



2009-04

The Assembly of Delegates of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), at its session on 1 October 2009 in Brussels, adopts the following resolution:

*Submitted by Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu -
 Delegation of the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace
 (Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe and Western Thrace Minority University
 Graduates Association)*

Full and effective participation in political life is of vital importance in expressing and maintaining identities of minorities. However, the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace in Greece is inadequately represented in society's policy and decision making system. After the Turkish Minority elected an independent deputy in 1989, a new electoral law was introduced in Greece, which set a threshold of 3% of the nationwide vote for a party and for an independent candidate to be represented in the Parliament. Under the current electoral law of "reinforced proportionality", political parties and independent candidates cannot enter the Parliament unless they obtain at least 3 % of the votes throughout the country, 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 the majority political parties.

Law 2240/1994, which reduced the number of prefectures and sub-districts, established enlarged electoral districts in Western Thrace which in turn caused a decrease in number of elected representatives from the Minority. The redistribution of the electoral districts in 1994 has very adversely influenced the chances for the election of Muslim prefects or prefectural councillors, because the election law merged Xanthi with neighbouring Kavala and Drama, and Rhodope with neighbouring Evros, where the Turkish Minority is densely populated.

Full and effective participation of the Minority in political life requires an inherently pluralistic society in which the existence of the Minority is considered as a major factor, not of division, but of enrichment for the Greek society. However, there is a strong trend in news bulletins and regional or national newspapers to reproduce negative stereotypes and certain prejudices concerning the Minority, which in turn threatens the solidarity in society.

In order to ensure that the Turkish Minority of Western Thrace can fully and effectively participate in political life of Greece, we call upon the Greek State:

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- To immediately ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.
- To protect and promote full and effective participation of the Minority in political life and take every step to prosecute and punish any bias motivated crime or discriminatory treatment on the grounds of ethnic or racial origin or religious or other beliefs, which is essential for an effective participation in decisions on the national and regional level concerning the region in which the Minority lives.
- To create a consultative mechanism, at national, regional and local levels which would ensure an institutionalised, open, sincere and continuous dialogue with representatives of the Turkish Minority.
- To withdraw the 3% electoral threshold for an independent candidate to be elected.
- To review and amend Law 2240/1994 taking Minority's demands into account and abolish the division of local districts into enlarged electoral districts which are now implemented in the prefectures of Rhodope and Xanthi.