

RESOLUTION

**Delegation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace:
Resolution submitted by Friendship, Equality, Peace (FEP) Party, Western Thrace
Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA) and Federation of Western Thrace
Turks in Europe (ABTTF)**

The Assembly of Delegates of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) adopted the following resolution in FUEN Congress in 2015 held in home region of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, in Komotini/Gümülcine, Greece, on 16 May 2015:

Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece

The status and the rights of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece are established by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. The obligations assumed by Greece under “Section III” of this Treaty which deal with the protection of minorities, including “an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense, any charitable, religious and social institutions, any schools and other establishments for instruction and education, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their own religion freely therein”.

The educational and religious autonomy of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been undermined and diminished by governmental practices over years.

Considering that in Greece;

1. Greece does not subscribe to the right of any group to self-identification on a collective basis and the right of assembly or association of the group which seeks to determine their identity.
2. The educational autonomy of the Minority has been one of the most significant issues for protection and promotion of the Minority’s ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural heritage. State intervention on minority issues to such an extent that in practice, the Greek Government, through the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, has wide-ranging control over the minority schools at all levels, whether it concerns the composition and the functioning of the school boards, the hiring and firing of teachers, the distribution of textbooks or the building and repair of school buildings. This caused a low-qualified education in minority schools with structural problems regarding training of teachers, the curriculum and textbooks.
3. On 27 November 2014, the new Law for “Research, Technological Development and Innovation and other Provisions” was approved by the Greek Parliament. Law 4310/2014 introduces reforms and changes in administrative organizations, in issues related to teaching staff at minority schools, issues related to the functioning and scientific-pedagogical support (supervision of educational staff and administrators) of the minority schools, establishment of a teacher training school at the Democritus University of Thrace (also diploma equivalence program for the Graduates of Special Pedagogical Academy of Thessaloniki will be introduced) and appointment and hiring

of educators to primary minority schools. These would not solve current problems but would extend state control over minority education.

4. A commonly stated problem of the absence of bilingual minority kindergartens is not included in Law 4310/2014. Under Law 3518/2006 the pre-school education for all children at the age of 6 has been made compulsory, and minority children are obliged to attend state kindergartens where the language of education is only in Greek. This contradicts with the principle of educational autonomy enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty.
5. The Turkish Minority has the right to elect its own religious leaders (muftis) under the 1913 Athens Treaty, which noted, “Each Mufti will be elected by those Muslim voters who find themselves under the authority realm of the related Mufti”. Law 2345/1920 envisaged that muftis are elected by Muslims who were entitled to vote, this was never implemented and muftis in Komotini (Gümülcine) and in Xanthi (Ískeçe) were appointed by a special decree issued by the King. After problems with the Greek Government in 1985 with regard to the appointment of muftis, the Presidential Decree of 24 December 1990 prescribed that muftis must be appointed by Presidential Decree on nominations from the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. The Turkish minority elected its own muftis in 1990, but public authorities do not recognize the muftis elected by members of the Turkish minority.
6. Law 4115/2013, which replaced the Articles 36 to 39 of Law 3536/2007 about the appointment of Muslim religious officers, would allow the Greek government to exercise state control over religion through the appointment of Muslim preachers i.e. Imams to mosques/ the appointment of teachers without teaching qualifications to state schools to teach Quran in Greek language under the realm authority of the official Muftis in Xanthi, Komotini and Didymoticho in Greece.
7. Muslim Charitable Foundations (Waqfs) are important institutions for the Turkish Minority. The Junta regime of 1967 the Greek authorities appoint the administrative bodies of these pious foundations. Furthermore, Greek Government imposes excessive taxes on the properties of these pious foundations.
8. Article 19 of the Greek Citizenship Code (No: 3370 of 1955) was a crystal clear example of racial discrimination. Under this Article which notes, “A citizen of non-Greek origin leaving Greece without the intention of returning may be declared having lost Greek citizenship” 60.000 members of the Turkish Minority lost their Greek citizenship. Those who remain stateless within Greece and those who adopted the nationality of another country after losing their Greek citizenship and having left Greece have no right under Greek law to recover their Greek citizenship. Greece has not taken measures that would lead to the reparation of the serious consequences that arose from the deprivation of citizenship on the basis of Article 19.
9. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is inadequately represented in society’s policy and decision making system. In 1990, the electoral law was changed in Greece and 3% threshold was introduced. This threshold has been implemented for the independent candidates, too. Political parties and independent candidates cannot enter the Parliament although they may have enough votes to get electoral seats in specific electoral districts. This provision makes it almost impossible for members of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace to be elected to the Parliament, unless they run candidates with mainstream parties.

10. There are currently no associations in Greece operating legally with their names including the words “Turk” or “Turkish”, which reflect the ethnic or national identity of their members. Following the dissolution of the Turkish associations in the late 1980’s, the three associations (Xanthi Turkish Union, Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Region of Rodopi and Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association) lodged a complaint with the European Court of Human Rights in 2005; the ECtHR held unanimously that there had been a violation of Article 11 (freedom of assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights in 2008. The Court will rehear the cases of Bekir Ousta and others (35151/05), Emin and others (34144/05) and Turkish Association of Xanthi and others (26698/05).
11. Western Thrace has always been the most impoverished region of Greece. Also, because of the economic crisis in Greece since 2009, the region has been the most downsized economy of the country. The economic crisis affected Western Thrace Turkish Minority much worse than the people of other regions in terms of business and job opportunities. Greece introduced a 0.5 % quota under Law 3647/2008 for persons belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in the civil service where there is high level of unemployment. This special measure has, thus far, not been implemented in Greece and a comprehensive long-term programme has not yet been established by the authorities to improve the integration of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace into the labor market.

- Reminding that Greece has not ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities that provides that a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity,

We call on the new Government of Greece to

1. recognize the right of Turkish minority to self-identification on a collective basis and its right of association which seeks to determine and maintain identity,
2. respect its obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne and take measures in order to restore the autonomous structure in the field of education. Greece should respect, protect and promote the rights enshrined in the Lausanne Treaty and act in full compliance with the provisions of the Treaty and the core international human rights treaties of which Greece is a party,
3. establish bilingual minority kindergartens in Western Thrace in line with the minority schooling system, and allow the Turkish Minority to establish private nursery schools where the language of education will be in Turkish and Greek, and revise Law 4310/2014 regarding the educational supervision and the appointment of Minority school teachers and improve the quality of Minority schooling system,
4. respect the religious autonomy and recognize the elected muftis of the Turkish Minority,
5. allow the Turkish Minority to elect its Administrative Boards of Charitable Foundations and take necessary steps to protect cultural heritage and monuments of the Turkish Minority,

6. take steps to ensure the immediate rectification of the unfortunate consequences arising from deprivation of Greek citizenship under Article 19 for all persons concerned, although they no longer live in Greece even if they have acquired citizenship of another country,
7. implement, without any further delay, the decisions of the European Court in the cases Turkish Association of Xanthi and Others v. Greece, Bekir Ousta and Others v. Greece & Emin and Others v. Greece, and reaffirm the commitment of the Greek authorities to implementing fully and completely the judgments of the ECtHR and amend the Code of Civil Procedures in such a way that it allows the implementation of the European Court decisions in matters related to freedom of association,
8. abolish the 3% electoral threshold for the minorities and independent candidates on national and European Parliament elections and have a concrete dialogue with the Turkish Minority representatives during the legislation process regarding the laws and regulations about the Turkish Minority,
9. support the local industries, to reinforce the infrastructure and to invest on the workforce of Western Thrace. Also, encourage foreign investors to invest in the demographic, strategic and geographic opportunities of Western Thrace.