

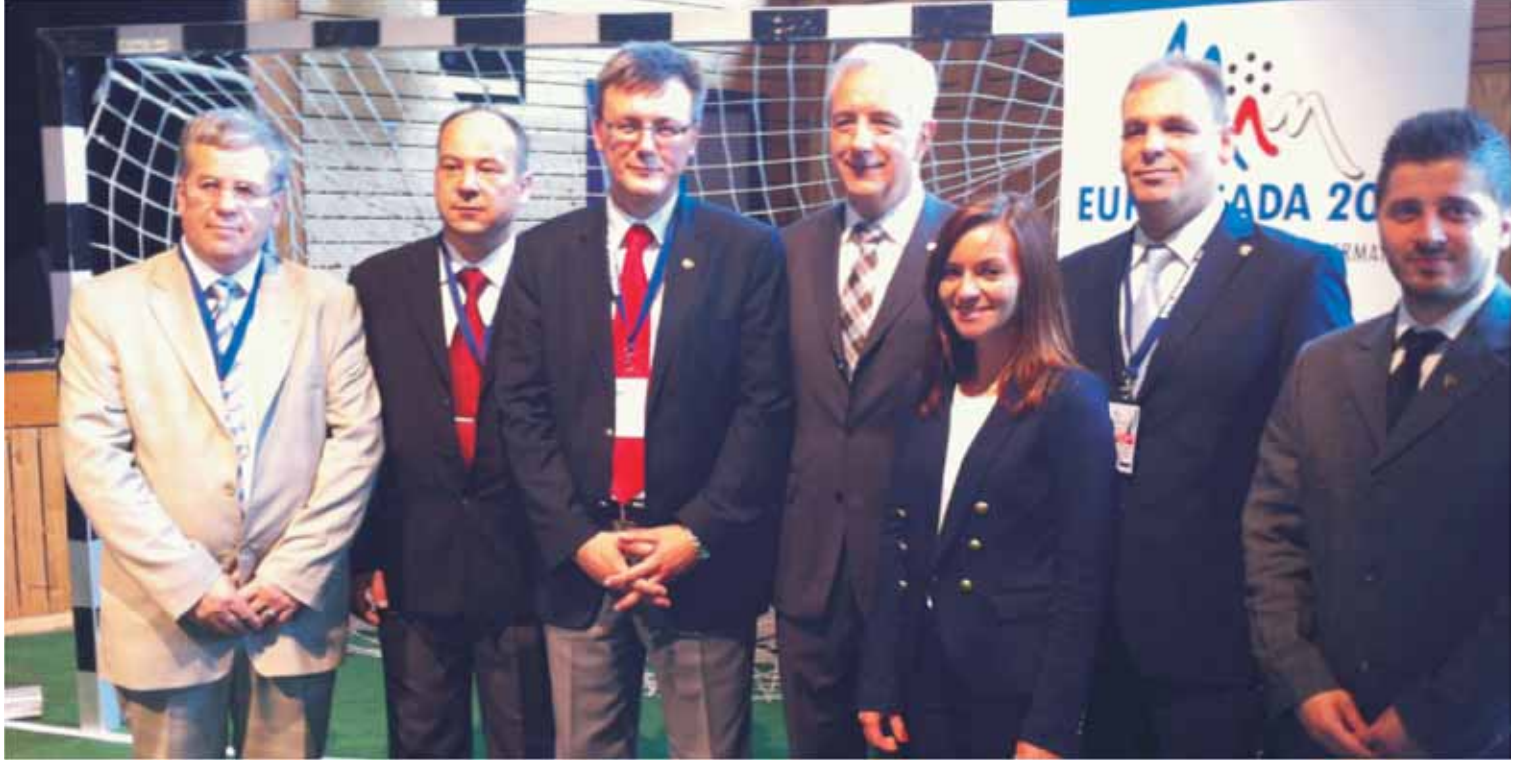
# Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europa Newsletter



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)

Nr. 23 | September 2012 | Year 8

## EUROPEADA 2012 ended



### The winner of the championship is German-speaking minority of South Tyrol

EUROPEADA 2012-FUEN 2nd European Football Championship hosted by FUEN member, Federation of Lusatian Sorbs, "Domowina" on 16-24 June 2012 ended. The winner of the championship has been the German-speaking minority of South Tyrol at the end of the match played at the Müllerwiese Stadium with Roma minority in Hungary. Western Thrace Turks which are represented by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and Xanthi Turkish Union (İTB) has had the 12th rank among 19 teams in the championship.

Western Thrace Turkish delegation called attention to the legal struggle of Xanthi Turkish Union

On June 20, Wednesday, Western Thrace Turkish delegation introduced the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace at the Culture Fest. Western Thrace Turks mentioned legal struggle of Xanthi Turkish Union which has been a symbol for the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace with regard to its freedom of association. The delegation stated that Greece still continues to violate the right to establish its own associations despite three judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

### Western Thrace Turks interviewed with the press, told the problems of the Turkish Minority

The Western Thrace Turkish delegation met minority press in the championship and mentioned the problems of the Turkish minority of Western Thrace. The Turkish delegation gave interview to Deutschland Radio Wissen (WDR),

## CONTENTS

EUROPEADA 2012 ended .....	pages 1-2	
ABTTF paid an official visit to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe .....	page 3	
ABTTF attended the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum .....	page 4	
ABTTF mentioned the problems of the Western Thrace Turkish women in the 20th Session of the UN Human Rights Council .....	page 5	
U.S. 2011 International Religious Freedom Report on Greece released .....	page 6	
"Double imam" tension in Rhodes .....	page 7	
A member group of Golden Dawn attacked Komotini Turkish Youth Union .....	page 8	



# ABTTF News

Deutschlandradio K lt r ve MDR Television. The delegation interviewed with various radio channels under the theme of "Living Diversity" and introduced the Western Thrace Turks

team and the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece. The delegation told that associations which bear the word "Turkish" in their titles were closed down and added that

Xanthi Turkish Union is struggling for its freedom of association for more than 25 years in Greece.





## ABTTF paid an official visit to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The President of ABTTF Halit Habipoğlu reported the problems of the Turkish Minority to PACE Members Boriss Cilevics and Klaas de Vries

On 25 June 2012, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid an official visit to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu and Member of International Affairs and Lobby Group Fatoş Akkuş visited PACE in order to discuss the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace with PACE members Boriss Cilevics (Latvia) and Klaas de Vries (Netherlands).

In the meeting with Boriss Cilevics, Member of Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the PACE, the President of ABTTF Halit Habipoğlu explained the current problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. Habipoğlu informed also Klaas de Vries,



the rapporteur of the report on “Implementation of judgments to the European Court of Human Rights”, about ABTTF and its activities. President Habipoğlu mentioned that the educational and religious autonomy

guaranteed by the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 has today been destroyed. Furthermore, the President explained current developments in Greece and added that that the economic crisis has most affected the Macedonia- Thrace region which recorded the highest unemployment rate in Greece and this situation had a negative impact on the living conditions of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. President Habipoğlu also expressed their concerns regarding increasing hate-motivated attacks against the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and added that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace had a fear that such incidents of hate-motivated attacks would continue in the period after the election of extreme rightist Golden Dawn which is known its strong discourse against the Turkish Minority to the Greek Parliament in 17 June elections.



## ABTTF attended the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum



Approximately 1800 participants discussed the role of media in culture and education

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated to



Deutsche Welle (DW) Global Media Forum on 25- 27 June 2012 in Bonn, Germany. Fatma Reşit, Member of ABTTF International Affairs and Lobby Group and Young ABTTF Spokesman, attended the international conference on “Culture, Education, Media - Shaping a Sustainable World” together with Felix Busch, Member of International Affairs and Lobby Group. Approximately 1800 journalists, educators and representatives of civil society attended the workshops held in the forum, to discuss how the media handle with the cultural diversity, education and global ethics, and the new methods of teaching and learning.

ABTTF: The media's attitude towards the minorities is based on stereotypes and prejudices

At the second day of the forum Fatma Reşit participated to the workshop “Is the Clash of Civilizations inevitable? Three approaches of Cultural Diversity”. During the workshop, organized by E C R I C a r t s , Prof. Elka Tschernokoshewa and Dr. Des Fabian Jacobs asked the participants what to do for an harmonious coexistence of different cultures. Then, Fatma Reşit emphasized the role of media and stated that the media reproduces prejudices in its work. She gave the example of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece where the majority of the community doesn't have any knowledge about the minorities in their country. She mentioned also that the media has to be objective in its stand and added that minorities should be included in the education system.





# ABTTF mentioned the problems of the Western Thrace Turkish women in the 20th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

ABTTF: Turkish women of Western Thrace face a lot of difficulties in economic and political life

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) submitted a written statement 'The problem of effective and full participation of women belonging to Turkish minority of Western Thrace in economic and political life of Greece' to the 20th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council. In its written statement, ABTTF expressed the challenges of women belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in their participation of economic and political life of the country.



May 2012 in Greece, ABTTF explained that women belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace discussed that deep economic crisis led most of young Turks to go abroad for work, which in turn the division of families resulted as an additional burden on women.

ABTTF further noted that since there is a 3% electoral threshold which is applied to independent candidates at national level, the members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace have to run candidates with majority parties. ABTTF argued that the electoral threshold hinders the participation of minority women in the political life of the country.

In its written statement, ABTTF noted that in the Western Thrace Turks Women's Assembly, the Turkish minority women asked for more participation in economic and political life. And ABTTF added that the minority women called the Greek authorities to establish a 50% women quota in local governments and abolish 3% electoral threshold for independent candidates in the national parliament.

The full text of the written statement submitted by ABTTF to the 20th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council is available at:

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G12/139/47/PDF/G1213947.pdf?OpenElement>

## Macedonia-Thrace is most affected by economic crisis

ABTTF noted that the highest unemployment rate in Greece was recorded in the Macedonia- Thrace and added that in the period of deep economic crisis, economic conditions of the persons, including women belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace have deteriorated.

In Western Thrace Turks Women's Assembly which took place on 18-19

## Turkish women asked for a 50% women quota in local governments

In its written statement, ABTTF also expressed the problems of the Turkish women in their participation of the political life of the country. Since there is a quota of at least 1/3 participation of each gender in electoral lists for local elections, ABTTF explained that there is only a small number of minority women who actively participate in the elected bodies at the local level.



## U.S. 2011 International Religious Freedom Report on Greece released



residing in Thrace.

It is stated in the report differences remained between the some Muslim Turkish minority and the Greek government regarding the process of selecting muftis and imams and the government continued to maintain it has the right to appoint muftis since they perform judicial Sharia function but on the other hand, some members of the Muslim minority objected to the government's appointment of muftis.

It is mentioned although the principal was written off by the Greek government, it continued to claim that waqfs (charitable organizations) in Thrace owed interest on their tax debt totalling approximately one million euros (\$1.3 million). Members of the Muslim minority protested the government's position and lobbied for the interest to be written off as well.

The report notes attacks against non-Orthodox groups in the country, stating that in March unknown perpetrators damaged the exterior of the Uysallı mosque in Rodopi prefecture, in February unknown perpetrators damaged approximately 10 gravestones at the Muslim cemetery in the city of Komotini and in July unknown perpetrators nailed a pig's head on the wooden door of the historic Halil Bey mosque in Kavala.

"The U.S. 2011 International Religious Freedom Report is important as it mentions the problems of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace together with the other non-Orthodox religious groups in Greece. As ABTTF, we will prepare a shadow report as in the previous and express those problems in a more detailed way in it." said Halit Habipoğlu, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

**ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu: As ABTTF, we will prepare a shadow report as in the previous years and express the views of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace on the matters left incomplete in the U.S. report**

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the U.S. Department of State released the 2011 International Religious Freedom Report on Greece. In the report, which also addresses to the problems "the Muslim minority in Thrace (Turkish Minority of Western Thrace)" faces in the area of religious freedom, it is stated the Greek Orthodox Church exercises significant social, political, and economic influence.

The report points out that the Greek government does not keep statistics on religious groups and it is stated the "Muslim minority" recognized officially by

the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne consists of an estimated 140,000 to 150,000 individuals (approximately 1.3 percent of the Greek population) residing in Thrace.

It is noted in the report the rights of the "Muslim minority in Thrace" was guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and the Greek government maintains that Muslims living outside Thrace are not covered by the Treaty of Lausanne and therefore do not enjoy the rights provided by the treaty to Muslims





## “Double imam” tension in Rhodes

ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu: The assigned Mufti of Dimetoka does not have the legal authority to appoint a new imam in Rhodes, which is also contrary to the current practice

The Office of Mufti in Dimetoka, Greece appointed a new imam to the İbrahim Pasha Mosque in Rhodes, where Imam İlder Meço has been serving for three years. According to the news published in the daily Gündem, Hasan Karaali was appointed as the new imam to the İbrahim Pasha Mosque by the Mufti of Dimetoka assigned by the Greek State although he did not have the legal authority to do so. Moreover, there has been no request of the Turkish minority living in Rhodes for a new imam at all. Due to the incident, which took place at the beginning of the holy month Ramadan, the state prosecutor of Rhodes invited the executive board members of the Rhodes Muslims Culture and Brotherhood Association and Imam İlder Meço, who objected to the appointed new imam, to his office and made them autosuggestions to solve the problem.

**Turkish minority living in Rhodes has the authority to choose any person it wishes as imam**



As the Turkish minority living in the Dodecanese Islands including Rhodes and Kos is not subject to the Lausanne Peace Treaty signed in 1923 and therefore does not fall legally under the authority of the assigned Muftis in Western Thrace, Greece, it can choose any person it wishes as imam. Moreover, the office of Mufti in Rhodes has been vacant since the death of Mufti Süleyman Kaşlıoğlu in 1974. So about 3,000 Muslim Turks living in Rhodes, who are all Greek citizens, charged three years ago İlder Meço as imam to serve in the İbrahim Pasha Mosque which is the only open mosque in the island for religious services.

“The Turkish minority living in the Dodecanese Islands including Rhodes and Kos has been facing difficulties in practising its religion for decades. The office of Mufti in Rhodes has been vacant since 1974. Most of the mosques in Rhodes have been closed on the ground that they would be renovated. Today, the historical İbrahim Pasha Mosque is the only mosque which is open for religious services. Now, although the Turks living in Rhodes did not request so at all, the assigned Mufti of Dimetoka appointed a new Mufti to Rhodes. And through the autosuggestions of the Greek state prosecutor and police, the Turkish minority is forced to accept this fait accompli. However, according to the Greek laws, the assigned Mufti of Dimetoka does not have the authority to appoint a new imam to Rhodes and through this implementation, freedom of religion and conscience of the Turkish minority in Rhodes is being violated.” said Halit Habipoğlu, President of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

\* Photos:

[www.yunanistandaosmanlieserleri.com](http://www.yunanistandaosmanlieserleri.com)





## A member group of Golden Dawn attacked Komotini Turkish Youth Union

ABTTF President Halit Habipoğlu: Our concern that we raised about the election of Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament has today become true

On 6 August 2012, a group of nearly 150 members of extreme nationalist Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi) party marched toward Komotini Turkish Youth Union (Gümülcine Türk Gençler Birliği) (GTGB) and chanted slogans against Turkey and Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, and the group threw bottles to the garden of the association.

At that day, Golden Dawn organized a demonstration in order to protest the settlement of illegal immigrant to the police schools in Komotini and Xanthi. After the demonstration, a group of demonstrators marched toward the Turkish Consulate in Komotini, but the police did refuse access of the group to the street on which the consulate is located. Subsequently, the group congregated in front of the GTGB building. The group chanted Greek national anthem and shouted slogans against Turkish Minority and Turkey,



then threw bottles to the garden.

**ABTTF President: We are concerned about the increase in hate-motivated attacks**

President of Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) said: "We strongly condemn the attack on Komotini Turkish Youth Union. And, we would like to express our fear that our

concerns that we raised about the election of extreme rightist Golden Dawn to the Greek Parliament has become true with this attack on GTGB. This attack raises our concern that it might lead an increase in hate-motivated attacks. In view of this provocative attack, the Turkish Minority will keep its calmness and maintain its unity and solidarity".

\* Photo: [www.birlikgazetesi.info](http://www.birlikgazetesi.info)

### ABTTF Newsletter

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

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

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

### ABTTF

#### Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu

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

##### ABTTF Head Office

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

##### ABTTF Brussels Office

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

Executive Editor: K. Engin Soyylmaz Editor: Mustafa Veli