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Press Release

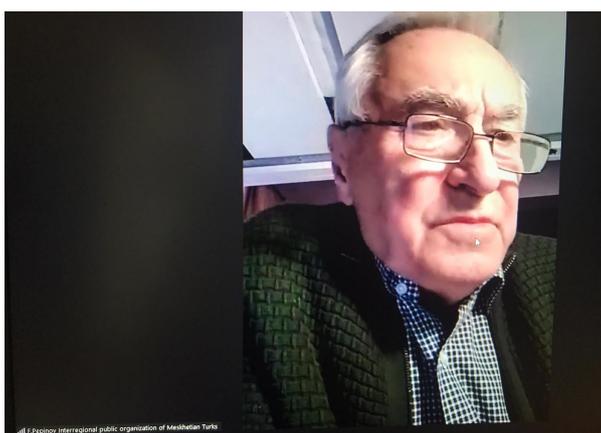
**Turkish organisations that are FUEN members attended the European Regional Forum on Minority Issues**

Turkish organisations that are members of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) attended the European Regional Forum on Minority Issues entitled “Hate Speech, Social Media and Minorities” which was organised online on 21-22 September 2020. Western Thrace Turks and Meskhetian Turks which are members of the FUEN Working Group of Turkic Minorities/Communities (TAG) participated in the forum where FUEN also was one of the partner organisations and which was organised by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and the Tom Lantos Institute.



Western Thrace Turks were represented by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association (WTMUGA), and Meskhetian Turks by International Society of Meskhetian Turks “VATAN” at the meeting.

**Hate speech targeted at Western Thrace Turks and Meskhetian Turks was indicated**



ABTTF and WTMUGA in representation of Western Thrace Turks took the floor in the first session on causes, scale and impact of hate speech targeting minorities in social media. ABTTF and WTMUGA underlined that the ethnic Turkish identity of the Turkish community in Western Thrace is not recognised and that hate speech has shown its effect in politics and media as part of systematic discrimination against Western Thrace Turks.

Intervening in the second session where the

international legal and institutional framework regarding hate speech in social media was discussed, Vice Chairman of the International Society of Meskhetian Turks “VATAN” indicated that the return process of Meskhetian Turks to their homeland in Georgia has not been realised and that there are views in the media, including social media, expressing hate speech. Noting that the media in its majority is shaped by the approach of the government, Pepinov underscored that governments should take the necessary measures by being attentive to the issue of hate speech.



In the third session on the role and responsibility of intergovernmental organisations, states, internet companies and social media platforms in the regulation of online hate speech, ABTTF indicated that following the media coverage of the military exercise which was carried out in the village of Glafki (Gökçepinar), a website known for its opposition to Western Thrace Turks published a photo of a marked house in Glafki (Gökçepinar) from where the photo of the exercise might possibly be taken and Western Thrace Turks have openly been targeted.

Intervening in the fourth and last session on the positive initiatives to address online hate speech towards a safer space for minorities, WTMUGA explained that Greece has an intolerant approach as regards civil society organisations representing the Turkish community in Western Thrace and that for that reason, civil society, government officials and public organisations are not engaging in a dialogue nor cooperating with the Turkish community in Western Thrace.