Education and Culture Association has been granted legal recognition!

ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu: Following the decision of the Thrace Court of Appeal, in relation to dissolved associations on the grounds of bearing the word “Turk” and/or “Minority” in their titles, we expect Greece to implement the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) decision in due course.

Thrace Court of Appeal decided in favour on the appeal of Western Thrace Minority South Evros Education and Culture Association and recognised the association, which had previously in 2009, been refused to establishment and registry by Alexandroupolis Court of First Instance.

According local daily Rodop Rüzgarı, upon the Alexandroupolis Court of First Instance's refusal of the registry of association on grounds that its name recalls a national minority whereas the respective minority is recognised only on religious grounds, the Western Thrace Minority South Evros Education and Culture Association has taken up the case to Court of Cassation.



Following the trial of the case at the Court of Cassation, it has been returned to Thrace Court of Appeal. With regard to the decision of the Court of Cassation, Thrace Court of Appeal eventually recognized Western Thrace Minority South Evros Education and Culture Association.

## Second refusal to Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi from the Court of Cassation

According to daily, Gündem, the domestic legal process since 2008 with the ECtHR decision on the establishment and recognition of the Cultural

Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi has come to an end. Appeal to Court of Cassation in the view of restoring the official status and recognition to Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi has again been refused.

ABTTF President: Greece should fully implement the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights!

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habipoğlu stated: “Regarding the legal struggle carried on by Western Thrace Minority South Evros Education and Culture Association since 2009, the decision of the Thrace Court of Appeal is very positive. We hope that Greek authorities fully implement the decisions of the ECtHR on dissolved associations on the ground of bearing the word “Turk” in their names, Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi and Evros Minority Youth Association to the end of lifting obstacles for the respective associations to officially pursue their activities”.

### ABTTF Newsletter

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

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