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Ukrainsk regeringskommisær for mindretalsemner på besøg i Flensburg - Mindretalspolitik er vækst- og fredspolitik

Flensburg, 6 November 2014

On invitation of the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Ukrainian Government Commissioner for Ethno-national Policy entrusted with minority issues, Mr Gennadiy Druzenko, visited the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) on 6 November 6. Over a 2 hour meeting with representatives from FUEN, Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF) and Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger (BDN), a vivid discussion about the minority constellation and the political situation in both Ukraine as well as in the Danish-German border region evolved.



From left: SSF Chairman Jon Hardon Hansen, BDN Chairman Hinrich Jürgensen, FUEN President Hans Heinrich Hansen, Ukrainian Government Commissioner for Ethno-national Policy entrusted with minority issues Gennadiy Druzenko, City Council President of Flensburg Swetlana Krätzschmar, Assistant Viktoriia Luganska

FUEN-president Hans Heinrich Hansen first talked about Europe's biggest minority umbrella organization, and the chairmen of SSF and BDN Jon Hardon Hansen and Hinrich Jürgensen exemplified the life of the local minorities. Mr Druzenko then gave his perspective on the conflict with Russia. This conflict may from afar appear to be a dispute between the Russian minority and the Ukrainian majority, but in reality it is much more complex.

Referring to the fact that there are more than 130 ethnic minorities in Ukraine and that a large part of its population master both the Ukrainian as well as Russian language from birth, the conflict may roughly be viewed as a struggle between different values, and to a lesser degree as a typical minority-majority conflict. Basically, a large part of Ukraine's citizens want to foster economic and cultural ties with the West while quite a sizeable smaller part of the

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population mainly from the Eastern regions clearly sympathize with the Russian Federation. According to Druzenko, the ethnic background must be viewed as of secondary importance, as the divide between pro/contra West/Russia cannot be clearly drawn between Russians on one side and Ukrainians on the other.

After the recent elections, in which the population of Ukraine clearly voiced its wish for closer relations with the West, the government is currently still in the process of formation. Mr Druzenko said to be very content with the result, and in regard to his country's future approach of minority issues he expects that values, such as democracy and inclusion, will in the future be more highly esteemed. As a result the general situation of numerous autochthonous minorities in Ukraine is likely to improve.

At the end, FUEN-president Hans Heinrich Hansen voiced this gratitude towards Mr Druzenko: "on behalf of FUEN and the European minorities, I thank you for your initiative to visit Flensburg. We are very happy to hear that the new political leaders in Kiev intend to take the ethnic diversity of your nation stronger into account, and I hope we were able to show you which possibilities this interculturality brings for the future of Ukraine".

Mr Druzenko was very positive towards two proposals made by FUEN, namely to organize a minority seminar in Ukraine in 2015 and to invite him to FUEN's annual congress in Greece. While the possibility of a Ukrainian minority seminar is also depending on the final formation of the government, the date of next years FUEN congress already found its way into his calendar.



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Minorities in Ukraine

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, Czechs, Chuvash and Urums. Ukraine also ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

According to the census of 2001, Ukraine had a total population of 48,416,000 people at that time. 37,542,000 of them were Ukrainians, and the rest belonged to different minorities. Of course, these numbers can only give a general idea of the size of the 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
Czechs	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 mentioned; 2. Handbook National Minorities in Europe, Christoph Pan & Beate Sibylle Pfeil, 2003. 3. Ethnologue: <http://www.ethnologue.com>

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