



FUEN KONGRÄSS
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CURRENT AFFAIRS DEBATE ON MINORITY POLICY IN EUROPE: UKRAINE/CRIMEA

EUROPE AT THE ABYSS AND THE MINORITIES IN THE MIDDLE?

8 May 2014, 13.30 hr



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Welcome by FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen

moderation and introduction, FUEN director Jan Diedrichsen

Keynote speeches:

Dr Alexander Osipov, Senior Researcher, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

Swetlana Krätzschmar, City Council President of Flensburg

Opening statement and discussion with our FUEN members:

Mustafa Dzhemilev, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament and former Chairman of Mejlis (parliament) of the Crimean Tatar People

Wladimir Leysle, Council of the Germans in Ukraine

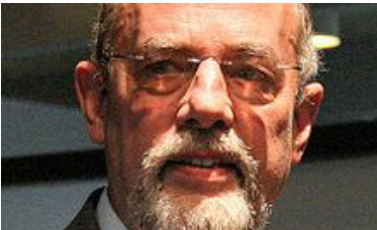
Ernst Kudusov, Crimean Karaites

Participants



Mustafa Dzhemilev

Former chairman of the Mejlis (parliament) of the Crimean Tatar People and Member of the Ukrainian Parliament since 1998. Dzhemilev was born on 13 November 1943 in Ay-Serez in the former Soviet Union. He was only six months old, when he and his family and all the other Crimean Tatars were deported by the Soviet-authorities in May 1944. He grew up in exile, in Uzbekistan. Since his early youth Dzhemilev has been fighting as an activist for the rights of the Crimean Tatars and as a Soviet-dissident he spend several periods in prison camps. Within the human rights movement he is also known for the longest-known hunger strike, which lasted 303 days and which Dzhemilev only survived because of forced feeding. In May 1989 he was elected chairman of the Crimean Tatars, who were allowed to return to their homeland of Crimea since the beginning of the nineties.



Hansen, Hans Heinrich

Since 2007 President of FUEN and before many year the Chairman of the German minority in Denmark – Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger.



Svetlana Krätzschmar

City Council President of Flensburg, Born in Nikolajev at the Black Sea in Ukraine. Krätzschmar studied mathematics at the Gorki-University in Kharkiv. She came via Dresden in the GDR to Western Germany. The mathematics-graduate has a lectureship at the University for Applied Sciences in Flensburg and is interpreter for Russian, Ukrainian and German.

Ernst Kudusov

Kirim Kayalar, The Karait language is a Turkic language with Hebrew influences. The language is spoken by only few people in Lithuania, Poland, Crimea and Galicia/Ukraine. The language is critically endangered.



Wladimir Leysle,

Chairman of the Council of the Germans in Ukraine, The Council of the Germans in Ukraine is the coordination body representing the interests of the ethnic Germans in Ukraine. With its “Society for Development” it organises German cultural centres (so-called meeting-centres) in more than 70 Ukrainian towns and villages, where the German language and culture is being taught.



Dr Alexander Osipov

Senior Researcher ECMI, Dr Alexander Osipov is heading the Justice & Governance Cluster at ECMI. He studied history and law in Russia and in 1993 he defended a PhD thesis in ethnology at the Russian Academy of Sciences where he has worked for 17 years. For 14 years he was also a member of the Human Rights Centre “Memorial”, one of the leading Russian human rights organisations.



Diedrichsen, Jan

Journalist, Head of the Secretariat of the German Minority at Government and Parliament in Copenhagen since 2006; FUEN Director since 2008



Ukraine / Crimea: Europa at the abyss and the minorities in the middle?

Today (while writing this introduction) the media are reporting about an offensive by Ukrainian forces in the eastern part of the country. In Odessa citizens are fighting in the streets, resulting in many deaths. Russia considers that the Geneva Accord on the de-escalation of the situation in the eastern part of Ukraine has failed and Crimean Tatar-leader Mustafa Dzhemilev still does not know for sure whether he was exiled from his homeland, Crimea, for the second time since 1944. The situation is changing so fast that it is not easy to keep track of the developments.

Only a few months have passed, since Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea in breach of international law and allowed the crisis in Ukraine to develop into an international political conflict, with elements closely resembling the choreography of the Cold War. The ousting of president Viktor Yanukovich, who had to flee the capital of Kiev after days of demonstrations with many deaths on the symbolic “Maidan”-square, plunged the country into a deep crisis. It seems as if Ukraine and its circa 46 million inhabitants are torn up between “East and West”.



Already this very short introduction will provoke some readers to disagree strongly. Nothing causes a discussion more quickly than the question whether the EU has the right approach to the crisis, whether in Germany the people who are sympathetic to Russia underestimate the dangers of the “Russian Bear” or whether the Americans should keep quiet, because of the share of actions the United States themselves have undertaken in breach of international law in the past decades. And then we don’t even speak of the psychoanalytical analyses about Vladimir Putin and about the future of Russia that flood our media. Ukraine and Crimea create a polarised debate. They also mercilessly expose the weaknesses of our European cooperation – not in the last place in the issue on how we deal with minorities in Europe.



With the current affairs debate we have the objective to clarify some questions and to give the floor to our members in the first place. We will certainly not agree in all – but we will listen and learn.

We provided the following documents as recommended reading materials:

Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – Ad hoc Report on the situation of national minorities in Ukraine adopted on 1 April 2014

Issue Brief – ECMI – “What do the Crimean Tatars face in Crimea”, by Alexander Osipov, April 2014

FUEN press releases

Furthermore we made an overview of the languages and minorities / nationalities in Ukraine for this small booklet and we added some articles about the Crimean Tatars.

From Brixen to Flensburg

Who would have guesses one year ago at the FUEN Congress in Brixen, that today in the German-Danish border region we have to talk about the possibility of war in Europe? Twenty-five years have passed by since the division of our continent was overcome and it is ten years after the EU enlargement to the east. The crisis in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in breach of international law is a damper on the festivities but also brought back the idea of the European Union as a peace project.

We are living in interesting times. In the shadow of the Ukraine-crisis we almost forget the question of how the referendums on independence in Scotland and Catalonia (which Russia uses to legitimise the annexation of Crimea) will change the architecture of the (nation) states and therefore the face of Europe. Are we moving towards a nationalistic renaissance and will the upcoming elections to the European Parliament give us a swing to the right? What will we do about the phenomenon of mass poverty among the 14 million Roma, most of them European citizens?



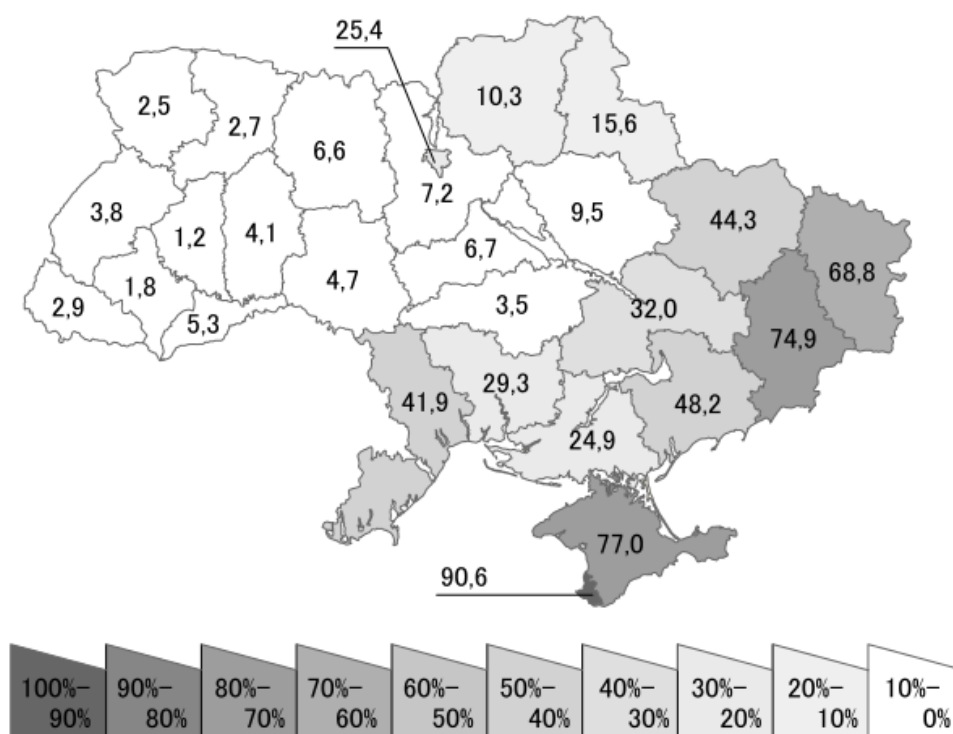


At the moment many people speak, especially in relation to the latest developments in Ukraine and in Crimea, about solidarity with minorities, about minority protection and international law. A lot of this reminds us of the aftermath of the Balkan Wars and the powerless attempts of states and institutions to react to the outbreak of violence. Today, the Balkan Wars seem to be histories from time long gone; however, they are still a cautionary example of how fast minority issues can fall into oblivion again. Despite many statements and assertions of the contrary, minorities have almost completely disappeared from the agenda of the states and of Europe, to turn up again now, in the middle of the next bloody conflict.

The crisis in Ukraine and in particular the disturbing reports from Crimea can only mean one thing for the minorities in Europe: they have to close their ranks and support one another. The minorities in Europe and their umbrella organisations have to use the crisis – and that may sound profoundly cynical – to create enduring attention for the minorities and their interests in the making of European policy, rather than making it to the agenda only at the repeated instances when a conflict is occurring.

Ukraine – Facts

Ukraine is a country with a complex history and composition of different nationalities and identities. You almost have to belong to a minority yourself in order to understand the melange of national, linguistic and cultural identities and loyalties. If you want to have a better insight about Ukraine, it is worthwhile to have a look at the wikipedia-pages – both the German and English versions are good.





According to the latest census from 2001 there were 77.8% Ethnic Ukrainians and 17.3% ethnic Russians and some 100 other minorities. A minority not recognised by the Ukrainian state are the Rusyns / Ruthenes living in Transcarpathia; they are also a member of FUEN. Also the Crimean Karaites are among the minorities; they speak a language that is almost extinct.

There are more than 20 national minorities in Ukraine. With the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe, Ukraine recognised the languages of the Belarusians, Bulgarians, Gagauz, Greeks, Jews, Crimean Tatars, Moldovans, Germans, Poles, Russians, Romanians, Slovaks and Hungarians. Furthermore there are minorities such as the Karaites, Rusyns / Ruthenes, Roma, Lithuanians, Chechs, Chuvash and Urums. Ukraine also ratified the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities.

Minority	Number
Russians	8,334,000 ¹
Rusyns/Ruthenes	560,000 ³
Moldovans	325,000 ²
Belarusians	276,000 ¹
Crimean Tatars	248,000 ¹
Bulgarians	205,000 ¹
Hungarians	157,000 ¹
Poles	144,000 ¹
Romanians	135,000 ²
Jews	104,000 ¹
Urums	95,000 ³
Greeks	92,000 ¹
Roma	47,600 ¹
Germans	33,300 ¹
Gagauz	31,900 ¹
Chuvash	20,400 ²
Lithuanians	11,300 ²
Chechs	9,100 ²
Slovaks	7,900 ²
Karaites	1,200 ¹

Source: 1. Census 2001, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/>, not all minorities were

indicated; 2. Handbook National Minorities in Europe, Christoph Pan & Beate Sibylle

Pfeil, 2003. 3. Ethnologue: www.ethnologue.com.

A large majority of the people living in Ukraine are proficient in the two major languages of the country: Ukrainian and Russian. After the independence of Ukraine, Russian lost its status as official language in 1991, which again and again led to conflicts. Both languages are eastern Slavic languages and they are related. The Ukrainian Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, adopted a Language Act in 2012. The Language Act determines that in the areas where a minority forms more than 10% of the population, the minority language shall be given the status of a second official language (in regard to Russian the Act is applied in 13 out of 27 Ukrainian regions. Furthermore it applies to Tatar in Crimea, Hungarian in Transcarpathia and to Romanian in two other regions). After the ousting of the government in February 2014 the Parliament had revoked the Act, but after protests by the Polish Foreign Affairs Minister and several Members of the European Parliament the acting President of Ukraine vetoed the decision of the Parliament and the existing Act – which shall be adapted together with a number of other laws after the elections on 25 May – remains in force.

Inprint

Federal Union of European Nationalities ,
Jan Diedrichsen, Frank de Boer
May 2014