

FUEN-Members are entering the European Parliament

According to estimations by the European Commission there are forty million people - out of around 505 million – who are part of a national minority or who are speaking a regional or minority language; that is approximately 8 percent of the population. Accordingly there “should be” about 60 MEPs out of the total number of 751 representatives who speak a regional or minority language or who belong to a national minority / ethnic group. In a series of three articles we will provide you with a fact-check.

- 1) We look if we can find representatives in the European Parliament among the member organisations of FUEN
- 2) We have a look at the results of EFA – der European Free Alliance.
- 3) We have a look within the different parties to see if there are representatives of regional languages or national minorities who are “hidden” on their lists

But let us start with FUEN:

Some years ago the members of FUEN founded a “European Dialogue Forum” in order to work together with the European Parliament. In terms of substance the European citizens’ initiative – Minority SafePack Initiative – plays a determining role. The political demands of the FUEN members have also been laid down in programmatic declaration and were summarised into its key points with the “Minority Manifesto” that was adopted at the 2014 Congress.

Apart from being a strong civil society movement, FUEN is also becoming more and more a political alliance, with members who run for the European elections. What follows is an overview of the successful FUEN election campaigners:

Romania

Since 2013, the Democratic Alliance of the Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ) is represented in the Presidium of FUEN with Loránt Vince as a Vice-President. He is also the International Secretary of RMDSZ and candidate for RMDSZ – on number 3 of the list.

Before the elections, the chances to keep the third seat for RMDSZ were seen as rather slim. Because of a very committed election campaign with the three top candidates **Gyula Winkler**, **Csaba Sógor** and **Loránt Vincze** at the forefront they managed to achieve an excellent result.

On 26 May 2014 – the day after the elections – a real election classic was developing – a classic nail-biter. Only after the detailed count of the votes it was decided whether RMDSZ was able to retain their third seat. Unfortunately “our” Loránt Vincze just barely missed to win the third seat. In recent years RMDSZ has been an important motor for the European citizens’ initiative and for increasing the profile of FUEN on the European plane.

Italy

Over decades the South Tyrolean People’s Party (SVP) has been one of the pillars under the activities of FUEN. Currently SVP is represented in the presidium with Minister Martha Stocker. The top candidate for the European Parliament elections, Herbert Dorfmann, run for the parliament for the second time after 2009 and was able to defend his seat. In the district of “Italia Nord Orientale” he received 93,949 preferential votes, 70,291 from South Tyrol. A great success, not just for Herbert Dorfmann, but also for the new SVP party chairman Philipp Achammer, who is also involved in our FUEN and our work for the European minorities.

Slovakia

In Slovakia, our member organisation MKP (*Magyar Közösség Pártja*) – part of the FUEN family since 2013 – also made it. Congratulations to MKP-chairman József Berényi. MKP did not succeed in defending the two seats the party had since 2009. That is the result of the newly established Hungarian-Slovakian coalition Híd-Most, which formed an alternative, but which clearly attracted less votes than our member organisation. The two Hungarian seats will now be divided among two parties. FUEN member party MKP will be represented in Brussels by former chairman **Pál Csáky**. He will replace Edit Bauer, among others, who worked closely together with FUEN and the minorities in Europe. Thank you for your support in the past years.

Belgium

Since our latest Congress in 2014 in the German-Danish border region, the regional ProDG party has been a member of FUEN. In Belgium there were elections for the European Parliament and also for the Parliament of the German-speaking Community. It appears that there will be a change of power. Prime Minister Karl-Heinz Lambertz, who has done valuable work and who is one of the members of the citizens' committee of the Minority SafePack Initiative, will probably not be able to continue as Prime Minister. Instead Oliver Paasch from ProDG has now good chances to become Prime Minister. The outcome remains exciting.

The ProDG – top candidate for the European Parliament, **Lydia Klinkenberg**, had a very good result, after a committed election campaign. She had to accept defeat by the new candidate from the conservative CSP party. For many years the conservatives have occupied the seat in the European Parliament that is reserved for the German-speaking Community.

Greece

For FUEN member organisation DEB Partisi, the main reason to run for the EP elections with a list of their own was to mobilise their own members. The Turkish minority in Western Thrace knew in advance that with the existing election districts it would not be possible to win a seat. But the gamble of running for the European Elections was rewarded with great success. DEB was able to achieve the majority both in Rodopi and in Xanthi with a total number of 42,718 votes. That gives the trust and courage to continue with political action. The Western Thrace Turks are represented in the FUEN Presidium by Halit Habipoglu.

France

Since our 2013 Congress in Brixen, South Tyrol, the Breton party Strollad Breizh has been a member of FUEN. Unfortunately, they did not succeed in winning one of the 9 seats in the district “Ouest”, which consists of Brittany and two other regions. They managed to gather 83,173 votes (3.05 %).



Minority cooperation in Europe.

We work together for a Europe with cultural and linguistic diversity and strong minority rights.

In the 47 states of Europe there are over 400 autochthonous minorities with more than 100 million people. Every seventh European citizen is part of an autochthonous minority or ethnic group.

In the EU alone there are more than 60 regional or minority languages, next to its 24 official languages. These languages are spoken by around 40 million people.

Romania, RMDSZ: Gyula Winkler, Csaba Sógor and Loránt Vincze

Slovakia, MKP: candidate list led by Pál Csáky

Italy, SVP: Herbert Dorfmann

Belgium, ProDG: Lydia Klinkenberg

Greece, DEB: Ali Mustafa Çavuş

France, Parti Breton: Yves Pelle

We are all members of FUEN and will work together to strengthen the solidarity amongst the minorities and regions in Europe.

We support the „Minority SafePack Initiative – One million signatures for diversity in Europe“.

Supported by the European Dialogue Forum of FUEN.



The election results of the European Free Alliance (EFA)

The European Free Alliance (EFA) is a European political party that brings together the national, regional and autonomist parties in the European Union. Several of its members were running for the European elections. Before the election they were represented in the European Parliament with six MEPs, where they formed one group together with the European Green Party.

The largest member party of EFA are the Flemish separatists of N-VA (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie), who want the independence of Flanders from Belgium. With this goal the party had a spectacular success both in the elections in Belgium and also in the elections to the European Parliament. At the European elections the party won four MEPs, which is a plus of three seats. It is uncertain, however, if the party, which should be put on the right side of the political spectrum, will remain in the EFA-group. There are some indications that N-VA will end its cooperation with EFA.

In Great Britain and Spain, EFA has a strong presence. In Wales, EFA-group chairwoman Jill Evans succeeded in retaining her mandate, obtaining about 15% of the votes in Wales. The Scottish National Party (SNP), canvassing for the independence of Scotland, became by far the strongest party and will bring back the two sitting MEPs Ian Hudghton and Alyn Smith.

In Spain the Basque-Galician coalition “People Decide” won one seat. According to their tradition the mandate will be shared among the two most successful candidates (who will change places in the middle of the term) – Josu Juaristi will start and Ana Miranda will replace him. In Aragon and Valencia the “Primavera Europea” coalition achieved one seat, which will be taken by Sebastia Jordi.

The Catalan party Esquerra Republicana Catalunya will be represented in the new parliament with two MEPs. The party, which advocates the independence of Catalonia, will be represented in the new EP by Josep Maria Terricabras and Ernest Maragall.

Unfortunately the very active Corsican MEP François Alfonsi did not succeed in defending his seat in France. On the other hand, Tatjana Zdanoka from Latvia caused a small sensation by retaining her seat with a slim 6.38% of the votes.

Minority representatives in the European Parliament who are not part of EFA or FUEN

There are several parties that represent minority interests or language groups in the European Parliament and that are neither active in FUEN nor in EFA. Furthermore, there are MEPs on the lists of the mainstream parties who have a background in a minority or who actively support their “cause”. What follows is an overview – which is not intended to be exhaustive. If you know more names, please write us!

Austria

From Austria a committed MEP, whom FUEN knows well, will enter the European Parliament. Former Secretary General of our Carinthian Slovene member organisation NSKS, Angelika Mlinar, will enter the parliament for the first time as the top candidate of the liberal pro-EU party NEOS.

Sweden and Romania

Two representatives of the Roma have succeeded in making it into the European Parliament. Soraya Post from Sweden is a Roma-activist, who comes into the parliament for the “Feminist Party” and who is well-known as Vice-President of the European Roma and Traveller Forum.

Damian Drăghici comes from Romania and was a candidate for the Social Democrats. Currently he is the personal advisor of the Romanian Prime-Minister for Roma issues.

Finland

The Swedish Party in Finland (Svenska Folkpartiet) had an excellent result with their top-candidate Nils Torvalds. In the last period, Nils Torvalds replaced Carl Haglund, who became Defence Minister after a cabinet reshuffle in Finland.

Slovakia

In Slovakia the Hungarian minority, who make up about 10% of the population, is politically divided among FUEN member party MKP and Most-Híd. Both parties were able to win a seat.

Hungary

In Hungary the awareness for minority issues is high, because about 2 million Hungarians are living as a minority in neighbouring countries. Therefore it is not so strange that there are representatives with a minority background among the Hungarian MEPs. The long-time chairwoman of the Intergroup for National Minorities, Kinga Gál (FIDESZ-EPP), and the former MEP for the Hungarian minority in Romania, Laszlo Tökes (FIDESZ-EPP), made it into the European Parliament. They both have their Hungarian roots in Transylvania, in Romania.

Spain

The governing parties in Catalonia and in the Basque Country, Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC) and Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) (both in the liberal group-ALDE) created an coalition with some other, smaller parties and won three seats in the elections. On behalf of CDC, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells and Francesc de Paula Gambús i Millet will enter the parliament and Izaskun Bilbao will be the MEP on behalf of PNV. Ramon Tremosa and Izaskun Bilbao were already in the parliament between 2009 and 2014.

Bulgaria

Although parties of religious and ethnic minorities are not permitted in Bulgaria according to the constitution, the “Movement for Rights and Freedoms” (DPS) is “unofficially” the party of the Turkish and Muslim minority in Bulgaria. The party (which belongs to the liberal ALDE-group) had very good election results and will be represented in the European Parliament with four MEPs.

Lithuania

In Lithuania the Polish party LLRA, which belongs to the Euro-sceptic conservative group (ECR), defended its seat with 8.06% of the votes and Valdemar Tomaševski will again enter the parliament.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands the Frisians did not run on a list of their own and they also did not have candidates high on the lists of the mainstream parties. The election system with preferential votes, in which the personal result is decisive, caused one MEP from Friesland to make it into the European Parliament. Jan Huitema, a young Frisian farmer and liberal politician (VVD--ALDE) will enter the parliament.

Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

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