

RESOLUTION

Federal Union of European Nationalities

At their Assembly of Delegates in Komotini, Greece, on 16 May 2015, the Delegates of the Member Organisations of the Federal Union of European Nationalities adopted the following resolution:

Since the time it was established more than 65 years ago, FUEN is active for the protection and promotion of the autochthonous minorities and ethnic groups in Europe. With more than 90 member organisations from 30 countries of Europe it is the largest umbrella organisation and also the voice of the member organisations affiliated to FUEN.

While the European Union and the whole of Europe are facing defining challenges, it is increasingly important for the FUEN to work in a coordinated and professional manner representing the interests of the minorities in the European states and to offer an institutional umbrella for their representative organisations.

At the same time the minorities experience, like other citizens of Europe too, a growing feeling of being powerless within the decision processes, in which they are often not involved. It is no surprise when social discontent is on the rise. The solution is more participation and subsidiarity, and less centralism. The European society must defend itself strongly against nationalism, vindicate human rights including minority rights and promote the diversity in Europe.

We observe with great concern how thousands of refugees, both from the majority and from the minority, are fleeing across the Mediterranean to Europe. Ideological radicalism has become a serious security threat across the European continent; many innocent peoples have lost their lives in terrorist attacks. We are convinced that no ideology or faith can justify such actions. We are also very concerned about the fact that in crisis areas of Europe persons belonging to minorities are in particular affected by violent conflicts, that minorities were abused as an excuse for military action and that the peaceful coexistence of all European citizens is under threat.

Today exactly 10 years ago all the Heads of States and Governments of Europe were together in Warsaw, where they decided that they wanted to build a Europe without dividing lines based on democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The Warsaw Declaration of 2005 also declared that in the field of human rights, coherence between the EU law and the relevant conventions of the Council of Europe would be ensured and that in its actions, the EU would take the instruments of the Council of Europe into account, like for example the Framework Convention on the Protection of Nationalities or the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Europe still has a long way to go.

FUEN and the autochthonous minorities can and must make a contribution. The states and institutions of Europe must talk with the autochthonous national minorities, regional and local language groups on an equal level and make use of the capabilities of the minorities.

The Federal Union of European Nationalities demands, in due consideration

- of the basic principles and fundamental rights defined in the Charter for the autochthonous national minorities in Europe from 2006
- of the political demands formulated in the “Programmatic Declaration” adopted in Brixen in 2013
- of the legislative proposals included in the European Citizens’ Initiative “Minority SafePack Initiative” from 2013
- of the aims included in the “Minority Manifesto” adopted in Flensburg in 2014
- of the relevant documents adopted by the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the situation and rights of autochthonous national minorities in Europe

from the Institutions of the EU,

1. that the interests of the autochthonous minorities in Europe are heard, respected, recognised and been taken into account in all aspects of living together in the European Union;
2. that it will continue engaging in an open and direct dialogue with the European civil society of minorities, which is organised in FUEN. FUEN proposes to establish a contact forum at the European Parliament in order to concentrate the issues and interests of the minorities vis à vis the European Union;
3. that the Federal Union of European Nationalities is heard or involved as an expert body in minority issues in relation to on-going decision procedures and that it can play a role as a peace-making minority community;
4. that the Federal Union of European Nationalities is being supported in its efforts to codify and implement legal minority standards on the EU level;
5. that they extend their well established system of sharing best practices between Member States that already exists in several policy areas, in the field of minority protection as well. Such an approach should include sharing and promoting best practices in the field of language, education, culture and all aspects of minority protection, including the different systems of ethnic autonomy from EU Member States.
6. to evaluate together with FUEN how best to implement the requests and proposals from the Programmatic Declaration, the Minority Manifesto and the Minority SafePack Initiative.
7. that the instrument of the European Citizens’ Initiative, which does not function well in its current form, will be improved and made into an instrument for debate of European interest.
8. to expressly include in their treaties the protection of minorities and thus create an unambiguous competence for the EU. Furthermore a set of legal acts shall be enacted aiming at the creation of a comprehensive and legally binding protection system and legislative framework for national minorities, which is to be complemented by a functioning monitoring mechanism.

from the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, especially the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the relevant institutions of the United Nations,

1. that the responsible bodies of the Council continue to try and get those Member States of the Council of Europe, that yet did not do so, to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
2. that the responsible bodies of the Council of Europe consider together with the contracting states and with involvement of the European minorities how the reporting system and the recommendations of the Council of Ministers can become more efficient;
3. that the responsible bodies at the Council of Europe consider together with the contracting states and with involvement of the European minorities how the reporting system can find more practical application. Especially the question of how the outcomes are relevant for and can be applied by those affected, i.e. the minorities and the regional or minority language communities, is something that must be focused on;
4. that the High Commissioner on National Minorities and other offices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe use the minorities united in FUEN as an intermediary in crisis regions in relation to the situation of minorities, in order to prevent violent escalations;
5. that the relevant institutions of the United Nations, in particular the Human Rights Council, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Forum on Minority Issues, to monitor the minority situation in Europe closely and to take action where that is necessary;

from the Governments of the European states,

1. that they recognise, protect and support the linguistic and cultural diversity of the autochthonous national minorities in their country as an asset and enrichment of the social life in their country;
2. that they start and continue dialogue with their respective minorities, apply the existing legislative framework and do not except any attempt which would enable the loss of given rights;
3. that they encourage public debate on existing European minority protection legislation and models, including the various types of autonomies;
4. that they support the cooperation of the member organisations within FUEN and work together with them towards the acquisition and implementation of EU-projects with EU funding;
5. that cross-border cooperation between the autochthonous national minorities in border regions is enabled and supported by targeted exchange of information based on best-practice examples.;
6. that the existing and developing institutions of the autochthonous national minorities are connected into a European Centre of Expertise and that they receive support;
7. that persons belonging to autochthonous national minorities shall not be the victim of any form of discrimination in any European state.

8. that they will try to take political decisions as close as possible to the citizens, respecting the principle of subsidiarity and that they will not implement any territorial or election reforms without prior involvement of the local population;
9. that they will inform their local and regional authorities about the principles and instruments of minority protection, to which the states are bound and that they make sure that these are also respected by the local and regional authorities.