

RESOLUTION 2024-04

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

The Delegates of the Member Organisations of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) adopted the following resolution at their Assembly of Delegates in Husum/Hüsem, Germany on 21 September 2024:

Revocation of the Registration of the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association

The rule of law in Greece has been seriously threatened and systematically violated in recent years. The Chapter on Greece of the 2023 Rule of Law Report published by the European Commission¹ noted serious concerns about the justice system in the country, and the European Parliament (EP) adopted a critical resolution² drawing attention to the worrying state of the rule of law in Greece on 7 February 2024.

The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has been struggling with systematic discrimination in Greece for many years.

In the three cases, known as Bekir-Ousta and Others group v. Greece, involving the dissolved Xanthi Turkish Union (est. in 1927), the Evros Prefecture Minority Youth Association (est. in 1995) and the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Rodopi (est. in 2001), the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in 2007 and 2008 that Greece had violated Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights on freedom of assembly and association. For the past 16 years, Greece has persistently failed to execute the aforementioned ECtHR judgements, violating its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Furthermore, the Court of First Instance with a Single Judge of the Prefecture of Rodopi ruled on 28 May 2024, after a hearing on 6 September 2023, to revoke the registration of the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association, a fans' association founded by Western Thrace Turks, on grounds that, although it was officially registered by the civil court of first instance in October 2022, the phrase "Western Thrace" in its name is contrary to the law and public order and poses a danger to the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the country.

The decision to dissolve the newly founded Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association is a clear attack on rights and freedoms beyond the violation of the freedom of association. The aforementioned association is a fans' association and has not acted in breach of its statutes to date; as stated in the indictment. It has not taken any action that threatens the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the country.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0069_EN.html

² https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/10bc40c8-b6f5-4ad4-8bde-b2ee4df33680_en?filename=21_1_52575_coun_chap_greece_en.pdf

The decision to dissolve the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association shows that the ECtHR judgements and case-law are not taken into consideration by the Greek courts.

The FUEN Assembly of Delegates calls on Greece to:

- recognize the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace. The Turkish Minority of Western Thrace must have the right to freely express and collectively exercise its Turkish identity in social, cultural, political, economic and public life.
- The freedom of associations of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace must be guaranteed, the court decision on the dissolution of the Western Thrace Fenerbahçe Culture and Sports Association must be revoked.
- The judgements of the ECtHR in the Bekir-Ousta and Other group of cases must be fully and completely executed by Greece as a matter of urgency.