



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

Welcome address to the 12th RMDSZ Congress in Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár, 17 April 2015 by FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen

The situation of the autochthonous minorities has become a topic on the agenda again, after the Balkan crisis in the nineties. With the East-West conflict in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbas area, once again protection of a minority has been used to justify military action.

In Greece, an EU state, minorities are struggling to achieve equal rights and recognition, above all the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. In France the Bretons have to accept that their home region will be split in two different regions in the future. No one can help them, because France, just like Greece did neither ratify the European Language Charter, nor the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

These are only the extreme cases. We, the FUEN, have worrying news from Romania as well: the right to use community symbols has been questioned, and an investigation on the restitution process to the historical Church properties started (Mikó-case as a precedent). Recently the proposed national safety and public security strategy of the Romanian Internal Affairs Ministry qualifies all claims for ethnic autonomy a national security threat.

These are not acceptable developments in a European democracy. The majority should understand that having minority rights or granting autonomy does not mean that the majority will lose anything, rather it will mean a more balanced society, where every community can develop itself by its own institutions.

If there is dialogue and cooperation there is always a chance to overcome historical differences; the path of the 25 years old RMDSZ is a great example for that.

Today we are in Cluj-Napoca – Kolozsvár – Klausenburg, the heart of Transylvania, with a community, which celebrates 25 years of political representation.

It is the path you have chosen 25 years ago: to use democratic tools and parliamentary democracy to achieve rights for the Hungarians. You had great successes, worth celebrating today.

These 25 years were not easy, nor were the 66 years of FUEN, but we achieved much since 1949. At first, nobody wanted to speak about minorities, especially not about rights



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for Germans outside the two Germanies or about the minorities behind the Iron Curtain.

We have the experience and the wisdom to make a difference in Europe for the benefit of the 100 million people in Europe, who are members of a national, ethnic minority or language group.

Later the Council of Europe gave consultancy status to the FUEN and started the adoption of resolutions and instruments pointing to the rights of national minorities, including the Minority Framework Convention and the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Within FUEN we know three different examples for good minority solutions. In Belgium, in Italy and in the German-Danish border region, where I come from. The two fundamental requirements for fruitful cooperation are dialogue and recognition.

This year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations. These Declarations, adopted in 1955 by the Parliaments in Bonn and Copenhagen, form the groundwork for the peaceful development from equal rights to the real equality for the minorities that we have now. But this process has taken us 150 years.

I don't have so much time left. But we can move faster, and learn from each other.

The role of FUEN in the upcoming years is to promote the protection of autochthonous national minorities in the European Union and to contribute to solving regional or local tensions between minority and majority.

We are still struggling; we want inclusion of the minority rights among the fundamental rights of the European citizens. We have behind us the European minorities and many member states. It is just a matter of time before we succeed to achieve our goal. If it will not be my generation, than it certainly will be the next generation of minority rights defenders in Europe.

RMDSZ was the main engine behind the Minority SafePack Initiative; it is a document which will represent the basic demands of the European minorities in the relation with the EU institutions

RMDSZ is not only the political representative of the Hungarians in Romania, an

important organisation of the Hungarian in Europe, but also a very active part and member of the FUEN.

I would like to thank for the continuous support of President Kelemen of our work in FUEN, it is not an overstatement to say that by his participation he is the friend of all minorities in Europe.

I was strongly supporting him during his difficult decision to give his resignation as deputy prime minister due to the position of the Romanian Foreign Affairs Ministry on the Minority SafePack Initiative. It was the decision of a true European statesman in a difficult time, an example for all politicians, who tend to keep their seat at all costs.

President Kelemen has invested time and energy into our common minority solidarity, he is an example for all our minority organisations, and it is our shared responsibility to keep up the good work and to make our European minority dreams come true.

The RMDSZ is part of the decision making process and the everyday life of the FUEN, Loránt Vincze as vice president is a very active member of the Presidium, coordinating the FUEN external relations, including our relation with the EU institutions and our main policy proposals.

We have put aside our frustration and disappointment regarding the rejection of the MSPI by the European Commission and we started a dialogue with the representatives of the EC.

The first meetings that we had with two commissioners Timmermans and Navracsics show us, that there is a chance to start a real debate on the protection of autochthonous national minorities in Europe.

Let me now end with a quote from what the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Frank Walter Steinmeier, said at the celebrations on the occasion of 60 years Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations:

“There is a fundamental understanding that lies behind every successful minority policy: violence and pressure are never a solution; only understanding and a deep sense of being together will move things ahead.”