



Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)  
Union Fédéraliste des Communautés Ethniques Européennes (UFCE)  
Föderalistische Union Europäischer Volksgruppen e. V. (FUEV)  
Федералистский Союз Европейских Национальных Меньшинств

Consultative Status  
to the Council of Europe  
and to the United Nations

Statut consultatif  
auprès du Conseil de l'Europe  
et des Nations Unies

Konsultativer Status  
beim Europarat  
und bei den Vereinten Nationen

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Place **COPENHAGEN**  
Venue **Conference on national minorities on Denmark's EU Chairmanship**  
Date **2002-11-05**

Stimà signur president dal folketing, sar Ivar Hansen, stimadas damas, stimats signuors, Chi'm permettan da drizzar meis prüm salüd in mia lingua materna, illa lingua da la cumünanza retoromana illas alps da la Svizra e da l'Italia, ün salüd chi'd es collià cun ün cordial grazcha fich!

Det var en hils i retoromansk min modersprog, en sprog som er efter statistikken nummer 80 at de europæiske sprog. Jeg ville gerne fortsætte in en anden sprog, pa dansk, den sprog ligger på midtbanen af de 90 europeiske sproggrupper i Europa. Hjertelig tak til det danske folketing for at de har organiseret dette internationale møde i en historisk tid og i en hovedstad som er meget tæt knyttet til de problemer af de sproglige mindretalsgrupper in Europa.

I will now continue my speech in German, statistically the No. 2 language in Europe after Russian.

I would like to dedicate 6 wishes to the EU—which will soon encompass 25 states—on its birthday.

- 1.) I consider it to be a decidedly positive sign and not a coincidence that a representative of an NGO can have his say first, particularly here in Denmark. In fact, apart from creating democratic and constitutional institutions, setting up a civil society is one of the principles, without which a state degenerates into a formal legal institution. A state can quickly become an institution without active and politically mature citizens, without their integration as partners in the opinion-forming and decision-making process and very easily lose its equilibrium through arbitrary actions of political decision makers. Considering events in history, it is still not easy for participants in civil society, particularly in the new states, to gain the attention and recognition they deserve. A special wish is for constructive interaction in partnership between the state and civil society towards structuring relationships with the ethnic groups whose language is not recognised as an official national language on the territory of the respective state.

And so my first wish for the new Europe that is taking shape is for a strong civil society, that is recognised and promoted as a partner as regards the preservation of lingual and cultural identity by the state institutions.

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A second wish is for fundamental reform of the national states. The national state has to depart from the task of monopolising one language and culture; its job is to guarantee all citizens an equal framework for preserving individual and collective identity.

History has shown that all liberal states have at some time attempted to disseminate one social culture throughout their territory.

All national states today have pursued and still pursue a lingual-cultural policy of homogeneity to a greater or lesser extent. This is reflected in:

- latent or openly proclaimed assimilation with more or less obvious discrimination
- pushing aside the social culture of different-language speakers to label this folklore and harmless through to a nightmare of separatism.

National minorities, however, are not a *quantité négligeable*; they have staunchly refused—throughout Europe—to be treated as a waste product of national state ideology.

- 2.) The central task of a modern, liberal constitutional state is to guarantee the autonomy of each citizen, i.e. to contribute to the preservation of individual and collective identity not only of the majority population, but of all lingual and cultural communities living on state territory. The constitutional state has to rediscover this old basic idea of enlightenment and to apply it. It replaces homogenising policy by management of heterogeneity.
- 3.) I wish Europe new visions:  
Particularly the intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe saw European integration with high hopes. These have now been replaced by reserved scepticism. Is the project of a united Europe still to be saved, is what Drakulic asks, and she continues: is on this continent the fear prevalent, that is a surrogate for security in words like nationalism and hostility to foreigners? Heiner Müller more sharply puts it into a brief formula: in Europe ideas only become markets. Has the uniting of Europe become a case of bookkeepers and small-minded trivialists, whose horizon does not reach beyond their own national state interests? Expressed positively: will we be able to achieve the indispensable political and emotional issue of a European 'sense of belonging' (Dahrendorf)? One of the main tasks will be to convert the negative issue into a citizens' issue who believe in Europe.
- 4.) 4th wish: one of the visions could be the preservation and promotion of the lingual and cultural diversity, of a spiritual value, that—and do not let us forget—was instrumental and could again become so for the civil accomplishments of our continent.  
In zoology and botany, where no political pressure exists, it would be inconceivable to refer to rare species of animal or plant as minorities. We speak here of the diversity of nature which is to be preserved, we refer to the mutual interdependency and fruitfulness this diversity has for nature and the environment. Diversification is a basic principle, a principle for evolution and a sign of vitality in nature. Applied to our topic, this leads to a change in paradigms: promotion of the diversity of nations and cultures has not just one, but two dimensions: one concerns the optimum adapted care and fostering of rare peoples and those threatened by extinction, and ethnic groups separated by state borders (there is still a lot to do here). The other dimension is directed at the majority populations and involves more intensive information and sensitising for the concerns of minorities as well as an educational policy that makes bilingual and multilingual ability a normal matter of course, in line with the recommendations of the European Council: first one's own language, then the language of the direct neighbour, and English as the third. To put this vision into practice is a challenge to the new as well as the old EU states.
- 5.) With my 5th wish I refer to the interior make-up of the extended EU. It is for the EU to pass clear principles mandatory for all EU states and conforming to the constitution and to develop a consistent and coherent policy to preserve lingual diversity.  
This has so far been extensively or completely non-existent, and, if it has been followed, this can only be termed 'hypocritical'. While the length and curve of a banana are defined by exact regulations, EU states have until today been able to pursue minority policy as they wish—and this in extreme contrast to each other and totally inconsistent with the standards set up by the Council of Europe. Secondly, the EU—I remember the criteria from Copenhagen in this respect—has just demanded those countries willing to join to observe these standards; but establishing

this was anything but consistent. In this respect the bon mot is: the EU has exported minority protection to the states willing to join, but kept them under lock and key at home.

- 6.) The Council of Europe has to drive forward the protection and promotion mechanisms with greater pressure. The framework convention is a first, and too weak, attempt to create international instruments. In telegram style its weaknesses: no definition of national minorities, no collective rights, flexible and in some cases questionable demands, no possibility of sanctions. Resumption of the negotiations for the additional 'archived' protocol to the ECHR, also for scope to take legal steps when minority rights are violated, must be vigorously demanded.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Putting into practice the vision to preserve all languages and cultures and nationalities irrespective of size, irrespective of state borders, is a great challenge to everyone, for both the old and the new EU states. It not only concerns Lithuania, as author Marius Iskevicius thinks when he writes that the art needed is to jump over several steps at once. Iskevicius believes young people have understood this. And we, adults, will we understand it, too?

Grazcha fich. Mange tak. Besten Dank. Thank you.

Let us take to heart a gruc by well-known Danish all-rounder and author Piet Heins: Ting man gerne / vil er fjerne. / Ting man vil, / naer man til. / Thi at ville / er dèn lille / smule mer / end: gerne ville. Things we would like, are distant. What we want, we come nearer to. Because there is a big difference between what we want and what we would like!