

HESTER KNOL,
President of the Youth of European Nationalities,
Welcoming speech, FUEN-Congress 23th May 2008

Welcome

Wolkom, kuszuntum unuket, herzlichen willkommen, welcome.

Dear FUEN-members, dear presidium,

As newly elected president of YEN, I would like to address some words to you. I'm honoured to participate in this FUEN-congress, especially since this is my first FUEN-congress.

I'm Hester Knol, 21 years old. I'm from the West-Frisian minority in The Netherlands. I've been in the board of the Frisian International youth organisation FYK for three years. The next two years will be my two years of leading YEN with the board. I'm really honoured to be able to do this work and I'm looking forward to these years.

So now I would like to ask all the members of YEN that are present to stand up. Please members of FUEN, notice that these wonderful young people are actively working on the preservation and development of the rights of the minorities in Europe. We can learn a lot from you, but you can also learn a lot from us so let's use this opportunity! Let's live this diversity!

An example of how you can co-operate is the way GJU and LDU are working together on this seminar. You as adult organisations should support your youth organisations in any way, because if you want to improve the position of your

minority and you want to continue the work do not forget that you've got a whole bunch of young people being enthusiastic about doing this work! So I would like to ask you to invite the youth to the FUEN congresses and search for a way to cooperate or support each other, this can be financially, this can be to give them a place to work or just supporting them with your own enthusiasm.

Since this congress is about media, I would like to share some thoughts and results of discussions that we had before.

Media is an important medium. Media affects the image of our minorities a lot, more than we realise. Everybody has got access to media, so basically everybody can read, watch, listen to everything people publish.

During the Youth Leader Seminar in Skylge last autumn, some media-topics came up to discussion. We thought about how to use the media to promote the minorities without putting too much pressure on the promoting of minorities. We focussed on the media that is already existing for the youth and where we can improve the media. In Fryslan for example, it was always like that that the Frisian media was slower in developing than the Dutch media. So not a lot of youth would actually watch the Frisian television programs. In the last 10 years I can see a great progression in the Frisian television programs, I think for young and old. My experience is that the best way to improve for example the use of minority languages, is to use it in fun and interesting ways. We thought that the best way would be to use the new (YouTube) and regular media (TV, radio, paper) by making 'cool', 'fashionable' and interesting programs and movies. As we heard yesterday, the minorities here in Hungary are fighting for their rights and fighting to broadcast as much as they

can. The more you use a language on the internet, television, radio and newspaper, the bigger chance there is that people will hear the language, see the culture and feel included in the minority. But the discussion we had at MTV yesterday was that we only saw folkloristic television with the traditional dances and clothing. That is of course an important subject that should definitely not be excluded, but the point is that young people are not only interested in folklore. There is more going on than that and young people do use their language and culture, but just in their own way. It is important that these things will be broadcasted as well. The argument from the television station was that it was hard to get to the young people. I would just advise them to include them in the process of producing and infiltrate in the youth culture.

Working on media is a big issue during the seminar, but there will also be an assembly. You all have got the possibility to candidate for a place in the European Dialogue Forum. One week ago we had the Whitsun seminar in Gravenstein where 120 youngsters came together and worked really hard. We adopted the European Dialogue Forum during the General Assembly. The member organisations elected Christiana Walde as a member of the European Dialogue Forum. Christiana and I will represent YEN in the European Dialogue Forum.

Aleksander Studen-Kirchner will be one of the candidates on the FUEN-assembly. Since Aleksander Studen-Kirchner is not the president of YEN anymore he is kind of unemployed. Aleksander dedicated his life to YEN for two years. Aleksander contributed a lot to the process of a structured collaboration between the European Nationalities and the European Parliament

which resulted in the plans for the European Dialogue Forum. On behalf of YEN I want to let you know that we fully support Aleksander.

I would like to thank GJU and LDU for the organisation of this congress. After the great Easter seminar in 2006 which had been organised by GJU, there was no doubt about this congress being a success as well. I appreciate all the work that has been done, cause when I look around during excursions or meals I can see that people are enjoying to be together and you made this possible.

Last but not least I want to use this opportunity to thank Susann Schenk, Frank de Boer, Judith Walde and Jan Diedrichsen for all the work they're doing for YEN and FUEN. Without these people it wouldn't have been possible for YEN or FUEN to work like we're working now and there would be a big chance that there wouldn't have been a European Dialogue Forum now.