



Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

# Newsletter

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NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations  
Member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)



## ABTTTF IS MEMBER OF FUEN!!!



Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTTF) has been accepted to ordinary membership for FUEN by majority of votes of delegates in the 52. Congress of Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) which has been organized in Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, between 16-20 May 2007. Also, Western Thrace Minority High Educated People's Association (BTAYTD) has been accepted to ordinary membership for FUEN with ABTTTF. According to the decision taken, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace will be represented by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTTF) and Western Thrace Minority High Educated People's Association (BTAYTD) in following FUEN congresses.

Before the Congress, Council of Delegates held in confer-

ence. Romedi Arquint, the President of FUEN has presented activity report of last 2 years, then Frank Nickelsen, the Secretary General, has presented the budget of FUEN. After these presentations, Hermann Heil, the President of Control Commission read the evaluation report and the new budget has been accepted unanimously. After acception of the new budget, election, in which new president and new vice-presidents of FUEN have been selected, has been held. There was only one candidate for the presidency and Hans Heinrich Hansen has been selected as the new President of FUEN unanimously. 8 candidates have contended for 6 vice-presidencies, 4 ex-vice-presidents have been selected again, and new 2 vice-presidents succeeded to be

selected for FUEN Presidium. Consequently, the Presidium of FUEN has been composed under Hans Heinrich Hansen's presidency with vice-presidencies of Heinrich Schultz, Jurij Brankack, Zlatka Mag Gieler, Andrea Rassel, Martha Stocker and John Catcliffe.

Then it was gotten through to the most important item of the agenda which is related with ABTTTF and statute of FUEN has been changed. The new statute which let minority NGOs activating out of their countries to be member of FUEN has been accepted. Later, 5 motions submitted to the Council of Delegates, have been accepted unanimously. It has been decided to send these motions having advisory character to European Union and to the governments of related countries.

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### Education problem of minorities was the mostly discussed case at the Congress

After the meeting of the Council of Delegates, the Congress has started. Then, opening of the Congress has been made by speeches of Romedi Arqint, the President of FUEN, Urve Palo, Minister of Population and Ethnic Affairs of Estonia, Jaak Prozes, Chairman of the Estonian Union for National Minorities, Edgar Savisaar, Mayor of Tallinn and Aleksander Studen-Kirchner, the President of the Youth of European Nationalities.

In the first session of the Congress, Oliver Paasch, Minister of Education and Scientific Research of Government of the German Speaking Community in Belgium, introduced the fundamental right of education and explained the developments about German Minority's education in Belgium. Paasch stated that other minorities in Europe also should have minority education qualities that they had in Belgium. Generally, minority education case has been discussed in following sessions of the Congress. It has been emphasized that taking education of minorities in their native language had been one of the basic right, and it is stated in the press conference that states had to annul the limitations, which still remain, on minorities' education rights.

ABTTF has put the education problems of Turkish Minority



of Western Thrace on the agenda.

Secretary General of ABTTF, Özkan Reşit, has made a speech in the session, and he said all attentions made to see the education of minorities in their native language as a basic right and interna-

tional agreements that were signed are still not considered by the state in Greece. What can be done against states which ignore warnings and agreements has been discussed in the session and it has been stated that European minorities should continue to be in close connection, to move in common for this case and it has been accorded on all minority NGOs should continue to lobby activities with determinedness by international institutions.

Western Thrace Minority High Educated People's Association has been represented by Pervin Hayrullah and Cemil Kabza. In the following session of the Congress, Cemil Kabza has made a speech in the name of Western Thrace Minority High Educated People's Association (BTAYTD) and he explained the relations between Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and media, then he gave some information about local Turkish press in Western Thrace.

### The next congress of FUEN is in the city of Pecs of Hungary

After consistent works in the Congress, in the last day, it is decided to organize the next congress of FUEN in the city of Pecs of Hungary, with the

host of German Minority of Hungary and Hungarian Government, in May 2008. ABTTF has attended to the 52. Congress of FUEN with a 4-person delegation under the presidency of Halit Habipoğlu composing of Halit Habipoğlu, the President of ABTTF, Özkan Reşit, the Secretary General of ABTTF, Mustafa Kasap and Mehmet Hüseyin, the Members of Administrative Board of ABTTF and ABTTF delegation has left the Congress with positive impression. Halit Habipoğlu, the President of ABTTF evaluated the Congress and he said that they had been attending to FUEN Congress for 4 years, they had been told that membership of ABTTF had not been possible because of its diaspora status in the beginning, but they had continued lobby activities with determinedness and they had been accepted to membership of FUEN at the last.

Habipoğlu said "at first they told us that we could not be a member of FUEN because we were an NGO out of Greece. But we succeeded to explain that we conduct a democratic contest by attending every FUEN congress. At the last, they have changed the statute for our membership and ABTTF became a member of FUEN. Importance of lobbying has been proved once more".

Habipoğlu also appreciated Western Thrace Minority High Educated People's Association, another NGO of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace which became member of FUEN with ABTTF and he said "from now on, Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has 6 delegates in FUEN. We should use this advantage positively and we should explain our problems comprehensively in every FUEN congress" and he finished his words.

# HABIPOGLU HAS BEEN REELECTED AS THE CHAIRMAN OF ABTTF

Newly elected ABTTF Board of Directors came together on 21 April in Witten and reelected Halit Habipoglu, chairman of ABTTF, as the 5<sup>th</sup> chairman.

As may be recalled, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe determined the Board of Directors at the 15<sup>th</sup> term Delegation Council by the attendance of 131 delegates on 8 April. At the first meeting of the newly elected Board of Directors, important decisions regarding ABTTF works for the period of 2007-2008 were taken.

Halit Habipoglu, who has been the chairman of ABTTF for five terms, said that he was very proud of being elected for the fifth term and continued „ Voluntary representative of our minority, ABTTF has achieved significant amount of success and has become an advisory



institution. We will concentrate on international projects more in 2007 and 2008. Our target is to initiate joint projects specially with United Nations, FUEN and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. We will announce our concrete steps to realize that aim to the public in the coming days. Habipoglu underlined that in addition to the identity, religion and human rights prob-

lems of the Western Thrace Turkish minority members, ABTTF will introduce the cultural wealth of the Western Thrace to the international public. Habipoglu continued “Our minority is always mentioned at the international platforms with their problems. It is worrisome that human rights are violated in an EU country, we should always keep that issue on the agenda

but we should not forget that we have an important cultural wealth and we have the responsibility to represent that wealth to the attention of international public. We will fulfill that responsibility in 2007-2008 period.

ABTTF 15<sup>th</sup> term Board of Directors are as follows: Chairman, Halit Habipoğlu; Vice Chairmen, Sami Yusuf, Sebaytin Mümin; Engin Ahmet ; General Secretary, Özkan Reşit; Accountant, Mehmet Hüseyin; Organization Chairman of the North Europe, Mustafa Kasap; Organization Chairman of the Middle Europe, Ramadan Ramadan; Organization Chairman of the South Europe, Cengiz İsmail; Person in charge of Youth Organizations, Kamuran Ömeroğlu; Person in charge of education organizations, Ekrem Kircaali.

## BREAKDOWN OF GREEK MINORITY POLICY

### The establishment of Pomak Culture Association in Xanthi demonstrates the breakdown of Greek minority policy

Following the establishment of *Pomak Culture Association in Xanthi* on 29 March 2007 with the sign name *Pomak* (an ethnical name), Mr. Halit Habipoglu, the President of the Federation of Western-Thrace-Turks in Europe (ABTTF), released a press statement and said that this practice confirmed the breakdown of the Greek minority policy, and Greece had to give up its policy of trying to separate the Turkish minority in Greece and allow all the minorities in the country to express their ethnic identities.

Mr. Habipoglu emphasized that the establishment of *Pomak Culture Association in*



*Xanthi* was the result of the political deadlock in Greece which tried to save itself from this circumstance through adopting artificial minority policies. He said further: “Greece has to recognize the ethnic identities of its own minorities. But Greece did not permit the establishment of associations which used ethnic descriptions like the word “Turkish” in their signboards. Far from this, Greece has permitted the foundation of *Pomak Culture Association* which represents!!! also an ethnic identity.

This contradictory action of Greece demonstrates the collapse of Greek minority policy”.

In his press release, Mr. Habipoglu stated: “Greece has to permit free expression of ethnic identities of the minorities living in the country. It is the right moment for Greece to abolish the political hindrance preventing it from doing so. The only solution for Greece is to recognize the ethnic identities of its own minorities”. Mr. Habipoglu also noted that all Greek citizens, but in particular the ones from Turkish, Albanian, Wallachian and Macedonian minorities had to be allowed to express their ethnic identities both in the society and public sphere which had already become an indispensibility.

Mr. Habipoglu continued his press statement noting: “Greece will be a country where democratic values dominate only when it adopts a minority policy furthered by international conventions and all the minorities in the country are allowed to express freely their ethnic identities. The non-recognition by Greece of ethnic identities of both Turkish and other minorities is the main obstacle of adopting such a minority policy. In this respect, it is time to recognize the minorities’ ethnic identities”. Before concluding his statement, he also pointed out the indispensibility of a change in Greek’s minority policy, and said: “Greece has to adopt the international rules and norms with regard to minority rights and stop trying to manipulate and escalate the situation with artificial minority policies”.

# THE PROBLEM OF 19. ARTICLE IS IN PACE

**The problem of 19. Article has come to order in European Council Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)**

Members of Turkish Minority of Western Thrace who were aggrieved by 19. Article have come to order with the motion which is related with minorities, that has been made in the Spring Session of European Council Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) between 16-20 April 2007. Results of racist discrimination have been expressed by attribution to ex-Article 19 of Greek Citizenship Law in the 8. article of the motion that has been submitted by Latvian parliamenter Boriss Cilevics. When 19. Article came to order in PACE, Halit Habipoğlu, the President of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, stated in his press statement that aggravations and injustices issued from 19. Article have started to come to European politicians' order, too.

**ABTTF has begun to take the results of lobby activities**

Habipoğlu declared that ABTTF has begun to take the results of decisive lobby activities that have been made in past and having been continued today, and he said that, the promise got from Mr. Cilevics after the meeting made in the past had been delivered and the case of 19. Article had been mooted. In addition to this, Habipoğlu said campaigns such as visits to European Council, sign campaigns for victims of 19. Article, postcard and e-mail sendings have been effective and very important. Habipo-



*parliamenters Boriss Cilevics and Habipoğlu*

ğlu indicated that it has been satisfactory for ABTTF and victims of 19. Article to see positive effects of these visits and campaigns today.

Motion given to PACE by Latvian parliamenter Boriss Cilevics in 19 April is composed of 9 articles and draws attention to problems of minorities living in European countries. The most notable article of the motion is 8. article, then. In the 8. article, it is stated that non-recognition of some minorities in Europe by some states still remained a major problem, injustices Turkish Minority of Western Thrace living in Greece faced with have been showed as example and annoyances of members of Turkish Minority who had been deprived of Greek citizenship have been emphasized clearly. Motion will be discussed and settled in June in European Council Parliamentary Assembly (PACE).

Then, Halit Habipoğlu stated in his release that they believed problem of 19. Article which came to order of PACE would keep going to come to Europe's order hereafter, and he said submission of problem

of 19. Article as a motion in PACE was an important start. Habipoğlu thanked to Latvian parliamenter Boriss Cilevics because of his sensitivity and he stated that susceptibilities of 20 parliamenters, Hungarian, German, Dutch, Serbian, Lithuanian, Romanian, Azerbaijani, Finn, Czech, Irish, Latvian and Ukrainian, who signed the motion, to practices of racist 19. Article in Greece were very important. Habipoğlu mentioned the importance of lobby activities of ABTTF and he said that "this motion given to PACE is a success of decisive and disciplined lobby activities of our Federation". He implied that they would continue to lobby activities by gaining power from this development, and he said "importance and effectiveness of lobby activities have been proved once again with this motion".

Habipoğlu said signing of 20 parliamenters from 12 different European countries the motion would lead the problem of 19. Article to come order to whole Europe and he told that "from now on, Greece can not hide negativities emerging from 19. Arti-

cle from agenda any more, and can not escape from restituting the rights of victims of this embarrassing policy". Habipoğlu explained that it was clearly emphasized in the motion that "former Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Law allowed for deprivation of citizenship on the basis of residence abroad of Greek nationals-but only those of non-Greek ethnic origin (this provision has been abolished, but the restoration of citizenship for those more than 45,000 nationals who were deprived of their Greek citizenship on the grounds of this provision is still pending). Similarly, the rights to restore citizenship and to reclaim property of those Greek citizens who fled during the Civil War, as established by law, also depend on their ethnic origin" and he stated that these statements in the motion would had lumbered Greece and it would let pressures on Greece rise.

**Greece must restitute the rights of the victims of 19. Article now**

Habipoğlu ended his statement by saying "the motion submitted to PACE shows that European public also realised injustices that Turkish Minority of Western Thrace faced with and the case came to order of European parliamenters, too. Consequently, Greece can not ignore annoyances that victims of 19. Article had any more. The rights of Western Thracian Turks who were deprived of their Greek citizenships must be restitute, annoyances emerging from 19. Article must be compensated by the state".

# THE PHRASE OF „TURKISH“ HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM A STREET SIGN

The phrase of „Turkish“ has been removed from a street sign in Komotini

The street sign entitled „Greek Friend Turkish Ali Ustoglu Street“ has been changed by the Municipality of Komotini before the local elections in October in 2006 to „Greek Friend Ali Ustoglu Street“ by removing the phrase of „Turkish“ from the street name. This practice of the Municipality of Komotini, which has caused justified reactions among the Turkish minority of Western Thrace, has over again manifested the impatience of Greek authorities against the minority’s ethnic identity.

**Our „Turkish“ identity should not be perceived as a threat, but as a uniting element**

Following the removal of the phrase of „Turkish“ from the street sign in Komotini, Mr. Halit Habipoglu, the President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) released a press statement and said: „Such practices demonstrate the continuation of Greek policy of seeing the Turkish minority in the country as an element of threat“. In his statement, Mr. Habipoglu pointed out the still existing undemocratic implementations against the name of „Turkish“ and hence the ethnic identity of the minority stating: „Through practices such as removing the phrase of Turkish from the street sign, the democratization

of Greece cannot be achieved. The ethnic identity of our minority means cultural richness for Greece. When our ethnic identity is seen as a uniting element by the Greek authorities, such practices will also be understood by them as wrong and unjustified. There is no reason for the Greek authorities to feel

themselves bothered by the minority’s Turkish minority“. He also mentioned that the name of „Turkish“ had become a chronic disease for Greece stating: „Please try to picture that they have even removed the phrase of Turkish from a street sign. Such a practice would be responded as totally absurd in any other European country“.

**We will continue to claim for the recognition of our „Turkish“ identity**

Mr. Halit Habipoglu went on his statement saying: „Despite such practices against the Turkish identity of the minority, we will go on claiming for the recognition of our ethnic identity. The removal of the phrase of Turkish from a street sign explicitly demonstrates that we are still not able to express our ethnic identity in the public sphere. These kind of practices do not really comply with the democratic values of



Europe. Today, the minority rights are guaranteed by the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities adopted by the Council of Europe, and this implementation in Greece is totally wrong and contradicts the democratic rules. Turkish minority of Western Thrace means richness and uniting element for Greece. The recognition of our ethnic identity and acknowledgement of our minority rights guaranteed by the Framework Convention and bilateral agreements will very much contribute to the domestic peace in our country Greece. Therefore, such practices have to be abandoned at once, the phrase of Turkish has to be replaced in the street sign, our minority’s ethnic identity has to be recognized by Greece, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has to be ratified immediately by Greece“.



Doc. 11283 revised  
29 April 2007  
Minority protection in Europe: best practices and differences in implementation of common standards  
Motion for a recommendation  
presented by Mr. Cilevici and others

1. Report for cultural and linguistic diversity and protection of minorities in Europe has improved during the last decade. Due mainly to the adoption of the instruments of the Council of Europe, in the legally binding Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, minority rights have been moved from the field of political rhetoric and negotiation to the area of practical policies and legally based monitoring.
2. Unfortunately, the two instruments mentioned above have not yet become universal standards throughout Europe, as some Council of Europe member states have not yet ratified them. This problem was addressed to the Assembly in its recent Recommendation No. 12(2006).
3. The Framework Convention is "a document of principles", and practical methods of implementing these principles vary broadly from country to country. In the course of monitoring compliance of the state parties with the provisions of the Framework Convention, its Advisory Committee has accumulated an extensive array of relevant data.
4. Both effective solutions and failures are among these patterns, models and practices of implementation of the Framework Convention. Quite often the most successful solutions for some provisions, and serious problems in implementation of others can be observed in the same country.
5. Thus, in the Austrian province of Carinthia, its governor has for several years effectively undermined implementation of the provision of national law stipulating bilingual road signs. Finally, after the Constitutional Court had unequivocally ruled that this practice was illegal, the minority language inscriptions were displayed, but with such small letters that it is virtually impossible to read them. This is a clear example of distorting the humanitarian spirit of the Framework Convention.
6. In Romania, remarkable progress has been visible and very high standards ensured in the field of minority protection in recent years. However, also here a controversy over displaying bilingual inscriptions in the multilingual Babeş-Bolyai University, which led to the dismissal of two professors who produced and displayed such signs on their own initiative, has hurt the implementation of the Framework Convention.
7. Some state parties, including Denmark, the Netherlands and Latvia, have ratified the Framework Convention with declarations which substantially limit the scope of application of the Framework Convention and hence restrict its practical significance.

8. Non-recognition of certain minorities by some states remains a major problem. Paradoxically, despite having declared "unity of the nation" as a pretext for non-recognition, it is not rare for these states in the meantime to continue to differentiate between their citizens on the basis of ethnic origin. This is the case, in particular, in Greece, where former Article 11 of the Citizenship Law allowed for deprivation of citizenship on the basis of residence abroad of Greek nationals – but only those of non-Greek ethnic origin (this provision has been abolished, but the restoration of citizenship for those more than 45,000 nationals who were deprived of their Greek citizenship on the grounds of this provision is still pending). Similarly, the rights to restore citizenship and to maintain property of those Greek citizens who fled during the Civil War, as established by law, also depend on their ethnic origin.

9. Therefore, the Assembly decides to study, in close cooperation with the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention and the Committee of Experts of the European Charter, concrete ways of implementing provisions of the Council of Europe instruments on minority protection, its successes and failures – with a view to disseminating best practices and making them available to all member states within the framework of the Charter – and to continue the promotion of minorities and respect for diversity in their societies. This work should also cover practices in those states that have not ratified the Framework Convention and take into account related discussions, e.g. in the framework of the Council of Europe's inter-governmental committee of experts on national minorities (CENMI).

- Signer<sup>1</sup>:
- CILEVICI Boris, Latvia, SOC
  - ALMÁSI Katalin, Hungary, EPP/CD
  - BARNETT Dore, Germany, SOC
  - BEHRENS-VIDEC Marie-Louise, Netherlands, EPP/CD
  - BERENS Jozsef, Slovakia, EPP/CD
  - ČAČIĆ Ivica, Serbia, SOC
  - DZEMBRITZKI Detlef, Germany, SOC
  - ÉKES József, Hungary, EPP/CD
  - FRUNDA György, Romania, EPP/CD
  - HAJIYEVA Gulshain, Azerbaijan, EPP/CD
  - JURGENS Erik, Netherlands, SOC
  - KELEMEN András, Hungary, EPP/CD
  - KOZMA József, Hungary, SOC
  - LAAKSO Jaakko, Finland, UEL
  - MELČÁK Miloš, Czech Republic, SOC
  - MOONEY Paschal, Ireland, ALDE
  - OSRADOVIĆ Željko, Serbia, SOC
  - POPESCU Ivan, Ukraine, SOC
  - SZABÓ Zoltán, Hungary, SOC
  - VAREIKIS Egidijus, Lithuania, EPP/CD
  - VESATTE Bineta, Lithuania, SOC

<sup>1</sup> SOC: Socialist Group  
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party  
ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe  
EDG: European Democratic Group  
UEL: Group of the United European Left  
NI: not registered in a group



# IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF ARTICLE 19...



## What should you do if you are a victim of Article 19 of Greek Citizenship?

Here follows the information note of Prof. Dr. Tekin Akil-lioglu, who asserts the rights of the 19th Article victims voluntarily at European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).

Greek authorities denaturalized more than 60 thousand Western Thrace Minority members during 1958-1998 and to assert the rights of the victims, a campaign lasting 3 months mounted by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe and during the campaign named "19<sup>th</sup> Article victims are filing lawsuits", instructive meetings in Soma, Bursa and Istanbul were held. People were informed on how to file a lawsuit at ECHR. During the meetings, it was clearly seen that our Western Thrace Turkish Minority members have a great aspiration for their country in spite of the long time passed. Western Thrace Minority members expressed the challenges they faced at border gates. The most important problem was unfair denaturalization process. Minority members would

like to know whether it was possible to file a suit to take their citizenship rights back. There are serious barriers to file a lawsuit against Greek authorities. Let me summarize some of them; a long time has passed and people get used to that situation, victims were not informed at any condition, subjects to complain about have been concealed and international law courts are not competent.

## When does the court process begin and how does it run?

One has to file a suit at ECHR within 6 months after the domestic judicial decision becomes final. However, long time had already passed when the victims learnt that they had been denaturalized so they could not do anything against the decision. Meanwhile, attorney Orhan Hacıbrahim claims that if an administrative act is not conveyed to the related parties, tender period does not begin. When the related parties are informed then tender period begins. I totally agree with Mr. Hacıbrahim. Mr Hacıbrahim filed suits at Council of State to assess the rights of some Western Thrace Turkish minority members who were denaturalized. It is not possible to apply directly to ECHR and that is why Mr. Hacıbrahim preferred to apply to Greek Council of State which is a domestic court. Additionally, if the suit is won then Ministry of Interior Affairs could be challenged to give back the citizenship rights of

the Western Thrace Turkish Minority members. Yet, it should be taken into account that those suits can last for years. We can easily say that none of the suits finalize in a reasonable period of time.

According to another view, denaturalized minority members can write petitions to Ministry of Interior Affairs collectively and demand their citizenship rights back. That offer does not seem realistic. The petitions are to be written by attorneys and financial difficulties that minority members face make it difficult to hire a attorney. Even if attorneys do not demand money, Ministry of Interior Affairs already announced in 1998 that it was impossible to make any administrative act for the denaturalized ones who had not applied to Greek authorities during the announced tender period.

## What are the necessary conditions to apply to ECHR?

I have already mentioned that there are serious challenges to apply to ECHR. First challenge is that citizenship is not one of the human rights that is preserved under the framework of European Convention on Human Rights and one must exhaust all ways through domestic law which can last a life long, at least 10 years. After exhausting all possibilities in domestic law, one can apply to ECHR. A denaturalized person becomes either-heimatloss/stateless/apatride and is given Jansen Pass with which one can leave Greece

but can never come back again or takes another citizenship mostly from Germany or Turkey. It can be easily guessed that after taking another citizenship (Turkish/German), it is impossible to take back citizenship rights from Greece. During our meetings in Turkey, we have found out that most of minority members have found jobs in Turkey and established their own families. For those minority members, losses occurred as a result of denaturalization are planned to be demanded from Greece. Yet, there is not an international law mechanism that could provide that. Meanwhile, various conditions to file a suit against Greece are not satisfied. What could be done in such a condition? It seems more logical to apply to ECHR for those who still live in Greece without any citizenship rights.

## Suits that could be example for ECHR

A family of 3 daughters and one mother was denaturalized by one by then 2 daughters and mother were naturalized again, now one daughter is still stateless. Mother can not get any social support since government gives that social support only to 3 children families and that family is considered as a two children family (2 naturalized, one is still stateless). If the mother files a suit on that background and is rejected by domestic courts then she can apply to ECHR, emphasizing the violation of 8<sup>th</sup> Article and supplementary protocol 1<sup>st</sup> Article of

the European Convention on Human Rights.

Stateless minority member can apply to European Court of Human Right on the condition of being discriminated or bad treatment. However, such conditions require the support of an attorney but a stateless minority member does not have the necessary financial means to pay for an attorney. In that case, minority member prefers not to do any legal action. Additionally, she/he believes that authorities will tease her/him. Due to these reasons, we could not find any file to send to ECHR.

Dr. Erol Kasifoglu, Chairman of Western Thrace Turkish Minority Solidarity Association, was not permitted to



*European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg*

enter Greece in 2005 to visit his family. His suit which was filed to ECHR, reasoning the violation of 8<sup>th</sup> Article of European Convention on Human Rights (that article preserves the family rights) was rejected by ECHR, reasoning that the subject of the suit is not covered by the 8<sup>th</sup> Article. Although Mr. Kasifoglu claimed that his family rights were violated, ECHR said that his right to enter Greece was

violated, not the right to see his family. It was just an indirect consequence. I think that ECHR avoids to take decisions that could affect control of Schengen. Is that possible

to say that stateless people from Germany or other European country are prevented to enter Greece and nothing can be done against that? I strongly believe that this solution method should be thought. The one who is not permitted to enter Greece can file a suit at Greek Council of State and can claim that his rights that are preserved by European Convention on Human Rights

are being violated. That way has not been tried up to now.

#### **What can be done to solve the current problems?**

The ones who lost their citizenships and are forced to live in other countries should inform the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECHR) and Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in a very detailed way and make those institutions evaluate those cases again. Greece has misinformed those two institutions and said that there were no complaints from Western Thrace minority members. While no one applies to them, those institutions have closed the cases.

## ABTTF HAS ACCOMPLISHED A NEW STRUCTURING

In order to ensure more efficient and effective presentation of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace in the international arena, ABTTF has adopted in May 2007 a new working system. In parallel to this and in order to introduce better the problems of Western Thracian Turkish minority face to the world and European public and to conduct more comprehensively the lobbying activities of ABTTF, it was decided to perform the activities in the fields of international affairs, academic and economic researches, Greek studies and public relations in a systematical way.

Following the consultations and meetings made by the Executive Board of ABTTF, it was arrived at the conclusion that the activities directed to Western Thrace and to the presentation of Western Thracian Turkish minority in international and European arena



could be performed in a more systematic and programmed way via working units which would be formed within ABTTF under the headship of young specialists. Upon the decision taken by the ABTTF Executive Board, four different working units have been formed within ABTTF. These are the Working Unit of International Affairs, the Working Unit of Academic Affairs, the Working Unit of Greek Studies and Economic Affairs and the Working Unit of Media and Public Relations.

In this respect, the working groups have immediately started to perform their tasks. In parallel to ABTTF's Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and also its membership in the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), the Working Unit of International Affairs will provide for all the necessary preparations for international activities ABTTF will take part in and be responsible for performing the lobbying activities at international conferences and meetings. The Working Unit of Academic Affairs will perform activities in order to fill the void in the academic researches with regard to the Turkish minority of Western Thrace in the academic environment. Following this, within the the Working Unit of Academic Affairs, academic essays about the problems of Western Thrace Turkish minority

will be written, published, translated into English, Greek and German, and sent to all concerning universities, institutions, strategy establishments and academic publishing houses in Greece, Turkey and in Europe as well. Within the Working Unit of Greek Studies and Economic Affairs, studies about Greece and researches about the economic condition of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace will be coordinated. The Working Unit of Media and Public Relations will be responsible for all press bulletins, press releases, news and the announcement of ABTTF activities to the public. Upon the formation of these four working units, Mr. Halit Habioglu, the President of ABTTF stated his positive convictions and said: „We believe that via our new working system, the activities of ABTTF will be performed more efficiently“.



# CALL TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Call to the European Commission  
from ABTTF 15th term Assembly of Delegates  
8 April 2007 Gießen

Human rights of Western Thrace Turkish Minority have been seriously infringed by Greece since 1981. Our country, Greece does not only recognize the identity of Western Thrace Turkish Minority but also violates their political, social and economic rights. To summarize those violations, Greek authorities do not permit our elected muftis to do their job, political representation right of our minority is prevented via the 5% election barrage, members of Western Thrace Turkish minority can not work in public bodies, our minority faces unfair treatment in economic areas. All in all, we can conclude that Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities is not implemented at all.

The mentioned human rights violations are all taking place in Greece, a European Union member country. This situation is not compatible with European Union values of strong democracy and human rights concept. European Union should show the same sensibility of human rights violations to Greece that it shows to other countries; and urge Greece to implement more human rights oriented minority policy.

Meanwhile, Greece's attitude towards Western Thrace Turkish Minority causes European Union values to be examined seriously. Greece's inappropriate minority policy is a negative situation for European Union as well. We think that European Union should convince Greece to implement a minority policy that is compatible with European Union's values of democracy.

In that respect, European Union has an important task to accomplish. Western Thrace Turkish minority faces serious problems in an EU member country for a long time. If no precautionary action is taken, European cultural mosaic will be harmed seriously and EU will be the suspect. To eliminate such a consequence, EU should intensify its pressure on Greece to put Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities into force and urge Greece to implement the minority policy that regards the rights, that were granted by international treaties, of our minority members.

**Consul of Delegates of ABTTF**



## ABTTF NEWSLETTERS

News Bulletins published in Turkish, German, English and Greek by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) will start its 3. incoming year.

ABTTF News Bulletins in which there are current events in Western Thrace, minority policy of Greece, international activities of ABTTF related with problems of Western Thrace Turks, information about Western Thrace Turkish associations in Europe are followed up by Western Thrace Turks at first and large parts of society interestingly.

*In addition and for abonman  
you can contact with us and get information  
at the web site [www.abttf.org](http://www.abttf.org)  
or telephone number 0049 230 291 32 91*

### ABTTF Newsletter

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe  
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