



2009-02

**The Assembly of Delegates of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN),
at its session in Brussels of 2 October 2009, adopts the following open letter:**

Submitted by the presidium of the Federal Union of European Nationalities

Dear xxx,

Europe grows together; with the Lisbon Treaty and the integration of the new EU-member states a temporary high point has been reached. Among all the appreciation for what has been reached one should not forget that Europe is not equal to the EU; it consists of many more states and people, who want to be part of the project of Europe.

We – FUEN (the Federal Union of European Nationalities) – represent 84 member organisations in 32 states of Europe – from the Sami in the north to the Bretons in France, from the Frisians in the Netherland to the Crimean Tatars in Ukraine. National minorities like the Hungarians in Romania or the Danes in Germany are also part of our community, just like the Sorbs, Rhaetians – people that did not establish a state of their own.

This letter is sent to you from our jubilee congress in Brussels – FUEN celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2009.

People should not be afraid of us, we do not raise territorial claims and do not want to destabilise the state in which we live. We live in European regions and we want these regions to be prosperous. People should not regard us as a danger, but rather as a potential for the development of these regions.

The situations of the European minorities show a heterogeneous picture. In some regions an exemplary coexistence between minorities and majorities developed. But elsewhere many minorities have to struggle for their survival and have to resist the pressure of assimilation. At this very moment a silent dying of European languages and cultures is going on, which can only be averted by a clear change of direction in minority policy.

According to research each seventh European or circa 100 million people in Europe belong to an autochthonous minority or speak a minority language.

We follow the developments in Europe with great concern and see an abandonment of minority protection and its significance. Some states are moving away from the standards

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that have been reached. The most recent example is the Slovakian Language Act, which rightly caused much commotion. We demand loud and clearly that languages are to be supported and protected. Is it important for us to emphasise that minorities should not be used as somebody's puppet or as alibi for politics in Europe. They should be supported and protected for who they are.

Within Europe and also in the EU several dormant conflicts exist, which can also turn out to become problems of security at some time. Most often the minorities get caught in a cleft when the power game starts. The war between Georgia and Russia made this very obvious – where were the minorities, which were exploited by all parties? If only for issues of security – we think – you and your colleagues, those who are politically responsible in Europe, would do well to seek the dialogue with the minorities and those who represent them.

FUEN can be your partner – with a direct connection to those involved and with much practical experience. A balanced perspective is what we stand for. There are solutions for settlements between minorities and majorities – there are encouraging examples in Europe. However, both sides have to take some steps and a dialogue on a par must take place.

Dear XXX, we count on your support and hope you will enter in such dialogue – both nationally and as proponent for a more prominent place for the issue of minorities on the European agenda, also within the European Union.

We take the liberty to enclose the resolutions of the FUEN-congress and the basic demands of the minorities of Europe, as defined in the European Charter for the autochthonous national minorities.

I send you the best wishes on behalf of our 84 members and if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

With kind regards,

HHH