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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 2022

Summary Activity Report

International Meetings

Session on the Issue of Bilingual Minority Kindergartens at the EP Committee on Petitions, 10.01.2022 / Online

A petition regarding the lack of bilingual minority kindergartens in Western Thrace to provide education in Turkish and Greek

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/0058%252F2019/html/Petition-No-0058%252F2019-by-Ozan-Ahmeto%25C4%259Flu-%2528Greek%2529-on-teaching-Turkish-in-pre-school-education-to-children-belonging-to-the-Turkish-community-in-Western-Thrace>

which had been submitted by President of the Xanthi Turkish Union (XTU) Ozan Ahmetoğlu in 2019 as a pupil's parent and with the initiatives and support of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) within the realm of the European Parliament (EP) was discussed at the European Parliament (EP) Committee on Petitions (PETI) on 10 January 2022.



As the petitioner, Ozan Ahmetoğlu attended the Committee's meeting on 10 January online and realised a presentation on the content of the petition titled "Teaching Turkish in pre-school education to children belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace." Ahmetoğlu stated that his child, who was 5 years old in 2019, had to go to the state kindergarten, where only Greek is taught, when he submitted the petition due to the necessity of pre-school education in Greece under Law No. 3518/2006 and he further noted that all Turkish children in the region are required to attend public kindergartens because Turkish schools belonging to the Turkish community in Western Thrace are not allowed to provide pre-school education in their native Turkish language. Ahmetoğlu said that the failure of the Greek authorities to respond positively to the request for kindergartens which would give education in Turkish and Greek just as in the primary schools of the Turkish community in Western Thrace caused serious issues for the Turkish children and their parents.

Participation in the international seminar titled “Human Rights Violations Faced by Muslims”, 16-17.02.2022 / Istanbul, Türkiye

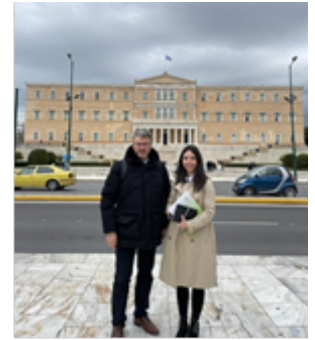


The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated to an international seminar entitled “Human Rights Violations Faced by Muslims” which was organised in cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Türkiye and the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on 16-17 February 2022 in Istanbul.

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu and ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık participated to the seminar, which was attended by representatives of the Turkish community in Western Thrace with a large delegation and where human rights violations against Muslims in Europe, Asia and Palestine and proposals for solutions in this respect were discussed.

Working visit to Athens and Thessaloniki, 28.02-01.03.2022 / Athens and Thessaloniki, Greece

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid a working visit to Athens, the capital city of Greece, and Thessaloniki from 28 February to 1 March 2022. ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu held a series of talks for an open and constructive dialogue as part of his working visit, accompanied by Nihan Ayan from the ABTTF Athens Office.



During the meetings, where the problems of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the rights violations against it were conveyed, there was an exchange of ideas with respect to the discrimination against Muslims and vulnerable groups in Greece along with suggestions on solutions, and the current developments in the country were also discussed.

Participation in the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council, 23-24.03.2022 / Geneva, Switzerland



ABTTF, which participated in the Conclusion Session of the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism with respect to Greece, presented its recommendations on the issues regarding the recognition of the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, the restoration of the educational and religious autonomy, and the execution of the ECtHR judgments as regards the freedom to form associations.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated in the session titled ‘Results of the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism (UPR)’ as part of the agenda of the 49th Regular Session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council held on 28 February-1 April 2022.

ABTTF, which is in special consultation status with the UN Economic and Social Council, attended the UPR Results session held on 23-24 March 2022, where the results of the 3rd Cycle Review of Greece were discussed, and it presented its recommendations on the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Participation in the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, 28-29.03.2022 / Vienna, Austria

At the meeting, ABTTF indicated the structural and systematic discrimination in Greece with notably hate speech targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace, especially in politics and media.



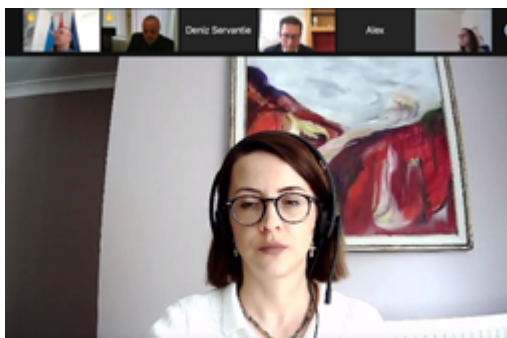
The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Supplementary Humanitarian Dimension Meeting held in Vienna, Austria on 28-29 March 2022, representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

Deniz Servantie of the ABTTF Brussels Representative office attended the meeting titled ‘International co-operation to address violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law’, organized by the Polish OSCE Chairmanship and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Intervening at the second session of the meeting titled ‘Investigation and documentation of international humanitarian and human rights law violations’, ABTTF underlined that Greece does not recognise the Turkish community in Western Thrace as a national minority and rejects the ‘Turkish’ identity, noting that hate speech in politics is part of structural and systematic discrimination against the Turkish community.

Noting that ABTTF reports hate speech and hate crimes targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace to the OSCE on a regular basis every year and that these are included in the OSCE Hate Crimes Report, ABTTF called upon the OSCE participating States to conduct support and training programmes for individuals or groups with different backgrounds for improving cooperation with NGOs in reporting and data collection to ensure that government and civil society are actively engaged in the implementation of OSCE commitments.

Participation in the meeting of the AP Minorities Intergroup, 07.04.2022 / Online



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated on 7 April 2022 in the meeting of the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages in the European Parliament (EP), which was held online. ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık attended the meeting and delivered a presentation with respect to the issues experienced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the field of education, with a special focus on the lack of bilingual minority kindergartens to teach Turkish and Greek

in Western Thrace.

Approximately fifty people attended the meeting which was moderated by Intergroup Co-Chairs François Alfonsi (MEP, France) and Loránt Vincze (MEP, Romania). The first session, moderated by Alfonsi, discussed how regional autonomy could constitute an alternative in resolving conflicts as well as in securing the linguistic and cultural rights of the linguistic minorities. Intervening in this session, Minister for Industry and Trade in Åland’s government Fredrik Karlström and Director at the Åland

Peace Institute Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark touched upon the past and current state of autonomy in the Åland Autonomous Administration, where the Swedish-speaking community in Finland lives.

Intervening in the second session which was moderated by Vincze, ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı Arık noted that Greece does not recognize the ‘Turkish’ identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and that it has repeatedly interfered in its educational autonomy. Noting that the Turkish primary schools in the Western Thrace region have been closed one by one by the Greek authorities over the past years on grounds of an insufficient number of students, Kırmacı Arık stated that although pre-school education is mandatory in Greece, bilingual Turkish kindergartens are not allowed to be established in Western Thrace, and that children belonging to the Turkish community are deprived of their right to a good education in their mother tongue Turkish.

Participation in the European Regional Forum on Minority Issues, 02-03.05.2022 / Online

The Western Thrace Turkish delegation comprised of the representatives of ABTTF and WTMUGA explained about the legal obstacles to the Turkish community in Western Thrace in its presentations at the meeting.



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, attended to the European-Central Asian Forum on Minority Issues under the heading of ‘30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the rights of minorities 1992-2022’ which was held in hybrid format on 2-3 May 2022. Deniz Servantie of the ABTTF Brussels Office and WTMUGA Member Kerem Abdurahimoğlu attended the forum which was organised in cooperation between the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Fernand de Varennes, the Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria and the Budapest based Tom Lantos Institute and in which the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) has also taken part.

Speaking during the meeting, ABTTF stated that nothing with respect to the discrimination suffered by the Turkish community in Western Thrace for years has changed positively, reminding that the states parties are obliged to fully implement the Declaration on the 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Minorities. In addition, ABTTF mentioned that policies on protecting minority rights should be included in all government policies and touched upon the importance of implementation within this framework. Speaking once again at the fourth session titled ‘Moving Forward: Reforming the Protection and Implementation of the Minority Rights Framework’ on the second day of the meeting, ABTTF reminded that the Turkish community in Western Thrace consistently receives the answer that the European Commission is not in a position to take any specific action with respect to this area when asked questions about the national minorities through the Members of the European Parliament. ABTTF stressed that the protection of the culture and language of national and linguistic minorities should be included in the EU treaties as a mandate and obligation. ABTTF recommended promoting education and awareness-raising programmes in combating the prejudices in the majority population, as well as initiatives involving tolerance, dialogue, respect and mutual understanding through the media, including on the internet.

Participation to the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting, 16-17.05.2022 / Vienna, Austria



The Western Thrace Turkish delegation consisting of ABTTF and WTMUGA brought forward that the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been violated and that the ECtHR judgments have not been executed for the past 14 years.

The Western Thrace Turkish delegation, consisting of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) attended the OSCE Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting titled 'The Functioning of Democratic Institutions in Times of Crisis: Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting II' which was held in

Vienna on 16-17 May 2022. ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı and WTMUGA Human Rights Expert Kerem Abdurahimoğlu represented the Turkish community in Western Thrace at the second human dimension meeting of 2022.

The role of national and local institutions as guardians of democracy in times of crisis, as well as the importance of freedom of association and freedom of the media in the OSCE region were discussed at the meeting, which was held in cooperation with the Polish OSCE Chairmanship and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

In the morning session where the importance of freedom of association in the OSCE region was tackled, ABTTF indicated that the freedom of association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace has been violated by Greece. ABTTF noted that in the three cases known as Bekir-Ousta Group of Cases, Greece has not executed the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for the past 14 years. Stating that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will examine the Bekir-Ousta Group of Cases in June 2022, ABTTF stated that they requested the initiation of the infringement procedure against Greece since no steps were taken to execute the ECtHR judgments. In the session on media freedom, ABTTF indicated that the official policy of Greece of not recognizing the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and that there is only a religious minority in the country had an impact on the media as well. Stating that there is a prejudiced approach towards the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the media, ABTTF stated that racist and hate-based discourse against the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the online and offline media has increased fear and insecurity throughout the country. Indicating that this situation may trigger hate crimes, ABTTF requested from the country authorities to take responsibility for reporting and punishing hate speech and hate-based attacks.

Working visit to Brussels, 15.09.2022 / Brussels, Belgium

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid a working visit to the capital of the European Union (EU) Brussels on 15 September 2022.

ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu, accompanied by Deniz Servantie from the ABTTF Brussels Office, met with European Free Alliance (EFA) President Lorena López de Lacalle as part of the working visit. EFA Political Advisor Paul Butcher was also present at the meeting held at the ABTTF Brussels Office in Brussels.



During the meeting held in the European Parliament (EP) with the EFA delegation which is in the same political group together with the Greens, the current issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the current developments in Greece and the Western Thrace region were conveyed.

Participation in the OSCE Human Dimension Conference, 28-29.09.2022 / Warsaw, Poland



At the conference, ABTTF raised the current issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and its increasing targeting in politics and media.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace, participated in the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Conference on 28-29 September 2022 in Warsaw, Poland.

Deniz Servantie from the ABTTF Brussels Office participated in the ten-day conference on the state of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the OSCE region, organised by the OSCE Polish Presidency with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

Indicating that the religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace was further weakened by the Presidential decree No. 52/2019 and the new act under the title of “Modernisation of the Mufti Offices” adopted by the Greek parliament on 29 July 2022, ABTTF pointed out that the new law was violating the 1913 Treaty of Athens and the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and was intended to establish full control and audit over the muftiates that have the autonomous structure.

Participation in the FUEN 66th Congress, 29.09-02.10.2022 / Berlin, Germany

ABTTF Vice President Nabi İbrahimcik was elected as FUEN Vice President after ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu, who served as FUEN Vice President for three terms in the Assembly of Delegates.



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace and a member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) attended the 66th FUEN Congress which was held on between 29 September and 2 October 2022. Hosted by four autochthonous national minorities and ethnic groups in Germany, the Congress was attended by FUEN Vice President and ABTTF President Halit Habip Oğlu, ABTTF Vice President Nabi İbrahimcik, ABTTF Vice President Vedat Arap and ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı Arık.

The situation of minority communities within the context of the international, regional and national conflicts was discussed at the opening day sessions at the Brandenburg State Representative Office in Berlin. In the sessions which were held with the participation of the deputies of the European Parliament, national politicians and representatives of non-governmental organisations, the main agenda topic was the Russia-Ukraine war, while the situation of national minorities in the war was discussed with the participation of minorities in Ukraine.

Working visit to Strasbourg, 11-12.10.2022 / Strasbourg, France



During its working visit, ABTTF insisted on the non-execution of the ECtHR judgments on the associations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace by Greece and conveyed the current developments regarding the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid a working visit to Strasbourg on 11-12 October. During its working visit parallel to the Autumn Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 10-14 October 2022, ABTTF raised the current issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, especially the violation of freedom of association and the non-execution of the ECtHR judgments on the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases for more than 14 years.

During the two-day working visit, ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı Arık met with Clare Ovey, Head of the Department of the Execution of Judgments of the Council of the Europe, Zoë Bryanston-Cross, responsible for Human Rights Meetings from the Secretariat of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Matthieu Birker, Advisor to the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Kimmo Kiljunen, Head of the National Delegation of Finland to PACE, and Gerhard Ermischer, President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe.

Participation in the Fundamental Rights Platform 2022 annual meeting, 10.11.2022 / Online

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) participated on 10 November 2022 in the Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) annual meeting 2022 organised by the European Union (EU) Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık attended the online meeting themed on the rule of law in the EU.



The meeting, which was held in line with the 2022 Rule of Law Annual Report published by the European Commission and attended by approximately 110 people, started with the opening speech of FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty.

Intervening in the first part of the meeting titled “State of play of the rule of law in the EU”, Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders noted that the European Commission’s annual report on the rule of law prepared by the European Commission contains sections and recommendations specific to the 27 EU Member States. Furthermore, Reynders indicated that the first tool in implementing these recommendations is dialogue with the EU Member States, but if the recommendations are not implemented, other means, including deductions from EU funds, can also be enforced.

Speaking at the session on the implementation of rulings of the supranational European courts from the simultaneous workshops held in the second part of the meeting titled “Civil society and the rule of law – practical tools”, ABTTF delivered information about the associations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace with respect to the Bekir-Ousta and the Others Group of Cases.

Meetings with MEPs in Brussels, 16.11.2022 / Brussels, Belgium



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid a working visit to Brussels on 16 November 2022. ABTTF President Halit Habip Ođlu, whom was accompanied by Deniz Servantie from the ABTTF Brussels Office, met with the Members of the European Parliament (MEP) François Alfonsi (Greens/EFA) from the Corsica region of France and Yana Toom (Renew Europe) who belongs to the Russian minority community in Estonia.

During the meetings held with the parliamentarians that are dealing with minority rights issues under the EP umbrella, the current issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace along with recent developments in Greece and Western Thrace were discussed.

ABTTF President Habip Ođlu indicated that hate speech towards the Turkish community in Western Thrace has increased gradually in the political and media spheres in Greece and noted that people representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace are targeted in the written and visual medias. Stressing that Xanthi SYRIZA Deputy Hüseyin Zeybek was threatened with death in a live broadcast on a local television channel, Habip Ođlu explained that the ruling New Democracy (ND) Party Deputy and Greek Parliament Second Deputy Speaker Charalampos Athanasiou delivered a scandalous statement in which he had said that the deputies from the Turkish community in Western Thrace could be wiretapped on grounds of national security.

Working visit to Berlin, 23.11.2022 / Berlin, Germany

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) paid a working visit to Berlin, the capital of Germany, on 23 November 2022. ABTTF President Halit Habip Ođlu, accompanied by ABTTF Head Office Manager K. Engin Soyyılmaz, met with German Bundestag deputies Filiz Polat (Alliance 90/The Greens) and Boris Mijatović (Alliance 90/The Greens) during the working visit.



At the meeting, hate speech and attacks targeting the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece and the discrimination and rights violations suffered by the Western Thrace Turks were expressed.

ABTTF President Habip Ođlu underlined that the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which was left to Greece with the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, was guaranteed, and noted that Greece liquidated the educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish community with various laws and practices over the years contrary to its obligations arising from international treaties.

Participation in the UN Forum on Minority Issues, 01-02.12.2022 / Geneva, Switzerland



At the Forum, which was held with the theme of the 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, ABTTF and WTMUGA expressed the issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the Turks in Rhodes and Kos in the field of minority rights.

The 15th Session of the United Nations (UN) Forum on Minority Issues was held on 1-2 December 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland. Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

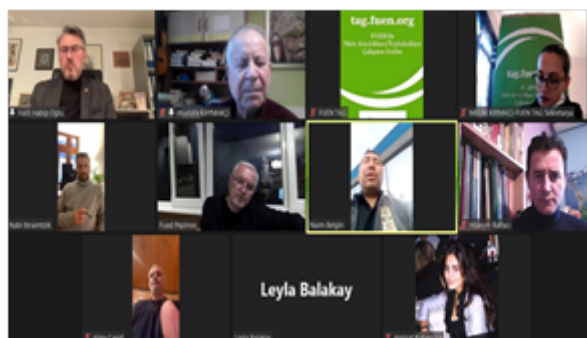
(ABTTF) International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı Arık and Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) Human Rights Expert Kerem Abdurahimoğlu, representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace attended to the Forum which was held with the theme of the “30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities”.

During the two-day sessions of the Forum, where the normative framework of the UN Declaration of the on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities the role of the defenders in the implementation of the declaration was discussed, and what should be done to bridge the gap between rhetoric and practice in the implementation of the declaration was assessed.

Participation in FUEN TAG 8th Annual Meeting, 11.12.2022, Online

The 8th Annual Meeting of the Working Group of Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) was realised on 11 December 2022.

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, Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Turks Culture and Solidarity Association (ROISDER) representing Rhodes and Kos Turks, the Public Organisation of Meskhetian Turks “VATAN” representing the Meskhetian Turks, the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People representing the Crimean Tatars (QTMM), the Social Organisation for Fostering and Development of the Karachay-Balkar Traditions (Bars El) representing the Karachay-Balkars and the Tatar Democratic Union representing the Romanian Tatars attended the 8th Annual Meeting of FUEN TAG.



At the meeting, which started with the greetings of FUEN TAG Spokesman Halit Habip Oğlu and FUEN Vice-President Nabi İbrahimcik, Habip Oğlu was unanimously re-elected as FUEN TAG Spokesman.

The participating organisations conveyed the important developments regarding the Turkic minorities and communities they have represented since the last annual meeting in December 2021, as well as the activities they carried out in 2022 and planned to perform in the near future.

The meeting ended with the discussion of FUEN TAG’s 2023 action plan and the identification of the common roadmap for it.

Contribution to Reports

Report to OSCE on the Turkish community in Western Thrace and anti-Muslim attacks and hate speech, 02.05.2022



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) forwarded to the OSCE its written contribution to the 2021 Hate Crimes Report of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which includes the Turkish community in Western Thrace and

Islamophobic hate-based attacks and hate speech in Greece.

In its written contribution, ABTTF quoted Archbishop Ieronymos II of Athens, leader of the Orthodox Church, as saying in a documentary broadcast on a television channel in January 2021 that 'Islam is not a religion, but a political party and people are people of war' and indicated that he had been engaged directly in hate speech.

Noting that an improvised explosive device containing screws and nails was thrown at a building used as a mosque in Athens, Greece, in January 2022, ABTTF noted that in the same month, an anti-Islam poster reading 'Stop the Islamization of Evros now!' was put up by an unidentified person or persons on a wall opposite the historic Çelebi Sultan Mehmet Mosque in the town of Didymoteicho in the province of Evros.

Parallel report to the Greece 2021 Human Rights Report, 26.04.2022

In its parallel report, ABTTF detailed the issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and the violations of its rights that it is being subjected to.



The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) prepared a report in parallel to the Greece 2021 Human Rights Report published by the Department of State of the United States of America (USA) and forwarded it to the US authorities. In its parallel report, ABTTF detailed the issues faced by the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the field of human and minority rights and provided updates on the issues and current developments of the Turkish community, which were not included in the US report.

In its parallel report, ABTTF expressed disappointment that the 2021 report had the title pertaining to the members of national/racial/ethnic minority groups removed and that the issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace had been given limited space within the framework of the report.

Parallel Report to the Greece 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom, 15.06.2022



In its parallel report, ABTTF detailed the issues that the Turkish community in Western Thrace is dealing with in the field of religious freedom and called on our country Greece to restore the religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace.

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) prepared a parallel report in response to the Greece 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom published by the Department of State of the United States of America (USA) on 2 June 2022 and forwarded it to the relevant authorities of the United States. In its parallel report, ABTTF detailed the issues of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which enjoys religious autonomy in accordance with international treaties, in the field of religious freedom, especially the issue pertaining to the muftis.

In its parallel report, ABTTF stated that the population of the Turkish community in Western Thrace was given as approximately 140,000 according to government sources based on the 2011 data, and that the Turkish community lived in the Dodecanese Islands, especially in Rhodes and Kos accounted to a population of approximately 6,000.

Written statement to the UN Human Rights Council, 19.08.2022

The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) presented a written statement to the 51st session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council titled “A further violation of the religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, Greece with the Act on Modernization of the Muftiates”. In its written statement, ABTTF raised the issue of the muftis in focus of the new law adopted by the Greek Parliament in July 2022, noting that the religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, guaranteed by treaties, would be completely abolished under the pretext of modernising the muftis in the autonomous structure.



ABTTF indicated that the religious autonomy of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which today has a population of about 150,000, was guaranteed by the 1923 Lausanne Peace Treaty, and that contrary to the 1913 Treaty of Athens, to which Greece is a party, it did not allow the Turkish community to elect its own religious leaders, and did not recognise the elected muftis.

Letter on the final report of the Commission for the Development of Thrace, 08.04.2022



ABTTF sent a letter to the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the Commission for the Development of Thrace, the political parties in Parliament, the relevant ministries and the Governor of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, criticising the report, which contained limited and vague statements on how to solve issues related to the Minority, and noted further that as a result, the report was practically declared null and void.

The final report sent to Parliament by the cross-party Commission for the Development of Thrace on 7 December 2021 was discussed at the general assembly on 6 April 2022.

The Commission for the Development of Thrace was established as a cross-party commission on 16 July 2020 at the suggestion of the Prime Minister, and the final report was adopted by the commission in November 2021 after completing its work under the chairmanship of New Democracy Party (NDP) MP Dora Bakoyannis.

ABTTF participated in the public consultation process conducted by the Commission for the Development of Thrace online and asked for the creation of a development model and programme specific to the region in Western Thrace, taking into account the geographical, economic and socio-cultural structure of the region, and submitted concrete proposals and demands for regional economic development to the Commission.

After the final report was completed and discussed at the general assembly, ABTTF sent the letter containing its views on the final report to Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Chair of the Commission for the Development of Thrace Dora Bakoyannis, heads of political parties represented in Parliament, relevant ministries and Christos Metios, governor of the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

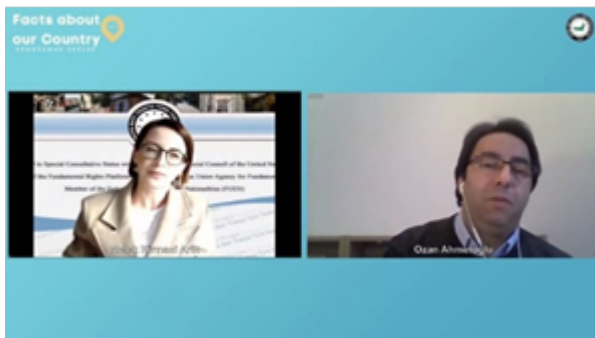
Parallel report to the report of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, 23.02.2022

ABTTF prepared a report in parallel to the report of the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs titled 'Incidents in areas of religious importance in Greece – 2020' details the status of the Turkish community in Western Thrace in the field of religion, the right to choose its muftis, the functioning of muftiates and the restructuring of muftiates, and the status of mosques in the region which includes the views and requests of the Turkish community in Western Thrace and sent it to the relevant ministry.



Broadcasts/Social Media Programmes

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 2nd programme, 13.01.2022 / Online



The second programme of the online programme series entitled “Facts about our Country” organised on the Zoom platform by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) was realised on 13 January 2022.

The second guest of the programme, which was broadcast live simultaneously on ABTTF's YouTube channel and Facebook page was Ozan Ahmetoğlu, President of the Xanthi Turkish Union (XTU), the

first and oldest association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which had been founded in 1927 but was closed due to the word “Turkish” in its name. Ahmetoğlu answered the questions posed by ABTTF International Affairs Director Melek Kırmacı Arık as regards XTU's 39-year legal battle.

Ahmetoğlu noted that in 1983, due to the word “Turkish” in the signboards of the Komotini Turkish Youth Union and the Western Thrace Turkish Teachers' Union, their signboards were taken down together with that of XTU, and that as a result, the 39-year legal battle of XTU began.

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 3rd programme, 27.01.2022 / Online

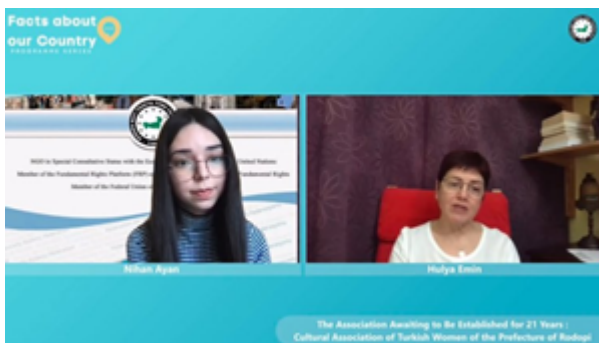
The third programme of the online programme series entitled “Facts about our Country” organised on the Zoom platform by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) was realised on 27 January 2022.

The guest of the third programme, moderated by ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı Arık, was Panayote Dimitras, spokesperson for the Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM) and a member of the Board of the Strasbourg-based European Implementation Network (EIN). Dimitras answered questions posed by Kırmacı with respect to the state of human rights in Greece and the human rights cases against Greece before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).



In response to a question about how he assesses the state of human rights in Greece, including migrants, minorities and other vulnerable groups, Dimitras said that the lack of human rights culture in Greece has even more affected the country's vulnerable groups. Indicating that when democracy was restored in Greece in 1974 that this concerned only the majority, Dimitras noted that democracy remains on hold in the context of the lack of recognition of the ethnic identity for the country's Turkish and Macedonian minorities and that there is a cross-party consensus in the country on this particular issue.

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 4th programme, 10.02.2022 / Online



The fourth part of the online programme series titled “Facts about Our Country” organised by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) on the Zoom platform was realised on 10 February 2022.

The guest of the fourth programme was Hülya Emin, President of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi, which has not yet been registered by the national courts

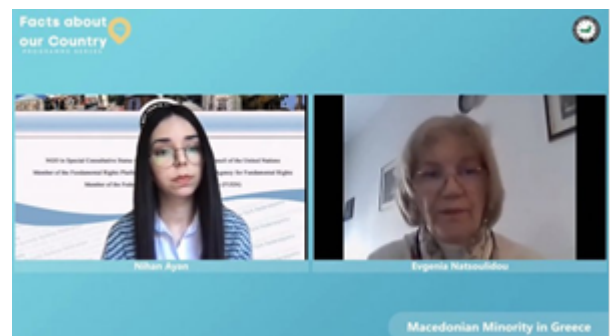
despite the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) against Greece. Emin answered the questions of Nihan Ayan from ABTTF Athens Office with respect to the 21-year legal process before the national courts and the ECtHR as regards the failure to register the association.

Emin noted that the aim of the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi, which was established on 21 March 2001, is to organise women from the Turkish community in Western Thrace under the umbrella of cultural activities and help solve their problems.

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 5th programme, 24.02.2022 / Online

The fifth part of the online programme series titled “Facts about Our Country” of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) was broadcast on 24 February 2022.

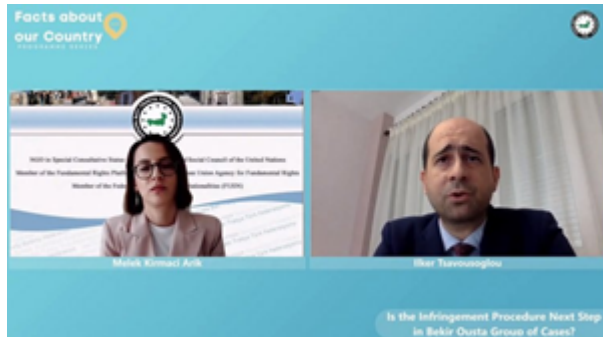
The guest of the fifth programme was Eugenia Natsoulidou, founding member of the non-profit organisation (NPO) “Krstе Misirkov (Movement to Promote Macedonian Mother tongue)” of the Macedonian minority in Greece. Natsoulidou answered the questions from the programme's moderator, Nihan Ayan from ABTTF Athens Office, with respect to the issues facing the Macedonian minority, which Greece does not accept and does not recognise.



Natsoulidou noted that the language and culture of the Macedonian minority in Greece are completely different from Greek language and culture, noting that Greece does not recognise any ethnic minorities within its borders because that if it starts to recognise ethnic minorities, the structure based on the

assumption that all Greeks came from Ancient Greece would collapse. Natsoulidou added that it is very difficult to change the perception in the country because there is no political will to do so.

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 6th programme, 17.03.2022 / Online



The sixth part of the online programme series titled “Facts about Our Country” of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) was broadcast on 17 March 2022.

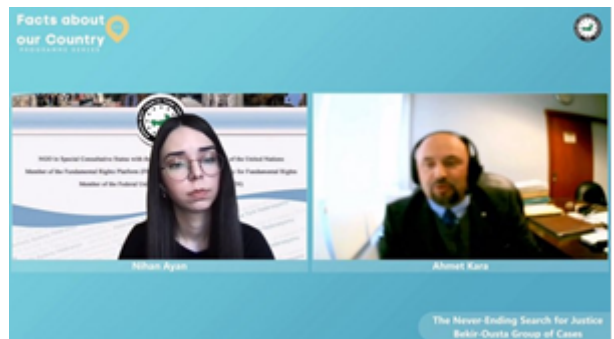
The guest of the sixth programme was Ilker Tsavousoglou, Legal Counsel of Bekir Ousta and Others Group of Cases, in which are included associations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which were closed and/or not registered by

the Greek national courts, included the Xanthi Turkish Union, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women in the Prefecture of Rodopi and the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association.

Tsavousoglou answered the questions posed by the programme’s moderator, ABTTF International Relations Director Melek Kırmacı Arık, with respect to the Bekir-Ousta and Others Group of Cases in which the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) convicted Greece of violating the freedom of association in 2008.

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 7th programme, 24.03.2022 / Online

The seventh part of the online programme series titled ‘Facts about our Country’ of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) was broadcast on 24 March 2022.



The guest of the seventh programme was Ahmet Kara, Attorney of Bekir-Ousta and Others Group of Cases, which concern the freedom of association of the three associations of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, namely the Xanthi Turkish Union, the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi and the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association.

Kara answered questions from the programme’s moderator, Nihan Ayan of the ABTTF Athens Office, about the failure to execute the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments on the Bekir-Ousta and Others Group of Cases for the past 14 years by Greece.

Kara stated that the Xanthi Turkish Union, the first association of the Turkish community in Western Thrace, which was established on 14 April 1927 and will celebrate its 95th anniversary this year, operated smoothly until 1983, noting that the association, which was closed due to the word ‘Turkish’ in its name, had been fighting for 39 years and that Greece had not executed the 2008 ECtHR judgment as regards the association.

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 8th programme, 28.04.2022 / Online



The eighth part of the online programme series titled “Facts about our Country” of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) was broadcast on 28 April 2022.

The guest of the eighth programme was Pavlos Voskopoulos Filipov, member of the Presidium of “EFA-Rainbow” which is the political party of the Macedonian minority in Greece.

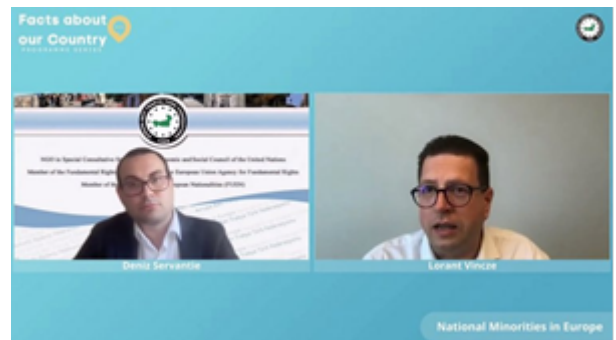
In the programme, which was moderated by Nihan Ayan from ABTTF Athens Office, Voskopoulos Filipov answered the questions about the fundamental issues and demands of the Macedonian minority, which Greece does not accept and does not recognize, and the political manifesto and activities of “EFA-Rainbow”.

Voskopoulos Filipov noted that there are 500 villages in northern Greece where the Macedonian minority live, noting that in the 1923 population exchange, 20% of the Macedonian-speaking population had to leave their homes.

Voskopoulos Filipov stated that the issue of the ethnic minorities is a sensitive issue for modern Greece, and that if ethnic minorities are recognized, the national myth that all modern Greeks taught in schools are descendants of ancient Greeks will be shattered, and that according to that myth it is noted that Macedonia has always belonged to the Greeks and therefore only Greeks live in this part of Greece.

“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 9th programme, 14.07.2022 / Online

The ninth part of the online programme series of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) titled “Facts about Our Country” was broadcast on 14 July 2022.



The guest of the ninth programme was Loránt Vincze, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and President of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), who belongs to the Hungarian minority in Romania.

In the programme moderated by Deniz Servantie from ABTTF Brussels Office, Vincze answered questions with respect to the current situation of the national minorities in Europe, the steps to be taken towards the protection of national minorities at the European Union (EU) level and the European Citizens’ Initiative “Minority SafePack (MSPI)” coordinated by FUEN and the Turkish community in Western Thrace in Greece and the broader view of minority rights in the country.

Vincze, who is also Co-Chair of the EP Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages, indicated that the communities that differ from the majority population by their own language, culture, customs and traditions are defined as national or indigenous minorities, noting that some of the EU Member States, such as Greece, do not recognise in any way national minorities within their borders.



“Facts about Our Country” programme series, 10th programme, 10.11.2022 / Online

The tenth part of the online programme series of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe

(ABTTF) titled “Facts about Our Country” was broadcast on 10 November 2022.

Herbert Dorfmann, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) from the German minority in Italy, was the guest of the programme.

In the program moderated by Deniz Servantie from the ABTTF Brussels Office, Dorfmann answered questions about the status and rights of national minority groups living in the Autonomous Province of South Tyrol in Italy, the agricultural and rural development process of the region, which is considered as a model for regional development throughout Europe, and the importance of economic development in the development of national minorities. In addition, Dorfmann expressed his proposals for the economic development of Western Thrace in Greece in comparison with examples from Europe.

Dorfmann reminded that 15 years ago, with the expansion of the European Union (EU) towards Central and Eastern European countries, many new national minorities were included in the borders of the EU, and Dorfmann indicated that the history, culture, customs and traditions as well as the protection of rights of each national minority are different. Currently, many national minorities are not protected in Europe, and therefore some regional languages are in danger of extinction.