



**Programmatic Declaration at the
2013 FUEN Congress in Brixen**

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FEDERAL UNION OF EUROPEAN NATIONALITIES
FÖDERALISTISCHE UNION EUROPÄISCHER VOLKSGRUPPEN
ФЕДЕРАЛИСТСКИЙ СОЮЗ ЕВРОПЕЙСКИХ НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫХ МЕНЬШИНСТВ
UNION FÉDÉRALISTE DES COMMUNAUTÉS ETHNIQUES EUROPÉENNES

With more than 90 member organisations in 32 European countries, FUEN is the largest umbrella organisation of the autochthonous, national minorities in Europe.

To the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups belong the minorities that came into being as a result of developments in European history, as a result of the changes of state borders and other historical events. To the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups also the peoples of Europe belong who have never established a state and who live as a minority in the territory of a state. FUEN – which was founded more than 60 years ago in Paris – considers itself as the advocate of these European minorities.

As civil society representative actor, FUEN represents the various interests on regional, national and in particular on the European level. To this end, FUEN works closely together with the Council of Europe, the European Union, the European Parliament and the European regions and maintains good contacts with the United Nations and the OSCE.

The Programmatic Declaration of FUEN was adopted by the Member Organisations of FUEN at the Assembly of Delegates of 22 June 2013 in Brixen, South Tyrol.

The Programmatic Declaration complements the Minority SafePack Initiative  : the European Citizens' Initiative of the autochthonous, national minorities under the title of „You are not alone. One million signatures for diversity in Europe.“

FUEN
Federal Union of European Nationalities
Hans Heinrich Hansen, FUEN President

FUEN Generalsekretariat Flensburg, Schiffbrücke 41, 24939 Flensburg, Deutschland
+49 461 12 8 55 · info@fuen.org

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PROGRAMMATIC DECLARATION AT THE 2013 FUEN CONGRESS IN BRIXEN



At home in our region, strong in Europe!

The debate about the present situation and the future of Europe is dominated by the financial crisis. Its effects threaten the economic livelihood of millions of people on our continent and take away the chances of part of the younger generation. The Members of the Federal Union of European Nationalities and the signatories of this Declaration look at the developments in Europe with increasing concern.

Millions of people are without a job. The youth unemployment in some countries is over 50 percent. There is a fault line between the economically strong regions, which until now have been little affected by the crisis, and those areas where the concentrated impact of the crisis is felt.

The minorities and ethnic groups / nationalities in Europe and the speakers of regional or minority language communities¹ are often living in economically weaker regions or in border regions that are particularly affected by the crisis. Especially the largest national minority in Europe, the Roma, are in a precarious situation.

The people in Europe are unsettled. The problems are complex and the trust in political actors both on national and European level is decreasing. Never before have the approval rates for European cooperation been lower. Instead of the required intensification of European cooperation, renationalisation of the continent is imminent.

FUEN is the civil society representative organisation and the umbrella organisation of the autochthonous minorities and ethnic groups and the organisation that represents the regional and minority language communities in Europe, which comprise of about 100 million Europeans. FUEN joins together 90 organisations from 30 countries.

FUEN was founded in Paris in 1949. It's main purpose then was to create a federal Europe of the regions, as an instrument to secure peace. In the decades after the First World War, the nation states had failed. The horrors of the Second World War, the planned annihilation of Jews, Sinti and Roma and the persecution and exploitation of minorities required radical rethinking. The call for a stronger role for the regions was the right answer to the abuse of power exercised by the centralised states. The respect for cultural, linguistic and national differences that is inherent in regionalism characterises the ambitions of our organisation to the present day.

The European Union goes by the motto "United in Diversity". This diversity is not restricted to the national cultures and the official languages only. The cultural and linguistic dimension of Europe is much more diverse:

¹Definition from the FUEN Charter (2006):

A national minority / ethnic group should be understood as community,

1. that is resident in an area of a state territory or scattered around a state territory,
2. that is of smaller number than the rest of the state population,
3. the members of which are citizens of that state,
4. the members of which have been resident in the area in question for generations,
5. that is distinguishable from the state's other citizens by reason of their ethnic, linguistic or cultural characteristics and who wish to preserve these characteristics.



In the 47 states of Europe there are circa 340 autochthonous minorities, totalling about 100 million persons. Every seventh European citizen is part of an autochthonous minority / ethnic group.

In the EU alone there are more than 60 regional or minority languages, next to the 23 official EU languages. The number of speakers of these languages is estimated at 40 million. Among the larger languages that do not have a national state of their own, are Catalan with about six million speakers, and also Welsh, Basque, West Frisian, Breton. Also the languages of some peoples in Russia, such as Bashkir and Chuvash are above the critical threshold of 300,000 people that some experts mention as the minimum number for the survival of a language. Below this threshold are the majority of the regional and minority languages in Europe, such as Ladin, Rhaeto-Romansh, Sorbian, North Frisian or Kashubian.

Since the start of this millennium, some of the new EU States introduced minority standards in compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria. There was an omission, however, in the sense that no mechanism was introduced on the European level that ensures that the agreed standards and legal norms are adhered to. After these States were admitted to the EU, we notice that several of them are backpedalling from agreed minority standards.

Moreover, the Copenhagen Criteria created a system of double standards. Whereas the new EU-states were obliged to implement minority protection, there are still countries, which deny the very existence of minorities within their territory.

The Lisbon Treaty for the first time explicitly mentions the minorities and cultural and linguistic diversity. This has created an attitude of expectation among the minorities in Europe. It changed into a sense of disillusionment, as there has been no real discussion on the issues of the autochthonous minorities so far.

Protection and support for the autochthonous minorities on the European level are increasingly losing their significance. In this context we could speak of a “lost decade” for minority protection in Europe.

Since it was founded in 1949 the Council of Europe time and again dealt with minority / ethnic group issues. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages are binding international law.

From the outset the Council of Europe has played a leading role in the development of human rights. The minorities / ethnic groups have benefited from the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and the provisions in specific treaties, such as for example in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Unfortunately, not all member states respect the decisions of the Court and several of them delay the ratification of important treaties. At present there is no significant momentum for the further development of the system of protection of the minorities beyond the Framework Convention and the Language Charter.



The Federal Union of European Nationalities calls for a change of policy:

Within the European multilevel system the minorities / ethnic groups and nationalities and related, the linguistic and cultural diversity, have to be recognised as added value. The minorities are no threat for the cohesion of Europe or for the states. In their diversity they lead to enrichment of the state and of society.

The subsidiarity principle and the principle of proximity to the citizens have to inform the discussion on minority issues. That means that the municipalities, regions and states of Europe are under the obligation to ensure adequate protection of and support for the minorities. It is unacceptable “to pass the buck” to the European plane alone; this would be contrary to these principles.

Europe, however, carries its own self-defined responsibility for the minorities and for linguistic and cultural diversity. This responsibility has advanced into a new dimension with the Lisbon Treaty and the European Charter for Fundamental Rights. The legal obligations must now also be reflected in a tangible approach in regard to issues of protection of and support for the minorities / ethnic groups.

FUEN expects from the European Union that it considers itself as the “protector of the minorities”. There is the opportunity to work closely together with the Council of Europe, which works for the protection and further development of human rights and fundamental freedoms.


Europe of the Regions

FUEN advocates a stronger and more powerful role for the regions of Europe. Next to influence from the national level, the European integration process needs new impulses from the regions.

Most citizens feel closely connected to their own region. Especially the minorities / ethnic groups are strongly rooted in their regions. It is here where the dichotomy between minorities and majorities in cultural and linguistic diversity is neutralised and where the basis for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence is developing.

Concretely this means that the political influence of the regions in the decision process of the European multilevel system has to be genuinely strengthened. The Committee of the Regions (CoR) of the European Union must be granted more competences. The same accounts for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in regard to their competences. The Congress too needs more powers to be able to play its important role in regard to diversity in Europe and minority protection more effectively.

FUEN demands that in a future review of the EU Treaties the issue of a stronger position for the regions and the political participation of the minorities / ethnic groups and nationalities is taken into due account.



Research of voters' behaviour shows that voters in minority regions are more positive towards the European idea and cooperation than the voters in areas with a mainly majority population.

Untersuchungen des Wählerverhaltens belegen, dass die Wähler in Minderheitenregionen der europäischen Idee und Zusammenarbeit positiver gegenüberstehen als die Wähler in Gebieten mit überwiegender Mehrheitsbevölkerung.

Europe of the Citizens

The alienation of the citizens with respect to Europe and the European institutions is an alarming signal. The citizens of Europe have a feeling of dispossession in regard to those decision-making processes, in which they are not involved. Many speak of participation of civil society but in fact the decisions within the European context are made by states and by the political parties.

The institutions in Brussels are often blamed for the current crisis – whereas in most cases the major decisions were taken by the heads of state and government of the national states in the European Council.

Europe and the decision-making processes have to be brought closer to the citizens. The call for a “European public sphere” has been heard for many years and from many groups in society.

FUEN calls on the European Union to adapt its structures and treaties in such a way that will enable direct citizens' participation with representatives of civil society. This means foremost that the European Union must support actors of civil society and has to provide the financial means to allow them to play an adequate role in the process of awareness raising and decision-making within the European multilevel system.

FUEN calls for the improvement of legal certainty of citizens by reducing the number of open cases at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which are often cases dealing with minority issues. Furthermore, the member states must be more committed than at present to implement the binding decisions of the Court.

European Citizens' Initiative: One Million Signatures for Diversity in Europe

The Members of the Federal Union of European Nationalities launched a European Citizens' Initiative at the FUEN Congress in Brixen in 2013:

“You are not alone! One million signatures for diversity in Europe”

We are focusing actively on the new instrument of political participation in the European Union, which was created with the Lisbon Treaty. In one year time we want to collect one million signatures, so that the European Union will be obliged to engage in an active dialogue about improving the participation of the European minorities and the regional and minority language communities.



Together with the European Parliament, which will be newly elected in 2014, and with the new European Commission, negotiations will have to take place on how the concerns of the European minorities and in relation to that, the cultural and linguistic diversity, can be implemented in the European multilevel system. With the support of one million citizens in Europe, we will have a strong position to negotiate.

THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN DIALOGUE FORUM ARE:

Prime Minister Luis Durnwalder, South Tyrol, Italy
Prime Minister Karl-Heinz Lambertz, German-speaking Community, Belgium
Minister Anke Spoorendonk, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany
Valentin Inzko, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Austria
President Hunor Kelemen, Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania
President Hans Heinrich Hansen, FUEN / Denmark
Minister Jannewietske de Vries, Province of Friesland, the Netherlands

With a team of experts we elaborated our “Minority SafePack”, a package of measures and concrete legal acts (laws) to promote and to protect the European minorities and the regional or minority languages.

Because of the constraints of the instrument, the citizens’ initiative is aimed at the European Union. With the citizens’ initiative we furthermore want to canvass for a minority system based on solidarity in the whole of Europe and to make it possible for citizens of all European countries to participate symbolically in the collection of signatures.

Based on the “Charter for the autochthonous national minorities in Europe”, which is the document on principles of FUEN, and with reference to the “Minority SafePack”, the signatories of this Declaration have the following demands:

To the states in Europe:

As a basic prerequisite we expect from all states in Europe that they recognise the autochthonous minorities and regional or minority languages in accordance with the two international treaties of the Council of Europe – the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. We urge all countries that did not yet ratify the two treaties, to do so.

We further call on the states of Europe not only to protect the minorities and the regional or minority languages, but also to actively promote and support them. Because of assimilation pressure in some countries the cultural and linguistic diversity is in acute danger.

We demand from the states of Europe that they adapt their minority policy according to the principle of “positive discrimination”. We are not looking for more favourable treatment or unfounded privileges. With supporting measures we want to create factual equality. In many cases equality does not exist in comparison with the majority and can only be achieved by enacting specific arrangements.



Decisions on national or regional level that directly affect the minorities – such as for example decisions on new territorial subdivisions or legislation with a direct effect on the minorities / ethnic groups – shall not be taken or changed without their consent. Solutions have to be elaborated in negotiations between minorities and majorities, based on a dialogue of equals. There are some good examples in Europe on how close cooperation can be of mutual benefit for both the majority as well as for the minority.

The states that already for years have been supporting their minorities should promote their “best practices” with more emphasis on the European level. It must become fashionable and self-evident to take the minority issues into account on the regional, national and European level, if their interests are affected.

To the European Union:

On the basis of our “Minority SafePack”, the first European Citizens’ Initiative launched by the minorities, we call on the competent institutions of the European Union to engage in a dialogue with the minorities in Europe. A dialogue among equals will be beneficial for all parties involved – for the European Union and its Member States and also for the minorities in Europe, who are represented by FUEN.

The organisations united in FUEN are not opposed to the states in which they are living. We want, together with the Member States, to create a Europe with strong regions and build a European Union that has the power to act.

We demand that our special role is recognised, a role that goes beyond the European national state. This special role of the European minorities / ethnic groups and the regional and minority languages is already recognised by many actors. Yet the notion that we are added value for Europe and not a threat, has not been acknowledged by everyone.

With the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and the European Fundamental Rights Charter, the European Union has entered into legal obligations towards the minorities in Europe. As civil society representative organisation we offer to implement these obligations together with the European Union to the benefit of all parties involved.

To the Council of Europe:

FUEN appreciated and with gratitude the pioneering role of the Council of Europe in relation to human rights and fundamental freedoms. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the adoption of the European Fundamental Rights Charter and the establishment of the Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna, the EU is increasingly dealing with human rights. As an institution, however, that has a pan-European legitimacy in the field of human rights and minority issues the Council of Europe remains indispensable.

With the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages two seminal treaties were created. They both



established a monitoring system. This monitoring procedure is now for a part already in its fourth round. In the past decades an extensively researched compendium has been developed that is of great value.

Right now a sense of “reporting fatigue” can be noticed, both among the minorities and among the governments/administrations who participate in the reporting system with sometimes comprehensive opinions and in short intervals. Therefore we propose that the responsible bodies at the Council of Europe consider together with the contracting states and with involvement of the European minorities how the reporting system can find more practical application. Apart from scholarly conferences and symposiums, the question of how the outcomes are relevant for and can be applied by those affected, i.e. the minorities and the regional or minority language communities, is something that must be focused on.

At home in our region, strong in Europe!

Concrete measures

The Members of FUEN and the signatories of this Declaration, want:

- a Europe of the Regions
- a Europe of the Citizens
- a Europe of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
- a Europe of the Minorities / Ethnic groups / Nationalities

In order to realise these goals we would like to cooperate with the regions, the states, the European institutions and all the relevant civil society organisations and individuals in Europe who are interested.

On the European level we want to share our powers and skills and we focus thereby on concrete proposals:

I) PARTICIPATION:

We demand that long-lasting political involvement of the minorities and the regional or minority communities is to be ensured in the European multilevel system. So far the European minorities have been excluded from direct participation. In comparison, EU states with only a few hundreds of thousand inhabitants have a disproportionate larger influence, with their own EU Commissioner and permanent seats in the European Parliament. It is reasonable to ask that the right of the numerically large minorities / ethnic groups, with more than one million people, to have a say, shall be guaranteed in an adequate way.

-Political Representation in the European Parliament

In some states in Europe there are representation models for the minorities / ethnic groups, which can serve as an inspiration for an arrangement in the European Parliament. The different national representation models have to be analysed and based thereupon a recommendation



for a model of representation on the European level should be formulated.

- Minority Platform at the European Commission

We propose to institutionalise direct exchange between the European minorities and the European Commission. A similar procedure has already been established by the Commission with the “Civil Society Platform for Multilingualism”.

-Permanent Representation of the Minorities / Ethnic Groups at the Committee of the Regions

We propose to establish a permanent representation of the minorities / ethnic groups at the Committee of the Regions. Minority issues are often closely related to the regions in which they are living. The Committee of the Regions is the right platform to discuss minority issues on the European level.

-Funding for European activities by the European Commission

At the moment the minorities are financing their political participation on the European level through project funding and their own contributions. It would be appropriate, similar to the support for parties that work on political decision-making, to provide a financial grant to support the social commitment of the European minorities.

II) LANGUAGE / CULTURE:

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, minority issues and linguistic and cultural diversity took on new weight. Already in 2003 the European Parliament showed the way for realising these new priorities with the adoption of the Ebner-report². These recommendations were never implemented. Based on this report and with reference to the “Bozen/Bolzano Declaration of FUEN”³ from 2012, we propose the following measures:

- Developing a language policy and strategy for the regional or minority languages in Europe
- Easing the access to EU funding with micro-projects for the regional or minority languages
- Establishing an action plan to promote and protect the regional or minority languages
- Establishing a European centre of expertise for the regional or minority languages

III) REGIONAL POLICY

The European minorities and the regional or minority language are inextricably connected to the regions in which they are living. In some regions they form the majority. The European minorities / ethnic groups with their different models of self-administration and autonomy are not a threat; they enrich Europe. They are no recipients of subsidies, but offer added value, which should be utilised better for the benefit of the society as a whole. This includes the following measures:

² Report with recommendations to the Commission on European regional and lesser used languages – the languages of minorities in the EU – in the context of enlargement and cultural diversity (2003/2057(INI))

³ www.fuen.org



-An analysis and inventory of socio-economic factors relating to the European minorities and regional or minority language communities.

Similar analyses in regionally confined areas (“Golden Banana” and the “Competence Analysis” in the German-Danish border region) show that the European minorities are not automatically receivers of subsidies, but create political, social, cultural and economic added value for society as a whole;

-Amendment of European Regional Funding within the framework of the new multiannual financial framework of the European Union

it possible that European minorities and regional or minority languages can be better taken into account when funding is granted.

-National and regional funding

INTERREG-programmes and the programmes by the national and regional authorities themselves must be, in principle, accessible for minorities to participate in.

IV) MEDIA

The use and free access to media are of particular importance for the European minorities / ethnic groups. In many cases the programmes and content are produced by the minorities themselves. But in many regions they depend on what is offered in the neighbouring countries. Many groups face obstacles, which make it cumbersome or impossible to freely access the programmes in neighbouring or minority languages. Therefore we call for the following actions:

-Making European rules on the reception of TV-signals between neighbouring countries; so that TV-signals of the neighbouring countries can be received in the area of the minorities / ethnic groups across the border.

-Ensuring that cinema films in languages of minorities / ethnic groups can be shown in minority regions without restrictions.

-Making rules, so that cultural content, such as for example music in the minority language, will also be available in streaming services in the country.

V) ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

With its anti-discrimination directives, the European Union defined a minimum standard that has developed over the past years. Despite that there is the possibility of bringing cases to court this option is used insufficiently. It is now the time to extend the scope of the anti-discrimination directives and to make them more effective. Furthermore, we have to consider the fact that hundreds of thousands of people in Europe continue to live as stateless people, in other words: people who have to live without adequate citizens' rights. These people cannot participate in elections, cannot travel legally and are often excluded from the social welfare systems:

-Further development and extending the scope of the anti-discrimination directives to prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief or language of minorities / ethnic groups.



VI) EU-ENLARGEMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

In the event of a future enlargement of the EU, especially in view of the Western Balkans and Turkey, minority issues must be given more emphasis than in the last enlargement rounds. Also in regard to the neighbourhood policy of the European Union, the protection and support for minorities / ethnic groups must play a central role. The following actions shall be taken:

-The Copenhagen Criteria in the accession procedure must be organised with concrete conditions and requirements that can be verified. The obligations that a state agrees to fulfil in order to become a member of the EU also have to be ensured for the time after admission.

-The priorities of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) also have to include a written reference to the protection of minorities and the involvement of civil society.

-The programme “Democracy in Dialogue”, which was initiated by FUEN, needs Europe-wide support. The programme aims at improving the situation in potential crisis regions by informing them of practical experiences of well-established minorities in Europe.

VII) CITIZENSHIP

-In many cases people belonging to minorities have multifaceted identities and are at home in different cultural surroundings. We are in favour of opening up the possibility to have dual citizenship Europe-wide. Precautions shall be taken that prevent the exploitation of minorities / ethnic groups for domestic or bilateral disputes.

-Improvement of the position of stateless people in Europe. Especially the Russian-speaking population groups in the Baltic countries and the Roma are affected by this.

VIII) ROMA

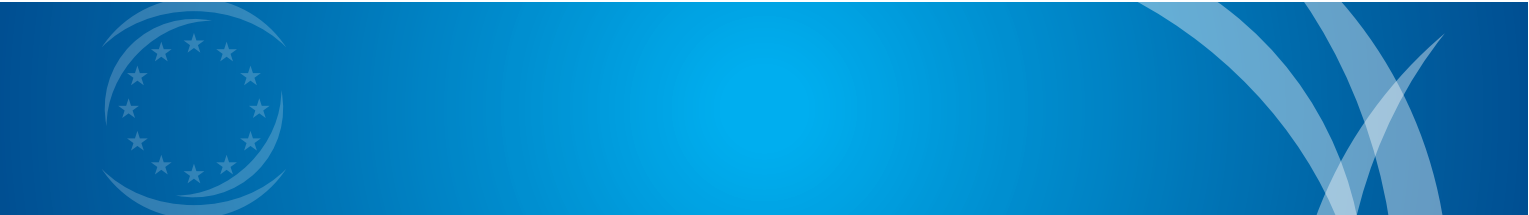
Europe's largest minority – a great majority of the ten to twelve million Roma live in bitter poverty. Down to the present day they are frequently oppressed, despised or discriminated against and in some regions they are the victims of racist hostilities⁴.

-Examining existing funding schemes based on the communication of the European Commission for “an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”: Is funding used according to the set objectives, or are the accusations right that a large part of the money is not appropriately used to improve the situation of the Roma?

-An analysis of the national Roma-strategies with a particular focus on which measures the countries want to take to improve the social inclusion and participation of the Roma.

-The conception and development of a “Roma Development Agency” – to be led by the Roma

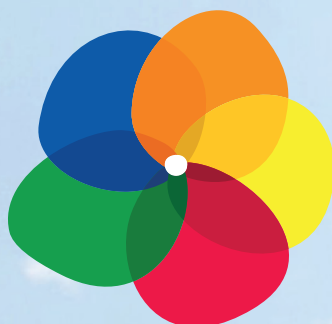
⁴ Eisenstadt Declaration 2011 (www.fuen.org)



themselves. The expertise of the Roma has to be bundled and strengthened; the Roma must become competent to take over the tasks of international intermediary organisations themselves.

FUEN has initiated a comprehensive and ambitious Roma-project under the motto “Minorities help Minorities”. This project, which aims at using the expertise of established minorities for the social integration of the Roma, is implemented as a pilot project in Hungary. After evaluation and with adequate funding by the European Union the project could be rolled out in all the target countries.

⁵ www.fuen.org



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www.fuen.org

FUEN · Schiffbrücke 41 · 24939 Flensburg · Germany
Telephone +49 461 128 55 · Telefax +49 461 18 07 09 · info@fuen.org