



**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)

**Oral Statement by Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF)**

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Discrimination and positive measures/affirmative action

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Distinguished Participants,

The Forum on Minority Issues offers a unique and essential opportunity to address the issues that continue to challenge States and minorities in all regions, and gives us the opportunity to speak up. The Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe speaks on behalf of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace, Greece, which is recognized by Greece on its religious background i.e. Muslim, that has already been stated by the Permanent Mission of Greece to the UN.

Positive measures or affirmative action which aim to address inequality that prevents persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities from meaningful and effective participation in economic life are often imperfect due to the non-recognition of minorities by Member States in their territory.

The UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues, Gay McDougall, visited Greece in September 2008 to promote implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The Independent Expert visited Western Thrace including Xanthi and Komotini, where the Turkish Minority reside. The Independent Expert has recommended that the government should retreat from the dispute over whether there is a Turkish minority and place its full focus on protecting the rights to self-identification. The recognition of the existence of minority groups is important for minorities' full participation in society and development, and for the full realization of their rights. Formal recognition by the state makes possible the protection of those minority rights guaranteed in domestic legislation and in any international treaties to which a country is party.

The Turkish people living in the islands of Rhodes (Rodos) and Kos (İstanköy) are not granted the official minority status on the ground that these islands were not part of Greece when the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 was signed. The minority rights enshrined in the Lausanne Peace Treaty of 1923 and European standards on minority rights should be applied to persons of Turkish ethnic origin of those islands. The fact that those islands were not part of Greece when the Lausanne Peace Treaty was signed should not be a reason to deprive the Turkish population on the islands of their minority rights. Since the Turkish Minority in Rhodes, Kos and the Dodecanese Islands are deprived of the right to have education in mother language, and it has been reported that the Turkish minority living in the islands are not even allowed to organize weekend schools or additional classes in Turkish.

Though there are a large number of international, regional and domestic laws and policies adopted by Governments, including Greece to address discrimination and the inequalities experienced by persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, there is still discrimination and inequality in participation of these minorities in economic life. Greece has signed but still not ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, though ECRI, in its 4<sup>th</sup> monitoring cycle report in 2009, strongly recommended that Greece ratify, as soon as possible, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

By virtue of Law 3647/2008, Greece introduced a 0.5 % quota for persons belonging to the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in the civil service where there is high level of unemployment. Though, this special measure has not been implemented in Greece. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), in its 4<sup>th</sup> Monitoring Cycle Report on Greece in 2009 highlighted that a comprehensive long-term programme has not yet been established by the authorities to improve the integration of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace (Muslims from Western Thrace in the original report) into the labour market, and it notes that reports indicate that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace continue to be under-represented in the public sector and state-owned corporations. The Independent Expert noted that the government should quickly implement its program of positive measures to ensure that 0.5% of all government jobs are filled by persons belonging to the Turkish (Muslim in the original report) minority.

In the situation of deep economic crisis, unemployment rate in the region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, where the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace reside have raised 12.9 % in September 2010, which recorded one of the highest unemployment rate in the country. This deep economic crisis that resulted the closure of 24 factories out of 68 in Rhodope, and economic conditions of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace has deteriorated during this period. Furthermore, unequal distribution of resources and services prevents the persons belonging to this minority from enjoying their economic and social rights.

ECRI has noted that a special attention to the situation of the Turkish Minority women in Western Thrace. Surveys which were made in different villages in Rhodope and Xanthi have proved that the level of education of the minority women in Western Thrace is at a very low level. Only 5.3% of women participated in the survey are university graduate or university student, 4.7% of them are high school graduate or student, and 6.6% of them are secondary school graduate or student. The very low level of education prevents the minority women to participate in economic life in a meaningful way.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Greece should review all legislation and practice with regard to access to employment, and identify and eliminate whatever discrimination may exist, with a further consideration of awareness-raising among civil servants in all public departments regarding the prohibition of discrimination and fight against discrimination of any form and at all levels.
2. Governments should ensure that persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities have equal access to quality education in either public schools or private educational institutions and are enabled to complete education without discrimination.
3. Greece should take further measures to improve the integration of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace and should give priority to the education of the women belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, and should carry out a program and/or project on the problems and the needs of these women in order to strengthen their participation in economic life.