



# House of Minorities in Flensburg

INTERREG 4A project “House of Minorities”



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# House of Minorities in Flensburg

## The Vision

There will be a “House of Minorities – a European information and documentation centre” in Flensburg, the capital of the German-Danish border region and the headquarters of FUEN.

The committee for minority issues in the Danish parliament – Sydslesvigudvalget – has provided the financial means for a feasibility study and concept for such a “House of Minorities – a European information and documentation centre”.

A grant from the INTERREG-programme enables us, in our project “House of Minorities” that is following up on the ideas of 2013-2015, to show the abilities and qualities of the minorities as well as their diversity and to reap the benefits for the society as a whole.

The House of Minorities project combines a specific idea (the building) with a vision (concentration and implementation of the challenges and opportunities for the minorities of Europe). The Scandinavian model of society and democracy and the experiences of the minorities in the German-Danish border region have a decisive influence on the emergence of this House of Minorities.

The process of building renovation and design will run in parallel with the expansion of the range of work and the professionalization of the representation of the interests of the European minorities.





**The building for the Centre of Expertise has been purchased – it now has to be renovated.**

**The challenges and opportunities facing the European minorities are known – they now have to be solved or implemented.**

Auf den folgenden Seiten bieten wir einen Einblick, wie wir uns ein solches Haus der Minderheiten vorstellen und wie wir uns eine Umsetzung vorstellen.

- Timeframe: Completion 2017
- Cost: 3.5 million Euros

**With this House of Minorities we want to**

- Create the point of contact for all questions about the autochthonous minorities in Europe.
- Help close the gap between politics, science and the civil society.
- Be communicator, creative mind, and implementer.
- Prove that minorities are not petitioners, but that they provide something and create added value.
- Educate, inform and close gaps in knowledge.
- Give young people a chance to realise and develop their ideas and visions.
- Create European projects and generate EU funding.
- Build bridges between majorities and (new and old) minorities.
- Defuse conflicts and help prevent conflicts arising.
- Protect and promote languages, draw attention to the natural multilingualism of the regional and minority languages in Europe.
- Use the solidarity of the minorities and use specific projects to make a contribution to help the Roma in Europe achieve social recognition.
- Make the potential offered by a Europe of the Regions visible and useable for the minorities.



## Who – The minorities of Europe and FUEN

The House of Minorities aims to address the 100 million people who count themselves as members of an autochthonous minority in Europe, or speaker of a regional or minority language.

### The minorities of Europe

In the 47 European states there are around 340 autochthonous minorities with approximately 100 million members. This corresponds to about 14 % of the total population, which translates as one in seven Europeans is the member of an autochthonous minority.

156 autochthonous minorities live within the European Union. The total population of Europe is calculated to be around 450 million, 37 million of whom are members of an autochthonous minority.

In the European part of Russia alone there are 45 minorities / nationalities, with 21 in Ukraine and 19 in Romania. The ratio of minorities to total population varies from a few per cent to a third and more.

The field is led by Latvia, Moldova, Estonia and Serbia and Montenegro.

Roma live in most European states (28) as minorities, followed by German speaking minorities (27) and Russian minorities (9 in European and 7 in Asian countries.)

There are 87 different peoples in Europe, of which 33 have established a national state.

There are a total of 90 languages in Europe, of which 37 are spoken as official state languages and 53 count as “stateless languages”.

# FUEN

The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) is a European umbrella organisation founded in 1949, with more than 90 member organisations in 32 European countries, of which 22 are EU states. FUEN thus represents around 1/3 of these autochthonous minorities, for whom it is the main lobbyist and European civil society protagonist.

In line with its statutes, the main aim of FUEN is the preservation and promotion of the identity, language and culture of the minorities, thus contributing to linguistic and cultural diversity and the maintenance of the inalienable values of Europe.

FUEN advocates the establishment of a European civil society, based on mutual values, history and culture.

FUEN represents the interests of its members at European level and in dealings with European organisations, especially the EU and the Council of Europe. FUEN coordinates the concerns of its members, secures their political participation, functions as information and interaction platform, as disseminator for European policies, and as interface to the general public.





## Why – The justification

Only a few people in Europe are aware that one in seven Europeans belong to an autochthonous minority. In many cases, not even the minorities themselves are aware of this shared diversity.

The representation of interests, demonstrative power and organisational capacity of the autochthonous minorities at European level is relatively weak and must be strengthened. It is not entirely without good reason that European minorities are seen as a “well-kept secret in Europe”.

Minorities are only noticed when they are spotlighted as a result of crises and conflicts (Balkans, Basque Country, Northern Ireland) or through quaint posing (folklore, traditions).

**In its role as an information centre, the House of Minorities should close the gaps in knowledge and do awareness-raising work among minorities and majorities.**

*The House of Minorities will be part of an open “European Forum”, which also gives other minority regions or actors in Europe the opportunity to participate with their own initiatives and ideas. The plan is that e.g. also a political representation in Brussels and a centre of expertise on regional and minority languages will be established.*

The minorities have expertise that is important for the whole of Europe. The minorities represent added value, in that they are extremely important in times of crisis and lack of orientation (natural multilingualism, conflict management, innovation through creativity, economic production, cultural diversity, model for integration etc.).

The House of Minorities should draw attention to the cultural, economical, scientific, media and intellectual potential of Europe’s minorities, and help to make this potential more useful to the rest of society in general.

But with respect to their own future, the minorities in Europe need the support that a House of Minorities can offer. While some minorities are large, strong, well organised, and fit for the future, there are many who are faced with massive problems. Some autochthonous minorities are even in acute danger of extinction.

The House of Minorities cannot save minorities from extinction – but it can and should be a contact point for advice, best practice, inspiration and help, so that the minorities can get help to help themselves.

If one looks at the mass of existing scientific literature about European minorities one will find that there is hardly a problem of knowledge – but there is a serious problem in regard to practical implementations. Many of these well-meant and sensible scientific suggestions never get through to the minorities themselves.

Many of the smaller, less well cross-linked minorities also need a strong mouthpiece, which communicates their messages in Europe and also in their own countries so that they are heard. The House of Minorities will work together with the umbrella organisation FUEN to strengthen this voice.

***There is a need for a House of Minorities run by the minorities – for the minorities.***





## How – The 3-pillar house

The House of Minorities consists of 3 pillars:

- Marketing
- Information, documentation and communication
- Service

The determination of the subject matter with which our House of Minorities will be dealing, will always depend on the needs of the “customers” (minorities) and the available resources.

It is our explicit wish not to establish yet another research institute or to compete with any existing scientific institutes.


The House of Minorities will put knowledge and ideas into practice and always keep in mind the added value for the minorities and their specific needs.

For the realisation of the project and as far as the prospective staff is concerned, we should rely on up and coming young people, young academics, career entrants, journalists, doctoral candidates, students, teachers, designers, computer scientists, linguists etc., who want to check the practicability of their ideas and start their career with a successful project, idea, campaign or activity.

At the House of Minorities we also want to provide a framework which will give experienced experts the opportunity to realise their own ideas.

We are of the opinion that there is not a lack of good project ideas, business plans or suggested EU measures, but that there are drawers full of good quality projects just waiting to be implemented.





## *Marketing – Conference Centre and Café of the Minorities*

It is very important that the House of Minorities is accepted by the broader population and that it has grass roots support, especially in the city of Flensburg and the German-Danish border region. The House of Minorities must not hide itself away, it must be a visible part of the cityscape and a proactive member of the cultural and social life of the region.

The House of Minorities must offer an interesting variety of activities, so that it is also a contact point for “normal” citizens, i.e. those who do not belong to a particular European minority. This will also tangibly and comprehensibly implement the highly praised added value of the minorities.

Summing up: The planned House of Minorities must also have an attractive “shop window”.

We therefore suggest that the House of Minorities also will have a conference centre and a Minority Café:

### **Conference centre at the House of Minorities**

The House of Minorities should include conference rooms for conferences, seminars, symposia etc.

The House of Minorities will therefore not only be open to the minorities of Europe but also be an attractive conference and event venue that is open to the German-Danish border region and the city of Flensburg.

The conference centre will also work closely together with FUEN and with the minorities in the German-Danish border region that are united in Dialogforum Norden. This offers an array of opportunities for offering attractive events at local, regional and European level in the conference centre.

### **Café of the Minorities**

Facing on to Norderstrasse, there is the old C.C. Petersen shop. This will be a “shop window”, in that our plan is to redesign the historic building, which until last year housed the longest established retail business in the city, to create a Café of the Minorities.


The possibilities are wide and varied: we can sell specialities from the various European minorities, lay out minority newspapers for reading or even have a special minorities lunch.

Lectures and cultural events can also take place at the Café of the Minorities.

The Café of the Minorities is not only designed for minority representatives but also for all residents of the city and the border region, as well as tourists who want to directly experience some real minorities flair.

A sustainable operating concept has to be developed for the conference centre and the café – which could be one organisational unit.





## *Information – Documentation Centre and Communication Department*

We have already described the existence of the European minorities as a well-kept secret. The fact that so little is known about the minorities and their importance is to some extent their own fault. The minorities provide insufficient information about themselves.

**We therefore suggest that the Centre of Expertise includes**

- a Department of Information and Communication, and
- a European Minorities Documentation Centre.

### **Department of Information and Communication**

A Department of Information and Communication within the House of Minorities must first of all draw up a professional communication and information strategy in cooperation with all the relevant actors that will form a basis for all its work.

The main areas of activity will have to be defined on the basis of the available resources, the needs of the minorities and FUEN. Possible focuses would be:

- Efficient media work
- Campaigning ability
- Press information
- Business reports, image publications,
- Print, online or audio articles

New communication channels like blogs, twitter, facebook, google+, youtube, etc. offer a special chance.

Traditional journalism has suffered for cost reasons and because of the changes in communication and information techniques. Information has to be prepared in a different manner. European minorities have to reposition themselves in this new media and communication world.

## European Minorities Documentation Centre

Not only has the oft-quoted diversity of the minorities been a well-kept secret, but it has also only been insufficiently “user-friendly” documented. There is no doubt that there are shelves of books and scientific documentation about minorities – the facts have been documented and researched. Yet nowhere in Europe is there a museum of the minorities or even an exhibition of the minorities.

### We therefore suggest that the House of Minorities also includes a European Minorities Documentation Centre:

The House of Minorities could educate visitors about the diversity of minorities with a permanent exhibition. Here we are thinking of school classes, residents of the region, guests from minorities throughout Europe, politicians and anyone interested in the subject, who can get information in a documentation centre. Another interesting possibility would be changing exhibitions about the art, history, architecture, and traditions etc. of selected minorities.

The exhibition could be expanded with various collections, photo archives, digital platforms or a reference library.





## Service

### – *demand-oriented offers*

The House of Minorities should be seen as a service provider for the minorities in Europe. We suggest that an appropriate service department be established.

A substantial service would be in the field of advice:

We are thinking primarily about advice about applying for and implementing projects, networks and other activities. Particularly where funding programmes of the European Union are concerned there are opportunities that are currently unused or only rudimentarily used by many minorities. The small minorities often have a lack of the necessary resources and often also a lack of co-financing possibilities. They often have problems in finding project partners in other European countries.

The House of Minorities can offer a wide range of help, from project application advice to helping find co-financing and suitable partners.

The new EU multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020 currently under negotiation, and the complete reorganisation of the EU funding framework, gives the House of Minorities the opportunity to position itself as an expert.

In this context we mention projects and activities in the areas of language, culture and exchanges, training, conferences, media projects but also funding in the field of European structural measures and regional development programmes (Interreg + structural funds (ERDF) / (ESF)) and cohesion funds).

Another important service that the House of Minorities can offer is in the dissemination and cultivation of best practice examples. There is a vast amount of expertise within the various European minorities which could be very advantageous in mastering the challenges faced by other minorities.

When for example a kindergarten in North Frisia is considering developing a trilingual concept, it would be advisable to tap the expertise of experts from Carinthia, who have amassed a great deal of experience in this field, instead of starting cold. The educationalist in North Frisia would not have that experience, but he just has to know that he can contact the House of Minorities and they will help him get the information he needs.

In this context it would be worthwhile considering setting up a database of expertise and best practice examples.

Another specific service could be the dissemination of expert knowledge in the shape of lecturers, teachers, and seminar organisers.

It would also be worth considering the establishment of a “minority publishing house” which could market the literature, music, and other publications, and thus contribute to its dissemination.



## Focuses – Roma Project and RML2future

The House of Minorities must be a place where the main focus activities of FUEN have their place. At the moment there are two firmly established focus projects that have to be mentioned here:

### RML2future

Over the last three years FUEN has built up special expertise in the field of regional and minority languages. In 2008 the European Commission funded a three-year network project for the promotion of language diversity to the tune of 400,000 euros. The project was a FUEN initiative in collaboration with various European partners, which focused especially on regional and minority languages.

A declared aim of RML2future – the network will continue to exist after the end of the funding period in – is the establishment of a “Centre of Expertise for Regional and Minority Languages” in Europe.

The RML2future Centre of Expertise will gather expertise, offer specific help, and develop strategies for assuring the existence of endangered languages in Europe.

### RML2future

Network for multilingualism and linguistic diversity

It's never too late ...  
**monolingualism**  
is easy to cure!



[www.language-diversity.eu](http://www.language-diversity.eu)



## Roma Project

All strategies for improving the economic and social situation of the Roma need implementation and must be flanked by measures that will increase the acceptance and social participation of Europe's largest minority. This objective aims to realise the solidarity of the autochthonous minorities of Europe with the Roma through practical measures.

It is well known that members of minorities possess a special social and intercultural expertise that qualifies them as mediators and bridge builders. In association and collaboration with other minorities the Roma will experience more acceptance from the majority population, and can develop a stronger consciousness of their self-worth, and are encouraged to become proactively involved in state and social processes.

The aspired solidarity between minorities is not only relevant to the Roma population. It strengthens the standing of all minorities and how they are seen by the overall population by offering a contribution to solving a current problem, and this is how we can emphasise that minorities embody an overall social added value.



## The German-Danish border region

The House of Minorities is to work for all minorities in Europe, but will pay special attention to the 90 FUEN members.

We are of the opinion that Flensburg as location is a good, wise and obvious choice.

The House of Minorities will be part of an open “European Forum”, which also gives other minority regions or actors in Europe the opportunity to participate with their own initiatives and ideas. The plan is that e.g. also a political representation in Brussels and a centre of expertise on regional and minority languages will be established.

### Fundamental prerequisites

The idea of establishing a House of Minorities originated in the German-Danish border region and is closely associated with the building, the old warehouse on Norderstrasse next to Flensborghus. The Danish minority has given great support and inspiration along the way.

The Danish government, and especially the Folketing committee Sydslesvigudvalget, have encouraged this ambitious plan with their financial and moral support.



## **FUEN History / Border Region History**

The history of FUEN is closely associated with the German-Danish border region. The Frisians, and the German and Danish minorities were founder members, and were later joined by the Sinti. The secretariat of FUEN has been based in Flensburg since 1992.

The historical balance between the nationalities and the minorities / majorities in the German-Danish border country is exemplary. An important source of inspiration is the very true saying: “from against one another to next to one another to with one another to for one another“.

FUEN and its international minorities involvement have a very good reputation among the minorities in the border region, reflected in the fact that the president and the vice-president are former chairs of the German and Danish minorities.

## **Regional Potential**

Essential for success is its anchoring in the region and in the city of Flensburg. The German-Danish border region is well aware of the importance of its minority model and wishes to build on this with regard to marketing the region also as a sustainable business base - and the House of Minorities is counting on this support.

The competence analysis commissioned by the Schleswig-Holstein parliament: “Minorities as a standortfaktor in the German Danish Border Region” was an important source of inspiration and recommended course of action, and explicitly points out that the regional minorities expertise should be specifically used for European involvement – and that is exactly what the House of Minorities aims to do.



## The Buildings

The House of Minorities will be housed in two buildings in the direct vicinity of Flensborghus, the headquarters of the Danish minority.

- 1) The old historic warehouse
- 2) The old shop of the Petersen family

We already have first architect's drawings for the old warehouse. The 4-storey, detached building requires complete renovation, and a new stairwell is also planned. The gross floor space measures 600 sq m.

The shop was owned and run by the Petersen family for over 100 years, with a shop front on Norderstrasse in Flensburg. The ground floor shop and the family salon will be used for the House.

The shop will also house the Café of the Minorities and office space.



## Financing the Project

First estimates of the cost of complete renovation and conversion of the warehouse and shop suggest a price of 3.5 million euros.

In addition to the renovation costs, it will also be necessary to secure the running costs for the House of Minorities – outgoings for salaries, running the house, taxes and duties etc. These estimates suggest a sum of 500,000 Euros a year.

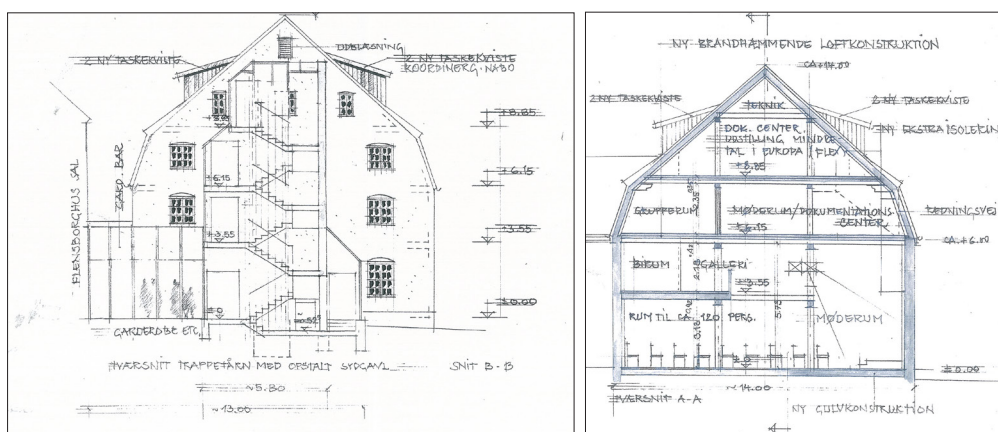
The building – both the old warehouse and the Norderstrasse shop are now owned by SSF.

Neither the minorities in Europa nor their umbrella organisation FUEN can bear the costs of the renovation or the running costs for such a House of Minorities from their own funds.

In our opinion, the House of Minorities is a project that has great European relevance. We believe that this justifies that part of the required sum should come from European funding. This applies to incidental costs during renovation as well as the running costs thereafter. Here we will have to fall back on the necessary political support.

The negotiations on the new EU multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020 should be used to raise the required funding.

A financing strategy will also have to address the possibilities of obtaining funding from private foundations and regional and international grants.





## Notes

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