

We are living diversity

57th FUEEN Congress in Moscow

16. - 20. May 2012

Documentation

VIELFALT LEBEN
ЖИТЬ В РАЗНООБРАЗИИ
VIVRE LA DIVERSITÉ

MOSKOW



Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

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- We would like to use this opportunity to inform you about our newly revised version of our homepage - www.fuen.org.
- Of course you can also visit us at Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Issuu.

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Introduction

Hans Heinrich Hansen, FUEN-President



For the first time since our foundation in 1949, we organised a congress in Russia. The possibility was never there before, and we considered this as a signal of opening up towards the West and as recognition for the concerns of minorities. We have been breaking new ground, and all together it was a huge logistical challenge for the partners.

The largest congress of the European minorities was organised together with the International Association for German Culture IVDK, the umbrella organisation of the Germans in Russia, and took place in the German-Russian House in Moscow, in the midst of this vibrant metropolis, only a few stops with the metro away from the Red Square. Thanks to the good cooperation between the FUEN Secretariat in Flensburg and the excellent preparation by the German minority in Russia led by Olga Martens, we were successful together. The FUEN Congress took place in Moscow from 16 till 20 May 2012 and was attended by about 170 people.

We discussed three main topics: "Russia as unknown multiethnic state", the "Fundamental Right to Language" as a part of the discussion about fundamental rights which we have been carrying out at our congresses for some years, and the "European Citizens' Initiative".

With the Citizens' Initiative - one million signatures must be collected in at least seven European countries - the citizens of the European Union can bring about that the European Commission will deal with a certain topic. With the "political tool" of the European Citizens' Initiative, the minorities can emphasize their role as civil society actors. FUEN will use this instrument together with other minority organisations.

Not just the logistical challenge – almost all participants needed a visa – made the congress into something special. Russia is a large and complex country. We set out not to arrive with a European, moralising finger, or patronise from our progressive perspective how this country should solve the problems with its minorities and nationalities. We wanted to refrain from preconceived opinions and learn more about this country with more than 100 autochthonous nationalities and languages. But we didn't keep silent in regard to addressing the problems of Russia, neither, e.g. about the complicated situation of the minorities in the northern Caucasus (Dagestan). That becomes clear in our congress-declaration, which found widespread support and was mentioned in several media, and also printed in its entirety e.g. in the magazine "pogrom" (published by the Society of Threatened Peoples).

At the Assembly of Delegates, the highest decision-making body of FUEN, six resolutions and three statements were discussed and adopted, and four applications for membership were accepted.

The program included a guided city-at-night tour, the “Market of Opportunity” where one could get to know the various nationalities in Russia and as a visit to the Bolshoi Theatre.

As supplementary information, also the speeches, photos and recordings have been published at our internet site.

This documentation offers an insight into the main themes and results of the Congress.

I hope that you will enjoy this brief retrospect.

Han H. Han



The opening

Shortly before the beginning of the congress a message from the Kremlin was reason for some excitement. The president of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, wanted to have his welcoming words read out. Not by just anybody, but by the chief of staff of the presidential administration, former defence minister Sergei Borisovich Ivanov. With the calm of a non-governmental organisation the message, which made us realise the significance of the FUEN Congress in Russia, was duly accepted. However, on the day of the official opening Mr Ivanov had to cancel on short notice. Nevertheless the welcoming words of president Putin were read out and can be read now at our internet site.

FUEN “strategic partner of the Intergroup”

Next to welcoming words by FUEN-president **Hans Heinrich Hansen** and the host and chairman of IVDK, **Heinrich Martens**, also the European Union and the Council of Europe figured prominently with two keynote speakers.

With **Csaba Tabajdi**, the chairman of the Intergroup for National Minorities in the European Parliament, a friend of FUEN had come, who has been following our work already since the beginning of the nineties.

The Intergroup for National Minorities is a cross-party group of Members of the European Parliament. During the meetings of the Parliament in Strasbourg the Intergroup discusses topical issues. FUEN regularly participates in these meetings. E.g. the Sorbs, the Danish minority and the Western Thrace Turks have addressed their concerns at these meetings. The FUEN initiative for a European Citizens’ Initiative was also presented at the Intergroup.

Csaba Tabajdi called on the states of Europe to not push the issue of the minorities from their agenda. In times of financial crisis the minorities play an increasingly marginal role. “That is a mistake. The

minorities have to unite, and fight together for their rights”, said Tabajdi, who praised the work of FUEN as “strategic partner” of the Intergroup.

Director for Human Rights Ralf-René Weingärtner: “Deepen the cooperation with FUEN and fight for the preservation of rights”

The history of FUEN is closely connected to the development of the Council of Europe. Ralf-René Weingärtner, director for Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination at the Council of Europe attended an event of FUEN for the first time.

Within the remit of the director are also the two minority treaties of the Council of Europe,

- the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and
- the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Ralf-René Weingärtner emphasised the importance of the two Council of Europe-treaties as “framework of reference” for the protection and promotion of minorities in Europe and called for ratification and accession of Russia to the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Strasbourg and Moscow have been negotiating about this issue for two years.

He emphasised that not only should the minority rights be acquired but also that rights once acquired should be maintained and implemented.

“We very much appreciate the work of FUEN – we see you as an important partner. I personally am very much willing to deepen our cooperation. For the minorities and for linguistic diversity in Europe”, said Ralf-René Weingärtner.

The speeches / manuscripts of the main speakers are available at our homepage.

Russia – the unknown multiethnic state



Discussion round with Russian experts. From left to right: FUEN director Jan Diedrichsen, Dr Marat M. Gibatdinov (Tatarstan), Mieste Hotopp-Riecke (moderation), Dr Garun-Raschid-Abdul Kadyr Gesejnov (Dagestan), Dr Prof Valery Tishkov.

Hans Heinrich Hansen: “We do not want to give a moral lecture, we want to learn”

FUEN-president Hans Heinrich Hansen defined the context: “With more than 90 member organisations and more than 60 years of experience, FUEN is the actor with the most extensive practical experience in the field of minorities and linguistic diversity in Europe. But we did not come to Moscow to give a moral lecture about the best solution to all the hard challenges in regard to minority protection and diversity. We want to learn, because with all their difficulties and problems, the nationalities in Russia have longstanding experience and also the West may profit from that experience.”

The territorial structure of the Federation mirrors its diversity.

- There are 21 republics, which for a part have their own constitution and far-reaching autonomy. Among them are the national republics such as Dagestan in the northern Caucasus or Tatarstan in the Volga-region.
- The largest segment of the population is formed by the Russians, with 80 percent.
- But there are more than 100 other peoples who are living on the territory of Russia.
- The larger minorities are the Tatars (4.0 percent), the Ukrainians (2.2 percent), the Armenians (1.9 percent), the Chuvash (1.5 percent), the Bashkirs (1.4 percent), the Germans (0.8 percent) and other groups.

With more than 100 ethnic groups and languages Russia is a true multiethnic state. One of the aims of the congress was to make the participants more familiar with this complex diversity. Before the start of the congress, the *Neue Moskauer Zeitung*, the weekly newspaper of the Germans in Russia, featured a series about the different peoples of Russia. The newspaper articles were regarded by the participants of the congress as good background reading.

- **Linguistic diversity**
The non-Russian minorities predominantly speak languages from the Turkic language family, the Caucasian language family, the Uralic language family (Samoyedic languages) and Altaic and Paleosiberian languages. (Source: Wikipedia)

The participants of the congress were able to listen to key-note speeches by top-class experts, who introduced them to the complex subject. Among them was **Vladimir A. Tishkow**, the director of the Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who spoke about the nationalities policy in Russia.

Mieste Hotopp-Riecke from the Society of Threatened Peoples (STP) led a discussion round about Russia and its many nationalities with several representatives of minorities. After the discussion the experts together prepared a congress-declaration with representatives of FUEN, which was unanimously adopted by the Assembly of Delegates.

Key activity language

For some year FUEN has dealt intensively with the issue of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Europe. Together with several partners we have applied successfully for EU-funding for our multiannual network RML2future. Moreover, in 2012 funding for an EU-project under the acronym ProML (Promotion of Multilingualism) was granted, which will develop a Europe-wide campaign for linguistic diversity.

The subject “Right to Language” was suitable for the FUEN Congress in Russia. As basis for the deliberations on the subject, Ewa Chylinski from the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) in Flensburg compiled a research paper, which was discussed with experts and congress participants and chaired by Prof Karen Margrethe Pedersen from the University of Southern Denmark and FUEN vice-president Heinrich Schultz.

FUEN vice-president Hauke Bartels, leader of the Sorbian Institute in Cottbus, Germany gave an introductory overview. His basic considerations have been included below – his summary of the “language day” at the congress is available in the internet.

“Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

After we discussed the diversity of peoples in the Russian Federation yesterday afternoon already and therefore also already had a first impression of the diversity of minority configurations, we now want to shift our focus to, the role of language.

Linguistic diversity is an important cornerstone for FUEN. Many of us are speakers of so-called lesser-used languages and even those delegates who have one of the “larger” languages as their mother tongue, e.g. one of the official FUEN-languages, will experience that outside the kin-states these can also be “lesser-used”, in other words: can also be a minority language, with all the consequences this status entails.

There are at least two good reasons to start the discussion on the role of language for national minorities in general and on the right to language in particular in Moscow, the capital of the Russian Federation:

In the wake of the political changes at the end of the eighties and the beginning of the nineties of the last century FUEN expanded to Eastern Europe. Today, we have members from regions that for the old western European members were not at all part and parcel of their thoughts and actions in regard to minority policies. And we have to admit that the “mental” enlargement of FUEN that was necessary has not been able to keep pace with our formal enlargement.

We are still in the process of getting to know one another, do our best to understand one another, but regularly we have to catch up on the most basic facts. This means that the enlargement of FUEN has to take place not only on paper, but also within our minds, and this process is still a long way from completion.

The second reason, or rather a good occasion, is the ongoing process towards the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Russia. Yesterday we already heard: after the accession of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe in 1996, Russia also signed the Charter in 2001. However, the treaty was not yet ratified. Until now, the experts are still examining how to ratify the Charter.

We understand that the adaptation of the Language Charter to the territory of the Federation is not an easy task. The large number of peoples and languages, which goes far beyond what is normal in Western Europe, an enormous diversity of demographic, political, social, economical and other circumstances in which these peoples are living, the internal federal structure of Russia, different legal traditions and terminology – to mention only some reasons – make the implementation of the provisions of the Charter to the local situation and therefore also its ratification much more complex than in any other European state (although we all know



FUEN - Vice President Dr. Hauke Bartels and Dr. Alexej Kozhemyakov, head of the department for National Minorities and Antidiscrimination at the Council of Europe



Ramasan Alpaut, expert to the practice of language rights of national minorities in the countries of the Council of Europe

that also there it was not always easy to come to the ratification of the Charter).

The Council of Europe, the European Union and the Russian Ministry for Regional Development therefore agreed to engage in a joint programme with the title “Minorities in Russia: Languages, Culture, Media and Civil Society”; this was also already mentioned yesterday. For three years, from 2009 till 2011, and in three pilot regions, an investigation was undertaken on how to surmount various obstacles that stand in the way of ratifying the Charter.

In an article of the Moskauer Deutsche Zeitung from January 2012 is written about the programme, understandably a little in despair: “The impression remains that none of the parties really knows how Russia, its ethnic minorities and the Charter of the Council of Europe should be aligned.”

However, FUEN is already a fairly old organisation – it celebrated its 60th anniversary in Brussels in 2009, and the knowledge that the road to success may be long and hard should, if possible, already have settled down in the “genes” of the organisation.

That is why we are hopeful that at the end there will be ratification, so that the Charter can be applied to the many languages in the territory of the Russian Federation. With good will this shall be possible. This is even more so as the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is an extraordinarily important legal document for the national minorities and therefore also for FUEN. Its main objective is the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in Europe. To improve

the use of regional or minority languages in different domains (administration, education, media etcetera) it offers an “à la carte”-menu of legal obligations, from which the state party has to select at least 35 provisions for each language that will be legally protected by the Charter.

That may not be an easy procedure, but it allows for adaptation to very diverse situations. And therefore it should also be possible to apply the Charter in the Russian Federation.

It has turned out to be extraordinarily important and useful that the application of the Language Charter comes together with a reporting and monitoring procedure by experts. I don’t have to tell most of the participants here about this system, as many of our member organisations are directly involved in the reporting procedures of the Council of Europe and its Expert Committee.

That is exactly the reason why we know that on the one hand the knowledge of one’s own rights and how to exercise them in a practical manner is insufficient among the minorities – also for this reason we want to elaborate our own FUEN-Right to Language – and that on the other hand laws and legal obligations are one thing, but their implementation is something completely different. (And yesterday the director for Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination at the Council of Europe, Ralf-René Weingärtner once again pointed out that it is not just about the implementation, but also about preserving rights; this means that it is a continuing struggle, a

permanent fight to maintain the rights once attained on the long term.)

The chairman of the Expert Committee of the Language Charter, Prof Stefan Oeter, who follows the activities of FUEN and many of the member organisations with a keen eye and whom many in this room will know personally, repeatedly urged us to make better use of the Charter and the monitoring activities to the advantage of the minorities.

Similar ideas were also expressed at the FUEN conference on European Language Policy in Bozen/Bolzano in South Tyrol in January: there are many expert-reports, which give in principle a good overview of the most urgent challenges related to language policy, but they do not receive the attention they deserve, maybe also because they are not reader-friendly or because they are written for a specific target-group. This means that the knowledge is available, but it is not easily accessible.

One of the concrete tasks for FUEN is to find remedies, to show the most important challenges of language policy and to give European support to the individuals who are affected, i.e. in particular our own member organisations.

It is not about formulating an information text of our own on the “Right to Language”, but about several measures with which FUEN carved out its own profile in language policy over the past months and years.

These include e.g.:

- the establishment and activities of the European network RML2future, supported by the EU funding programme for lifelong learning and positioning this network, and therefore FUEN too, as actor in the field of language policy,
- the attempts to establish better networking between FUEN and other actors in the field of language policy such as EBLUL (i.e. the member state committees of the European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages that still are active) and NPLD (Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity),
- the conference on European Language Policy in Bozen/Bolzano in January that was already mentioned above, and especially

- the ongoing efforts to realise a European centre of expertise for the minority languages, with the specific task to open up the knowledge about the minorities and their rights and to disseminate this knowledge.

We will give more detailed information about these and other activities at the Assembly of Delegates.

That what FUEN is achieving at the moment, what it is able to achieve, is certainly quite something. But at the same time, FUEN is effectively a small organisation, despite its large number of member organisations: it does not have a large apparatus that can work continuously for our interests; it has no host of employees and experts.

As an organisation it tends to be overburdened with the large area from where its member organisations are coming and the diversity of situations in which the national minorities are living who are represented by FUEN.

We cannot expect miracles. We can collect and use expert advice and facilitate the exchange of information. We can organise support. And we can do many other things.

But we are both dependent on the active support from experts and the constructive cooperation with our member organisations.

In many cases this is functioning excellently nowadays – and we want to thank you very much for the fact that it does so.”

(Hauke Bartels)

European Citizens' Initiative – towards collecting 1 million signatures

At the congress of 2010 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the programme manager of the Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna, Gabriel Toggenburg, presented the concept of the European Citizens' Initiative:

The European Citizens' Initiative is an instrument of direct democracy in the European Union that came into existence with the Lisbon Treaty. The European Citizens' Initiative is a right of initiative, similar to the popular initiative in several German lands and in Austria. With the citizens' initiative – with one million signatures from at least seven European countries – citizens of the Union can bring about that the European Commission will have to consider a specific subject.

The largest member organisation of FUEN – the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) took up the idea to engage in such a citizens' initiative for the benefit of the European minorities, together with FUEN, the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP) and the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN).

Member of the European Parliament Gyula Winkler (Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians) explained the status of the citizens' initiative together with the international secretary of RMDSZ, Loránt Vincze and FUEN-director Jan Diedrichsen.

- “The citizens' initiative offers the unique opportunity to prove European solidarity among the minorities in Europe; that we work together to improve the situation for all minorities, regardless if they are large or small. The citizens' initiative gives us also the chance to reach something substantial and new for the

minorities in the European multilevel system”, said Winkler in Moscow.

- The initiators of FUEN, YEN, SVP and RMDSZ signed a cooperation agreement and the first discussion meeting in the European Parliament defined the objectives. The idea is that we will have collected the one million signatures until the elections of the European Parliament in 2014.
- The minorities have to establish themselves as European civil-society actors and increase their pressure and influence (every seventh European citizens is part of a minority). With the “political instrument” of the European Citizens' Initiative the minorities have the chance to emphasise their role as civil-society actor.
- Another advantage, according to the initiators, is the collection of signatures itself. With a smart campaign the minorities can attract lots of attention in the regions of Europe and reach a European audience, which would otherwise remain closed to them.

All the member organisations that were present in Moscow welcomed the initiative and promised to support it.



Gyula Winkler, Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania



Frank de Boer, FUEN



Loránt Vincze, Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania

The Assembly of Delegates



Vote at the Assembly of Delegates



FUEN-presidium

The Assembly of Delegates that takes place during the FUEN Congress is the highest decision-making body of our organisation.

Next to the report by FUEN-president **Hans Heinrich Hansen** (see his speech printed from page 12) and the report from the Secretariat (shortened version from page 16), the main topics on the agenda were the congress-statement on the situation in Russia prepared by experts and representatives of FUEN and the adoption of three resolutions.

It is a positive trend that ever more minorities and organisations apply to become member in FUEN. For the first time a member state committee from the dissolved European EU-network of lesser-used languages, EBLUL Germany, was admitted as member of FUEN. The following organisations were admitted:

- . 1) Community of the Carinthian Slovenes (SKS) / Skupnost koroskih Slovencev in Slovenk (SKS)
- . 2) Croatian Centre for Culture, Education and Politics in Vienna / Hrvatski centar za kulturu, obrazovanje i politiku
- . 3) Social Organisation for Fostering and Development of the Karachay-Balkar Traditions (BarsEL) / Межрегиональная общественная организация содействия сохранению и развитию карачаево-балкарских традиций «Барс Эль»
- . 4) European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, member state committee of Germany

In total, FUEN now consists of 94 member organisations.

Speech – FUEN-President Hans Heinrich Hansen at the Assembly of Delegates

Dear friends,

The congress has not yet come to an end; we still have the “statutory highlight” – the Assembly of Delegates in front of us. But allow me to consider the first, short results of the past couple of days. I hope you share my positive feelings: we have some hard and demanding days behind us – not in the last place for our feet – but we were successful.

We gained a multifaceted insight into the complex and interesting situation in Russia. We expressly came to learn. Not to act as schoolmasters, but to look for dialogue.

I would like to thank **Dr Mieste Hotopp-Riecke** from the Society for Threatened Peoples for the first day with much information about the multiethnic state of Russia. He and his colleagues led us through the subject of the congress in a competent and straightforward manner. Thank you very much and I hope that we will continue to work together.

The situation in Russia

In the last couple of hours we have had many talks, also with our member organisations from Russia. These were not just easy conversations.

We understand the very difficult situation that some of our members in Russia are in. We now have to consider together how we can deal with the issue of the minorities in Russia more intensively and also more effectively. We already discussed some first ideas about new fact-finding missions and projects.

At a later point of the Assembly of Delegates we will vote on a resolution submitted by the National Council of the Balkars. It is included in your Assembly-documents. With the help of our experts we furthermore elaborated a general statement as result of our discussions on Thursday, and we kindly ask you to accept this statement.

With these documents we can address the government and responsible parties in Russia. We shall use this general statement as the starting point for our further actions in regard to the minorities and/or nationalities in Russia.

Please allow me now to say some words on the subject of language. I am convinced that it has been a wise decision to adopt our FUEN Charter in Bautzen in 2006, with its 13 fundamental rights enshrined. It is a good guideline for our work and for dealing in a targeted way with the subjects that are so important for the minorities.

The fundamental right to language is a very comprehensive right. I am thankful to my colleagues **Heinrich Schultz** and **Hauke Bartels** that they handled the “first reading” of this fundamental right to language with effortless ease. I think we all know that there are many tasks that will have to be solved in this area.

Citizen’s Initiative: 1 million signatures

I also want to make some comments about our third and last topic – the presentation of the citizens’ initiative by Mr Winkler and Mr Vincze: I think that the animated speech and the many talks that have been taking place during the congress are a clear indicator that with the idea of the citizens’ initiative we are working on a proper and important undertaking, which is strongly supported by the minorities in Europe. We now have the opportunity to place the concerns of the autochthonous minorities of Europe right in the centre of attention and to aim for concrete – and relevant and measurable – results for the minorities.

Closer cooperation and rules for FUEN membership

But let me now have a look on the past year, since our latest congress in Burgenland.

I don’t want to go into all the details; I refer to the report of the FUEN Secretariat that will follow and the written activity report that is included in your Assembly folder.

Let me start in Eisenstadt/ Zelježno: after difficult negotiations and internal discussions we agreed to revise our statutes and adopt new rules for membership in FUEN. That was a “difficult birth”. But our efforts have yielded the first results. Right now we have already



Hans Heinrich Hansen



Hans Heinrich Hansen with FUEN vice-president Olga Martens

received more income from membership contributions than in the same period last year. We maintain a personal contact with our members. In this context, I would like to thank **Jenni Ali-Huokuna**, whom you all know and who has become a steadfast anchor for coordination and communication.

We want to work more closely together with you. We are glad that many organisations are applying to become member of “our family”. Almost every week we receive requests and in the coming years we will admit new members. However, we will also say goodbye to some members who are not actively involved or who do not pay their financial duties, which make it possible to be member in FUEN.

We have an active core of members and we want to increase the level of activity. That is where we need your cooperation. In most cases this works out excellently! I want to thank all the organisations that are represented today for their commitment and their solidarity with our umbrella organisation.

In all modesty I allow myself to say with pride that in the past months we have made a large step forward.

- The number of requests for cooperation, for advice and participation in activities, projects or the request for statements from FUEN on specific political issues is increasingly growing.
- It is nice that now also the Council of Europe is openly searching for strategic partnership, as the director for Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination at the Council of Europe, Ralf-René Weingärtner underlined.

Financing

- The fact that we are so much in demand as civil-society representative and that our cooperation is asked for, is an honour and pleasure for us. But the public structures – the EU, the Council of Europe, the European states etcetera – should beef up the infrastructure of our organisation (including financially).
- To call for an active civil society and not providing it with any means is an insult to all the relentless, committed and in part voluntary work that is being done.
- Please bear in mind that we have four employees in FUEN; that includes our project staff.
- We remain chronically underfinanced and have to invest a large part of our capacity in fund-raising.
- The fact that we raised about 800,000 Euro in EU-funds for our successful projects cannot obscure that we still have a huge need for more financing.
- We are creative, active and on the right track. Although – I want to be honest – it is sometimes really tiresome to visit those “in power” and to go begging for money.
- They all want a strong civil society but it should cost them nothing. This is simply impossible.

Thank you Denmark

FUEN has to thank many people and organisations, but this year I want to pick out one that is not represented here but has been very important. The Danish state.

With a special grant for some projects that Jan Diedrichsen will further explain, Copenhagen offered us the chance to take important steps in developing FUEN into the civil society representative organisation of the autochthonous minorities in Europe.

Denmark has even written FUEN into its own minority statute and supports us as an institution and with project funding.

Many other states that boast of their European commitment to the minorities could learn something from Denmark.

Let me finally thank my colleagues in the presidium. The subjects that we have to discuss are not always easy. Sometimes discussions can be real serious. But it is always a pleasure, we understand one another and for me, that is very important.

New presidium

I want to close my contribution by leaving you, the delegates, with some homework. In 2013 we will elect a new presidium. Please consider if you can nominate a representative to decide on the course of FUEN as part of the presidium.

Dear friends, thank you very much for the past congress-days! I look forward to an active discussion with you, about the current situation and the future of OUR FUEN.
(Hans Heinrich Hansen, FUEN-President)



FUEN – Activity Report 2011

South Tyrolean Minority Prize 2011

Special recognition for the activities of FUEN under the chairmanship of Hans Heinrich Hansen came with the bestowal of the South Tyrolean Minority Prize 2011.

At an official ceremony with around 200 guests at Tyrol Castle near Meran/Merano, Hans Heinrich Hansen accepted the South Tyrolean Minority Prize, 20,000 Euro for the Federal Union of European Nationalities, from the hands of governor Luis Durnwalder.

“FUEN understands that a peaceful Europe can only exist on the long term if peace reaches into the most remote corners of our continent”, said governor Durnwalder, who mentioned South Tyrol today as example for how minority conflicts can be solved – “peaceful and with much, much patience”.

FUEN Congress 2011: focus on Roma

The FUEN Congress took place from 1 till 4 June 2011, at the Burgenland Croats in Austria, in the town of Eisenstadt/Željezno. Around 150 guests from 20 European countries responded to the invitation of FUEN and its member organisation “Hrvatsko kulturno društvo”.

The main topic of the congress was the situation of the Roma. With speeches, a panel discussion and in a working group the situation of the Roma as autochthonous minority in Europe was discussed. This led eventually to the adoption of the “Eisenstadt Declaration”.

Ethnic group act without the involvement of the Burgenland Croats

In reaction to recent developments an urgent appeal was addressed to the Federal Government of Austria. The reason was the revision of the Ethnic Group Act, which was elaborated without the involvement of the Burgenland Croats. This was criticised in a clear protest statement by the FUEN-delegates. The chairman of the Expert Committee of the European Language Charter, Prof Dr Oeter gave very modest marks for Austria's compliance with European standards from the perspective of the Council of Europe.

Citizens' Initiative

The Romanian minister Borbély – who belongs to the Hungarian minority and represented FUEN-member organisation RMDSZ – promoted the idea to start working together in FUEN on a European Citizens' Initiative, which has become possible with the Lisbon Treaty. The delegates of FUEN agreed to examine the feasibility of engaging in such a minority-citizens' initiative.



High Representative Valentin Inzko

A topical conclusion of the meeting was the speech of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and EU Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr Valentin Inzko, who in his function as chairman of the Carinthian Slovenes is also delegate of FUEN. In a well-received speech the diplomat gave a critical appraisal of the past years in regard to the political elites in Bosnia and Herzegovina and took a rather critical view of the future. The engagement of socially active citizens and the potential of young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular were seen by Dr Inzko as signs of hope.

Read more at www.congress2011.fuen.org

FUEN's priorities

The congress was the launch for FUEN's engagement in three priority areas:

1. Roma in Europe,
2. Establishment of a House of the Minorities and
3. Networking initiative in the field of regional or minority languages.

1. FUEN project Solidarity with the Roma – a project of FUEN

The 10 to 12 million Roma with European citizenship are among the most excluded groups of the population on our continent and for a part they are living in inhumane conditions.

In the complex issue of the Roma, FUEN agrees to the position of the European Parliament, which stated in a resolution on the Roma-strategy from February 2011 that the Roma in Europe are an extremely heterogeneous group. Therefore there cannot be one single correct strategy.

It is emphasised that together with representatives of civil society, common concepts will have to be developed. For that reason FUEN initiated a pilot project with support from the Hermann Niermann Foundation. It is our goal to use the

specific experiences of the autochthonous, national minorities in Europe. There are several examples and practices among the European minorities that may be consulted as an inspiration in solving the Roma-problems, according to FUEN.

As a first conclusion, the “Eisenstadt Declaration – Solidarity with the Roma” was adopted, which addressed national governments and European decision makers and gives concrete recommendations on how to take action. FUEN and its members are committed to contribute to solving the problems with all the means available to them.

2. House of the Minorities

A European centre of expertise and information shall be developed, which will function as a European contact point for all questions and for sharing knowledge about the minorities in Europe. Together with FUEN-member organisation Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF), representing the Danish minority, and with support from the Danish Parliament, the Folketing, FUEN started establishing a House of the Minorities. The South Schleswig-Committee of the Danish Parliament provided funding for developing the concept for the House.

3. FUEN networking initiative

In 2011 FUEN launched a new networking initiative in the field of the regional and minority languages. Since 2009 FUEN has been active in the field of regional and minority language with its own Network for Multilingualism and Linguistic Diversity, RML2future, which is funded by the European Commission. (www.rml2future.eu)

After EBLUL Europe (European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages) decided to dissolve itself, there are three networks that are being funded by the European Commission and which are working for the interests of the regional and minority languages.



1. The FUEN-network RML2future,
2. the Mercator Network and
3. NPLD (Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity).

The aim of the initiative is to create more political and institutional networking between the different actors on the European level in regard to the promotion of regional or minority languages and European linguistic diversity.

At the annual congress of 2011 there was a first meeting of these organisations.

Representation of interests on the European level
In May 2011 FUEN-president Hans Heinrich Hansen and FUEN-advisor Dr Jürgen Schöning presented the activities of FUEN, and in particular the engagement for the Roma in Europe, at a meeting with the vice-president of the European Commission, EU Commissioner Viviane Reding in Brussels.

During a visit of the High Commissioner on National Minorities of OSCE, Knut Vollebaek, in Flensburg, there was a meeting with representatives of FUEN, led by president Hans Heinrich Hansen. FUEN director Jan Diedrichsen presented FUEN and its member organisations at meetings of the Intergroup for traditional minorities of the European Parliament.

Parliamentary Lunch Debate in Brussels

On 29 June 2011 FUEN held a Parliamentary Lunch Debate together with Danish MEP Anne E. Jensen in the European Parliament in Brussels.

More than 50 Members of all political groups, representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe and several members of FUEN and other interested people had come. The main subjects were the promotion of a structured dialogue between civil society and the Members of the European Parliament as well as a presentation of the activities of FUEN.

Seminars of FUEN in 2011

The seminar of the working groups of the German minorities took place in October 2011 on the invitation of the German-speaking community in Eupen, Belgium. The web-portal for the German minorities that is maintained by FUEN gives an overview about the seminar at www.agdm.fuen.org.

The seminar of the Slavic minorities within FUEN took place during the International Folklore Festival and on the invitation of Domowina – Federation of Lusatian Sorbs in Lehndorf/Lejno and Bautzen/Budyšin. The meeting was documented: www.fuen.sorben.com.

Resolutions and statements

Next to the congress statement on the situation of the minorities / nationalities in Russia, three resolutions and another statement on the situation of the Karachay were submitted to the Assembly of Delegates.

All the resolutions and statements were adopted.

1. Free und unrestricted reception of TV-signals

Submitted by the Danish minority in Germany, by member organisation Sydslesvigsk Forening: Call upon the European institutions to ensure that free and unrestricted reception of TV-signals of the neighbouring country will remain possible in European border regions.

2. Right of victims of gross violations of human rights

Submitted by the representatives of the Greek minority in Turkey, by member organisation the Ecumenical Federation of Constantinopolitans: Reminder for the implementation of UN Resolution 60/147 on “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of

International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law”

3. Rights of the Turkish minority in Greece

Submitted by the representatives of the Western Thrace Turks in Greece – the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe and the Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association:

The rights of the Turkish minority to establish associations of their own in Greece is not respected by the Greek state and not implemented despite decisions by the European Court of Human Rights.

4. Statement on the “urgent situation of the repressed Balkar people in the Kabardino-Balkaria Republic of the Russian Federation.”

The text of the congress statements and resolutions can be accessed at the internet site of the congress. (www.fuen.org)



Excursions, Moscow by night

The organisers of the FUEN Congress on behalf of the International Association for German Culture (IVDK) made the almost impossible possible and with the help of a host of volunteers they made sure that hardly any wish or question from the 180 guests went unanswered. The guests enjoyed the proverbial Russian hospitality and felt regaled by the warmth of the Germans in Russia.

Within the programme there was sufficient time arranged to enable the participants to visit the many sights in a group or on their own.

The guided tour and (for some) the performance in the world-famous, recently lavishly renovated Bolshoi Theatre was really impressive. Here too the impossible was made possible.

Many participants will also remember the traditional festive evening with the Germans in Russia – and with the folklore ensemble “Phaeton” from Tomsk.

The “Market of Opportunity” in the German-Russian House was a suitable start of the FUEN Congress in Moscow. Many representatives of various nationalities in Russia had come to Moscow and with their food and artistic skills (dance, music) they gave an impression of the diversity of Russia.

The difference, beauty and variety of the metropolis of millions made a deep impression upon the participants of the FUEN congress. The congress itself was almost like a piece of home in an exciting, complicated and always interesting environment.

The greatest gift however, was the warm welcome for the participants by the Germans in Russia, under Olga and Heinrich Martens. This made the FUEN Congress 2012 in Moscow to an unforgettable experience.



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FEDERAL UNION OF EUROPEAN NATIONALITIES
FÖDERALISTISCHE UNION EUROPÄISCHER VOLKSGRUPPEN
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UNION FÉDÉRALISTE DES COMMUNAUTÉS ETHNIQUES EUROPÉENNES