



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

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)

Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) International Studies/Activities January-December 2021

Summary Activity Report

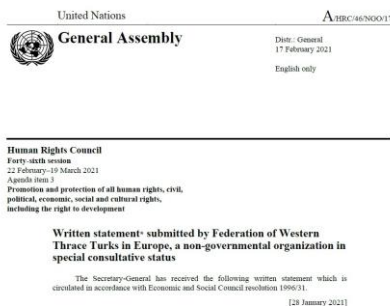
Participation to the Fundamental Rights Platform Meeting, 01.02.2021 / Online

ABTTF attended the 2021 Fundamental Rights Platform online meeting titled 'Human rights work in challenging times – ways forward' organised by the European Union (EU) Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) on 1 February 2021. Deniz Servantie of the ABTTF Brussels Office attended the meeting, which was held in two parts.



The working sessions, which began with an opening speech by FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty, focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on communities and the opportunities for networking between non-governmental organisations working in the field of human rights from various countries in Europe.

Written statement to the 46th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council, 22.02.-19.03.2021 / Geneva, Switzerland



The 46th Regular Session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council was held from 22 February to 19 March 2021. ABTTF, which has a special consultation status before the UN Economic and Social Council, regularly participates in the council's work through written statements. In this context, ABTTF prepared and submitted to the Council a written statement titled 'Violation of freedom of association due to the refusal to register associations with the word "Turkish" in Greece and the pending implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights'.

Webinar: ‘The Problem of Execution of ECtHR Judgments in Greece: Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases’ 25.02.2021 / Online

ABTTF, the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) co-organised on 25 February 2021 an online panel entitled ‘The Problem of Execution of ECtHR Judgments in Greece: Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases’.



In the webinar which was organised with the moderation of President of the Xanthi Turkish Union Ozan Ahmetoğlu and where ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu and WTMUGA President Dr. Hüseyin Baltacı realised their opening remarks and Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Rodopi President Hülya Emin her keynote speech, Attorney Ahmet Kara, GHM Spokesman and European Implementation Network (EIN) Board Member Panayote Dimitras and Human Rights Specialist, former MP and former Secretary General for Human Rights at the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights of Greece Maria Giannakaki took part in the meeting as panellists.

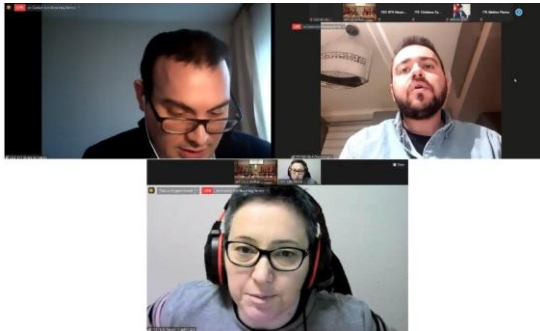
You may watch the event which took place on Zoom from ABTTF’s YouTube and Facebook accounts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsWelJ3hhgE&t=290s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hjzdG0ihdM&t=2170s>

<https://www.facebook.com/ABTTF-Avrupa-Bat%C4%B1-Trakya-T%C3%BCrk-Federasyonu-939989616164959>

Participation to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, 08-09.03.2021 / Online



ABTTF participated in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting titled ‘Media Freedom and Gender Equality’ held online on 8-9 March 2021 due to the new type of coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak.

Deniz Servantie and Nihan Ayan from ABTTF, Dr. Pervin Hayrullah representing WTMUGA and General Coordinator Fatih Hüseyinoğlu representing FEP Party attended jointly the meeting representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Intervening in the session where the role of the media in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda was discussed, ABTTF said that the Turkish community in Western Thrace is continuing to be the target of hate speech in the mainstream Greek media and it further called on Greece to strengthen the existing mechanisms that define hate speech which may lead to hate crimes in the media, including online and social media platforms.

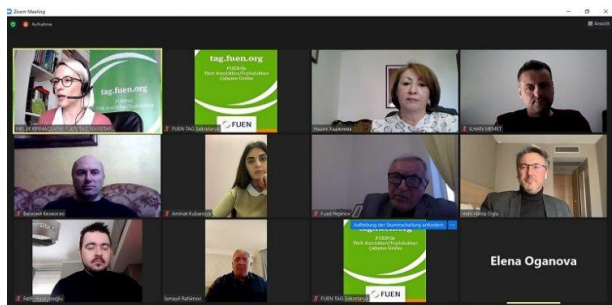
ABTTF Parallel Report to the '2019 Report on Incidents Against Places of Religious Importance in Greece', 09.03.2021

ABTTF prepared a parallel report with the aim of responding to the issues pertaining to the Turkish community in Western Thrace which were included in the 'Report on Incidents Against Places of Religious Importance in Greece' published by the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs on 30 December 2020 and sent it to Greek President Katerina Sakellaropoulou and Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs Niki Kerameus.



ABTTF criticised the unilateral portrayal of issues related to the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the Ministry's report which only reflected the official state approach, adding that the religious autonomy and rights of the Turkish community in Western Thrace were ignored, and that the information and explanations in the report did not address the current problems of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Participation to FUEN TAG's 1st thematic seminar, 25.03.2021 / Online



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party, representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended the 1st thematic seminar of the Working Group of Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) in the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) which was held online on 25 March 2021.

In the first part of the seminar, which started with a greeting and opening speech by FUEN Vice-President and FUEN TAG Spokesperson Halit Habip Oğlu, Bars El Board Member Nadia Hadjieva gave a video presentation regarding the Karachay-Balkar Turks in the Russian Federation.

In the second part of the seminar, the participating organisations conveyed the latest developments and current issues in the Turkic minorities and communities they represent and their countries. In this context, the Western Thrace Turkish delegation expressed the recent problems of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

ABTTF Parallel Report to the US 2020 Greece Country Report on Human Rights Practices, 13.04.2021

ABTTF prepared a report containing the opinions, suggestions and demands of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in parallel with the 2020 Greece Human Rights Practices Report published by the United States of America (USA) Department of State and forwarded it to the competent authorities of the United States.



In its parallel report, ABTTF detailed the problems experienced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace and provided up-to-date developments not included in the US report.

ABTTF noted that the failure to include in the US report the failure to execute the ECtHR judgments as regards the closure or non-registration of associations with the word ‘Turkish’ in the name of the associations belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace is a serious and major deficiency, noting that throughout the report, there is an approach that is in line with the opinion of the state and government in Greece.

Participation to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, 26-27.04.2021 / Online



ABTTF attended the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) entitled ‘Democratic Law-Making: Ensuring Participation’ which was held online on 26-27 April 2021.

Deniz Servantie and Nihan Ayan from ABTTF, Dr. Pervin Hayrullah and Kerem Abdurahimoğlu from the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and General Coordinator Fatih Hüseyinoğlu from the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party attended the meeting representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Intervening on 26 April in the first session titled ‘Open and Inclusive Law-Making’, ABTTF stated that Greece has not implemented ECtHR judgments regarding the associations belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases for 13 years, adding that despite the warnings of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the applications of the regarding associations have still not re-examined on their merits by the Greek national courts in light of the ECtHR’s case law.

Speaking at the third session titled ‘Public Participation and the Digital Space’ which was held on 27 April, ABTTF stated that the Turkish community in Western Thrace is poorly represented within the policy-making and decision-making system of Greece, noting that the 3 percent electoral threshold applied to independent candidates, together with political parties in general elections and European Parliament (EP) elections, has blocked the representation of the Turkish community in parliament through independent candidates or through its own political party.

Participation to the YEN General Assembly meeting, 08.05.2021 / Online

Young ABTTF attended the General Assembly of the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) which was held online on 8 May 2021. Nihan Ayan, representing Young ABTTF attended the meeting.

In the meeting which began with the opening remarks by YEN President Andor Barabás. Barabás, the YEN 2020-2021 annual report was presented and the amendments to the YEN statutes were put to a vote and adopted.



Immediately as a result of the elections held at the meeting, new members of the YEN Executive Board were also elected. Linea Kopf belonging to the Danish minority in Germany was elected as Vice-President for Internal Relations and Ewelina Stefańska belonging to the Kashubian minority in Poland was elected as Convenor for the Working Group on Minority Rights and Politics.

The meeting ended with the introduction of member organisations that will host the events and events that YEN plans to organise in 2022 and 2023.

Webinar: ‘The Long-Standing Problem of Non-Execution of ECtHR’s Judgments by Greece: The Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases, 02.06.2021 / Online

ABTTF, with the support of the member of the European Parliament (EP) François Alfonsi (Greens/EFA) organised a webinar entitled ‘The Long-Standing Problem of Non-Execution of ECtHR’s Judgments by Greece: The Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases’ on 2 June 2021.



The webinar began with the opening remarks of ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu. MEP François Alfonsi, Legal Counsel of Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases and Doctoral Researcher at the Human Rights Centre of Ghent University Ilker Tsavousoglou and Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) Spokesperson and Board Member of European Implementation Network

(EIN) Panayote Dimitras were present as panellists at the panel session which was moderated by ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık.

The recording of the event, which took place on the Zoom platform, can be viewed on ABTTF’s YouTube channel and Facebook page in English and Greek:

YouTube English recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-WarSd39Ko>

YouTube Greek recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7sg_dtC2DkU

Facebook English recording:

<https://www.facebook.com/939989616164959/videos/1236033870191545>

Facebook Greek recording:

<https://www.facebook.com/939989616164959/videos/2805723423022468>

ABTTF Parallel Report to the US 2020 Greece Report on International Religious Freedom, 23.06.2021

ABTTF prepared a parallel report to the 2020 Greece Report on International Religious Freedom issued by the United States of America (USA) Department of State and forwarded it to the US authorities.



In its parallel report, ABTTF stated that the statements throughout the US report support Greece’s official state view, detailing the problems experienced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the religious sphere and its views and demands.

Participation to FUEN TAG’s 2nd Thematic Seminar, 23.06.2021 / Online



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and the Friendship Equality Party (FEP) Party, representing the Turkish community in

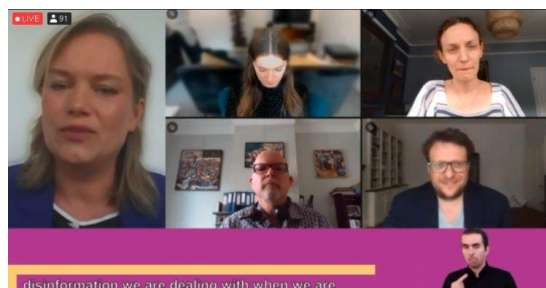
Western Thrace attended the 2nd thematic seminar of the Working Group of Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) in the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) which was held online on 23 June 2021.

The seminar began with an opening speech by FUEN Vice-President and FUEN TAG Spokesman Halit Habip Oğlu. In the first part of the seminar, QTMM Representative and Crimean Tatar Community Coordinator Elvin Kadirov made a presentation regarding the history of the Crimean Tatars, their exile during the Soviet Union and their struggle today as well as on the work and activities of QTMM.

In the second part of the seminar, the participating organisations conveyed developments and current problems related to the Turkic minorities/communities they represent. In this context, the Western Thrace Turkish delegation expressed the rights violations suffered by the Turkish community in Western Thrace and its current problems.

Participation to the FRA meeting, 28-29.06.2021 / Online

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) attended the online meeting entitled “How to tackle disinformation? Communicating human rights in the digital age” organised by the European Union (EU) Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on 28-29 June 2021. Deniz Servantie from the ABTTF Brussels Office participated in the event which was held in two sections, the panel discussion and workshops.



At the event, which was attended by representatives of NGOs operating in the field of human rights in Europe, ABTTF participated in workshops titled ‘Solidarity in times of COVID-19 and disinformation: storytelling and shared values on migration’ and ‘Media communicating on human rights: tackling disinformation to empower people to make choices based on facts’.

Deniz Servantie from the ABTTF Brussels Office explained the disinformation suffered by the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece during the coronavirus pandemic and the attempts to make it a scapegoat in the media through the chat function of the workshops where participants could submit their comments and questions in writing.

Participation to the OSCE seminar, 29.06.2021 / Online



ABTTF, representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, participated in an online seminar (webinar) titled ‘Intolerance and Discrimination during the COVID-19 Pandemic – Perspectives from Civil Society Organizations’ organised by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on 29 June 2021, representing the Turkish community of Western Thrace.

Nihan Ayan from ABTTF participated in the webinar held on the Zoom platform.

During the panel session of the seminar, which started with the opening speech of Kisha Manocha, head of the OSCE/ODIHR Tolerance and Anti-Discrimination Department, the speakers conveyed their experiences of the challenges and opportunities faced by the organisations and communities they represented during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Participation to the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, 12-13.07.2021 / Online

ABTTF attended the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) entitled 'Digital Technologies and Human Rights – Opportunities and Challenges' which was held online on 12-13 July 2021.



Deniz Servantie and Nihan Ayan from ABTTF, Dr. Pervin Hayrullah and Secretary General Meltem Giritli from WTMUGA and General Coordinator Fatih Hüseyinoğlu from FEP Party representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended the meeting.

Speaking at the first session entitled 'Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Digital Age', ABTTF stated that the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been discriminated against and targeted in the digital age, adding that the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments concerning Western Thrace Turkish associations have not been executed by Greece for 13 years. ABTTF urged Greek authorities to take measures against disinformation and hate speech targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the media, including in the digital space.

Working visit to Strasbourg, 27-28.08.2021 / Strasbourg, France



ABTTF paid a working visit to Strasbourg, where the Council of Europe is located on 27-28 August 2021. ABTTF delegation comprised of ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu, ABTTF Vice-President Nabi Ibrahimcik and ABTTF Head Office Manager K. Engin Soyyılmaz met with the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and Turkish NGOs based in Strasbourg during the two-day working visit.

ABTTF delegation met with Head of the Department for the Execution of Judgments of the ECtHR Clare Ovey and Head of Division Nikolaos Sitaropoulos and Head of Section Bojana Nikolin on Friday 27 August 2021. During the meeting, ABTTF delegation discussed the problems in executing the ECtHR judgments against Greece regarding the Xanthi Turkish Union, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Rodopi Province and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, the associations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which are part of the Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases along with the latest developments in the proceedings before the national courts.

On Saturday 28 August 2021, ABTTF delegation met with the directors of the Union of International Democrats (UID) Alsace-Strasbourg Regional Centre, the Turkish-Islamic Union of Religious Affairs (DITIB) Strasbourg Regional Centre, the COJEP International and Islamic Community Milli Görüş (ITMG) Strasbourg Regional Centre, and informed them about the current problems of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the violations of its rights that it is subjected to.

Written statement to the 48th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council, 13.09.-01.10.2021 / Geneva, Switzerland

ABTTF presented a written statement titled 'The limitations in civil rights granted to the Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece' to the 48th Regular Session of the United Nations (UN)



Human Rights Council
Forty-eighth session
13 September - 1 October 2021
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights
including the right to development

Written statement submitted by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.
[20 August 2021]

Human Rights Council which was held from 13 September to 1 October 2021.

In its written statement, ABTTTF raised the issue of the closure of 12 more primary schools belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the new school year, with the refusal of the Greek Court of Cassation in the case of the Xanthi Turkish Union within the scope of freedom of association and the failure of Greece to execute the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments concerning the Western Thrace Turkish associations.

ABTTTF urged Greece to execute the ECtHR judgments concerning the Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases and to restore the educational autonomy guaranteed by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne of the Turkish community in Western Thrace. ABTTTF also asked the UN and its bodies to send a strong political message to Greece about the rights violations suffered by the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Participation to the YEN seminar, 01-05.09.2021 / Strasbourg, France



Young ABTTTF participated in the seminar titled ‘Story of My Life’ organised by the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) in Strasbourg, France on 1-5 September 2021 with the contributions of the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe. Nihan Ayan of Young ABTTTF attended the seminar.

In the seminar which focused on the issues such as the process of identifying minorities themselves, narrative identity, stereotypes and discrimination within the framework of the workshops, the participants gave interviews about their identity within the scope of identity identification and education.

In the workshop titled ‘Stereotypes and Discrimination’, Nihan Ayan expressed the unjust treatment of the Turkish community in Western Thrace as a result of the stereotypes and prejudices targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace for many years.

At the Minorities Market held within the framework of the seminar, Young ABTTTF introduced the Turkish community in Western Thrace and ABTTTF and informed the other participants about the problems experienced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Letter from ABTTTF to international authorities about Greece’s usurpation of the rights and freedoms of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, 08.09.2021

In a letter addressed to the international authorities, ABTTTF stated the systematic usurpation of the rights and freedoms of the Turkish community in Western Thrace by Greece. In its letter, ABTTTF indicated that the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty granted rights to the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece and the Greek Orthodox minority in Turkey on the basis of reciprocity, adding that Turkey has taken positive steps towards the Greek Orthodox minority, especially in recent years, while the rights and freedoms of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece have been taken away for the past years.



In its letter, ABTTF noted the following:

- While Turkey restores the real estate property belonging to the Greek community, our country which holds the goods and real estate properties belonging to our community, appoints by order of the state the administrative boards of the foundations of the community which have every right of disposition,
- While the Greek community in Turkey chooses its own religious leaders, our country Greece appoints the Muftis which constitute our religious leaders again by order of the state,
- While in Turkey, even historical religious buildings outside of Istanbul, Imbros (Gökçeada) and Tenedos (Bozcaada) are preserved, restored and rites and rituals are allowed on special occasions, historical and religious monuments outside of Western Thrace in Greece are left to their fate or closed under the pretext of restoration or to the destruction of time,
- In Western Thrace, where the Turkish community lives, permits for reparation are blocked as regards historical or new mosques, and various problems arise in the construction of new ones,
- In Turkey, all places of worship belonging not only to the Greek community but also churches and synagogues of other religious communities are also being restored. In fact, although there are no congregations in that region and while 7,000 Turks live in Thessaloniki in Greece; Hamza Bey, Hortacı Süleyman Efendi, Yeni Cami (New Mosque) and Alaca Imaret Cami (Alara Imaret Mosque) are closed for worship. This is happening not only in Thessaloniki but throughout Greece,
- While non-Muslim minorities living in Turkey have the right to express their ethnicity collectively as Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian or Jewish and manage the foundations and the goods belonging to their communities in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne, we are not even allowed to manage the foundations belonging to our community, let alone the collective acceptance of our ethnic Turkish identity in our country Greece.

In its letter, ABTTF asked international authorities to draw attention to the problems of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which is one of the worst-off groups in the European Union (EU) for minority rights, and to urge Greece to take steps to improve the situation of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Participation to the 65th FUEN Congress, 09-12.09.2021 / Trieste, Italy



ABTTF attended the 65th annual Congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) held in Trieste, Italy on 9-12 September 2021. The Congress, hosted by Italy's Slovenian minority, was attended by ABTTF President and FUEN Vice-President Halit Habip Oğlu and Secretary General of the Friendship Equality Peace (FEP) Party Yeşim Hasan from Trieste and ABTTF Director of International Affairs Melek Kırmacı Arık and Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) Member Şükriye Mehmet online.

The decision text of the resolution on the non-execution of the ECtHR judgements by Greece regarding the Bekir-Ousta and Others Group of Cases which includes the Xanthi Turkish Union, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Rodopi Province and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association, which violates the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace jointly presented by ABTTF, WTMUGA and FEP Party as the Western Thrace Turkish delegation was adopted by a majority vote in the FUEN Assembly of Delegates which was held in a hybrid format on Saturday 11 September.

The draft resolution on the issues and current situation of the Turks of Rhodes, Kos and Dodecanese Islands in Greece, presented by the Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER), a member of FUEN, was adopted by a majority of votes.

In the FUEN Assembly of Delegates, where amendments to the FUEN charter were also voted, representatives of the Tatar community in Romania known as the Democratic Union of Tatars and the Italian Union which represents the Italian community in Slovenia and Croatia whose applications for membership to FUEN were accepted have effectively become the new member organisations of FUEN

Participation to FUEN TAG's 3rd Thematic Seminar, 24.09.2021 / Online

ABITTF and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended the 3rd Thematic Seminar of the Working Group of Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) in the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) which was held online on 24 September 2021.



ABITTF and WTMUGA representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, the Rhodes Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER) representing Rhodes and Kos Turks, the Public Organisation of Meskhetian Turks 'VATAN' and the Public Union Of Meskhetian (Ahıska) Turks living In Azerbaijan 'VATAN' representing Meskhetian Turks and the Tatar Democratic Union representing the Romanian Tatars all attended the online seminar which brought together Turkic minorities and communities within the online platform.

In the seminar which began with a greeting speech by FUEN Vice-President and FUEN TAG Spokesman Halit Habip Oğlu, President of the Tatar Democratic Union Naim Belgin, the new distinguished member of FUEN, briefed on the activities of the Tatar Community in Romania and the Tatar Democratic Union, which was established in 2008.

On behalf of the Public Organisation of Meskhetian Turks 'VATAN', Head of Foreign Relations and Researcher Ansar Usmanov, delivered a presentation on the history and culture of Meskhetian Turks, the theme of the seminar, and their struggle to return to their ancestral lands in Georgia.

In the second part of the seminar, the participating organisations conveyed the developments related to the Turkic minorities and communities they represent and their current problems. The Western Thrace Turkish delegation indicated that Greece does not allow associations bearing the word 'Turkish' in its name as a result of a policy of denial of the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and has still not executed the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments with respect to the Western Thrace Turkish associations for the past 13 years.

Participation to the FRA Fundamental Rights Forum, 11-12.10.2021 / Online



ABITTF participated in the Fundamental Rights Forum organised by the European Union (EU) Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) on 11-12 October 2021. Deniz Servantie from the ABITTF Brussels Office attended the Forum which took place in hybrid format.

Representatives and experts from international institutions and non-governmental organisations participated in the 2021 Fundamental Rights Forum, where the human rights challenges facing Europe today were discussed in about 150 different sessions.

At the Forum, which began with FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty's opening remarks, ABITTF participated in sessions titled 'Tracking publicly funded hate speech', 'Content moderation and freedom

of expression in times of disinformation’, ‘Human rights start locally, like basic income’ and ‘Freedom of information: a human right’.

Participation to the European Regional Forum on Minorities, 12-13.10.2021 / Online

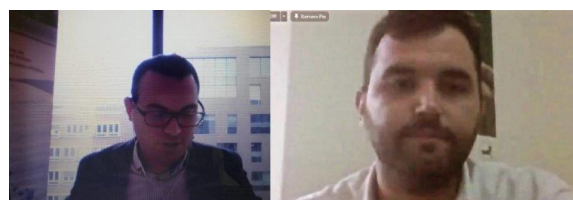
ABTTF representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace participated to the European Regional Forum on Minorities which was held online on 12-13 October 2021 under the heading of ‘Conflict Prevention and the Protection of the Human Rights Minorities’.



ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık attended the Forum which was held by the Budapest based Tom Latos Institute which is also one of the joint organisations of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and at the initiative of United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Prof. Fernand de Varennes.

Intervening in the thematic session titled ‘Substantive root causes of contemporary conflicts involving minorities’, ABTTF indicated that the Turkish community in Western Thrace is perceived in Greece as a threat to national security and public order and that it is seen as motherland Turkey’s Trojan horse in Turkey and that as a result of this, the Turkish community in Western Thrace is faced with structural and systematic discrimination. Referring to the letter it sent to the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues in September 2021, ABTTF added that as a result of this systematic discrimination, the current situation in the areas of recognition of ethnic identity, freedom of association and freedom of religion or belief is getting worse.

Participation to the OSCE conference, 14-15.10.2021 / Online



ABTTF attended the conference titled ‘ODIHR: 3 decades and ready for the future: Democracy, human rights and security in the OSCE’ organised in a hybrid format by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on 14-15 October 2021

Deniz Servantie from ABTTF and Kerem Abdurahimoğlu from WTMUGA attended the conference representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Intervening in the session titled ‘Promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms together’, ABTTF indicated that Greece denies the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and that associations bearing the word ‘Turkish’ are not allowed and further noted that that the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) as regards the Xanthi Turkish Union which was closed in 1986 has not been executed by Greece for the past 13 years. ABTTF further called upon Greece to immediately execute ECtHR judgments as regards the Western Thrace Turkish associations and to ratify the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Participation to the OSCE conference, 09.11.2021 / Online

ABTTF participated in an online conference titled ‘Addressing Intolerance and Discrimination against Indigenous Peoples: Mapping the Situation in the OSCE Region’ organised by the



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on 9 November 2021. Deniz Servantie from ABTTF Brussels Office attended the conference, which took place in two sessions.

Realising the opening remarks of the conference, OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities Kairat Abdrakhmanov noted that the High Commissioner for National Minorities (HCNM), established in 1992, focuses on issues related to national minorities and has a duty to protect basic human rights and fight all forms of discrimination.

In the first session, titled ‘Mapping the Situation in the OSCE Region: Manifestations of Intolerance and Discrimination against Indigenous Peoples’, relations between communities and states, hate speech, access to justice and intolerance and discrimination against indigenous peoples in connection with the situation of human rights defenders of indigenous peoples were discussed.

The second session of the conference focused on current and historical economic, social, cultural and environmental concerns, including language and education, cultural activities, employment, poverty and the effects of climate change in the context of intolerance and discrimination.

ABTTF’s contribution to the OSCE 2020 Hate Crimes Report, 16.11.2021



The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) published the 2020 Hate Crimes Report. The section related to Greece in the report, which includes information on hate crime incidents in states in the OSCE region and statistics on them, also includes hate motivated attacks and hate speech targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace reported by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).

ABTTF had earlier issued a written statement in preparation for the OSCE 2020 Hate Crimes Report, reporting hate-based attacks and hate speech targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece.

The report notes that on 12 May 2020, an unidentified person or persons attacked a fountain built by a philanthropist from the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Nimfea (Yanıköy) which is linked to Komotini, smashing the marble slab with the name of the benefactor and the date of the fountain’s construction, and spray-painting anti-Turkish insults on the fountain wall. Moreover, the report indicates that on 16 July 2020, the minaret of the historic mosque in the Diomidia (Hemitli) village linked to Avdira (Bulustra) Municipality in Xanthi province was destroyed by unidentified persons or persons, adding that on 25 September 2020, the association founded by Turks who migrated from Western Thrace to Imathia province was attacked and the windows of the association building were broken. The report also notes that on 27 November 2020, ‘A Good Turk is a Dead Turk’ and other threats were written in the mirror of the elevator of the apartment where Mufti of Xanthi Ahmet Mete which was elected by the Western Thrace Turks lives.

Working visit to Athens, 16-17.11.2021 / Athens, Greece

ABTTF paid a working visit to Athens, Greece, on 16-17 November 2021. President Halit Habip Oğlu and Vice-President Mustafa Kasap, who travelled to Athens as the first act of the ABTTF 21st Presidium, had a series of meetings



within the framework of the working visit in Athens which is the actual place to find long lasting solutions to the issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, along with Nihan Ayan from ABTTF Athens Office.

The ABTTF delegation met on Tuesday 16 November with Xanthi KINAL MP Burhan Baran and Maria Giannakaki, former MP and former Secretary General of the Greek Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights. During the talks, the problems of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the discrimination and rights violations suffered were discussed and an exchange of views with respect to the latest developments in Greece was realised.

The ABTTF delegation met on Wednesday 17 November with Anna Stamou, Public Relations Specialist of the Muslim Association of Greece. Current issues concerning the Turkish community in Western Thrace and Muslims living in Greece were assessed during the meeting.

The ABTTF delegation also paid a courtesy visit to the Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Athens, the motherland of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, as part of the working visit.

Participation to the OSCE Human Dimension seminar, 16-17.11.2021 / Online



ABTTF participated in the Human Dimension Seminar entitled 'Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Girls' organised by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on 16-17 November 2021. Deniz Servantie from ABTTF Brussels Office participated in the seminar which took place in a hybrid format.

Intervening in the second working group of the seminar entitled 'Violence against women in political and public life',

ABTTF stated that the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi, founded by women from the Turkish community in Western Thrace, and the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Xanthi are still not registered by national courts, noting that Greece has not yet executed the 2008 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) regarding the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of Rodopi which was established in 2001. ABTTF underscored that as a result of the non-registration of the abovementioned associations on grounds of the word 'Turkish' in their names, Western Thrace Turkish women living in the region faced an obstacle in their participation to public life. ABTTF called on Greek authorities to provide equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of ethnic or religious identity and gender.

Participation to the UN Forum on Minority Issues, 02-03.12.2021 / Online

ABTTF attended the 14th session of the United Nations (UN) Forum on Minority Issues titled 'Conflict Prevention and the Protection of the Human Rights of Minorities' organised in a hybrid format on 2-3 December 2021.

ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) member Kerem Abdurahimoğlu attended the Forum which was hosted by UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Prof. Fernand de Varennes.



In the forum which began with the opening remarks of UN Human Rights Council President Nazhat Shameem Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Prof. Fernand de Varennes and Forum Chair Victoria Donda, the role of states, international organisations, civil society and minorities in addressing the root causes of conflict at an early stage; the presence of different levels of mechanisms for early prevention of conflicts at the local, national, regional and international levels; practical solutions to the prevention of violent conflicts involving minorities and the role of UN bodies in the prevention of conflicts were discussed during the four thematic sessions.

‘Facts about our Country’ Programme Series, 1st programme, 10.12.2021 / Online



ABTTF launched its online programme series titled ‘Facts about our Country’ on 10 December 2021. Anna Stamou, Public Relations Officer of the Muslim Association of Greece, was the guest of the first programme, which was held exclusively at the occasion of the International Human Rights Day and broadcast live. Stamou answered questions posed by Nihan Ayan from ABTTF Athens Office.

Stamou noted that there are two different Muslim communities in Greece, one is the Muslim Turkish community in Western Thrace which has a special status, and the other is the Muslim community with an estimated population of 500,000 throughout Greece. Stamou added that about 80,000 Muslim migrants and asylum seekers live in Greece.

In response to a question about the most important issue of the Muslims in Greece, Stamou indicated that as a non-governmental organisation of the Muslim Union of Greece, they have been striving for equality of all citizens before the law for many years, regardless of religion, and that this is a long and difficult process, adding that the most important problem is the lack of equal laws for all in the country.

Finally, underlining that the main issue is the failure to fully integrate Muslims into the society, Stamou noted that the vast majority of the country’s political class unfortunately continues to ignore this reality.

The recording of the programme, which was performed on the Zoom platform and broadcast live simultaneously on ABTTF’s YouTube channel and Facebook account, can be watched by clicking on the links below in English and Greek:

YouTube English recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_3WL-XTDvY

YouTube Greek recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcgQqj3kAeY&t=153s>

Facebook English recording:

<https://www.facebook.com/939989616164959/videos/200823965502832>

Facebook Greek recording:

<https://www.facebook.com/939989616164959/videos/2015909678585453>

Participation to FUEN TAG’s 7th Annual Meeting, 11.12.2021 / Online

ABTTF and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended the 7th Annual Meeting of the Working Group of Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) which was held online on 11 December 2021.

In the meeting which started with the opening speech of



FUEN Vice President and FUEN TAG Spokesman Halit Habip Ođlu, the Western Thrace Turkish delegation which cited the current problems experienced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace, stated that the Greek state has not executed the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments regarding the Western Thrace Turkish associations for years, and that it has implemented practices in contradiction with the educational autonomy guaranteed by the treaties to the Turkish community.

Within the framework of education, the main language and the linguistic rights of Turkic minorities and communities which was the theme of the meeting, Baltacı indicated that the Greek authorities do not allow Turkish and Greek bilingual private kindergartens and have closed the Turkish primary schools with autonomous status on grounds of a lack of sufficient pupils.

The meeting ended with the discussion of FUEN TAG's activities for 2022 and the determination of a common roadmap.