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Joint Press Release

A delegation of Western Thrace Turks at the OSCE Human Dimension Conference

The systematic violation by Greece of the rights and freedoms of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace were conveyed at the conference.

The Western Thrace Turks were represented at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Human Dimension Conference, held in Warsaw, the capital of Poland, from 5 to 15 October 2026.

Organised by the Swiss OSCE Chairpersonship with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the conference took place from 7 to 9 October 2026. The delegation was led by Chairman of the Western Thrace Turkish Minority Advisory Board (BTADK) and Mufti of Xanthi Mustafa Trampa, and included K. Engin Soyyılmaz from ABTTF, Dr Pervin Hayrullah, Human Rights Expert from the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA); Kerem Abdurahimoğlu, Deputy Chair of EFA from the Friendship, Equality and Peace (FEP) Party; and Emine Hüseyin Palazlı from the Association of Religious Officials of Xanthi Mosques.

The conference, which covered all OSCE commitments relating to the human dimension, was attended by the OSCE's 57 participating States, OSCE institutions, international organisations and representatives of civil society.

Intervening during the conference's third plenary session, which focused on fundamental freedoms including the freedom of peaceful assembly and association, ABTTF, noted that, as a result of the Greek state's policy of denying the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, minority associations whose names include the word "Turkish" – and which had been operating officially in Greece for many years without encountering any obstacles – had been dissolved, whilst permission to establish new ones had been refused.

Noting that Greece has failed to execute the three European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments against it concerning Turkish associations in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases for over 18 years, ABTTF pointed out that the Cultural Association of Turkish Women of the Prefecture of Xanthi—which was refused registration in 2010 due to the word "Turkish" in its name—won its lawsuit against Greece at the ECtHR, and that the ECtHR ruled unanimously on 24 June 2025, in the case titled Sagir and Others, that Greece once again violated Article 11 (freedom of peaceful assembly and association) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

ABTTF noted that the report on Greece, adopted at the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CINGOs) of the Council of Europe and the monitoring report on Greece adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 26 September 2026, as well as in the resolution accompanying the report, it was recommended that Greece execute the aforementioned ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases in the context of freedom of association.

ABTTF called on Greece to execute the ECtHR judgments in the Bekir-Ousta and Others group of cases and the Sagir and Others case fully, effectively and without delay, and to uphold the rule of law in the country.

Speaking at the same session, the FEP Party highlighted the restrictions faced by the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace regarding freedom of association. It indicated that Turkish minority associations, which had been dissolved down due to the word “Turkish” in their names and whose official status had not been restored despite ECtHR judgments, were unable to participate in dialogue platforms such as the OSCE Human Dimension Conference

During the same session, the Association of Religious Officials of the Mosques of Xanthi took the floor. In the speech delivered, it was stated that the religious leaders of the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace are not recognised by Greece, that muftis are appointed against the will of the Minority, and that this imposition has been institutionalised by the recently adopted law on muftis.

In its address during the same session, WTMUGA emphasised that fundamental rights form the cornerstone of the OSCE’s commitments under the Human Dimension, and called upon Greece, within this framework, to respect the right of the Western Thrace Turks to self-identification, freedom of association, and freedom of religion and belief.

Intervening at the conference’s fourth plenary session, themed “Tolerance and Non-discrimination”, the FEP Party highlighted the injustices faced by the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace in the areas of religious freedom, education, economic development and employment. It noted that, despite the quotas applied by Greece to minority students seeking admission to Greek universities and the European Union (EU) funds allocated to the region, Western Thrace remains one of the poorest regions in Greece.

During the conference’s fifth plenary session, themed “Rule of law”, the FEP Party took the floor to emphasise that the systematic violation of the rule of law in Greece is a widespread and long-standing issue; however, for the Turkish Minority in Western Thrace, this has been an unchanging reality since time immemorial. The FEP Party underscored that the Turkish minority faces interventions in the areas of freedom of association and education that are incompatible with the rule of law.