



# Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europa

# Newsletter

Happy New Year!

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)  
Member of the European Language Equality Network (ELEN)

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## ABTTF attended the 69th FUEN Congress held in Italy



At the FUEN Assembly of Delegates, ABTTF Vice President Nabi Ibraimtzik was re-elected as FUEN Vice President for the next three years.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, participated in the 69th annual Congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), held in the city of Bozen/Bulsan/Bolzano in Italy's South Tyrol region from 23 to 26 October 2025.

Hosted by the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), which represents the German and Ladin minorities in Italy, the Congress was attended by ABTTF President and TAG Spokesperson Halit Habip Oğlu, ABTTF Vice President and FUEN Vice President Nabi Ibraimtzik, and ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kirmaci.

The Congress, attended by representatives of

autochthonous national minorities, peoples and language groups from 30 different European countries, featured panel sessions discussing barriers to cross-border, access to audiovisual media in minority languages in Europe and how FUEN's European Citizens' Initiative known as the Minority SafePack Initiative (MSPI), addressed this issue. The host German and Ladin minorities were introduced with cultural performances.

### ABTTF Vice President Nabi Ibraimtzik re-elected as FUEN Vice President

Elections for the FUEN Presidency and Vice Presidency were held at the FUEN Assembly of Delegates held within the framework of the Congress. Olivia Schubert, a member of the German minority in Hungary, was elected as the new FUEN President, while ABTTF Vice President Nabi Ibraimtzik was re-elected as

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FUEN Vice President.

## Resolutions submitted by the Western Thrace Turks and the Turks of Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Islands were adopted

The resolution jointly submitted by ABTF, the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party, representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace and as the Western Thrace Turkish delegation was adopted by a majority vote.



The resolution indicated that Greece had persistently failed to execute three judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) regarding the Turkish associations in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases for over 17 years. It noted that the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi, which was not registered in 2010 on grounds that the word "Turkish" in its name was misleading and could cause problems in terms of public order, won its case against Greece at the ECtHR. The FUEN resolution further records that in its

unanimous judgment on 24 June 2025 in the case of "Sagir and Others", the ECtHR found that Greece had once again violated Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) concerning the freedom of peaceful assembly and association and called on Greece to respect the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and to promptly and effectively execute the ECtHR judgments concerning the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases and the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi.

A draft resolution submitted by the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER), calling on Greece to allow the use of the word "Turkish"



for all institutions and organisations of the Turkish people of the Dodecanese Islands, was also adopted by a majority vote.

## Four new minority organisations joined the FUEN family

At the FUEN Assembly of Delegates, the organisations of Ukrainians in Hungary, the Roma minority in Romania, and the Saterland Frisians in Germany were accepted as full members, while the organisation of the Yenish in Germany was accepted as a supporting member of FUEN.



FUEN's annual congresses in 2026 and 2027 will be held in Finland and Slovenia respectively

Following a decision by the Assembly of Delegates, the 70th FUEN Congress in 2026 will be hosted by the Swedish minority in Finland in Helsinki, and the 71st FUEN Congress in 2027 will be hosted by the Italian minority in Slovenia in the Istria region.



# Despite those who try to silence us, we will continue our struggle for rights and freedoms!

Dear readers,

We are preparing to leave another year behind us. As we approach the end of this year, one of the most important milestones in our work has been our contacts with the United Nations.

After becoming a member of the UN Economic and Social Council in Special Consultative Status in 2006, we submitted fifty written statements to the UN Human Rights Council, which meets three times a year, and physically attended some of the sessions. In our work, which has been ongoing for almost 20 years at the UN, we have contributed to Greece's review processes not only within the UN Human Rights Council but also within the framework of the UN treaty body mechanisms, and we have followed Greece's reviews.

We were also present in Geneva at the inaugural meeting of the UN Forum on Minority Issues, the most important platform attributed to national minorities at the UN. We have participated in this forum, held annually at this time for 18 years, and have persistently and resolutely raised the issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

This year, I participated in the 18th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues for the first time, due to my private meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Prof. Nicolas Levrat.

The meeting, attended by diplomatic representatives from all UN Member States, also saw the participation of numerous civil society organisations from different parts of the world. According to information provided by the Special Rapporteur, approximately 800 people registered for the meeting. We were there too, of course. Representatives from the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) from our region were also in attendance.

We brought the issues of the Turkish

community in Western Thrace to the UN agenda through our interventions at the forum. Our country Greece repeated what we already knew, putting forward the state thesis that is not based on facts. On the other hand, it seems that the state thesis is not enough to cover up the facts, because this time, institutions and organisations from our region that support our country's state thesis were also in Geneva.

The organisations attending the meeting were registered under the names of the Committee of the Muslim Alevi-Bektashis of Thrace in Greece, the Administrative Committee for the Management of the Muslim Property of Didymoteicho, the Administrative Committee for the Management of the Muslim Property of Komotini, the Teachers of Islamic Education of Thrace Association, the Association of Muslim Greeks of Pos Pos-Komotini, the Cultural and Educational Association of Roma Women of Drosoro Xanthi Elpida "The Hope", the Cultural Sports Committee of the Mountainous Region of Xanthi and the Pomak Cultural Association of Xanthi.

Representing the Istanbul Greeks, whose status and rights were determined by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and whose fate was sealed by the same treaty, the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans (Ec.Fe.Con) was also present at the meeting. The Ec.Fe.Con representative also indicated that their population in Türkiye was declining and requested that special incentive programmes be created to encourage the younger generation in particular to settle in Türkiye.

This year's forum was also attended by Omonoia, the representative of the Greek minority in Albania, who requested that trust be established between their minority and Albania in terms of the Greek minority's relations with Greece, their motherland, and expressed the issues faced by the Greek minority in Albania.

As you might expect, the forum was also



brought to the news of our country and received extensive media coverage. The Greek media, of course, did not change its position of repeating the state thesis, as demonstrated by the language used in reporting on the forum.

Indeed, in the forum where ABTF and WTMUGA voiced the problems of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, the speeches made by other organisations in our region were reported in the media with phrases such as "... claims were refuted", "... completely baseless claims", "... our country strongly expressed its justified position".

On the other hand, the term "Greek national minority" used in news reports referring to the Greek minority in Albania was noteworthy.

What I mean is that in Greece, the mainstream media, among others, is a platform where the state's position and official discourse are reproduced daily, rather than ensuring an objective coverage. It is almost impossible for a critical voice or an idea that does not coincide with the state thesis to find a place in the media.

There is institutionalised discrimination against the Turkish community in Western Thrace in politics and the media. They do not report what we say as it is, and none of us have articles published in Greek newspapers. At every opportunity, the media acts to distort our voice, and to make matters worse, they use a style reminiscent

of ardent defenders of the state thesis.

However, as we always say, you can't hide the truth; the truth can only be concealed for a while with various games and lies, but sooner or later, the truth will come out. We have been struggling for rights and freedoms for years, and we have enough experience to know what is what. While some try to create a false reality, we will continue to

make our voice heard on every platform, without straying from the path we know.

The struggle for rights and freedoms is a determined, long path. We acted knowing this, such deceptions do not divert us from our path, on the contrary they spur us on even further. They have not silenced us, and they cannot! The younger generations after us will continue this struggle. Indeed, this is

a struggle for existence and identity!

On this occasion, I wish each of you a happy new year and hope that 2026 brings health, peace and happiness to everyone.

Greetings and yours sincerely,

Halit Habip Oğlu  
ABTF President

## ABTF President attended the ELEN 2025 General Assembly

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTF), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, participated in the General Assembly of the European Language Equality Network (ELEN), of which it is a member, held in Barcelona, Spain, on 14-15 November 2025. Hosted by the Catalonia-based Escarré International Centre for the Ethnic Minorities and Nations (CIEMEN), the General Assembly brought together representatives of national and linguistic minorities from different European countries. ABTF President Halit Habip Oğlu attended the Assembly, accompanied by Deniz Servantie from ABTF Brussels Office.

As part of the General Assembly programme, the ABTF President participated in a workshop on the first day before noon on the project titled "FOSTERLANG (Fostering Linguistic Capital)", which aims to protect, and support endangered and minority languages and is funded by the European Union (EU). At the workshop, which focused on intensive education and multilingual classes using the example of Catalonia, representatives from different countries shared their experiences on the preservation, revitalisation and digitisation of endangered and minority languages.

Following the workshop, the ELEN 2025 General Assembly started with the welcoming speeches by ELEN President Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones, ELEN Secretary General Davyth Hicks, and host CIEMEN Director Jordi Garrell.

At the official reception held on the first



evening, United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Nicolas Levrat delivered a presentation. Levrat emphasised the need for supranational organisations and states to work together to protect minority languages and strengthen minority rights. He noted that discrimination against minorities continues in Europe and around the world, with inequalities persisting particularly in areas such as gender and mother tongue. Levrat stipulated that international organisations such as the Council of Europe and the UN must strengthen their efforts to support the rights

of minorities, adding that he himself was working towards this goal.

On the second day of the General Assembly, seven draft resolutions submitted by ELEN members were discussed and unanimously adopted. Subsequently, the new members of ELEN introduced themselves. ABTF President Habip Oğlu introduced ABTF, which became a member of ELEN this year, and its work, stating that as the representative of the Turkish community in Western Thrace living in Greece, ABTF raises the issues of the Turkish community and the human rights

violations it faces in international platforms. Habip Oğlu concluded his remarks by expressing ABTTF's great pleasure at joining the ELEN family.

Within the framework of the General Assembly, ABTTF President Habip Oğlu met with UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Nicolas Levrat and Chair of the Committee of Experts on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe Aleksandria Oszmianska-Pagett, informing them about the fundamental and current issues facing



the Turkish community in Western Thrace. Habip Oğlu also met with representatives of ELEN member minority organisations attending the General Assembly and engaged in lobbying activities.

The ELEN 2025 General Assembly concluded with delegates emphasising the importance of working together and sharing ideas for the preservation and development of minority languages and decided that the 2026 ELEN General Assembly would be held in Belfast/Béal Feirste, the capital of Northern Ireland.

## Western Thrace Turks at the OSCE Human Dimension Conference

ABTTF raised the issue of Greece's systematic violation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace's freedom of association.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (BTAYTD), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, participated in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Conference held in Warsaw, Poland, from 6 to 17 October 2025.

Organised by the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office of Finland with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the ten-day conference addressed the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the OSCE region and celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. The Turkish community in Western Thrace was represented by K. Engin Soyyılmaz from ABTTF and Kerem Abdurahimoğlu from WTMUGA.

Speaking at the conference, which was attended by 57 OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions, international organisations and civil society representatives, ABTTF addressed the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including in the session on tolerance and



non-discrimination on 13 October. ABTTF noted that associations bearing the word "Turkish" in their names, representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace whose status and rights were defined by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, operated officially in Greece without any obstacles for approximately 50 years after that date. However, as a result of the Greek state's policy of denying the Turkish presence and identity in the country, the oldest association of the Turkish community, the Xanthi Turkish Union (ITB), founded in 1927, was dissolved in 1986 because of the word "Turkish" in its name.

ABTTF pointed out that Greece has failed to execute three judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) concerning the Turkish associations in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases for over 17 years and has politicised it over the years. It further indicated that in 2010, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi, which was not registered on grounds that the

word "Turkish" in its name was misleading and could cause issues in terms of public order, won its case against Greece at the ECtHR. ABTTF stated that in its unanimous judgment on 24 June 2025 in the case of "Sagir and Others", the ECtHR ruled that Greece had once again violated Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) on freedom of assembly and association.

Noting that this latest ECtHR judgment addressed the same fundamental issue as its 2007 and 2008 rulings, ABTTF explained that the dissolution or non-registration of associations with the word "Turkish" in their names in Greece was not an individual or isolated case but pointed to the existence of a systematic issue.

In this context, ABTTF highlighted that the European Commission's 2025 Rule of Law Report also referred to the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases in its section on Greece, emphasising that the European Commission thus confirmed the decline in the rule of law in Greece in recent years. ABTTF called on Greece to fully and effectively execute the ECtHR's judgments concerning the associations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and to remove the obstacles to the registration of associations whose names include the words "Turkish", "Minority" or "Western Thrace" in light of the ECtHR's judgments and case-law.

## ABTF President Habip Oğlu met with UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Levrat

President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTF) Halit Habip Oğlu met with UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Nicolas Levrat, at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland on 26 November 2025.

Habip Oğlu, accompanied by ABTF International Relations Director Melek Kirmaci, raised the fundamental and current issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece and the human rights violations they are subjected to.

Habip Oğlu indicated that, contrary to the educational autonomy guaranteed to the Turkish community in Western Thrace by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, autonomous and private Turkish primary schools in the Western Thrace region are being closed one by one each year by ministerial decisions on the pretext of low number of pupils. He noted that three more Turkish primary schools are to be closed in the 2025-2026 school year, and that the number of Turkish primary schools, which was 188 in 2011, has now fallen to 83.



Furthermore, Habip Oğlu emphasised that Greece denies the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community and that associations bearing the word "Turkish" in the country have been dissolved or not registered,

adding that Greece has persistently failed to execute the European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases concerning Turkish associations for over 17 years.

Habip Oğlu stated that the ECtHR had once again ruled against Greece for violating Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in its unanimous judgment dated 24 June 2025, in the case titled "Sagir and Others" filed by the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi, which was not registered by the Greek national courts due to the word "Turkish" in its name.

Habip Oğlu stated that MPs, rights defenders and institutions representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace were being targeted in politics and the Greek media and were being subjected to hate speech. He explained that lawsuits were being filed against prominent figures in the Turkish community with the aim of intimidating them with false accusations and revealed some examples of this situation.

## Western Thrace Turks participated in the UN Forum on Minority Issues

The Forum addressed the marginalisation and targeting of Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece, its exposure to hate speech, and the systematic violation of the Turkish community's freedom of association.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTF) and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace participated in the 18th session of the United Nations (UN) Forum on Minority Issues held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 27-28 November 2025.

ABTF President Halit Habip Oğlu and ABTF International Relations Director



Melek Kirmaci, along with Dr Pervin Hayrullah and Kerem Abdurahimoğlu from WTMUGA, participated in the session themed "The contribution of minorities to diverse, resilient, and peaceful societies".

Intervening at the panel session titled "Building trust and social cohesion: addressing barriers to peaceful coexistence", ABTF emphasised that the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne granted education and religious autonomy to the Turkish community in Western Thrace living in Greece. It was further noted that while Greece initially permitted signboards with "Turkish school" in both Turkish and Greek to be displayed, it has gradually increased political pressure over the years and today denies the Turkish

community's ethnic Turkish identity.

Pointing out that associations operating in the Western Thrace region for half a century have been dissolved on grounds of the word "Turkish" in their names, ABTTF indicated that the Turkish community's right to elect its own religious leaders has been usurped by the government since 1991.

ABTTF noted that the Turkish community in Greece, which faces systematic discrimination in many areas, has seen its educational and religious autonomy dismantled over the years by various laws and arbitrary regulations, and that it has been largely eliminated in practice.

ABTTF highlighted that the discrimination targeting Turkish community, which has become normalised and manifests itself in every aspect of daily life, stems primarily from the state's constant repetition of the "perception of an enemy within" targeting the Turkish community in politics and the media. ABTTF stated that members of parliament and human rights defenders from the Turkish community are subjected to hate speech in the Greek media, and that unfounded and defamatory news is being published about them.

ABTTF called on Greece to develop effective policies against structural discrimination and inequality targeting the Turkish community and demanded that the bridge-building role of the Turkish community be strengthened both nationally and internationally.

WTMUGA, on the other hand, stated that Greece does not recognise the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and violates many minority and human rights, including the right to education, calling on Greece to recognise the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community and to respect their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Reacting at the same panel session, Greece reiterated its official state thesis, claiming that the minority in (Western) Thrace is a Muslim minority defined on the basis of religion in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and that it enjoys all the rights guaranteed by the Greek constitution and the European Union (EU).



## ABTF President Habip Oğlu paid a working visit to Strasbourg

President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTF) Halit Habip Oğlu paid a working visit to Strasbourg from 29 September to 1 October 2025, in parallel with the Autumn Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

During the working visit, accompanied by ABTF Director of International Relations Melek Kirmacı, Habip Oğlu raised the current issues and human rights violations faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace in his meetings with PACE members and Council of Europe bodies.

Habip Oğlu emphasised that Greece has persistently failed to execute the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases, which includes Turkish associations in Western Thrace, for over 17 years. He further referred to the unanimous judgment rendered by the Court on 24 June 2025 regarding the case known as "Sagir and Others", which was filed by the Cultural Association of Turkish Women from the Prefecture of Xanthi, which had not been



registered by Greek national courts on grounds of the word "Turkish" in its name. He added that Greece was once again condemned for violating Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Habip Oğlu also stated that, contrary to the educational autonomy guaranteed to the Turkish community in Western Thrace by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, Turkish primary schools are closed by the Greek authorities on the pretext of insufficient number of pupils. He noted that while there were 194 Turkish primary schools in the Western

Thrace region in 2008, this number had fallen to 83 in 2025-2026 due to closures.

Habip Oğlu noted that the Turkish primary school in the village of Paleo Zigos (Mizanlı), which was closed in 2023, was not re-opened by the Greek authorities in the 2025-2026 school year despite reaching the required number of pupils. However, he stated that last year, the primary school in the village of Argiri in the province of Karditsa was re-opened for only one pupil, and this year the primary school on Pserimos Island re-opened for only 2 pupils.

Furthermore, Habip Oğlu pointed out that although pre-school education is compulsory in Greece, there is not even a single bilingual Turkish kindergarten in the Western Thrace region where the Turkish community lives. He stressed that the Greek authorities have still not met the Turkish community in Western Thrace's request for a new building for the Xanthi Turkish Minority Secondary and High School, and that pupils are forced to continue studying in the current building, which lacks the infrastructure necessary for modern education.

## ABTF participated in the 7th annual meeting of the FUEN Education Working Group

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTF), as a full member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), participated in the 7th Annual Meeting of the Education Working Group held in the city of Komotini in the Western Thrace region of Greece on 10-13 November 2025.

ABTF International Relations Director Melek Kirmacı participated in the meeting, which was attended by teachers, educators, researchers and academics from different European countries and focused on the theme of "Minority Schooling Systems, Turkish Minority Education in Greece,



Minority History Teaching".

FUEN President Olivia Schubert participated

in the meeting via video conference and delivered a welcoming speech. Subsequently, FUEN Education Working

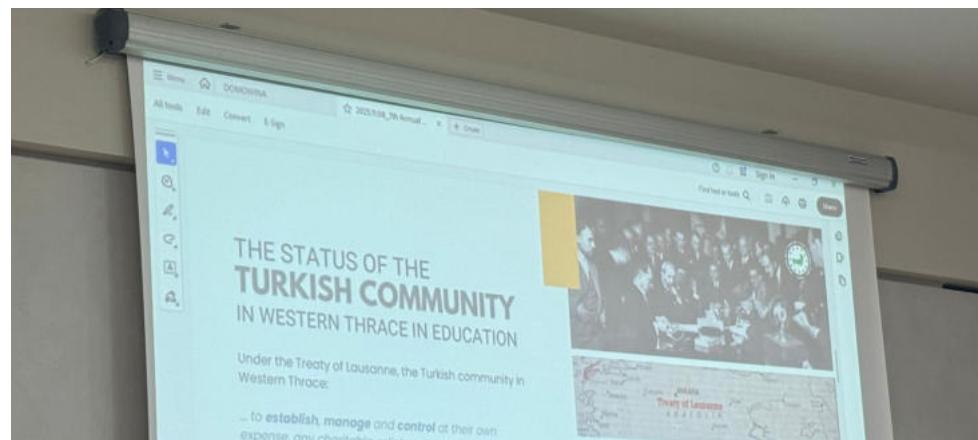
Group Coordinator Zora Popova and Thomas Hieber, lawyer and legal expert for FUEN's European Citizens' Initiative entitled "Minority Safepack Package (MSPI)", delivered introductory presentations on minority rights in education.

In its presentation during the panel session titled "Minority Schooling Systems in Europe", ABTTF addressed the status of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in education and the problems it faces in this area.

Emphasising that the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne guaranteed the Turkish community in Western Thrace autonomy in education and education in their mother tongue, Turkish, ABTTF noted that Turkish schools in the Western Thrace region are "autonomous" and therefore have "private school" status and belong to the Turkish community.

ABTTF indicated that this autonomous structure has been largely dismantled to this day as a result of laws, regulations and other legislation, as well as arbitrary practices by the state, and that schools belonging to the Turkish community have been turned into schools managed under state supervision and control, because the real aim is to eliminate the Turkish school system in the long term.

Noting that there is not a single Turkish kindergarten in Western Thrace and that children belonging to the Turkish community are forced to attend public kindergartens that provide education only in Greek, ABTTF recorded that private and autonomous Turkish primary schools have been closed under the pretext of low number of pupils,



and that while there were 194 Turkish primary schools in Western Thrace in 2008, today there are only 83.

ABTTF pointed out that although Western Thrace Turks constitute the majority of the population in the prefecture of Rodopi and nearly half of the population in the prefecture of Xanthi, there is only one Turkish middle school and one Turkish high school in each prefecture. In contrast, there are 14 public middle schools and 9 public high schools in Rodopi, and 20 public secondary schools and 9 public high schools in Xanthi.

ABTTF called on Greece to restore the educational autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which was guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne but has been largely dismantled today by

legal regulations and arbitrary practices.

At the panel session titled "Fundamental educational problems of the Turkish ethnic group in Greece" during the meeting, Prof. Dr. Fırat Yıldız, a member of the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER), Aydın Ahmet, President of the Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union (BTTÖB), and Attorney Ahmet Kara, former President of the Western Thrace Minority Schools Board realised their presentations on the educational issues of the Western Thrace Turks and Rhodes and Kos Turks. Moreover, Ozan Ahmetoğlu, President of the School Board of the Xanthi Turkish Secondary and High School, realised a presentation at a panel session titled "Minority Education at Secondary and Upper Secondary Levels".



# ABTTF's parallel report to the U.S. State Department's 2024 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Greece

In its parallel report, ABTTF detailed the issues faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace, as well as the human rights violations and discrimination they are subjected to.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted its parallel report on the 2024 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Greece 2024 published by the Department of State of the United States (U.S.) to the relevant U.S. authorities.

In its parallel report, ABTTF noted that this year's report on Greece, whose scope has been significantly narrowed, is biased, lacks objectivity, and is pro-government, completely ignoring the human rights violations and systematic breaches of the rule of law occurring in the country. It expressed its disappointment that the report makes no mention whatsoever of the issues faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace or the rights violations it suffers.

Noting that the Turkish community in Western Thrace is considered taboo in Greece because it is seen as a national issue, ABTTF underscored that, unfortunately, there is no realistic and objective debate on issues related to the Turkish community in the mainstream Greek media.

Moreover, ABTTF stated that the educational autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace was guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, but that over the years, complex legal provisions and government practices have effectively eliminated this autonomous structure in education.

ABTTF emphasised that, despite pre-school education being compulsory in Greece, there is not even a single bilingual Turkish kindergarten in the Western Thrace region where the Turkish community lives. It noted that, contrary to the Turkish community's educational autonomy, Greek authorities

closed Turkish primary schools in the region on grounds of lack of sufficient number of pupils, and that while there were 194 Turkish primary schools in 2008, this number had fallen to 83 by 2025-2026 due to closures.

Furthermore, ABTTF noted that the Turkish primary school in the village of Paleo Zigos (Mizanlı), which was closed in 2023, did not re-open in the 2025-2026 school year despite reaching the required number of pupils, and stressed that Greece's real aim is to completely eliminate the educational autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

ABTTF also explained that, as a result of Greece's policy of denying the ethnic identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, it dissolved or refused to register associations with the word "Turkish" in their names, adding that Greece has persistently

failed to execute three judgments by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in the "Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases", which includes the dissolved Xanthi Turkish Union and the unregistered Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, for over 17 years.

In addition, ABTTF stated that, despite the ECtHR's 2007 and 2008 judgments against Greece, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi, which applied for registration with the competent court in 2010, was not registered because of the word "Turkish" in its name. The association, having exhausted domestic legal remedies, appealed to the ECtHR. ABTTF noted that in its unanimous judgment of 24 June 2025 in the case of "Sagir and Others", the ECtHR ruled that Greece had once again violated Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Finally, ABTTF called on Greece to restore the educational autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, and to ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

# ABTTF and FUEN Vice President Nabi Ibraimtzik participated in FUEN's working visit to Berlin



Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) Vice President Nabi Ibraimtzik participated in the working visit organised by FUEN, of which ABTTF is a full member, to Berlin, the capital of Germany, on 17-18 September 2025.

The FUEN delegation, consisting of FUEN Vice Presidents Olivia Schubert, Bernard Gaida and Nabi Ibraimtzik, and FUEN Secretary General Eva Penzes, met with German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) members Klaus-Peter Willsch (CDU/CSU), Kathrin Michel (SPD), Christoph de Vries (CDU/CSU), Knut Abraham (CDU/CSU) and Stefan Seidler (SSW), as well as Maylis Roßberg, President of the European Free Alliance Youth (EFAY).

During the meetings, which covered FUEN's activities, the current situation of European minorities and European minority policy, the Minority Safepack Initiative (MSPI), geo-blocking of internet content, the financing of FUEN's projects and opportunities for closer cooperation between FUEN and the

Bundestag were discussed.

ABTTF and FUEN Vice President Nabi Ibraimtzik informed Bundestag members about the current issues faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the discrimination and rights violations they are subjected to within the context of the European minorities. Emphasising that the Turkish ethnic identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace is denied by Greece, Ibraimtzik noted that associations bearing the word "Turkish" are not permitted in the country and that the Turkish community is portrayed as a "threat" and "danger" in the country's political circles and mainstream media. Ibraimtzik also raised the issues faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the field of education, stating that autonomous and private Turkish primary schools in the Western Thrace region had been closed by the Greek authorities on grounds of lack of sufficient number of pupils, in violation of the Turkish community's educational autonomy.

\*Image: <https://www.facebook.com/Federal.Union.of.European.Nationalities>



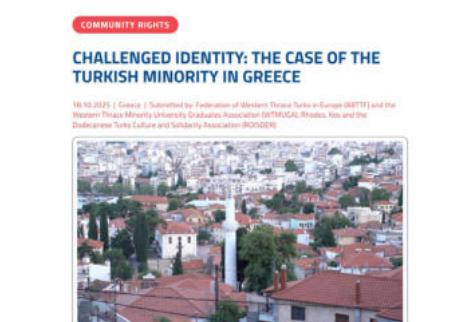


## FUEN published an analysis on the difficulties faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Turks of Rhodes and Kos in Greece

The project known as MinorityMonitor.eu, established by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), of which the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) is a member, aims to provide a common platform for autochthonous national minorities and language communities in Europe to publicise human rights violations and abuses. In this regard, it has published a new analysis on the challenges faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Turks of Rhodes and Kos in Greece.

As a result of an examination of 18 FUEN resolutions submitted to the FUEN Assembly of Delegates between 2013 and 2024 by ABTTF, the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA), and the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER), all members of FUEN, the contribution expressed concerns about issues such as denial of identity, restrictions on education and religious freedom, disregard for cultural heritage, deprivation of citizenship, and obstruction of freedom of association.

The contribution prepared by FUEN stipulates that Greece violates the following



fundamental rights:

- Right to Identity: The Turkish community is not recognised as an ethnic group and is defined as a "Muslim minority", paving the way for assimilation.
- Freedom of Religion: The community's right to choose its own religious leaders is being obstructed, and arbitrary interventions are being made in foundation properties.
- Right to Education: Turkish schools providing bilingual education have been closed, and there are no Turkish schools left in the Dodecanese Islands.
- Right to Citizenship: Thousands of people whose citizenship was revoked under Article 19, which was in force between 1955 and 1998, are still left without documents and status.
- Right to Organise: Associations

containing the words "Turkish" and "minority" are not granted legal status.

- Preservation of Cultural Heritage: Mosques and historical buildings have been neglected, and some have been demolished.

In its analysis, FUEN examines the historical background of the Turkish communities in Western Thrace and the Dodecanese Islands, showing how decades of cultural pressure, legal discrimination and administrative obstacles have led to profound marginalisation. FUEN notes that, despite repeated calls in resolutions adopted by the Assembly of Delegates, the Greek authorities have failed to take effective measures to recognise the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and to ensure equal treatment in line with international human rights standards.

FUEN draws attention to the systematic rights violations faced by the Turkish communities in Western Thrace and the Dodecanese Islands and calls on Greece to act in accordance with international treaties. Please click below for the full analysis by FUEN:

<https://minoritymonitor.eu/case/CHALLENGED-IDENTITY-THE-CASE-OF-THE-TURKISH-MINORITY-IN-GREECE>.

### ABTTF Newsletter

ABTTF Newsletter, which has been distributed since May 2005, is published in Turkish, Greek, English and German.

ABTTF Newsletter covers matters of grave concern to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, current developments in Western Thrace and Greece, ABTTF's international activities and lobbying as well as the activities of ABTTF member associations and plays an important role in promoting the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

ABTTF Newsletter is sent to homes by mail and can also be obtained from our member associations.

In order to receive ABTTF Newsletter by mail and for further information on the newsletter:

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