

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europa Newsletter

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations
Member of the Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)



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FUEN, MIDAS and representatives from the German and Danish minorities were in Western Thrace



The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), the European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS), representatives of the Danish minority in Germany and representatives of the German minority in Denmark in partnership with the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality, Peace Party (FEP) carried a fact-finding mission to Western Thrace between 19 and 22 June 2014. The 16 person delegation had the opportunity to examine the problems of the Turkish

Minority of Western Thrace.

On Friday 20th of June, the joint delegation, after visiting the FEP Party headquarters in Komotini, had a comprehensive meeting with representatives of the Turkish minority media. The purpose of the meeting was to listen to the problems the minority press and media is facing in the field of freedom of expression. The six journalists representing MIDAS and the two PhD students in media studies noted the problems of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority and gave examples from their experiences as minority journalists. In the

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afternoon the delegation, first, visited the Komotini Mayor George Petridis, who was re-elected on May 18 local elections. The delegation as well as gathering information about the workings of the municipality had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the participation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to the local authorities and their life experiences in the region. Afterwards the delegation visited the Harmanlik district of Komotini where they met with executives from the Harmanlik Minority Education, Culture and Sports Association. Afterwards, the Old (Eski) mosque was visited where the deputy of the Elected Mufti of Komotini Fehim Ahmet gave information about the mosque. In the evening, the delegation visited the 14. Annual Cherry Festival organised by Iasmos (Yassıköy) Municipality. FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen made a speech at the festival stressing the solidarity with the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.



On Saturday 21st of June, the delegation first visited WTMUGA. Afterwards they held an extensive meeting with the Western Thrace Turkish Minority Advisory Council (BTTADK) Vice-President and former Xanthi deputy Ahmet Faikoglu as well as BTTADK members, where the delegates had the opportunity to listen to the minority problems. From Komotini, the



delegation went to Xanthi where they first visited FEP party Xanthi office, afterwards the Çınar Mosque at the Aşağı Mahalle district of Xanthi. Then, the delegation went to Echinós (Şahin) village where they visited village library



and gathered information about the region. Finally they attended a charity fair held at the village where they had the opportunity to sample the local food and chat with the villagers.

200 participants from 30 countries met at Danish-German border for FUEN Congress

At the Congress, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was represented by ABTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party

Delegation of Western Thrace Turkish Minority participated in 59. Congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) on 7-11 May 2014. Co-hosted by umbrella organization of the Danish minority of Germany, Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF) and the German Minority of Denmark Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger (BDN) in German-Danish border region, the FUEN Congress participants in representation of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace included Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President and FUEN Vice-President Halit Habip Ođlu, ABTTF Vice-Presidents Cengiz İsmail and Engin İsmail, ABTTF General Director K. Engin Soyyılmaz, Representative of Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party Sinan Molla and Representative of Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) Aysel Homko. Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association President Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kaymakçı has for the first time participated at this year's FUEN Congress.

Including high level politicians, minority representatives and experts in total 200 participants from 30 countries attended the Congress.

Recent developments and situation of minorities in Ukraine and Crimea were on agenda

At the opening ceremony on 8 May, Special Advisor of the Ukrainian MP and the former President of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People Mustafa Jemilev,



Ahmet Özay gave a speech. At the session dedicated to minority policy in Ukraine and Crimea, Ahmet Özay on behalf of Ukrainian Mustafa Jemilev, Wladimir Leysle from the Council of the Germans in Ukraine and Ernst Kudusov from Crimean Karaites discussed the recent developments.

Symposium on European minorities and European elections

On the second day of the Congress, which corresponded to 9 May Europe

Day, a symposium on European minorities and European elections was organized in cooperation with Minority House, one of the projects of FUEN, in Sonderborg, Denmark. Prime Minister of the State Schleswig-Holstein Torsten Albig gave opening speech of the symposium. Demands of the European minorities on European elections to take place on 22-25 May 2014 were discussed by Minister for Education, Training and Employment in German-speaking Community of Belgium Oliver Paasch, Minister of Health, Sports, Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities of South Tyrol and FUEN Vice-President Martha Stocker, ECMI Director Tove Malloy, Member of the European Parliament and Chairman of CDU/EPP in Schleswig-Holstein Reimer Børge, Danish deputy and former member of the European Parliament Eva Kjer Hansen, former Member of the European Parliament Jens-Peter Bonde and European Dialogue Forum's spokesperson Jens A. Christiansen.



The resolution on “240 Imams Law” has been adopted at FUEN Assembly of Delegates

132 delegates representing FUEN member organizations participated at the Assembly of Delegates on 10 May. The resolution on “240 Imams law” submitted commonly by ABTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party has been adopted with overwhelming majority of votes.



Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association has been approved as new FUEN member

At the Assembly of Delegates, in addition to Federal Lezgin National and Cultural Autonomy, in representation of Lezgin minority, and ProDG on behalf of the German speaking community of Belgium, Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association



has been approved as new FUEN member.

2015 FUEN Congress is in Western Thrace!

At FUEN Assembly of Delegates, FUEN

President Hans-Heinrich Hansen, along with the video screening on FUEN's work on Western Thrace, announced next year's FUEN Congress will be hosted by delegation of Western Thrace Turks, ABTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party, in Western Thrace.

Bakoyannis talked about Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary



ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu: “The statement of Dora Bakoyannis is subjective and the exact repetition of Greek government’s official thesis on the issue although she is well aware of the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace”

New Democracy Party Member of Parliament and Former Foreign Minister of Greece, Dora Bakoyannis, has released a statement related to the statement of the President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan about the reopening of the Halki Theological School.

According to the journal *Azınlıkça*, Bakoyannis expressed in her statement it has been 15 years since Turkey was accepted as a candidate for membership in the European Union and the Turkish President, regrettably to say, is not yet aware that the major issues of religious freedom and human rights are not covered by bilateral arrangements or

negotiations between countries on reciprocity and providing compensation, and added the issue of the reopening of Greek Orthodox Halki Seminary does not belong to bilateral issues between Turkey and Greece but it is a universal demand concerning to the individual rights of Orthodox Christians all over the world.

During his visit to the Turkish Republic Northern Cyprus on 1 September 2014, the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, had replied the question having been posed by a journalist regarding the Halki Seminary by saying that their demand from Greece in response to the reopening of Halki Seminary to allow Turkey to construct two demolished mosques in Athens and of the election of Grand Mufti had not been fulfilled yet, although Greece had promised so.

Related to the issue, the President of Federation Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Halit Habip Oğlu, said: “We would expect a neutral, reality reflecting and objective statement rather

than Greek government's official thesis from Dora Bakoyannis as a senior politician who served as Greek Foreign Minister in the past in our country and knows closely the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Bakoyannis also knows very well the fact that the Lausanne Peace Treaty signed between Turkey and Greece defines the status and rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and gives it autonomous structure in religion and education areas. The same autonomous structure is also granted to the Greek Orthodox Minority in İstanbul. While our motherland Turkey has been improving many of the rights of the Greek Orthodox Minority in İstanbul and continuing to take concrete steps, our country Greece still sees the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace as an internal threat, and is producing new problems like adopting the “240 Imams Law” by disregarding its religious autonomy rather than taking concrete steps and solving its existing problems.”

*Photo: www.ysterografa.gr

ABTTF attended 7th Annual Fundamental Rights Platform Meeting

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) attended 7. Annual Fundamental Rights Platform meeting on 10-11 April 2014 held in Vienna. Established by European Fundamental Rights Agency as a means of cooperation with civil society, Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP), of which ABTTF is a member, has this year discussed "Future fundamental rights priorities in the area of freedom, security and justice – The contribution of civil society". Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman, ABTTF Board member in charge of foreign affairs, participated in the annual FRP meeting.



Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman attended the meeting held on 10 April 2014 regarding the activities of the Fundamental Rights Agency and institutions to be addressed in case of breaches in fundamental rights. The webpage, which is expected to be operational in 2014, will provide guidelines on national authorities to be addressed in case fundamental rights violations. Within the course of event, Dr. Abdurrahman attended meeting on EU minorities and discrimination survey (EU MIDIS II) to be carried out between 2014 and 2016. Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman asked the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to be included in the survey, the first version of which (EU MIDIS I) did not cover the Minority.

Recommendations on future priorities in terms of fundamental rights were on the agenda of the meeting

At his keynote address, FRA Director Morten Kjaerum stressed threats to rule of law and social and economic rights were still present and they needed to be tackled. Having underlined especially in follow up with the 11 September terrorist



attacks two main approaches on the basis of security and human rights were generated, Mr. Kjaerum pointed out that the two concepts should not be considered in opposite terms. Instead, they go hand in hand with each other. In this session, the future of the EU in terms of fundamental rights was discussed and civil society recommendations in relation to freedom, security and justice within the framework of EU strategic guidelines were shared.

On 11 April, in follow up with election of the FRP Advisory Panel, the workshop organised by FRP participants "The Floor is Yours" has taken place. Having participated first in the workshop on common practices among civil society organisations working on fight against discrimination, Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman secondly took part in workshop where tools on cooperation of public officials and local authorities with civil society organisations. Lastly, Dr. Sebahattin Abdurrahman attended workshop on participation of civil society organisations in political decision making mechanism co-organised by Council of Europe and international NGOs.

ABTTF prepared a parallel report to U.S. 2013 Human Rights Report on Greece

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) has prepared a parallel report in response to U.S. Department of State on its Greece 2013 Human Rights Report published in March. The parallel report has been communicated to corresponding authorities.

Last year the Minority's population was indicated as 150.000, this year it is 120.000

In the report, where Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was cited as "Muslim Minority in Thrace", ABTTF underlined the fact that Turkish Minority of Western Thrace's status and rights had been defined by the Lausanne Peace Treaty signed in 1923 and the Minority, exempted from population exchange, were recognized "Turk" on the "etabli" documents and international documents attesting the ethnic origin of the respective Minority. ABTTF noted the inconsistency of figures in the U.S. report which expresses the Minority as composed of three ethnic groups, such as Turkish, Pomak and Romani, and amounts to a population of 120.000 whereas this was indicated as 150.000 last year.

It has been six years the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights are not executed

In response to the U.S. Report on human rights in Greece for 2013, which uttered the difficulties faced by the Minority members because of the blockage for the associations bearing the word "Turk" in their titles, ABTTF provided an in-depth explanation regarding the trial process at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Furthermore, it has been noted that despite the six years



elapsed Greece does not execute ECtHR jurisdiction on dissolved and non-registered associations established by Turkish Minority of Western Thrace.

The Minority has been deprived of the right to choose its religious leaders

The U.S. Report lines up criticism to Greece on Mufti's competences within Sharia law in Western Thrace and stresses the incompatibility of Sharia law with the Constitution and international standards thus, recommends to limit the powers of Muftis only to their religious duties. ABTTF explained the Mufti problem in details and underlined under the reasoning that Muftis implement Sharia law therefore they were to be appointed by the Greek State, the Minority has been deprived of the right to choose its own religious leaders by the unilateral decision of the state.

Having uncovered the legal powers of appointed Muftis grounded in Athens Treaty signed in 1913, ABTTF emphasized Greece cannot unilaterally abrogate these powers and currently every decision made in terms of family and civil law by the appointed Muftis have to approve by civil courts.

Minority radio broadcasters and newspapers are under threat

Given the fact that the problems regarding freedom of expression and media were not covered at all by the U.S. Report, ABTTF raised Greek National Council for Radio and Television warned the radios broadcasting in Turkish in Western Thrace, Radio City, Çınar FM and JOY FM through an official notice and explained in details that the current media legislation threatens press and media freedom. Regarding press freedom, ABTTF provided details on Hara Nikopoulou trial where Gündem and Millet, the Minority dailies, were charged with illicit fines of compensation and the latest state of the trial.

The Minority is targeted by the extreme right!

Regarding hate motivated crimes, ABTTF provided instances of hate speech and hate attacks perpetuated by Golden Dawn members or supporters against Muslims. Furthermore, it has been expressed that Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, which is living on these territories for centuries, has become target of the Golden Dawn. In parallel report, ABTTF provided detailed evidence of the hate speech and attacks towards the Minority.

ABTTF prepared a parallel report to the U.S. International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 on Greece



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) prepared a parallel report to U.S. State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for 2013 on Greece. ABTTF expressed the views and demands of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace after clarifying in details the issues in relation to the problems the Minority has been facing in the field of religion, which were addressed superficial and incomplete in the regarding U.S. report.

ABTTF stated in response to the expression that a officially recognized "Muslim minority" with a population of 120 thousand (1.1 percent of the total population) was created in Thrace (Western Thrace) by the Lausanne Peace Treaty that the ethnic identity of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace was Turk and this ethnic identity was in

Etabli documents. However, ABTTF asked the reason of the changing of the number of the population of the Minority which was between 140 and 150 thousand in the report a year ago but 120 thousand in 2013.

ABTTF expressed that the fact that the islands of Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese were not part of Greece when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed should not be a reason to deprive the Turkish population living on those islands of their minority rights.

ABTTF also criticized the style of the report which reflects entirely the Greek government's view and is superficial on the muftis' problem. It also highlighted the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its religious leaders in accordance with the

international treaties and the decades-long state-appointed mufti was violation of freedom of religion.

Hence, ABTTF indicated that the appointing of 240 religious officials to the mosques and public schools in Western Thrace according to the Law 4115/2013 as in the way that was reflected on the report is not a positive application and it was imposed without recourse to the opinion of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and without considering its demands and was a unilateral approach. Lastly, as known "240 Imams Law" among the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was the law that aims to increase the control of the state over the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace through religion.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in U.S. Religious Freedom Report for 2013 on Greece

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oglu: U.S. Religious Freedom Report fully reflects the official position of the Greek government, it does not include problems that Western Thrace Turkish Minority faces in religious field

The report includes that Muslim minority in Thrace (Western Thrace) officially recognized by Lausanne Peace Treaty has an estimated population of 120.000(1.1 percent of total population) residing in Western Thrace. The report notes that the government amended a law (240 Imams Law) in January 2013 to hire 240 Islamic religious instructors in order to teach the Qur'an in the public schools of Thrace (Western Thrace). However, the report does not mention why the Turkish Minority persistently opposes 240 Imams Law.

Permits for reconstruction of for houses of prayer and worship

According to the report, the government in August 2013 passed a law which allows issuance of permits for reconstruction and renovation for mosques and places of worship which are accepted as unauthorized buildings that lack property titles and are not in compliance with zoning regulations.

The Mufti Issue

The report notes that the Lausanne Treaty gives the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace the right to maintain mosques and social and charitable organizations, i.e. vakfs, allows Muftis(appointed), of whom salaries are paid by the government, to render religious judicial services in the area of



family law, and provides bilingual education that were guaranteed by Lausanne Treaty. The report further notes but these rights do not include the Muslims living outside Western Thrace.

Furthermore, it is noted in the report that the government recognizes only government-appointed Muslim clergy and that there are no Muslim clergy outside of Western Thrace and the some Muslims who live on the Dodecanese islands demand the rights and the recognition which the Lausanne Treaty brings up.

The report notes, “Some members of the Thrace Muslim minority continued to lobby for direct election of muftis by the community while retaining their judicial powers. The government maintained it had the right to appoint muftis because the government appointed all judges, and the muftis performed judicial sharia functions. Some Thrace Muslims accepted the authority of the

government-appointed muftis, while others chose two unofficial muftis to serve their communities. The government did not recognize these two muftis, who did not have civil authority. Some Muslims also pressed for direct election of official imams”.

The President of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) Halit Habip Oglu: “U.S. Religious Freedom Report fully reflects the official position of the government and does not include the problems that the Turkish Minority faces in religious field. As ABTTF, we will prepare a parallel report in which we will clearly state why we have the right to elect our own Muftis and why 240 Imams Law violates the right to freedom of religion and conscience”.

You can access the report using the following link:

http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religious_freedom/index.htm#wrapper

Greece responds to Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) written statement submitted to United Nations Human Rights Council

Permanent Mission of Greece to United Nations Office at Geneva responded to written statement submitted by Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) to United Nations Human Rights Council held on 3-28 March 2014.

Greece: "Muslim Minority in Thrace is not an ethnic or national minority. It is a religious minority"

In the response of Permanent Mission on behalf of the Government Greece, it has been stressed that Muslim minority in Thrace is defined by its religious identity and this minority is not an ethnic or national one. Furthermore, in the answer it is alleged that the Muslim minority consists of different groups whose members are Greek citizens of Turkish, Pomak and Roma origin and cultural background.

Associations bearing the word "Turkish" in their titles

Regarding the associations dissolved due to the word "Turkish" in their titles, Permanent Mission answered on behalf of the Greek Government that three associations, Xanthi Turkish Union, Evros Minority Youth Association and Cultural Association of the Turkish Women of Rodopi, which European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) decided in favor, were denied official registry on the grounds that their statutes were incompatible with Greek legislation. The same answer since 2008 were again repeated in the response that Greek authorities are considering appropriate ways and means to implement ECtHR



decisions on the dissolved associations.

Muslim charitable foundations

In relation to Muslim charitable foundations, Greece repeated its position that while additional ways are currently explored regarding the concerns expressed by some minority members, Muslim foundations used for charitable purposes are exempted from land and income taxes.

Education

With regard to education, Greece pointed out while state continues to support minority schools, given the increasing preference of minority students to public schools, the public education system has been appropriately accommodated. Having emphasized the mandatory nature of pre-school education for pupils to attend primary school, Greece noted authorities have tried to accommodate the families whose children could not attend pre-school for justifiable reasons.

The Mufti issue

Having stated that there is no unique internationally set method for the election of Muftis, Greece justified given

the judicial responsibilities Muftis exercise, the State involved the selection of the Muftis. Having noted that the State does not recognise "elected Muftis", Greece claimed that despite signs of evidence of disrespect to existing legislation and often provocative attitude, the State does not obstruct their religious and other activities.

240 Imams Law

Explained under the rubrik of Muslim preacher, Greece, on 240 Imams Law, claimed that the respective legislation is generated as a forward looking initiative by taking into account the increasing number of Minority students attending to public schools and that if they wish they can learn the Holy Koran in the public schools.

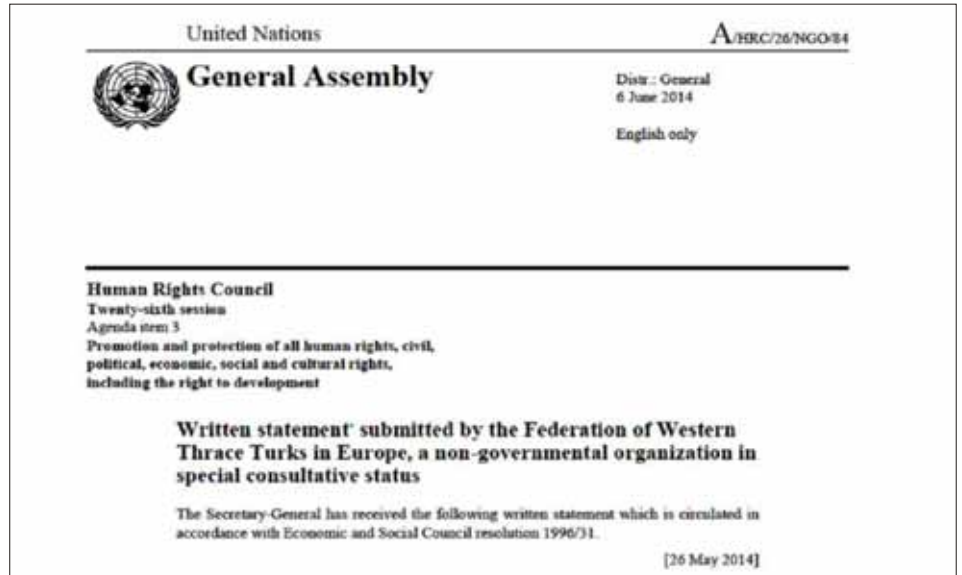
Having indicated the ongoing campaign that the legislation is an intervention to Minority's religious freedom, Greece claimed that the respective campaign smacks political expediency and is misleading.

You can access the full statement of Greece in response to FUEN's written statement here: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/7855672.24025726.html>

ABTTF brought Greek electoral threshold problem to the UN agenda

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted a written statement on electoral threshold in Greece, which stands as an obstacle for Western Thrace Turkish Minority to be politically represented, to the 26th Session of the UN Human Rights Council which summon this year on 10-27 June.

The criteria on protection of minorities, which is a pre-requisite for new Member States to join the EU, is not applicable in the case of EU 15!



Pointing out political participation of ethnic minorities regarded as an indication of modern democracies, ABTTF expressed concern that although the protection of minorities stands as requirements for accession of the candidate countries to the EU, the same condition unfortunately does not pose any obligation to the initial members (EU 15) including Greece. ABTTF reported on the 3% electoral threshold for political parties and independent candidates and informed that for this very reason the members of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, despite the fact that they make up the 1.5% of the general population, does not have any chances for being elected to Hellenic Parliament. ABTTF furthermore reported that this reason led members of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority to run the elections in the lists of majority parties that in the last elections in Greece three minority members were elected to the national parliament.

The minority is still perceived as “the other”

In terms of regional administration, ABTTF reported that, the recent administrative reform introduced 13

administrative regions, which resulted in considerable drop in the number of municipalities in Greece. At regional and municipal elections held in 18 and 25 May 2014, mayors elected in Arriana, Iasmos and Myki Municipalities are members of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, indicated ABTTF. ABTTF raised that the pre-election atmosphere still had implications on the Minority as “the Other” especially when it is taken into account that the former Minister of Education and Religious Affairs Evripidis Stilyanidis had stated Maronia and Iasmos Municipalities are Islamised and restoring these municipalities to the administration of Christians was increasingly necessary.

FEP Party scored highest in Rhodopi and Xanthi at European elections but because of the electoral threshold could not send any MEPs to the European Parliament

In addition to the European elections, on 25 May the second rounds of regional and local elections were held in Greece, reported ABTTF. ABTTF noted while 14 EU Member States did not introduce

electoral threshold, the same electoral threshold of 3% was applicable also for the European elections in Greece. ABTTF informed that the political party of the Minority, Friendship, Equality Peace, Party (FEP) took part in the European elections for the first time for the sake of voicing the Minority to Brussels and though having ranked first in Rhodopi and Xanthi with 0,76 % of votes nationwide, due to the 3% electoral threshold FEP Party unfortunately could not send any candidates to the European Parliament.

Having called on Greek authorities to lift the 3% electoral threshold, ABTTF asked for special regulations to be introduced for political representation of Western Thrace Turkish Minority in Hellenic Parliament. In addition, ABTTF called on for abrogation of 3% electoral threshold at European elections in Greece, while requesting inclusion of minority to the consultative organs of decision making mechanisms in local, regional and national levels.

You can access the written statement through following link:

http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage_e.aspx?b=10&se=155&t=7

The response of Greece to ABTTF

Greece replied to the written statement concerning the issue of electoral threshold problem of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace representation in the political arena, which was submitted by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) to the twenty-sixth session of the UN Human Rights Council.


With the title "Participation of the Muslim minority in Thrace in Greek public life", Greece claims that 3 percent electoral threshold is not an obstacle for minority's representation in response to ABTTF that underlines three percent electoral threshold is an obstacle to minority's representation in political life.

Greece suggests the actual participation of the "Muslim" minority in the governance of the local giving as facts at the most recent local and regional elections of May 25, 2014 roughly 120 Greek citizens members of the "Muslim" minority were elected at the local and regional councils in Thrace; among them three mayors in the cities of Arriana (Kozlukebir), Iasmos (Yassikoy) and Miki (Mustafçova).

According to Greece, at the last European Parliament elections held at the same day with the local and regional elections, the Friendship Equality and Peace (FEP) Party gained a considerable part of the ballot in the constituencies of Rodopi and Xanthi - accounting to 41,425 votes with an overall voter turnout in the region as high as 70%.

Therefore, Greece declares that the 3% electoral threshold is applicable in a non discriminatory way in all elections that are held in Greece and it has never served as the obstacle to the political representation of Greek citizens of Muslim faith residing at the region of

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General Assembly


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Human Rights Council
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Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Note verbale dated 27 June 2014 from the Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of Greece to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other international organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and has the honour to provide herewith the comments of the Government of Greece in relation to the written statement dated 26 May 2014 submitted by the "Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe", a non-governmental organization in special consultative status (A/HRC/26/NGO/84).

The Permanent Mission of Greece kindly requests the Office of the High Commissioner to circulate the attached text* as a document of the twenty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 3.



Thrace the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe wishes to present. Hence, it is as early as 1927 that members of the "Muslim" minority have been members of the Greek Parliament and as of June 17, 2012 three members of the "Muslim" minority in Thrace serve as MPs in the current Parliament with two different parties.

ABTTF submitted a written statement to the twenty-sixth session of the UN Human Rights Council and voiced the problems the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace experiences at the

representation of local, regional and national level. However, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace still perceived as "other" and racist and discriminatory reviews raised concerns before the elections of 18 and 25 May 2014. ABTTF demanded from the Greek authorities abolition of 3% electoral threshold for political parties and independent candidates and called for the creation of custom applications guaranteeing representation of the Minority at the national level in the Greek Parliament after stating FEP Party's victory in Komotini (Gümülcine) and Xanthi (İskeçe) but due to electoral threshold it was unable to send MPs to the European Parliament in the European Parliament elections.

ABTTF's written statement submitted to the 26th Session of the UN Human Rights Council can be accessed at http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/sdpage_e.a.spx?b=10&se=155&t=7 and the response of Greece to ABTTF at http://ap.ohchr.org/Documents/sdpage_e.a.spx?b=10&se=155&t=2.

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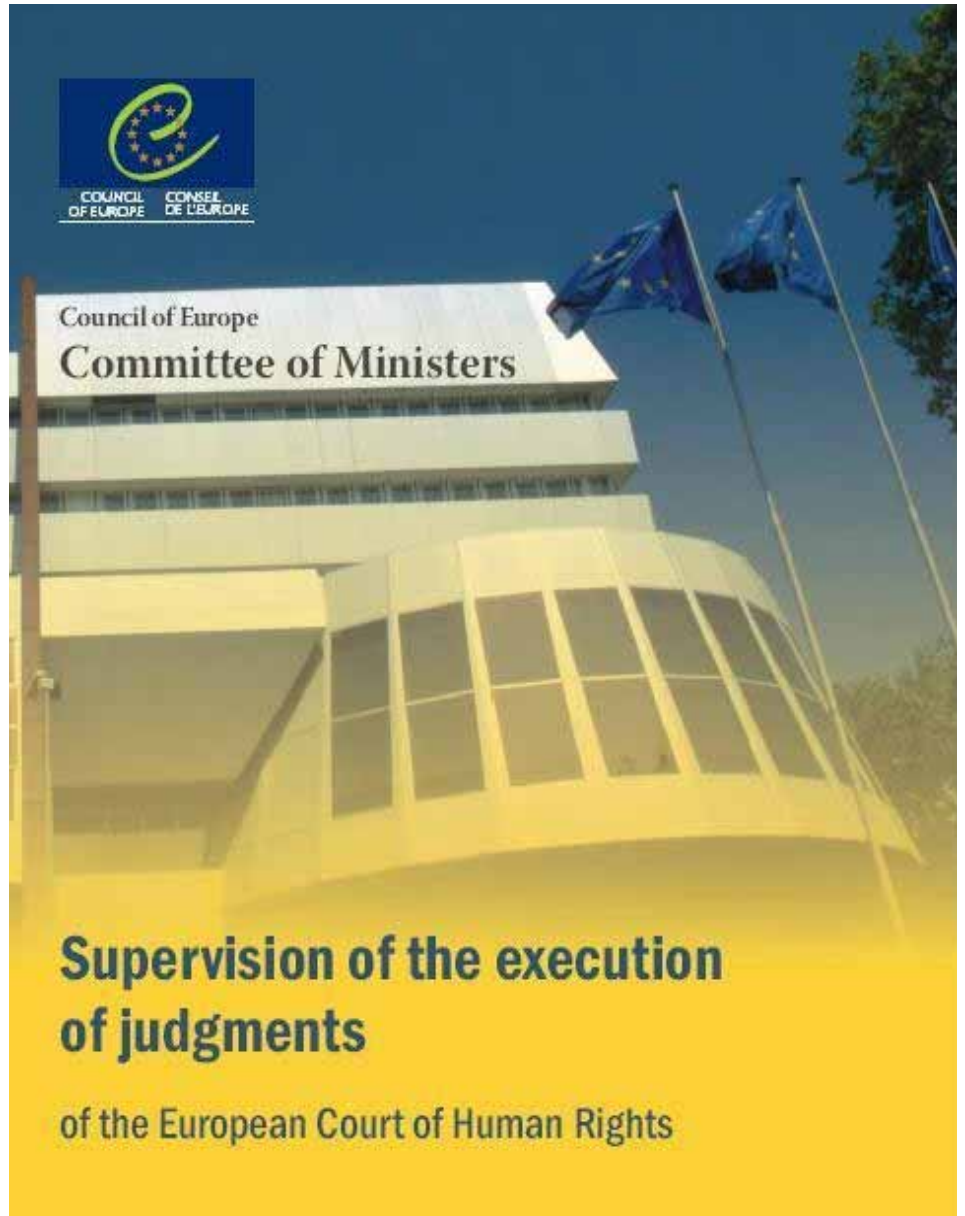
Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe criticizes Greece

Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted interim resolution for Greece to execute the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments regarding freedom of association of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority with no further delays. The respective cases are Bekir Ousta and Others vs. Greece (35151/05), Emin and Other vs. Greece (34144/05) and Xanthi Turkish Union and Others vs. Greece (26698/05).

[Committee of Ministers requested Greece to submit a timetable on execution process of the ECtHR judgments](#)

Different from the previously followed warning mechanisms since 2008, the Committee of Ministers under its mission of scrutinizing Greece's execution of ECtHR judgments on three cases in relation to Western Thrace Turkish Minority's freedom of association has given a strong message by adopting an interim resolution. The interim solution includes a request for Greece to submit a timetable for execution of ECtHR judgments.

The Committee noted that following the ECtHR judgments the registration requests of Evros Minority Youth Association (Bekir Ousta and others), Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi (Emin and others) and Xanthi Turkish Union (Xanthi Turkish Union and others) were not received nor the respective courts in the region held the trials further. The Committee of Ministers noted as well that since 2013 June Greek authorities indicate that specific measures are sought for execution of judgments on respective cases. Furthermore, the Committee disclosed that no tangible data and no timetable had been provided by Greek authorities since June 2013.



On its 1172nd meeting on 6 June 2013 the Committee of Ministers had assessed the status of execution of respective judgments under the rubric "Bekir Ousta Group" and had asked input of Greek authorities on execution process to be able to evaluate the situation on its next summoning in December 2013. At its 1186th meeting on 5 December 2014, the Council of Ministers warned Greece once again and requested a timetable on execution process of ECtHR judgments and

decided on proceeding with a draft interim resolution in case the request is not fulfilled by Greece.

You can access the interim resolution here: [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/ResDH\(2014\)84&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=CM/ResDH(2014)84&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864)

Three Western Thrace Turks were elected mayor in Western Thrace



ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu: “We congratulate Rıdvan Ahmet, İsmet Kadı and Cemil Kabza, the newly elected mayors of Arriana, Iasmos and Myki and we wish them all the success for their future projects”

The second round of local elections in Greece was held on 25 May 2014.

Giorgos Pavlidis elected Eastern Macedonia-Thrace Regional Governor

With 53, 33% of the votes, Giorgos Pavlidis had victory in rivalry with Aris Yannikidis. While this respective majority of votes provided Pavlidis 31 seats in the Eastern Macedonia and Thrace Regional Council, his competitor and former regional governor Yannikidis received 10 seats winning 43,67% of the votes.

Charalambos Dimarhopoulos elected mayor of Xanthi

In Komotini, the first round brought Giorgos Petridis as the new mayor with 56, 11% of votes. The rivalry between Christos Poullos and Charalambos Dimarhopoulos in Xanthi has come to an end with victory of Dimarhopoulos with a majority of votes 51, 08%.

Rıdvan Ahmet is the new mayor of Arriana

Rıdvan Ahmet preceded over Saadettin Şakir Hüseyin on Democratic Power List in Arriana by receiving 54, 92% of ballots and is elected new mayor of Arriana. Saadettin Şakir Hüseyin ranked second with 45, 08% of votes.

İsmet Kadı has been re-elected mayor of Iasmos

The head of the Democratic Cooperation List İsmet Kadı received 51, 24 % of votes against his competitor Kiryakos Amucas, who secured 48, 76 % of majority in Iasmos and Kadı has once again been elected mayor of Iasmos.

In Myki, Cemil Kabza has been elected the new mayor

Cemil Kabza and Mustafa Aga, after having received the biggest two majorities on the first round of elections, competed on the second round for the seat of mayor. Head of the People's Movement List Cemil Kabza secured 57,80% of the votes in the second round whilst Mustafa Aga was voted by 42,20 % of electorate, thus Cemil Kabza has been confirmed the new mayor of Myki.

Ioannis Stavridis elected Maroneia-Sapes Mayor

In Maroneia-Sapes, the rivalry between Ilias Ionnakis and Ioannis Stavridis ended with the victory of Stavridis, who received 67, 33% of the votes.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habip Oğlu reiterated “We congratulate Rıdvan Ahmet, İsmet Kadı and Cemil Kabza, the newly elected mayors of Arriana, Iasmos and Myki and we wish them all the success for their future projects”.

Reply of the President of the European Commission to FUEN

The European Commission sent a reply to the resolution on the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace elect its religious leaders, which was adopted on FUEN 59th Congress



The President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso sent a reply to Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)'s resolution and letter that was sent to all relevant institutions regarding the right of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to elect its religious leaders, which was adopted at FUEN's 59th Congress in May 2014.

On behalf of the President of the European Commission, the Directorate General for Justice sent a reply to the resolution, which was submitted by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality, Peace Party (FEP) Party and adopted by majority of votes at FUEN Assembly of Delegates held on 10 May 2014 during FUEN 2014 Congress in Flensburg. In its reply sent on August 25, 2014, the Commission recalled the Commission's commitment as regards the respect for fundamental rights in general and the respect of the rights of persons belonging to minorities in particular. The Commission noted that the respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities constitutes one of the founding values of the European Union, and is a principle explicitly mentioned in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. Furthermore the Commission underlined that Article 21 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibits discrimination based on membership of a national minority and

provides for the respect by the Union of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

The Commission stressed that freedom of religion, along with freedom of thought and conscience, constitutes one of the essential foundations of democratic societies, enshrined in Article 10 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Furthermore, the Commission noted that EU legislation and financing programmes contribute to address certain difficulties which are likely to affect persons belonging to minorities, such as discrimination and incitement to violence or hatred based on religious, race or national ethnic origin.

EU Commission: The respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities constitutes one of the founding values of the European Union but the Commission has no competence regarding collective rights of any minority

The Commission expresses that the EU has no general powers as regards minorities and there is no reference to collective rights of any minority or the term minorities in its meaning as a

shortcut for national minorities. The Commission therefore notes that it has no competence over questions like the definition and recognition of national minorities, their self-determination and autonomy or the use of regional or minority languages. The Commission claims that those questions fall under the responsibility of the Member States. The Commission further underlines that the provisions of the Charter are addressed to the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union and to the Member States only when they are implementing Union law.

The Commission also highlights the fact that Member States must use all legal instruments available to them in order to guarantee that fundamental rights of national minorities living on their territories are effectively protected in accordance with their constitutional order and obligations under international law, including the relevant instruments of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, the Commission underlines that it is up to the Council of Europe to monitor among others the application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as well as of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by its Member States.

*Image: www.wikipedia.org

The problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace once again on Dolomiten newspaper

Dolomiten newspaper representative Hatto Schmidt, who attended together with the representatives of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS), Dan minority in Germany and German minority in Denmark the fact-finding visit to Western Thrace between 19-22 June 2014 organized in partnership by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship Equality Peace Party (FEP Party), wrote an article on about his observations on the visit in the Dolomiten newspaper of the German and Ladin minorities in Italy.

Schmidt, who wrote also an article related to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace before the fact-finding visit, refers as MIDAS and FUEN delegation to Şahin (Echinos) village visit where 20 mothers refused to send their children to state kindergartens that only teaching language is in Greek. He also referred in his article the teachers who does not know a single Turkish word in state kindergartens and teach to students who does not know a single Greek word and the population of this village is consisted of a hundred percent by Turks and these children were not been able to enrolled to minority elementary schools because of not attending to state kindergartens.

He adds that the ethnic identity of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace was not recognized despite the condemnation of Greece by The European Court of Human Rights, it is not allowed the establishment of the associations that bear the name "Turkish" in their names and those who

were closed because of this reason their licences never returned. However, the Minority is not allowed to elect its religious leaders so the Minority elected its own muftis as a response for not recognising the state appointed muftis. By drawing attention to the discrimination suffered by the Minority on this issue, he says the government follows the same way by appointing 240 Imams to work in state schools and mosques.

After that, he states that the details of his interview with the Komotini mayor George Petridis and implies the small number of the Minority member employees who work in municipality. "Due to discrimination many Minority members emigrated from Western Thrace, 150 thousand populated

Minority's approximately one-third of it for various reasons emigrated Turkey, Germany and other European countries for work" the article included.

Lastly, Schmidt talk about the lack of signs in Turkish but in Greek in Komotini although significant part of the population in the city centre is consisted of by Turks but he came across rarely to signs in Turkish only in villages in the mountainous regions which their population is consisted of completely by Turks. He also states that the sign of the public library in Şahin (Echinos) village in Xanthi is in both Turkish and Greek and draws attention to the presence of a church at the entrance of the completely Turkish populated village is not anything but a symbol of arbitrariness and provocation.

Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party elected first ranking party in Rodopi and Xanthi



ABTTF President and FUEN Vice-President Halit Habip Oğlu: FEP Party with its slogan “Europe Europe Hear Our Voice” gave a strong message from Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to Athens and Brussels.

FEP Party, the only political representative of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, marked a historical record at its first participation at the European elections. Having run for the European elections to raise the Minority's cause in Athens and Brussels with its slogan “Europe Europe Hear Our Voice, The Minority's Free Voice”, FEP Party ranked first in Rodopi and Xanthi.

FEP Party had in total 38 candidates from Xanthi, Rodopi and Evros prefectures for the European elections. With 25,857 votes in Rodopi, FEP Party secured 41,68 % majority of votes and became the first ranking party by leaving

New Democracy (NEA) with 16,41 % and SYRIZA with 10,83 % behind.

With 1.220 votes, i.e. 1, 45 %, in Evros, FEP Party guaranteed a remarkable majority in Xanthi with 15.378 votes corresponding to 25, 89 %. New Democracy (NEA) obtained 17, 59% while SYRIZA was on the third place with 17, and 11% of votes in Xanthi.

FEP ranks third party with biggest number of votes in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace prefecture!

In Eastern Macedonia and Thrace prefecture, an administrative region of Greece which comprises the cities of Drama, Evros, Kavala, Xanthi and Rodopi, FEP Party secured 12,25% with 42.533 votes and became the third ranking party. New Democracy Party received 24,26 % of votes while SYRIZA was on the second place with 16,79%

support of electorate.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President and Federal Union of European Nationalities (ABTTF) Vice-President Halit Habip Oğlu said, “Western Thrace Turkish Minority demonstrated a big solidarity by choosing Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party at European elections on 25 May. Under the slogan “Europe Europe Hear Our Voice” FEP Party, with the support of the Minority, has given a strong message to Athens and Brussels. Leaving behind the NEA and SYRIZA in Rodopi and Xanthi, FEP Party succeeded to come out of elections as the first party and noted Athens of its presence at its first participation in the European elections. My sincere congratulations are to FEP Party with its historical election victory and to our Minority, which has been in support of our party passing this historical stage”.

Far-right came out with outrageous records from the European elections

European Parliament
Results of the 2014 European Election



ABTTF President and FUEN Vice-President Halit Habip Oğlu: “Overwhelming support to extreme right parties at the European elections constitute serious threat to human rights and freedoms and diverse population of Europe”

The European elections were held in 28 Member States on 22-25 May 2014. With an electoral turnout 43,9% over 390 Million citizens eligible to vote, the election results revealed an increased ratio of support to far-right political parties throughout European Union.

Neo-Nazi political party Golden Dawn secured three seats in the European Parliament

The Front National led by Marine Le Pen came out with a historical victory with

24,95% of French votes in European elections, while UK Independence Party had the record with 27% of votes in the UK. In Denmark, the far-right Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti) received a remarkable support with 26,60% of majority of votes. The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), on the other hand, has placed itself as the third party with 19,50 % of votes. Extreme right Jobbik Party came out of European elections as the second biggest party by receiving 14,68% of votes in Hungary. According to estimations, in Germany, the eurosceptic party, Alternative for Germany (AfD) managed to convince 7% of electorate. Neo-Nazi party of Greece, Golden Dawn secured 3 out of 21, total seat number of Greece in the EP, with a 9,39 % of votes received from Greek citizens.

European Minorities were in cooperation during the EP elections

In the European Union, where 40 Million people speaking more than 60 minority or regional languages, during the European elections the minority parties were in cooperation under Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) umbrella. Friendship, Equality, Peace Party of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority, as part of this cooperation, received 42.620 votes, which corresponds to 0,75% of votes nation-wide, in Rodopi and Xanthi and became the first ranking party in the regions where the Minority members represent the majority of the population.

Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), being part of the minority solidarity under FUEN leadership, received 6,20% of the votes and is ranked the fifth party in Romania. Party of the Hungarian Community (SMK-MKP) in Slovakia received 6,53% of votes and became the seventh party nation-wide. South-Tyrolean People's Party (SVP) received 0,50% of votes nation-wide in Italy whereas the political party representing the German speaking population of Belgium ProDG secured 0,09% of votes in the country.

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Vice-President Halit Habip Oğlu uttered “Overwhelming support to extreme right parties at the European elections constitute serious threat to human rights and freedoms and diverse population of Europe. The new European Parliament, where we the extreme right in powerful position, will go through a litmus test regarding protection and defence of the rights of national minorities and other vulnerable groups in Europe.”

*Photo: www.eu.greekreporter.com

Outrageous attack to the masjid in Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis)!



ABTTF President Halit Habip Ođlu: As a response to this outrageous attack, which is anticipated as a provocation in the eve of European elections, we call on the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to calm down and act with common sense

A pig's head cut into pieces and left in blood was found in front of entry door of the masjid built approximately year ago in Avandos in the city of Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis) of Greece. The masjid has been offering Qur'an lectures to the Minority as well. The community members who arrived to masjid on Sunday, the 13 April, for morning prayer found the persecuted pig's head in front of the door and reported the attack to

police. The police forces in charge of the incident started investigation.

A similar attack was made in February 2012 in Halil Bey Mosque in Kavala, which is also known as Alaca Mosque. The perpetrator(s), whose could not be identified, had cut a pig in the entrance of the mosque and nailed its head to the entrance door.

They left a pig's head in front of the masjid's door

In relation to the incident, Chairman of the Board of Trustees Selim Hasanođlu stated: "We all were shocked when we saw this attack. This is an unacceptable insult for us. Here we do our prayer five times a day and offer Qur'an courses to our children. We do not accept this

unbearable insult and we condemn it."

In relation to attack to masjid in Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis), Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) President Halit Habip Ođlu said: "We condemn the attack in Dedeağaç (Alexandroupolis) and we call on the Western Thrace Turkish Minority to calm down and act with common-sense as a response to this unacceptable attack, which is anticipated as a provocation in the eve of European elections. We ask for police to carry out the investigation with diligence and responsibility in the cases of hate motivated attacks as such and call for perpetrators of the incident to be sent to the judicial authorities following the investigation."

*Photo: www.gundemgazetesi.com



2015 FUEN Congress will be held in Western Thrace!

At the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Congress to be held in German-Denmark border region on 7-11 May 2014, it will be announced that next year's FUEN Congress will be hosted by FUEN members representing Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Friendship, Equality, Peace Party (FEP) in Western Thrace, Greece.

[At its annual Congress on 7-11 May, FUEN will announce the venue of 2015 FUEN Congress in Western Thrace](#)

FUEN represents 90 minority organisations from 32 countries and summons annually in premises of one of the member organisations. Last year's FUEN Congress was hosted by South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP) in autonomous region of South Tyrol on 19-23 June when the political representative of Western Thrace Turkish Minority FEP Party has been admitted to FUEN as full member. This year FUEN Congress will take place in



Nordschleswig and Sydschleswig, the border region between Germany and Denmark. Having a pivotal role in promotion of the hosting organisation and the minority represented by the host organisation, FUEN Congress 2015 will take place in Western Thrace. FUEN President Hans-Heinrich Hansen will announce that 2015 FUEN Congress will be hosted by the delegation of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Western Thrace.

[2015 FUEN Congress in Western Thrace will raise attention to the region and problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace](#)

During ABTTF's mission to Western Thrace on 20-23 March 2014, the three FUEN members and Consultative Council of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace (BTTADK) held discussions to host next FUEN Congress in Western Thrace and took favorable decision. Following the confirming decision taken at the Executive Boards of the three FUEN member organisations, the application to host next FUEN Congress in Western Thrace were evaluated by FUEN Presidium. As a result of approval of the FUEN Presidium, FUEN President Hans-Heinrich Hansen will announce during the Congress on 7-11 May 2014 that FUEN Congress in 2015 will be held in Western Thrace.

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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