



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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Vice-President FUEN

Place **FLENSBURG / Germany**
venue **1st European Minority Marathon in Flensburg 2004/09/05**
Date **Opening speech of the reception given by the town Flensburg**
2004-09-06

Benenes jentyl ha Tus jentyl

Yth yw enor bras agas dynerghy oll dhe'n wharfos ma'n kensa Marathon Mynoryta Ewrop arbarth Unyans Kefrysek Kenedhlegethow Ewrop, an pyth del wor lyes ahanough yw grondyes omma yn cyta teg Flensburg. Kens oll res yw dhym leverel drog yw genef na wodhyen vy cowsel Almanek po Danek ha'gas perthyans my a'gas pys pan wraf vy pesya yn Sawsnek.

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour to welcome you all to this the first European Minority Marathon on behalf of the Federal Union of European Nationalities, which many of you will know is based here in the beautiful city of Flensburg. I would first like to apologise for my inability to speak German or Danish but hope you will understand if I continue to speak in English.

The Federal Union of European Nationalities is an independent union of the organisations of national minorities in Europe, which was established in 1949 - at the time when the Council of Europe was set up in Versailles/France. Today there are 76 member organisations of FUEN, from 32 states.

According to its statutes, the Federal Union of European Nationalities serves the ethnic groups in Europe and pursues the goal of preserving their national identity, their language, culture and the history of national minorities. This objective is pursued only by peaceful means. It takes a decisive stand against separatism and the violent moving of national borders, and works towards a neighbourly, peaceful coexistence of majority and minority in one state or region. This is why the FUEN supports all state activities aimed at peaceful reconciliation of interests and democratic minority policy.

I would like to draw to your attention that, tomorrow, the FUEN will be having the first session of its newly elected board. (The President, Romedi Arquint, Vice-Presidents, Dr. Georg Brankatschk, Zlatka Gieler, Hans Heinrich Hansen, Heinrich Schultz, Dr Martha Stocker and myself)

There will be a press conference on Friday, 03rd September 1300 h, at the Danish Library in the Norderstraße, to which I invite all interested parties to attend and participate.

The European Minority Marathon is of great importance to FUEN as it presents a good opportunity for the majority to see how we, as an NGO for national minorities, work together with the majority in a constructive way.

FUEV - GENERALSEKRETARIAT

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Across the Continent of Europe, there are many minority cultures and people. All who belong to such minorities, face similar problems within their respective state borders, wherever they happen to be. These problems include such things as being unrecognised by members of the majority, suffering from a lack of visibility in mainstream life, having poor access to an education system which reflects their languages and cultures and having poor access to the press and media. Very often these minorities are situated in areas associated with the tourist industry and thus they are forced to confront the additional pressures of low wages, limited employment and financial opportunities and, last but not least, they are often at a disadvantage when it comes to obtaining their own accommodation.

So, I think you will all appreciate that it is entirely appropriate to hold a marathon event, bearing in mind the press coverage it generates, to focus on minorities and bring their problems, the likes of which I have just mentioned, to public attention. Although the timescales are quite different, the struggle that a marathon runner endures in the course of training and participation in such an event, is comparable to the efforts which minorities must make to preserve their cultures, languages and way of life.

Today, European minorities have the benefit (should their domestic government so wish) of a range of internationally accepted charters and conventions supervised by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, to protect and preserve their threatened cultures. However, despite these provisions, the struggle, or marathon, for minorities continues.

I would like to end my words of welcome on a very positive note by saying just a few words about this region. The Danish - German border region, with its tradition of respect for the rich and colourful mixture of cultures within, is a model upon which public authorities elsewhere in Europe, could do well to imitate. As a consequence of this liberal approach to minority issues, the Danish and North Frisian communities on this side of the border, together with communities of Germans across the border in Denmark, enjoy the benefits that arise from having the respect and support of national and regional parliaments alike. Acceptance and respect for minorities, like the example set in this region, have ensured that dialogue takes place between the various communities, a practice which is essential if we are to prevent the types of conflict between minorities and majorities which have ravished the Continent of Europe for centuries.

On behalf of the FUEN, I would like to express my thanks to:

ULRICH SCHOLL (YOUUMM {European Minority Marathon} Office)
MICHAEL DIEDOLPH (BARMER insurance = Sponsor)
GERNOT THOMSEN (Flensburg Marketing Office)
HORST OTTE (responsible for all sportive relations)

Mr. Helmut TROST, the Mayor of the town of Flensburg

and last but by no means least
HANS HERMANN LATURNUS (President of the town Flensburg)

I wish you a successful marathon run.

Thank you for your kind attention!