

FUEN CONGRESS 2016

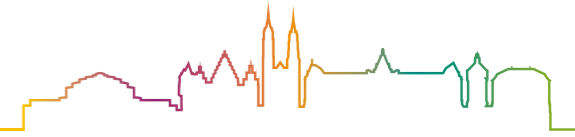
DOCUMENTATION

www.fuen.org




FUEN CONGRESS
WROCLAW / BRESLAU / WROCLAW · 18. – 22. MAY 2016





FUEN – the strong voice of minorities in Europe

The newly elected President Loránt Vincze wants to further increase awareness



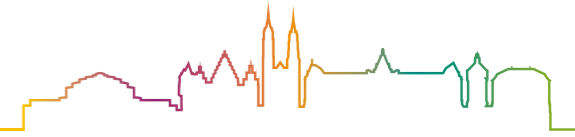
After many years, the political situation in Europe has reached a new dimension in complexity and is characterized by a strong dissonance which implies significant challenges for the European Union: strong immigration, unemployment, terrorism, economic crises and wars. All these issues provoke uncertainty. To avoid that European minorities are forgotten or overlooked in this difficult times, the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) tries to create as much attention as possible for their cause, as for example through the 61° Annual Congress, which took place in the cultural capital Wrocław from 18 until 22 May 2016. The Congress was hosted by the Association of German Social and Cultural Societies in Poland (VDG). More than 150 participants from 27 nations, representing more than 50 minorities, got together to discuss their concerns and wishes for the future. The main topics of the Congress were the general situation in Europe, the conditions for minorities in Poland, the situation in Ukraine, the cooperation of organisations representing minorities and the refugee issue.

On 18 May, the evening before the Congress was officially started, participants came together on the “People’s Market”. Among other traditional food specialties, they could try Polish poppy seed cake, Turkish dates and Breton cold meat. Dancing groups and musicians, like the two Armenian brothers Aram (14) and George Sayeghian (15) from Wrocław with their guitar and violin, ensured a good atmosphere.

This kind of events are important to promote their cause. Even if the priorities of the single nationalities may be sometimes different, all of them hope to achieve a higher degree of awareness and to be taken more into consideration. FUEN in its function of umbrella organization of the autochthonous national minorities and nationalities in Europe with more than 90 member organisations can contribute a lot

to strengthen the rights of the single nationalities. FUEN indeed, sees itself as lawyer and representative of the European minorities. Some of the minorities have many rights and a good cooperation with the majority population of their country. Others, however, are not recognized by their national States and are fighting against assimilation.

FUEN promotes the cause of the European minorities on a regional, national, and most important, on a European level. In order to do so FUEN cooperates with the European Union, the Council of Europe, with the OSCE and the United Nations, as well as with other associations representing the interests of the European minorities. FUEN has an advisory status at the United Nations and a participative one in the Council of Europe.

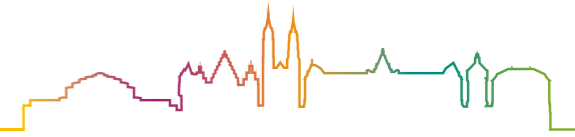


The European minorities being guests in the EU Capital of Culture, Breslau / Wrocław

The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) invited together with the Association of the German Social-Cultural Societies in Poland (VDG) to the 61st FUEN Congress to Breslau / Wrocław.

FUEN is the largest umbrella organisation and representative of the interests of the European autochthonous national minorities. The Congress is a contribution to the presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE) in Germany. Astrid Thors, OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, gave the keynote speech.





Recognition for “building bridges”

On 19 May the Congress of the Federal Union of European Nationalities was officially started. Guests were welcomed by **Rafał Dutkiewicz**, president of the city of Wrocław, and **Bernard Gaida**, chairman of the German Social and Cultural Societies in Poland (VDG). **Andrzej Duda**, the Polish President had nominated **Ryszard Galla** (Vice chairman of the Sejm committee for national minorities) to give a short welcoming speech in his place, which was well received considering the current political situation in Poland. Indeed, in this speech Duda affirmed that “Respect and openness towards minorities is part of the duties of the majority population and a premise for freedom and democracy.”

The speakers came quickly to the point and explained the positive and negative aspects for minorities in the current situation. Gaida explained in his speech that even if Europe has learned to appreciate ethnic and cultural diversity, today it is more important than ever to increase awareness for the issues of minorities. The Chairman of the VDG also added that, in his view, the Congress is a great opportunity to thank Mr. Hans Heinrich Hansen for his work as FUEN President, a function he had carried out for many years. Afterwards Mr. Hansen was given the floor.

Hans Heinrich Hansen started in his welcoming speech immediately with the current refugee crisis in Europe. “There is no simple solution”, the FUEN President said. In such a situation with significant tension the biggest danger is to lose humanity. Hansen explained that FUEN wants to actively participate in finding a solution and underlined at this point also the general tasks of the umbrella organization: “FUEN is so important, because it works for and with the people the organization is meant for.” However, Mr. Hansen as a member of the German minority

in Denmark also called for more recognition and appreciation of the minorities in Europe. “The freedom to express our opinion is required everywhere, no matter if for single members or for us as a group.”

After the speech of the FUEN President the floor was given to Mrs. **Astrid Thors**, High Commissioner for national minorities of the OSCE, who in her function of diplomat is also carrying out dialogues on conflict prevention throughout Europe. “This is not an easy task. Hate speeches become more and more frequent and we can currently see alarming developments in some regions”, she says. The reason can be found in the current refugee situation, which puts under risk the willingness to adopt a tolerant mind-set. Instead of playing off minorities against each other, societies should aim to achieve an intercultural dialogue. Once the conditions for a peaceful coexistence are given, education, justice and other institutions of everyday life must be accessible for everybody. Astrid Thors wants the minorities in Europe to take an advisory role and sees the present representatives as bridge builders between the communities. Astrid Thors defines FUEN a strong organization that is working



Rafał Dutkiewicz, the President of the City of Wrocław / Breslau



Chairman of the Association of German Societies in Poland (VDG)



Hans Heinrich Hansen was thanked for his commitment to FUEN

hard to improve the situation of national minorities and strengthen their political representation and participation. Also the interesting initiatives of FUEN improve the position and the visibility of the minorities’ representatives. Mrs. Thors concludes that for more than half a century FUEN has been successful in formulating the common issues of the national minorities.

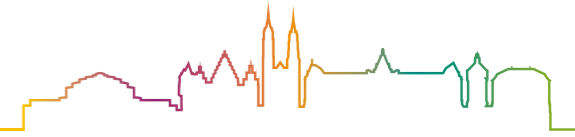
The Union also welcomed the intention of the German Chair of the OSCE to focus in 2016 especially on those topics, that are strongly related to the current crisis in the European security order. Another core topic will be the situation of minorities in times of crisis and their positive contribution to social integration, as well as their role of intermediary in international relations.

The development of the situation in Europe over the last years, characterized by wars in Ukraine and Syria, an ongoing economic crisis, with a significant migration and tendency to renationalization, disintegration and restoration of the borders in Europe, has brought up several matters in terms of security and cooperation, which reinforces the OSCE as organization in Europe. It is uncontested that in Europe and in the World many critical situations are still related to minorities.

Also the following speakers in the morning session, **Krzysztof Bramorski** (Consul General of Luxembourg), **Sebastian Chwałek** (Vice Minister of the

Polish Ministry for Internal Affairs), **Ryszard Galla** (Vice Chair of the Sejm-Committee for National Minorities), **Hartmut Koschyk** (Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Repatriates and National Minorities), **Roman Kolek** (Vice Marshall of the Voivodeship of Opele), **Yvo Peeters**, who extended greetings from **Per Lemoine** (founding member of FUEN) and **Dobiesław Rzemieniewski** (Ministry for Internal Affairs of Poland) thanked Hans Heinrich Hansen for his passionate commitment for FUEN.

In the afternoon, the focus was put on the situation of the minorities in Poland. The speakers were **Dr. Aleksandra Oszmianska-Pagett**, **Rafał Bartek**, **Bernard Gaida** and **Prof. Tomasz Wichierkiewicz**. They all highlighted the important role languages play for minorities. VDG-Chair Gaida gave a thorough analysis in a historical context. Dr. Aleksandra Oszmianska-Pagett, Member of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe, underlined the importance of the promotion of minority languages to foster a sense of identity. Rafał Bartek, the Co-Chair of the Joint Committee of the Polish Government and the National Minorities, pointed out similar issues. He suggested advisory centres for teachers that would support them in teaching the languages. Linguist Prof. Tomasz Wichierkiewicz addressed the possibility of a revitalisation of endangered languages, a topic that was treated in detail in the following panel discussion.



Small groups and major issues

Quo vadis Europa? Under this topic, a row of other interesting presentations and discussions took place at the congress of the Federal Union of European nationalities in Wrocław on 20 May 2016. After an introduction by FUEN Vice President **Olga Martens**, **Dr. Joachim Bleicker**, Commissioner for Relations with EU Member States at the German Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, pointed out that, unfortunately, there have been registered severe breaches of the human rights of minorities in parts of Europe. “We cannot accept this”, he insisted. “We are convinced that national minorities can bring together different societies within one country.” Especially the positive experience of the German-Danish friendship supports the conviction that fair treatment enables the solving of problems.

Renate Schnack confirmed this statement. As the Commissioner of the Prime Minister for National Minorities she is experienced in working in the border region and as a Lower German in the Land of Schleswig-Holstein she knows everything about Germans and Danes. Mrs. Schnack is aware of the fact, that it takes a big portion of energy and political will to protect minorities. As other speakers did before her, she emphasised the importance of education. Renate Schnack explained the major objective: “Living together in one society and being allowed to be different at the same time“. In order to achieve

this goal, all forces must be united. Minorities should relentlessly insist and push the European Commission, with the latter having to show commitment to eventually progress on the difficult path towards the main goal.

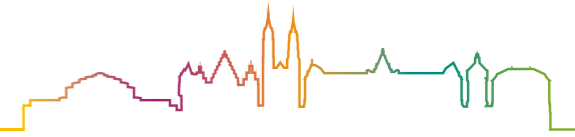
Afterwards the speakers went more into detail: after an overview of the developments in minority protection since the 1990s by **Prof. Grzegorz Janusz** (“There still exist some dangerous tendencies.”), various country-specific reports were presented. The single representatives of the numerous minorities

in Europe described their current situation. Repeatedly they mentioned hate speeches, an issue many minorities are suffering from. In Croatia, even the football matches turned into a platform for anti-Serbian slogans, said **Sascha Milosevic** from the Serb minority in Croatia. The situation in Ukraine was treated as a special subject with contributions by **Wladimir Leysle**, **Arkady Monastyrsky** and **Rovshan Tagiyev**.

Another major topic of the day was the situation of the refugees. **Anna-Carin Öst**, the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Poland, **Martha Stocker**, FUEN Vice President from South Tyrol, **Loránt Vincze**, FUEN-Vice President and member of the Hungarian minority in Romania, and FUEN Vice President **Dieter Paul Küssner** from the Danish minority in Germany, made an assessment on the current situation in Europe. The conclusion of the panel discussion was that Europe depends to a certain extent on migration and that the continent needs to become a protecting power for minorities.

In the afternoon participants were taken on a sightseeing tour through Wrocław. The tour guide mentioned that the city is known as “the flower of Europe”, at least before more than half of the town was destroyed during the Second World War. The Centennial Hall, which survived the War almost undamaged, was the first stop of the tour. The impressive building was built between 1911 and 1913 and is made of reinforced concrete. In 2006 the hall was declared UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today the building is used for trade fairs, sports and cultural events. Afterwards participants visited the old town, where another tourist attraction, the famous bronze dwarfs, can be found at each corner. In the 1980’s the political opposition movement “orange alternative” expressed their criticism about the Communist regime with spontaneous actions, such as demonstrations in dwarf costumes. When the first cast-iron dwarf was installed it was only the beginning. More than 300 dwarfs of a size of about 30 cm followed. It is interesting to see how something small can raise a big deal of attention.





Vincze's election victory, Hansen's farewell

The meeting of the delegates concluded on 21 May the official programme of the 61° FUEN Congress in Wrocław. 30 organisations were eligible to vote and participated with their delegations in this meeting of the highest council of the FUEN. Eventually, Loránt Vincze was elected new FUEN President and takes over as head of the Federal Union of European Nationalities. The Hungarian from Romania was elected in Wrocław with a slim majority. 89 of the 176 eligible votes went to the politician from the party of the Hungarians in Romania. His opponent, Dieter Paul Küssner from South Schleswig, collected 74 votes. Küssner was the first to congratulate Lorant Vincze immediately after the election

Elected into the Presidium were further Daniel Alfreider of the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), Dieter Paul Küssner of Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF), Olga Martens of the International Association for German Culture (IVDK), Halit Habipoglu of the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Gösta Toft of the Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger (BDN) and Bernhard Ziesch of Domowina-Zwjazk Łužiskich Serbow.

Before the elections took pace, Hans Heinrich Hansen presented the activity report for the years 2013–2016. Mr. Hansen mentioned the main stages during this period, from the launching and subsequent rejection of the MinoritySafePack Initiative in 2013, the two new FUEN offices in Berlin and Brussels, the extension of the House of minorities in Flensburg, the successful congresses in Brixen, Flensburg, Komotini and Wrocław up to the eagerly awaited sentence in the MinoritySafePack Initiative and the upcoming

EUROPEADA. Hans Heinrich Hansen thanked his companions, the members of the Presidium, the member organisations, the General Secretary and the FUEN team, the minority he is belonging to and his family, who all had supported him for many years.

Afterwards **Bernhard Ziesch** delivered the financial report. After 2014 the Federal Union of European Nationalities showed also in 2015 a positive financial result. The net income for the year equalled 2,070.38 Euro, which was possible thanks to a sound financial management and especially thanks to the success in the collection of membership fees and project grants. Moreover, FUEN has no longer a negative equity. These results create a good basis for further public funding commitments and donations that FUEN needs to represent the interest of the European minorities on a regional, national, and, in particular, on a European level.



Loránt Vincze was elected and will take over as the head of the Federal Union of European Nationalities



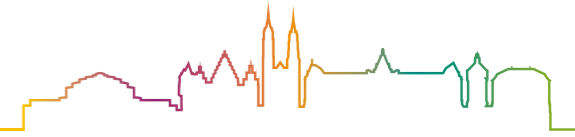
Hans Heinrich Hansen presented a positive financial statement also for the year 2015

Then the delegates took over the floor. Reports of the Working groups followed before FUEN Vice President Martha Stocker, Minister of the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP), announced the EUROPEADA, the European football championship of the autochthonous national minorities which will take place from 18 until 26 June 2016. "We are a little under pressure", she admitted with a smile, "some teams still have to complete their registrations". Martha Stocker affirmed that everybody is working to ensure that all the participants will have a beautiful week in South Tyrol. "I wish that we have football matches among equals."

During a grand gala evening, **Martha Stocker** and Hans Heinrich Hansen were honoured in a farewell ceremony. Warm words, flowers and a song that was composed for this special occasion moved the two and many of the guests to tears. The new Presidium decided to nominate Hans Heinrich Hansen honorary president of FUEN, underlining that his experience will be on demand also in future.

Loránt Vincze wants to lead the FUEN into a stable future. Mr. Vincze, member of the Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) was born on 03 November 1977. Vincze is FUEN member since 2013. He lives in Brussels, where he is working in the European Parliament, which gives him the possibility to promote the goals and objectives of FUEN within the European Institutions. He has already represented FUEN on many international conferences and contributed to the promotion of the organisation and the objectives of the autochthonous minorities.

As new FUEN President Vincze wants to find the right balance for the various perspectives and interests of the minorities with a different geographical, social and political background. He aims to improve cooperation by trying to find a consensus and launch common activities. His language and communication skills will definitely strengthen FUEN's image and media presence.



During the congress the FUEN highlighted the following aspects:

- The voice of the autochthonous minorities in Europe need to be heard, recognised and considered in the various areas.
- The European Union and its member states should pay more attention to the special needs and problems of the autochthonous minorities.
- The protection and revitalisation of the endangered languages in Europe requires tools and funds of the EU and its member states.
- The voice of the Federal Union of European Nationalities and of the European autochthonous minorities should be considered by the European Institutions and by the member states.

Moreover, the FUEN members formulated the following postulations:

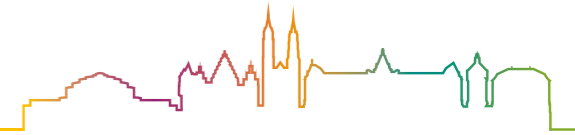
- The EU must create a legal basis for the protection of the autochthonous minorities and nationalities. This also includes the development of an efficient mechanism for the control of member states and the installation of sanctions in case of violations of the Copenhagen criteria.
- The European states must recognise all the autochthonous minorities and the minority languages in their country's territory, grant moral and financial support to protect their identity, language and culture and refrain from intimidation and persecution of their national minorities.
- The Council of Europe must sanction the delay in the submission of country reports, as well as the non-implementation of the framework agreement on the protection of national minorities and the European Charter for regional and national minority languages.

The FUEN delegates also welcomed the Hungarians in Slovenia and the Cham Albanians as new members of the organisation. Moreover, the FUEN now also represents the Greeks in Ukraine as sustaining member. The delegates adopted twelve resolutions. At the same time an amendment was passed that provides a statutory function to the Working groups within the FUEN.

Finally, it can be said that the FUEN, as organisation representing a significant number of minorities, highlighted at the Congress in Wrocław once more the conviction that the European challenges should not compromise our values. They rather should be seen as opportunities to start a debate about identity and develop a new perspective also for the protection of minorities in Europe.



The members of the new Presidium are Daniel Alfreider, Südtiroler Volkspartei (South Tyrolean People's Party) SVP, Dieter Paul Küssner, Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF), Olga Martens, Internationaler Verband der Deutschen Kultur IVDK (German minority in Russia), Halit Habipoglu, Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF), Gösta Toft, Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger BDN (German minority in Denmark) and Bernhard Ziesch, Domowina-Zwjazk Łužiskich Serbow.



Impressions from Wroclaw / Breslau



Project management:
Roxana Schorr / Nehle Mommsen
Editorial staff: Sven Bohde / Susann Schenk
Translation: Bettina Wisthaler
Design: visuellverstehen GmbH

This project was supported
by the Federal Ministry
of Interior and funded by
the Federal Republic of
Germany.



Bundesministerium
des Innern

 Facebook: www.facebook.com/FUEN.FUEV.UFCE

 Flickr: www.flickr.com/photos/fuen-fuev/

 YouTube: FUEN FUEV UFCE

FUEN Flensburg / Flensburg

Secretariat-General Schiffbrücke 41
+49 461 12855 D-24939 Flensburg

FUEN Berlin

AGDM Coordination Bundesallee 216 – 218
+49 30 1868114613 D-10719 Berlin

FUEN Brussel / Bruxelles

Europe-Office Avenue Palmerston 20
+32 485 284315 B-1000 Brussel

info@fuen.org · www.fuen.org

Version: Juni 2016



FUEN CONGRESS
WROCLAW / BRESLAU / WROCLAW · 18. – 22. MAY 2016

