

Version 1.1

YEN Youth of European Nationalities
JEV Jugend Europäischer Volksgruppen
www.yeni.org

YEN

White Paper

on

Minority
Rights

MASTHEAD

E-Mail

office@yeni.org, board@yeni.org

Homepage

www.yeni.org

Facebook

www.facebook.com/yeni.org

„Living Diversity!
Vielfalt leben!
Жить разнообразие!
Vive la diversité!”

Address

Jugend Europäischer Volksgruppen (JEV)
Youth of European Nationalities (YEN)
Postfach 640228
D-10048 Berlin
Germany / Deutschland

President

Matic Germovšek Ž.

Secretary General

Roman Kühn

Project Coordinator

Julia Portnowa

Authors

Florian Wagenknecht, Lasse Tästensen, Berit Nommensen,
Maria Kornfeind, Viktoria Wagner, Madlena Kowar, Lukas Nothdurfter,
Jakob Stadler, Roman Roblek

Editors

Julia Portnowa, Lasse Tästensen, Roman Kühn, Rejzka Lipičec,
Florian Wagenknecht, Konstantin Vlasich, Madlena Kowar

Layout

Annatina Nay

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CONTENTS

1. A Europe of Diversity – A Europe of Minorities	4
1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 How did minority protection come about?	6
1.3 30 years of the Youth of European Nationalities	8
1.4 Why a „YEN White Paper on Minority Rights?“	11
1.5 Endnotes and further reading	13
2. Social Inclusion	14
2.1 What is social inclusion?	14
2.2 Why are we focusing on social inclusion?	15
2.3 Official recognition	15
2.4 Discrimination	17
2.5 Assimilation	19
2.6 Recommendations	21
2.7 Endnotes and further reading	23
3. Language and education	24
3.1 The right to education for minorities in Europe	24
3.2 Examples from YEN member organizations	28
3.3 Recommendations	34
3.4 Endnotes and further reading	36
4. Roma Strategy	37
4.1 Why did YEN develop a Roma Strategy?	37
4.2 Background	38
4.3 National and international initiatives	39
4.4 Recommendations	40
4.5 Endnotes and further reading	41
5. Volunteering	42
5.1 What is volunteering?	42
5.2 What does Volunteering mean for YEN and its members?	44
5.3 Recommendations	49
5.4 Endnotes and further reading	50
6. Conclusion and outlook	51

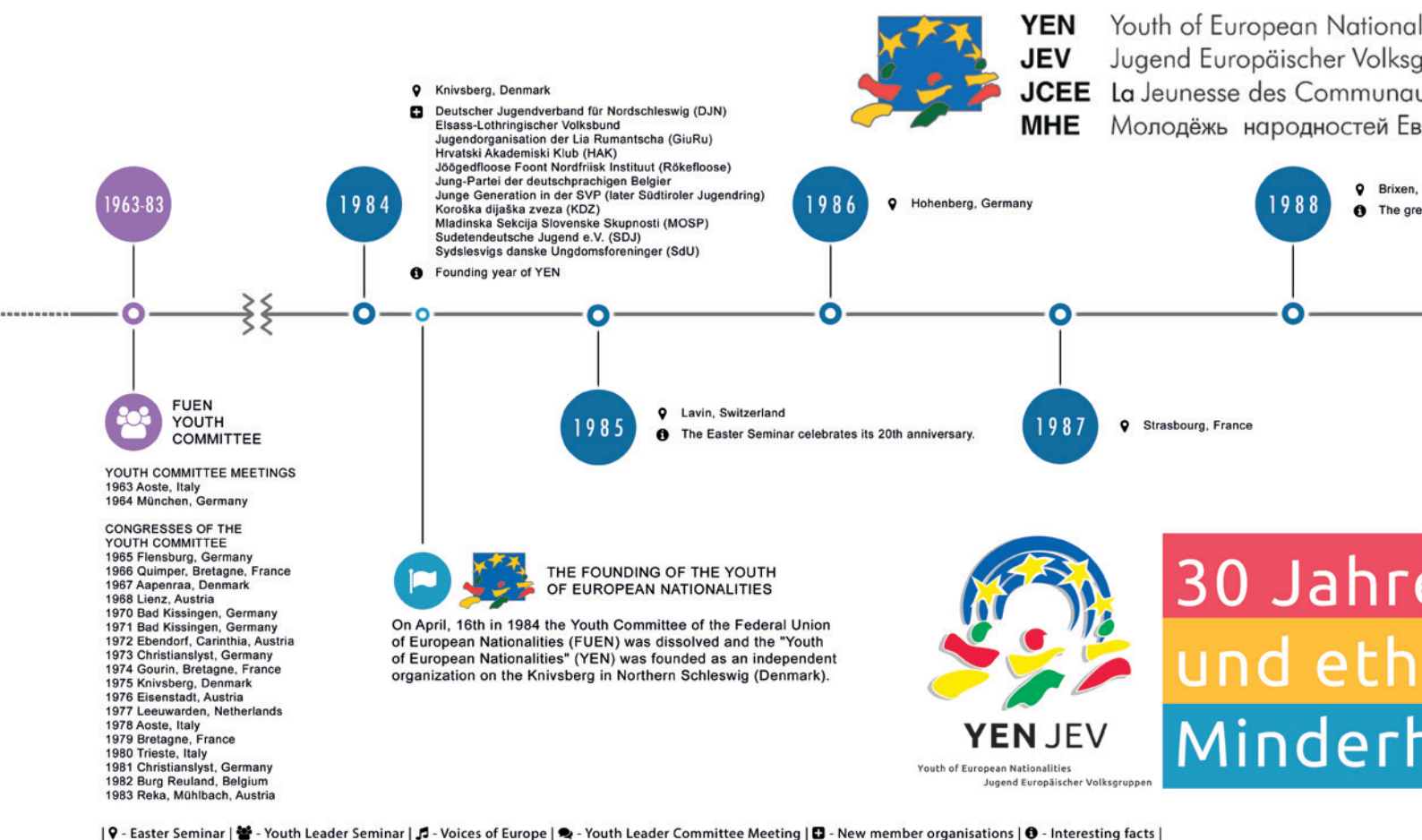
1. A EUROPE OF DIVERSITY – A EUROPE OF MINORITIES

In the following document, the word „minority” refers to all autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups who live in Europe.

We would like to refer here to the Charter of Autochthonous, National Minorities/Nationalities in Europe, which was adopted by YEN and the FUEN together in 2006. It states:

„To the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups belong the minorities that came into being as a result of developments in European history, as a result of the changes of state borders and other historical events. To the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups also the peoples of Europe belong who have never established a state and who live as a minority in the territory of a state.”

The Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) is the largest European network of youth organizations of European ethnic, national, and language minorities.



| 📍 - Easter Seminar | 🗣️ - Youth Leader Seminar | 🎵 - Voices of Europe | 🗣️ - Youth Leader Committee Meeting | ➕ - New member organisations | ⓘ - Interesting facts |



Living diversity!

30 Years of Youth of European Nationalities

30 Jahre
und ethn
Minderh

1.1. Introduction

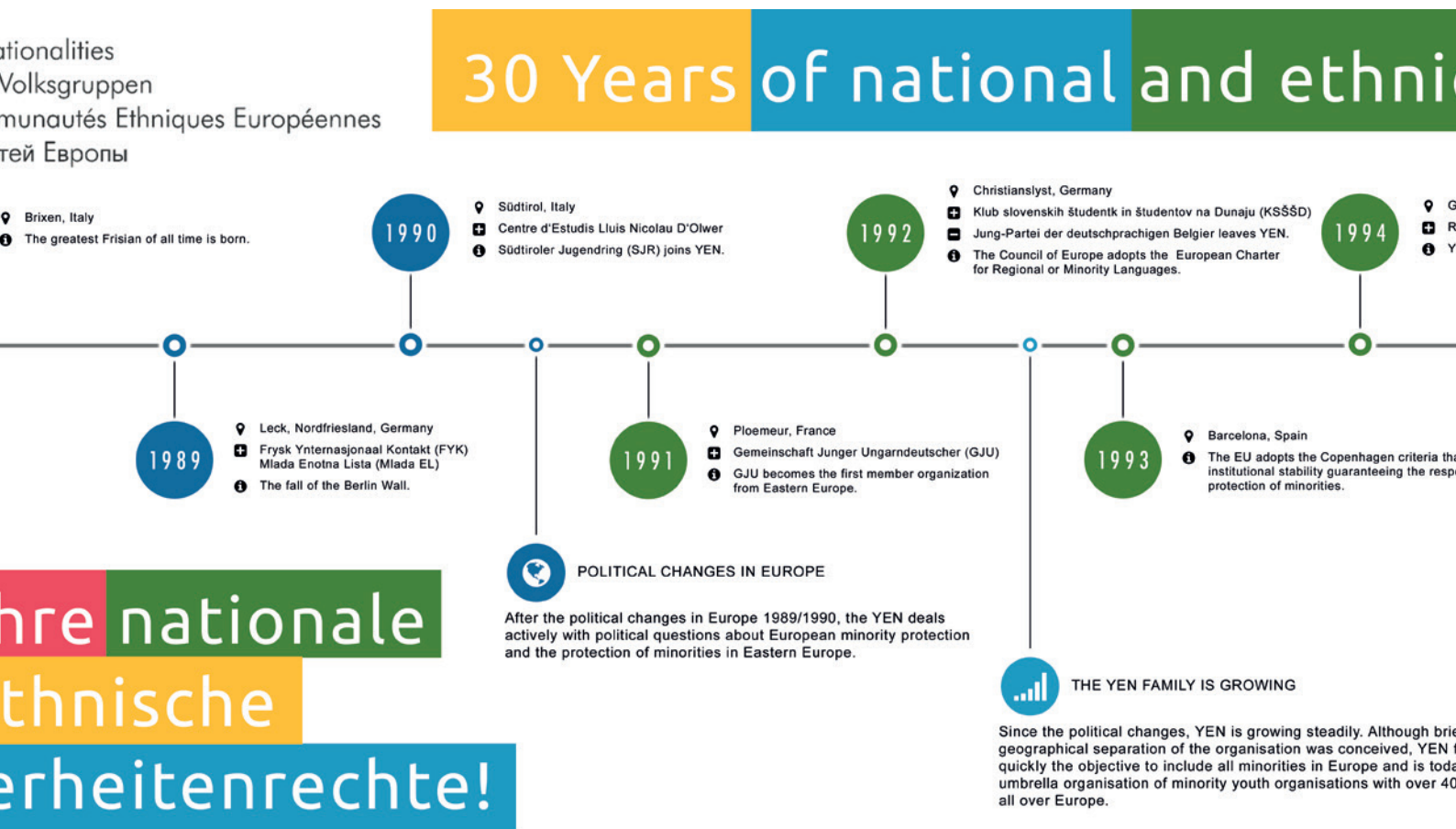
Cultural diversity strengthens and enriches Europe. Minorities contribute greatly to the cultural wealth of Europe; at least 156 minorities live in the EU alone, and enrich it with their languages, traditions, and cultural assets.

The cultural diversity of Europe also presents fundamental challenges. Cultural differences bring with them points of contention which can lead to conflict. The coexistence of different cultures thus often requires more effort on the parts of all involved than living in a culturally singular milieu.

As a union of young people who belong to minorities, we – the Youth of European Minorities (YEN) – understand all too well the daily challenges and problems that cultural diversity can bring with it. We have experienced the positive and negative sides of belonging to a minority group. Although it can be difficult sometimes, belonging to a minority is a part of us, our life, and our identity.

We're always excited to talk with others about our culture, language, and traditions; and to say proudly, „We're part of a minority, and we want to stay that way!”

For this reason, we, as YEN, work actively for the preservation of minorities and their rights and strive, through intercultural exchange with majority populations and other minorities, to support and live in a united, inclusive, and diverse Europe!

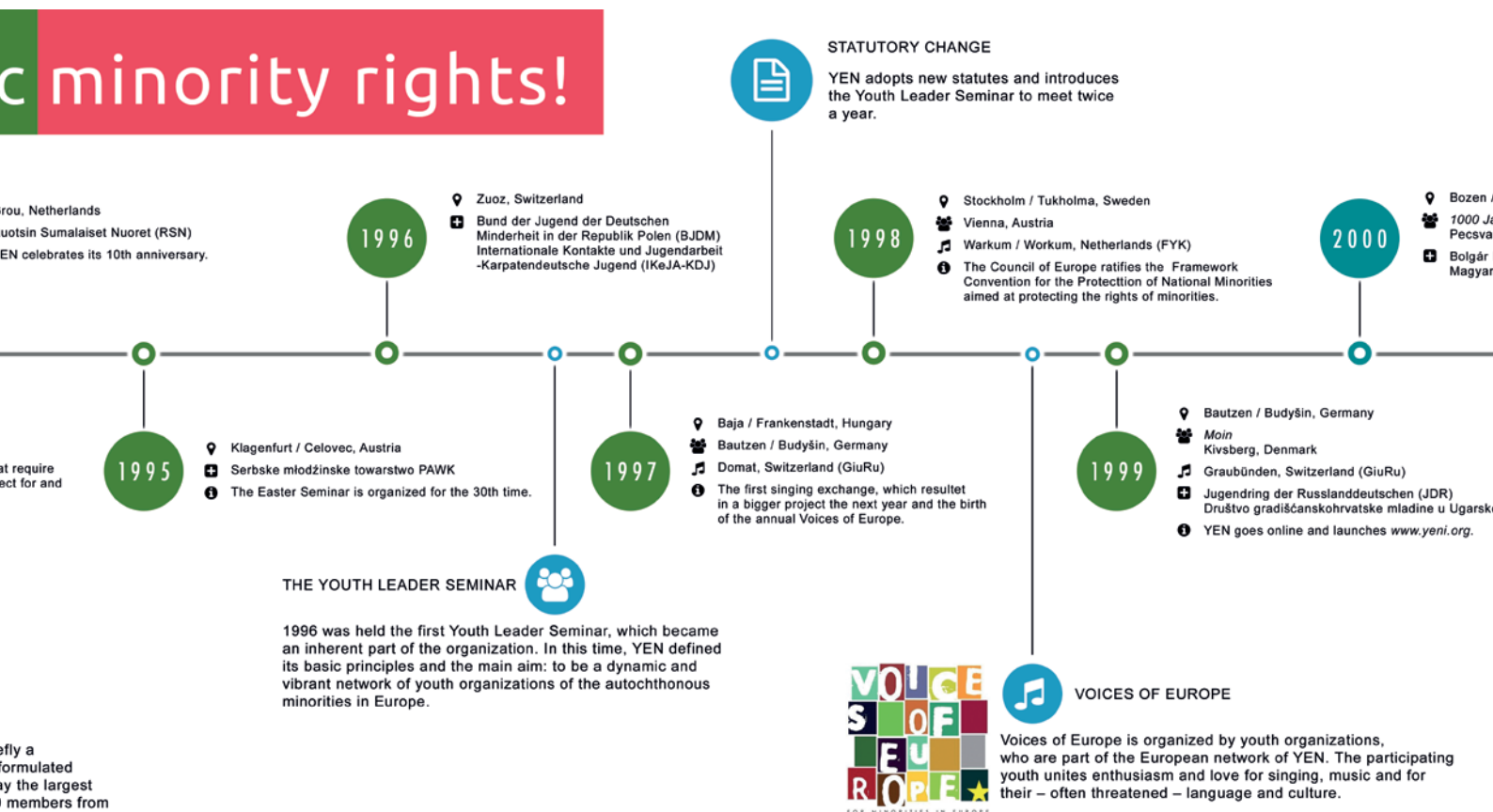


1.2 How did minority protection come about?

The enshrinement of minority rights is essential for a peaceful coexistence and a culturally diverse future. However, the legal basis for minority protection has moved sluggishly in the past few decades. It wasn't until the 1990s that people realized that political participation by minorities positively affected the political stability of a country. However, many of the conventions passed up to this point have simply paid lip service, in that they've never been comprehensively implemented, and thus don't offer the stable basis necessary for the long-term survival of minorities.

The importance of minority protection was first recognized on the international level by the **League of Nations** (1920–1946), which made provisions accordingly. The **United Nations**, unlike its predecessor, was fundamentally more reserved on the topic of institutionalized minority protection. Neither the UN Charter nor the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights contained explicit provisions for the protection of minorities.

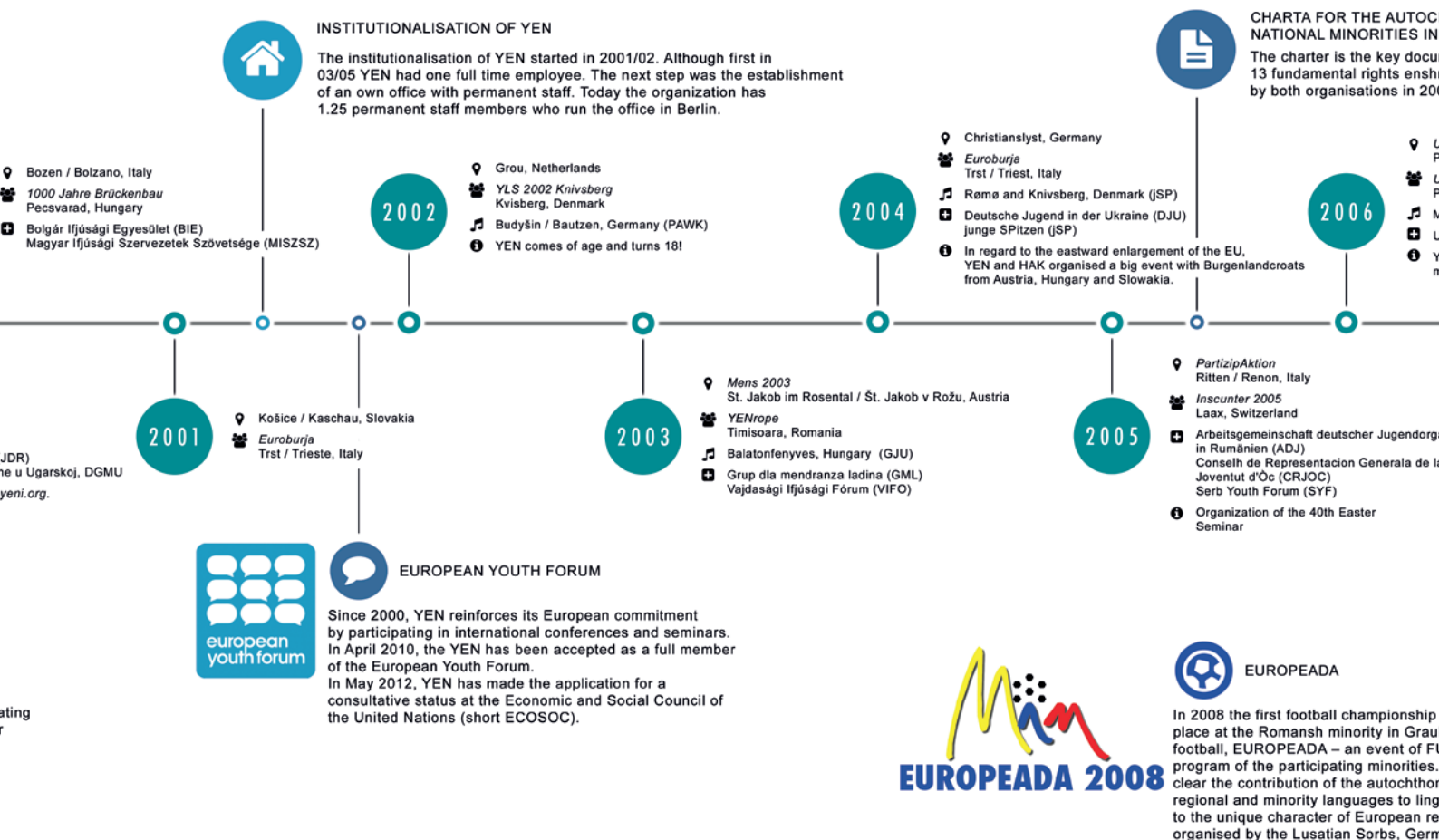
Disagreement on the definition of „minority” also affected the articles on minorities in the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which went into effect in 1976. The term „minority” was used, but never concretely defined. However, this document did allow for the interpretation of, for example, positive



discrimination for members of national minorities. As a result of which, the state is obligated to take legal measures to make effective participation by minorities possible when it is faced with a decision that would affect minorities.

Due to minority conflicts in Eastern Europe which flared up in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall, as well as regionalist elements in Europe, the **Council of Europe** began in the 1990s to concern itself more with minority rights. In 1995, the Council of Europe passed the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**. This treaty recognizes the collective rights of minorities and is the first legally-binding multilateral document of its kind. It expressly forbids any form of discrimination against a person on the basis of their belonging to a national minority, as well as assimilation against their will.

The **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**, which went into effect in 1998, states, among other things, that the protection of historical regional and minority languages contributes to the preservation and development of the traditions and cultural richness of Europe. Therefore, its goal is to actively protect and support the languages. To this end, the signatory states could pick 35 measures from a catalog of 96, and pledge their implementation. The charter stipulates a duty to report, but no sanctions come about as a result of noncompliance with the measures.

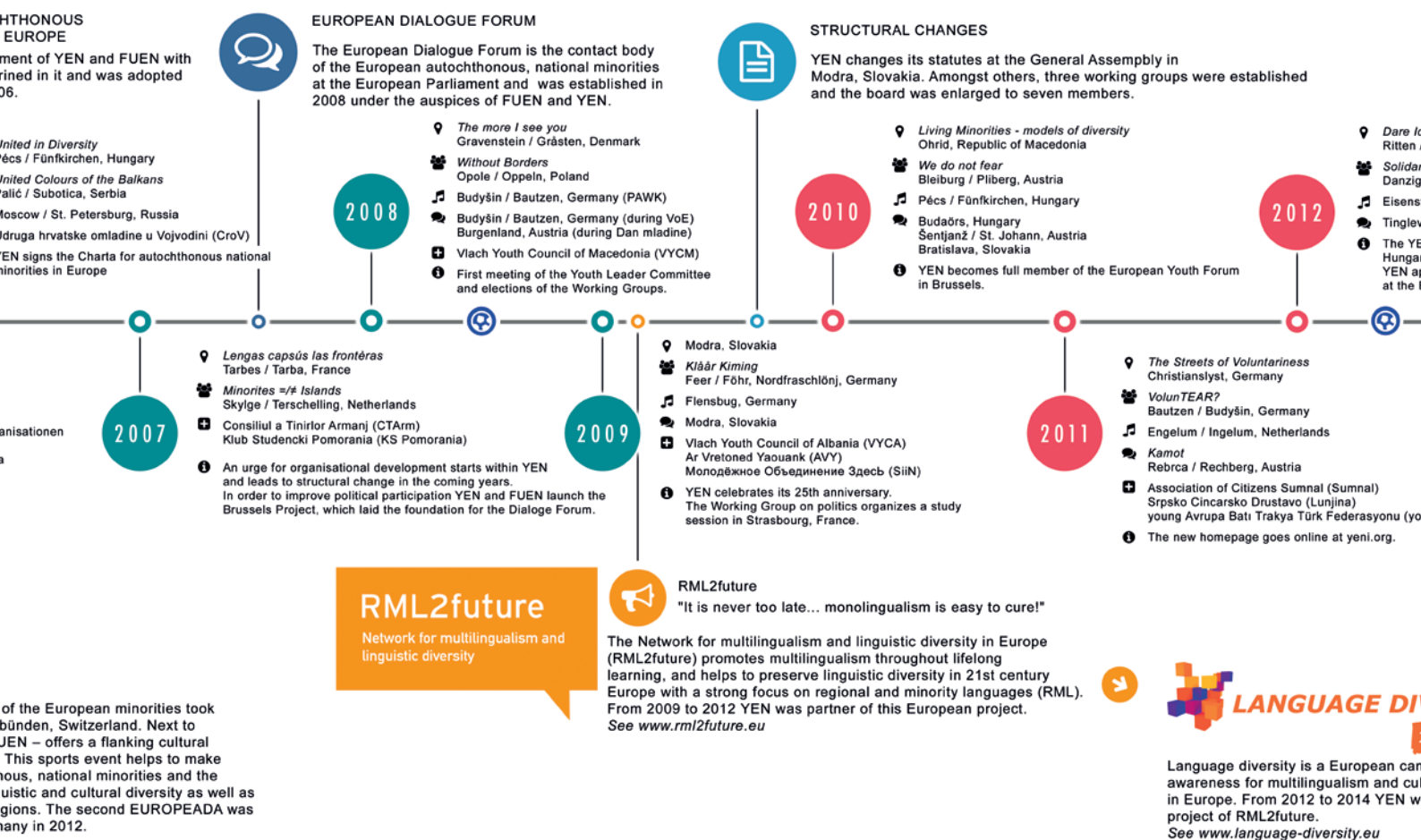


The **European Union (EU)**, on the other hand, which began as an economic union, showed little interest in minority rights for quite a while. With the adoption of the „Copenhagen Criteria” in 1993, the EU joined the Council of Europe as one the significant forces in minority protection. These are part of the eligibility criteria to join the EU, which an applicant nation must fulfill in order to become a full member of the EU. However, there has been a recent stagnation of the initially positive developments of these criteria.

Similarly, even after the 2009 adoption of the **Treaty of Lisbon**, the EU does not have jurisdiction over the regulation of minority protection, nor is there a coherent minority politics. To change this, the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) supports the Federal Union of the European Nations (FUEN) in their citizens' initiative „**Minority Safe Pack**”, which seeks to strengthen minority rights in the EU and Europe.

1.3 30 Years of the Youth of European Nationalities

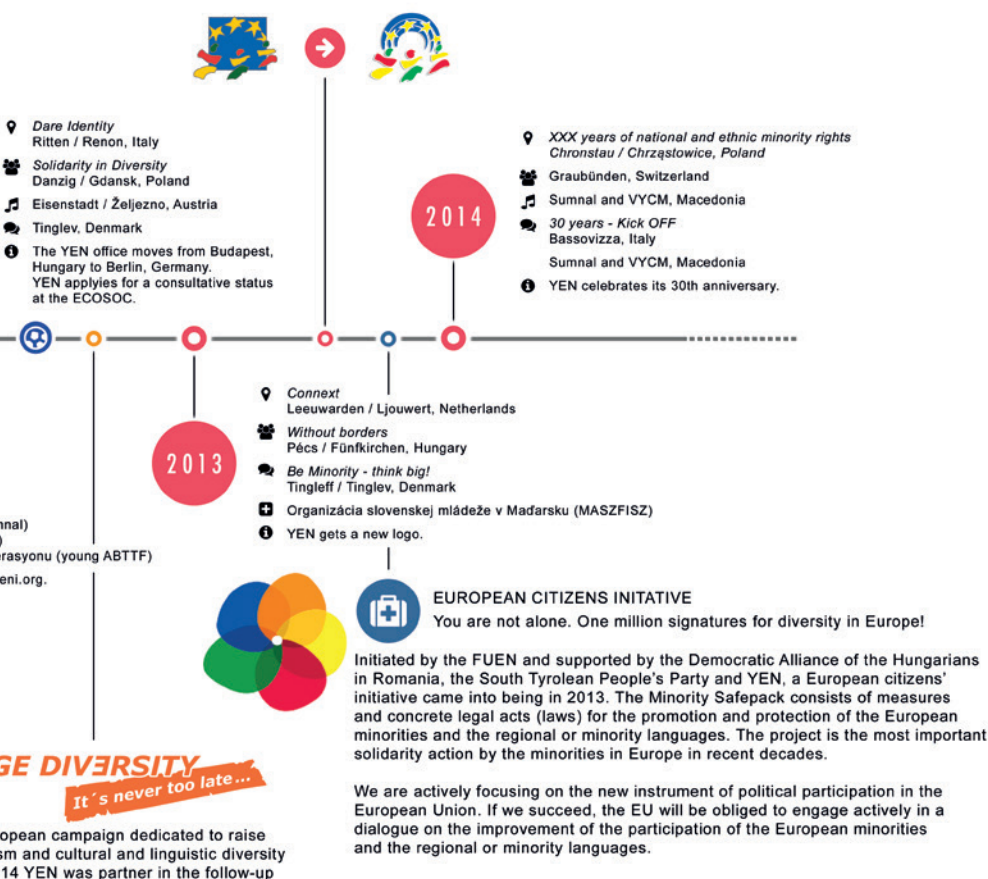
The beginnings of the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) go back to 1963, when a youth committee was brought into being at a FUEN conference in Aosta, Italy. The first working session of the youth committee happened the following year, which was to become the cornerstone for YEN's traditional yearly congress, the Easter Seminar. The first chairman was Ossi Böse, a Sudeten German, who served from 1963–1965.



The first congress of the youth committee took place in 1965 in Flensburg, Germany. With 25 minorities represented, it was a great success. For 50 years now, the traditional Easter Seminar has taken place in the week before Easter, which is hosted by a different member organization each year. With more than 100 participants, it's the largest meeting of young minorities and minority youth organizations in Europe and serves as YEN's central event for the year. The general assembly meets during this seminar and makes decisions about the future development of the organization.

YEN itself was founded in 1984 at the seminar in Knivsberg, Nordschleswig, Denmark. The youth committee of FUEN was dissolved, and the „Youth of European Nationalities” was established by 11 youth organizations. Christel Petersen, a North Frisian, became its first president. After the political shift of 1989/1990, YEN strengthened its devotion to political questions of minority protection across the whole of Europe.

Initially an informal, easily overlooked association, YEN has grown after the shift of '89/'90 steadily along with its challenges. Today, we're a network of 41 youth organizations of 34 different minorities, and are at the same time the only umbrella organization of this kind. We're an independent, non-governmental youth organization that brings young people from European minorities together.



MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Hrvatski akademski klub^(AT) Rökefloose e.V.^(DE) Sudetendeutsche Jugend^(DE/CZ) Sydslesvigs danske Ungdomsforeninger^(DE)
 Koroška dijaška zveza^(AT) Deutscher Jugendverband für Nordschleswig^(DK) Gjuventegna Rumantscha^(CH)
 Südtiroler Jugendring^(IT) Mladi v Odkivanju Skupnih Poti^(IT) Elsass-Lothringischer Volksbund Jugendgruppe^(FR)
 Frysk Ynternasjonaal Kontakt^(NL) Mlada Enotna lista^(AT) Gemeinschaft Junger Ungarndeutscher^(HU) Klub slovenskih študentk in študentov na Dunaju^(AT) Ruotsin Sumalaiset Nuoret^(SE) Serbske mlodžinske towarstwo Pawk e.V.^(DE) Bund der Jugend der deutschen Minderheit^(PL) Internationale Kontakte Jugendarbeit – Karpatendeutsche Jugend^(SK) Jugendring der Russlanddeutschen^(RU) Vajdasági Ifjúsági Fórum^(RS) junge SPitzen^(DK) Udruga hrvatske omladine u Vojvodini^(RS) Consiliul al Tinirilor Armanji^(RO) Vlach Youth Council of Macedonia^(MK)
 Centre d'Estudis Lluís Nicolau D'Oliver^(ES) Društvo gradišćanskohrvatske mladine u Ugarskoj^(HU) Bolgár Ifjúsági Egyesület^(HU) Magyar Ifjúsági Szervezetek Szövetsége^(RO) Grup dla mendranza ladina^(IT) Deutsche Jugend in der Ukraine^(UA) Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Jugendorganisationen in Rumänien^(RO) Conselh de Representacion Generala de la Joventut d'Òc^(FR)
 Српски омладински форум^(RS) Klub Studencki Pomorania^(PL) Vlach Youth Council of Albania^(AL) Ar Vretoned Yaouank^(FR) Noorteühendus Siin^(EE) Association of Citizen Sumnal^(MK) Srpsko cinarsko društvo^(RS) Avrupa Batı Trakya Türk Federasyonu^(DE/TR) Organizácia slovenskej mládeže v Maďarsku^(HU)

Member Organisations

Preservation and development of the rights of minorities and ethnic groups in Europe

Intercultural exchange between young people and young adults

Cooperation on international, national and regional levels with relevant actors in minority and youth politics

Base and Pillars of YEN

YEN's base is made up of our 41 member organizations. Our work as YEN builds on this base and may be represented in three pillars:

The preservation and development of the rights of minorities and ethnic groups has been YEN's principal goal from the beginning. Additionally, YEN aims to raise awareness of the issues faced by ethnic groups within majority populations. We create a space of recognition that allows all people to live their identities. Here, one can learn to overcome distance and break down borders through person-to-person dialogue. The seminars offer all types of workshops dealing with current topics on the situation of the host minority, and questions affecting minorities in general. To better get to know the host region and minority, the seminars are supplemented with excursions, lectures, sports, and cultural activities, such as concerts, films, and art. These seminars often mark the beginning of long-term engagement of the participants in minority issues and serve as motivation for further work in their own organizations.

After the expansion and stabilization of our network in the first decades, we began to work more closely with European intergovernmental associations. Through this cooperation, we've put on seminars with the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe and „Youth in Action,” the youth program of the EU. Along with these European supporters, YEN works today with the support of German Ministry of the Interior, the region of Trentino-South Tyrol (Italy), and the state of Schleswig-Holstein.

From the Charter of Autochthonous, National Minorities/Nationalities in Europe:

„To the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups belong the minorities that came into being as a result of developments in European history, as a result of the changes of state borders and other historical events. To the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups also the peoples of Europe belong who have never established a state and who live as a minority in the territory of a state.”

In 2003, YEN became a cooperating member in the European Youth Forum, and then a full member in 2010. Since then, YEN has engaged actively in meetings and work groups of this European umbrella organization. In addition, YEN maintains bilateral partnerships with the Roma networks ternYpe – International Roma Youth Network and FERYP (Forum of European Roma Young People), expressed through collaborative seminars and projects.

Collaboration with FUEN is manifested not only in the president of YEN's standing position in the FUEN board, but also in the development of joint projects. In 2007, for example, YEN, FUEN, and members of the EU parliament established the European Dialogue Forum in order to discuss topics relevant to minority politics on the level of the EU Parliament.

FUEN and YEN were partners in the 2009-2011 EU Commission-financed Network for Multilingualism and Linguistic Diversity in Europe (RML2future). YEN was also an active partner in its successor project – language diversity – from 2012–2014. In summary, it may be said that YEN, in its 30-year history, has become a capable partner in the field of minority rights in Europe, comprised of a dynamic and living network of 41 minority youth organizations from 20 countries.

1.4 Why a „YEN White Paper on Minority Rights?“

Our Challenges

As a steadily-growing and dynamically-changing organization, we are always faced with new challenges. A central question we worked with in 2014 was that of our 30-year anniversary: How do we as YEN want to grow? How can we better achieve our goals? What challenges do we want to take on? Is it better to grow, or to further manage our existing network? Do we need a new strategy for the Europe-wide operation of our youth organization?

Since the beginning of the financial crisis of 2009, growing disadvantages for the minorities of Europe are plain to see. Particularly in times of financial crisis, when national budgets are slashed, it's those weakest in society who are often hit the hardest. Minorities are often knowingly pushed aside, and their problems multiply in turn. This loss can threaten their identities and the cultural diversity tied to them. In times such as these, in which financial leeway decreases and cultural conflict increases, special protection of minorities becomes especially necessary. Minority organizations can help greatly; but a lack of financial resources often leaves their hands tied.

Negative developments can be seen not only in the financial sense, but in the political as well: In the EU, for example, the EU Commission has neither jurisdiction over minorities nor multilingualism. In some regions of Europe, the struggles of minorities for participation in society and the development of sustainable minority politics seem to have come to a standstill. And this is to say nothing of the current nationalistic trends and undeniable shift to the right in European politics. We see ourselves as obligated to actively approach these problems and will, with this White Paper on Minority Rights, make a decisive difference.

Our Strategy for a Solution

A White Paper consists largely of reports intended to better portray, understand, and ultimately solve the current state of affairs. Recommendations on different topics will be put forward. Not only we, as YEN, but governments and state and non-state institutions use this instrument to solve problems.

With the „YEN White Paper on Minority Rights,” we have the following goals:

- to call attention to the existing (and long-standing) problems faced by minority youth.
- to develop a new strategy for the development of our network
- to present demands, advice, and measures for state and non-state organizations from the local to the international level, in the interest of improving the situation of autochthonous minorities.

The White Paper is versatile: On the one hand, as a political instrument to influence decision-makers and to articulate our standpoints on the themes of:

- Social Inclusion
- Language and Education
- The Roma Minority
- Volunteering

And on the other hand, as an internal instrument it is an expression of our self-conception and our vision as a European network, which contains a collection of ideas that shall support us and our member organization in implementing our goals.

Many YENies – from the board, to members of work groups, to our employees – worked together on this document. Outside experts advised us, and we asked our members via two questionnaires between 2013 and 2014 about their personal and everyday experiences. The answers were evaluated, summarized, and now, as practical examples that illustrate concrete challenges, make up the foundation of the „YEN White Paper on Minority Rights.“ The „YEN White Paper on Minority Rights“ serves to ensure the sustainable future of our network. Like all NGOs, YEN strives to realize our greatest possible efficacy; and thanks to its participative development and the scope of its content, we're certain that the „YEN White Paper on Minority Rights“ will strongly support us in this goal.

A great thanks to the supporters of our organization, without whose help the active commitment to a solidary European minority politics would be much more difficult!

1.5 Endnotes and further reading

- Ethnologue, Languages of the World: www.ethnologue.com.
- EUROBAROMETER 2006 und 2012: www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm.
- Euromosaic: www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/.
- Europarat: www.coe.int.
- Europäische Kommission, Eurostat: www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat.
- Föderalistische Union Europäischer Volksgruppen: www.fuen.org.
- Jugend Europäischer Volksgruppen: www.yeni.org.
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2. SOCIAL INCLUSION

**„Tell me how the minorities in
your country are treated, and I
will be able to say what sort of
country you live in”**

Ivar Hansen

2.1 What is social inclusion?

Social inclusion is an important subject for minorities. It defines the social status of minorities within a society, and illustrates the relationship between the majority and the minorities. As Ivar Hansen, former president of the Danish parliament, said: „Tell me how the minorities in your country are treated, and I will be able to say what sort of country you live in.”

Social inclusion encompasses a number of controversial topics which are of the utmost importance to minorities, and which designate their position within society. When the topics of official recognition, discrimination, or assimilation of minorities arise, one can observe and measure the degree of social inclusion within a society. Social inclusion is a barometer of the equitable social participation of minorities, and is thus a topic of immense importance to us. Therefore we, the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), consider social inclusion to be an integral part of our White Paper.

We define social inclusion as the equal access of a person or group to all aspects of a modern, democratic society. This includes access to civil rights and duties, opportunities for political and social participation, as well as equal access to education and employment.

We define social inclusion as the equal access of a person or group to all aspects of a modern, democratic society. This includes access to civil rights and duties, opportunities for political and social participation, as well as equal access to education and employment.

Social inclusion is more than just the integration of minorities into the society of the majority. Rather, it is the equal and respectful coexistence of different nationalities within a nation. However, integration remains the term often used by politicians and stakeholders when referring to the relationship between minorities and

the majority. Integration often leads to languages and cultures being given up for those of the majority without any reciprocal exchange. Integration is in this way a one-way street down which minorities are led and made to change their own ways of life in order to fit in with the majority society.

While this may be a desirable process to some, it is not the case for all. We see social inclusion as a democratic alternative to integration. Inclusion is a process in which there is more than one way to achieve a goal: All groups are treated as equal and worthy of protection. In an inclusive society, the state supports all groups equally, rather than playing favorites with some while placing others at a disadvantage. In this regard, affirmative action plays an important role for minorities. The state has an obligation to guarantee members of minority groups complete and effective equality in all circumstances. This also includes special provisions for minorities.

Inclusion allows people to take part equally in society, and therefore to have the opportunity to help shape it. A just and social inclusion does not require the assimilation of minorities into a dominant culture; rather than parallel existences, it leads to a peaceful coexistence. It treats all groups equally—in terms of their rights and their responsibilities within society. An inclusive society is thus a fairer and more emancipatory framework for all members of society.

2.2 Why are we focusing on social inclusion?

Social inclusion is crucial for minorities in Europe, as it makes the peaceful coexistence of diverse cultures and ethnic groups possible through mutual recognition and respect. We've become aware, through extensive communication with our network of member organizations, that, despite the positive developments in the enforcement of minority rights in Europe in the last decades, practically all our members and friends still face discrimination in their home countries.

Belonging to a minority often carries disadvantages, and can even lead to a real threat to the unimpeded development of one's culture and individual rights. But we have also seen that when the European Union and other European institutions set forth a clear focus on social inclusion, great successes have followed; in this way, the exclusion of minorities in Europe can be stopped.

Through the evaluation of our member organizations and study of YEN's own 30-year history, we've been able to recognize three core factors of the social inclusion of minorities. We believe that these core factors are the most important indicators for the measurement of social inclusion of minorities in Europe, for they can be ascertained in both an empirical and an emotional sense.

Each of the three core factors has a powerful effect on the day-to-day living conditions of minorities. Even when there is a pronounced correlation between these core factors, we will, in the next three chapters, make a point of emphasizing the challenges that minorities face daily. In addition, we've gathered numerous current examples from our members to highlight the topicality of each core factor, and to call attention to ways to better the situation for minorities in Europe.

The three core factors of social inclusion:

Official recognition: Refers to the public recognition of minority groups by national institutions, media, non-governmental organizations, and influential lobbyists and stakeholders.

Discrimination: Refers to the unequal treatment of persons or groups in comparison to others within the society.

Assimilation: Refers to the social pressure which leads to a monocultural society in which the cultures and values of minorities are replaced by those of the dominant culture; instead of being able to freely enjoy one's own culture.

2.3 Official recognition

Official recognition is the basis for the preservation of minorities. Although both international and national organizations – such as the United Nation, the Council of

Europe, and the European Union – highlight the importance of official recognition of minorities repeatedly in their legal documents, there are still considerable obstacles regarding the recognition of minorities in individual nations.

During our continuing work in the field of minority rights, we see considerable differences again and again between the individual nations of Europe. Clearly, there are both positive and negative changes to be found regarding the extent of recognition of minorities in the European nations. A lack of official recognition denies the minorities opportunities to call for their rights, as well as to express their own cultures within majority society.

Article 27 of *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* states: :

„In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.”

Official recognition is a decisive first step in guaranteeing the rights of minorities. Recognition also secures them essential access to rights that prohibit structural discrimination and assimilation. The degree of recognition in Europe varies markedly in different countries and regions. Countries such as France and Greece do not recognize minorities at all. In Germany, Slovenia, and Denmark, on the other hand, minorities are officially recognized.

Through official recognition, minorities attain rights essential to them. Central aspects include the use of the minority language as „lingua franca,” legal protection, the guarantee of social and political participation in society, the consideration of special requirements in the education system, media representation, and the opportunity for free expression of the minority culture.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the United Nations, which went into effect in 1976, contains individual rights which protect voluntary participation in society and stipulate political, cultural, and social rights.

Examples from YEN Member Organizations

The situation of the Consilul al Tinirilor Armanji (CTArm), the Aromanian minority in Romania, represents a negative example of a lack of recognition. Romania does not recognize the Aromanian minority. In reaction to their lack of recognition by Romania, CTArm went through all national legal channels. Nevertheless, the results were disappointing and no improvements of the situation of Aromanians followed. Under Romanian law, the Aromanian language is only recognized as a national dialect.

The decision of the national court and the state of Romania has fatal effects for CTArm. Because of the lack of recognition, the Aromanians are still denied access to the instruments of political participation. Additionally, it's not possible for them to call for essential rights that are crucial to the preservation of their language and culture. Further elements vital to the social inclusion of minorities, such as educational opportunities and media, remain inaccessible. Although Romania has a multicultural and multiethnic society, obstacles on the legal level continue to prevent equal participation by all members of society from becoming a reality.

Positive trends in minority recognition also exist in Europe. The effect of official recognition in the border region between Germany and Denmark, for example,

is apparent. The recognition of the German minority in Denmark and that of the Danish minority in Germany goes back to the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations of 1955. The positive impact these declarations had on the legal situations, and thus the on the preservation of the minorities in the German-Danish border region, is enormous. Through political participation by their own parties and publicly-funded institutions, both countries ensure political and cultural equality for the minorities in the border region.

The Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations, signed by Denmark and Germany in 1955, guarantee the German and Danish minorities in each country comprehensive rights and a democratic inclusion of both minorities.

Recognition makes democratic participation, state support, and thus the preservation of the culture and language of the region possible. Access to public and financial resources allows minorities in the border region their own media representation through newspapers, radio, and other specific media-related measures to promote their individual cultures and identities. Majority and minority profit in equal measure from the resources associated with recognition and the cultural diversity of their societies.

Official recognition may be regarded as both an instrument to facilitate democracy and to prevent conflict. Democratic diversity, which comes hand-in-hand with the recognition of national and ethnic minorities in Europe, ensures not only specific rights for these demographics, but acts against possible conflicts between the culturally different groups of the society. With the aid of the differences in various European countries as examples, the ambivalent situation of the minorities becomes clear.

We, YEN, denounce the unlawful denial of the official recognition of minorities. The examples given make it clear that the official recognition of minorities is of the utmost importance to their rights and their cultural heritage. A lack of recognition does not only compromise opportunities for influence, it also yields the danger of lasting social and political conflict, which can in turn lead to instability within a country and its society. We hold the belief that the official recognition of minorities is of the utmost importance to strengthen diversity in our society and to prevent national and ethnic conflict. Therefore, it is in the interest of every nation, through the official recognition and active support of minorities, to support cultural diversity in the name of a peaceful and respectful coexistence.

2.4 Discrimination

Discrimination against minorities in Europe is a current problem which deserves considerable attention. We, the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), condemn all forms of discrimination, and stand in particular against discrimination against ethnic groups. Even though equality is enshrined in the laws of many countries, discrimination is still a daily reality for minorities.

Discrimination stems mostly from unfamiliarity or ignorance and is a flagrant violation of the rights of a person or group. Victims of discrimination are systematically denied enjoyment of their human rights on the basis of individual or group-specific characteristics. On an unlawful basis, the affected person or group experiences disadvantages compared to others in an initially similar situation. Reasons for discrimination include ethnicity, religion, national or social origin, language, physical appearance,

Discrimination may be understood as the disadvantaging of a person or group in relation to another in a comparable situation

ancestry, gender, sexual preference, age, and disability. Even when no objective or reasonable grounds for discrimination exist, it's important to understand why people continue to experience discrimination and why it can take so many different forms.

All of our member organizations have told us about situations in which they have been discriminated against. The reason was generally their national or ethnic background. Discrimination can manifest itself very openly; in the form of hate speech, violence, or racial slurs, for example. Our Romansh member organization in Switzerland, Givuetegna Rumantscha, gives us an example of discrimination on the basis of language:

„The use of Romansh in public is met with stereotypical jokes, especially in the German-speaking part of the canton of Graubünden (also the home of the Romansh people). As a Romansh person, you have to decide in this situation if you want to start a discussion on principles, or if you can and want to laugh at yourself. People met so often with such scorn and mockery will one day lose the pleasure in their own language, culture, and identity.”

Much more subtle, but no less dangerous, is **indirect discrimination**. This occurs when seemingly neutral provisions, criteria, procedures, or legislation represent a disadvantage for certain people. Our member organizations reported a palpable disadvantage in chances of employment, the right to use their minority language, and access to public institutions, all on the basis of their belonging to a national or ethnic minority. Although the anti-discrimination measures are enshrined in the law, they often don't protect against discrimination.

Especially when it comes to decisions within public and private institutions, systematic disadvantaging is very common. The lack of societal and official recognition of minorities is widespread form of institutional discrimination. The youth council of the Aromanian minority of Albania, VYCA, tells us of a number of instances of institutional discrimination:

„Just by representing the Aromanians in Albania, you feel discriminated against. You feel it when you're applying for money for projects, when you speak publicly on behalf of your minority, or when so many doors remain closed to members of the minority”.

Institutional discrimination, and thus restricted access to public institutions and services for minorities, is particularly disadvantageous for the preservation and security of the cultural and linguistic heritage of these members of society.

Should a minority be directly or indirectly forced to give up their linguistic or cultural characteristics in favor of those of the dominant culture of their country, one can see it as **structural discrimination**. Assimilation is a phenomenon that affects most minorities, and will be further elaborated upon later.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the disadvantages faced by an individual on the basis of his/her belonging to a national and ethnic minority, it does not suffice to examine the different types of discrimination. In most cases, discrimination proves to be a multidimensional experience based not just upon belonging to *one* specific cultural or social group, but upon a combination of multiple different identities.

Categorization as woman, man, queer, member of certain nationality, belief system, or language group, sexuality, the use of a certain language, physical or mental capabilities, etc. are dimensions of the identity of every person. When a person is discriminated against on the basis of multiple attributes of their identity, it would be considered multiple discrimination.¹

An individual's identity is not only defined through belonging to a certain cultural group. It is rather formed through a multiplicity of identities. The discrimination a person experiences based on a combination of these characteristics is called multiple discrimination.

The concept of **multiple discrimination** becomes clear in the following example: Imagine a young member of the Roma minority who's applying for a job. The employers look at her with a number of prejudices, because of which she doesn't get the job, despite being fully qualified: She is young, Roma, and a woman. The employer doesn't want to hire a member of the Roma minority, and especially not a young Roma woman, who, in the employer's mind, will certainly have lots of children and be unable to keep doing her job.²

But why does it come to discrimination exactly? Why are some people disadvantaged in favor of others? How is discrimination on cultural and ethnic grounds so widespread? And how can one fight it? Discrimination is often based upon inexperience, ignorance, prejudices, or stereotypes of certain people. Minorities are confronted daily with these kinds of prejudices, offensive statements, and disregard for the rights due to them in society.

When the culture of the majority population is regarded as „the norm“ in society and thus seen as „normal,“ typical qualities of minorities, such as their language and culture, are by implication seen as deviations from the norm, and thus less valuable for the common good and national identity.

The frequency with which minorities experience discrimination shows us that there's still a long way to go before we can speak of the social inclusion of minorities in Europe. We are of the opinion that every instance of discrimination must be acknowledged and accounted for; only through this can we get to the bottom of it, and actively fight prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination!

2.5 Assimilation

Assimilation is a central problem for minorities. Even as cultures steadily change, redefine themselves, and form through new influences, forced change can also occur. In most national states there is a dominant culture, from which minorities often come under pressure to scale back their cultural traits or give them up entirely in order to fit in with the dominant culture, and thus in society. While the adoption of manners and values of others is part of the growth of cultures, assimilation and the subsequent disappearance of cultures is an insidious process which can begin harmlessly. The origins of assimilation can be found in seemingly banal things, such as a conversation between two people. A natural exchange of language and signs, like a simple „Hello!“ are the building blocks of every conversation. Even this very simple action forces the involved persons to adjust their behavior. In so doing, they must also learn new and necessary skills that make contact possible. This could be learning a language like English, for example, to bring about consistent communication, or learning to shake hands as a greeting.

This exchange between two cultures likewise doesn't mean anything negative. It is in fact fertile ground for the positive development of society as a whole, and presents more opportunities for a deep mutual understanding and friendly communication.

Unfortunately, nations tend to assimilate minority cultures and integrate them into the culture of the majority. This happens both in a direct and intentional way, and in a surreptitious and unintentional manner. For example, a nation may impose the use of a uniform national language on all levels in the interest of a standardized bureaucracy. A number of benefits come unequivocally from this kind of standardization, such as easier organization; however, this also ignores the cultural and linguistic diversity of a country.

This kind of standardization toward a dominant culture and language can lead to serious tension and even conflict within a society. This can be felt by different members of society in very different ways. One side, for instance, may be totally unaware of assimilation, while the others might feel strongly oppressed. Conflicts like these are often emotionally charged, as individual ways of life often lay at the heart of the matter. Thus, an examination of the possible outcomes of assimilation and the related fears and uncertainties of both cultural groups is necessary. Only this can stop prejudice against and rejection of certain members of society.

We as YEN find it vital that the difficult consequences of assimilation for minorities cannot be denied. Both the decline in speakers of minority languages and the active pressure by the majority on each minority to give up their culture are among the most urgent problems of our members. The reasons for this are manifold and can often be traced back to a language and cultural politics of standardization. Even in societies with well-functioning democracies and a balanced relationship between minorities and the majority, assimilation is a part of everyday reality. But an active minority politics in some countries, especially in structurally weaker regions, can counteract the insidious process of assimilation. This weakness is often the result of investments and political decisions supporting cultural and geographic centers, such as regions of particular economic or strategic importance, but ignoring other regions important to minorities. But these largely rural areas and their people have the right to development, security, and prosperity. Only when we preserve these social, economic, and ecological habitats, can we thwart the deterioration of these areas and bolster their social and economic development. The situations of the educational infrastructure in the affected regions offer us a striking example. When young minorities want to study at institutions of higher education, they normally don't have the opportunity to do so in their home region. These young people often have trouble finding employment in these regions even after the successful completion of their educations. Many young people thus leave their home regions and lose the close ties with their culture. Many of our members report similar situations, such as the North Frisian minority: *„A big problem of our region is that many young people leave to study and then don't come back (or can't), because there aren't enough jobs here for academics.“* (Rökefloose 2014)

We can see a similar situation in Switzerland for our Romansh members: *„The Romansh areas are all in remote alpine regions where there are very few (attractive) job openings. There are also very few educational opportunities in these regions. This has the effect that many young people leave the Romansh valleys for education and the job search. Very few come back.“* (GiuRu 2014)

Though even more difficult than this passive and unspoken form is the active and intentional assimilation of minorities. Consequences of the active promotion of assimilation are, for example, an insufficient application of minority rights or even the boycott of the implementation of such rights through public institutions. Time and time again, our member organizations report property damage and violent attacks on their members. Nationalistic sentiments like these are sadly to be found in current EU politics. European politics and that of member states is aimed at standardization and in so doing, passes over the individual needs of minorities. Rather, it sometimes pursues an open assimilation strategy which has a homogenous culture as its aim. Active assimilation strategies are not simply some dark part of our European history, but primarily a sign of poor democracy and injustice. Today's Europe is not rid of currents like these, which have become daily reality for all autochthonous and national minorities. The consequences of these currents present a danger to a pluralistic and multicultural European society, and must be actively shut down by the European nations, their institutions, and actors within civil society.

We–YEN–are convinced that only a non-discriminatory, institutional, and legal atmosphere in which all minorities can find full expression can hope to defend itself against discrimination and assimilation. We are thus demanding the honest and uncompromising social inclusion of all minorities in Europe! All parties involved must have equal say in the allocation and availability of shared resources and institutions. For only when all people have the opportunity to move equally in society, can they live in democracy, peace, and prosperity.

Through actively inclusive politics on all levels of political decision-making, may all people not only enjoy their culture in freedom and security regardless of their status as majority or minority, but also profit from the diversity and bring about a just society. We–YEN–stand for sustainable society in a democratic and diverse Europe that offers everyone a homeland.

2.6 Recommendations

What are we calling for?

The crucial importance of social inclusion for minorities was clarified in this chapter. We as a European umbrella organization stand in solidarity against every form of disadvantage of minorities. We see it as our duty to call attention to every insufficiency related to social inclusion and the factors we pointed out. To live united in peaceful coexistence, it is the necessary task of politics and society to stand decidedly against every form of discrimination, non-recognition, and attempted assimilation. What's more, every person should feel obliged, through explaining and analyzing the formation of discrimination and assimilation, to fight against them.

How will we implement this?

1. Systematic drafting of position papers on the situations of minorities in Europe

In the face of the problem of the lack of recognition of minorities in Europe, we plan to begin the systematic documentation of the degree of social and political inclusion in European nations. Of special focus will be the official recognition of minorities and social involvement by minorities in majority society. The position

paper will specify where action is required for the improvement of the social and political standing of minorities and contribute to the problem-solving work. The position paper will be distributed on all relevant political levels. It will be made available to, among others, the European Youth Forum, The Council of Europe, and other lobbyists and stakeholders.

2. To call attention to common challenges through united forms of action

The young, voluntarily active young people of our member organizations lack neither engagement nor creativity; it is rather financial means that are often limited. Thus we plan to use the personal capacities of our member organizations more heavily to call attention to the desolate state of certain minorities. During YEN seminars we want to expose the members of the majority population to the problems and challenges faced by minorities in general, and specifically of those faced by the minority hosting the seminar. We're planning:

- Info-Flashmobs with information about the most important issues for the local minority.
- Rallies with the aim of informing the majority as much as possible about the minority.
- Diversity Festivals to bring minorities and the majority closer together.
- Demonstrations in multiple locations to build solidarity across borders.

3. Creation of an online database to document discrimination and the infringement of rights of national and ethnic minorities

Discrimination is often unseen and only evident to those affected by it. It is important that their experiences be shared, to show where injustice exists, and to shed light on the issue. To give our members, who are all themselves minorities, a platform to share, it's our goal to create an online database to document discrimination and the infringement of rights of national and ethnic minorities in Europe

The database will contain a collection of data, articles, court rulings, and personal reports of instances of discrimination. Additionally, the database will also report current degrees of social and political inclusion, as well as the state of official recognition. The goal of the database is to make visible the unseen instances of discrimination and infringement of the rights, to make them accessible to the public, and to give our members a platform to talk about these issues. This project would benefit greatly from collaboration with universities, research institutes, and foundations that stand for anti-discrimination and the preservation of diversity.

4. Public dialogue plan

The lack of social inclusion of minorities is clear sign of the necessity of a purposeful strategy to effectively get these problems out into the open. To this end we plan to undertake to systematic documentation of the state of our member organizations and to develop a procedure to illustrate deficits in social inclusion and to communicate requests to political and social actors as effectively and quickly as possible.

This is our aim with the public dialogue plan, which contains purposeful measures such aimed to:

- contribute to a structured analysis of the problems of minorities
- structure and facilitate cooperation with regional, national, and international political and social actors.
- make the results of dialogues and the current challenges in different areas of social inclusion freely available to all interested actors.

2.7 Endnotes and further reading

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_296_sum_de.pdf, pp.17.

² This example taken from the December 2014 publication of the Council of Europe, „Barabaripen: Young Roma speak about multiple discrimination.”

Information on Social Inclusion:

- Council of Europe – www.humanrightseurope.org.
- OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities – <http://www.osce.org/hcnm>.

Information on Official Recognition:

- Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the Council of Europe: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/ger/Treaties/Html/157.htm>.
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the Council of Europe: <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/ger/Treaties/Html/148.htm>.
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by United Nations: http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/sr/c0_103_2.html.

Information on Discrimination:

- Language Diversity in Europe – www.language-diversity.eu.
- No Hate Speech movement – <http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org>.
- All different – all equal – Education Pack by the Council of Europe – https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/youth/Source/Resources/Publications/Education_Pack_en.pdf.
- Tackling Multiple Discrimination: Practices, policies and laws by publication the European Commission 2007.

3. LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

**„Education is the most powerful
weapon to change the world.“**

Nelson Mandela

„The right to education is an inalienable, universal and fundamental human right and everybody has the right to education.“ To protect these rights, the UN member states enshrined them in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Article 13 and 14. Education is regarded as the key to personal development and shall pave the way to social and economic development.¹

Education is both a human and an individual right and an essential tool in the realization of other human rights. As a law aimed at empowerment, education is the main instrument with which economically and socially marginalized adults and children overcome poverty and gain the means to participate fully in their communities.²

Education is vital; it contributes to social development and can save lives. A country where everyone has the same opportunity to access the right to education will economically and socially outperform a country that denies its youth the possibility of education³

Education is thus essential for:

- the full development of the human personality, talent, intellectual and physical abilities, and the sense of a person's individual dignity,
- the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,
- the preparation of the child for a responsible life in a free, open and democratic society with a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality, and friendship among peoples of all ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds,
- the impartation of respect for one's own identity, language, and cultural values, the values of the country in which the individual is living and for societies different from his or her own.

3.1 The Right to education for minorities in Europe⁴

The importance of education for minorities

Education – as a challenge of the 21st century – is an essential requirement for the development of a personality, the preparation for the responsibilities of life, as well as for active participation in society and in creating social change. Education should be treated as a holistic, lifelong process which encompasses the entire life cycle of the human.

The concept of lifelong learning includes the following educational stages: early-childhood education and preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary education, vocational education, apprenticeship and advanced training, adult education, and non-formal education.

Education must ensure the acquisition of knowledge and competences which create the skills for self-directed education and learning processes. Education is thus an essential part of the protection and support of minorities.

Education helps to strengthen the identity of minorities and to stimulate this identity through a critical analysis of their own values and traditions. It is essential in giving minorities the ability to maintain, foster, and develop their identity, culture, language, history, traditions, and cultural heritage.

The importance of language for minorities

The right to speak one's own language is a universal human right. Every human has the right to use their mother tongue. This applies to speakers of regional and minority languages which, due to their often critical situations, require extra protection and support. The crucial number of speakers for the survival of a language is estimated to be 300 000, which puts about 80% of autochthonous European minority languages in danger.

Language is not only a means of communication, but a part of the cultural heritage and diversity of our world. For minorities, their own language is an existential and important part of their identity.

The declared universal and European objective is therefore the preservation of linguistic diversity. On a universal level, international legal and political documents of the United Nations protect the use of languages. Of particular importance is UNESCO's concept of an endangered language. On a European level, the protection of language diversity is enshrined principally in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, set forth by the Council of Europe; and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Treaty of Lisbon of the European Union.

Taken together, The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, form the most important European legal instrument for minorities. While the Framework Convention sets general political provisions, the Charter focuses on language and culture.

Multilingualism and linguistic diversity are core European values. As stated in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: „The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.” Speakers of regional and minority languages represent, through their natural bilingualism, an important resource for multilingualism, international cooperation, and regional identity. Multilingualism is a necessity for intercultural dialogue and the appreciation of European values.⁷

In order to achieve equality between minority and majority populations through the implementation of the right to education and the protection of language, the state must take all necessary measures to make education for minorities equally accessible, attainable, and reasonable,⁸ and give every minority the right to use, care for, and pass on their own language.

To reinforce the weight of these issues, YEN and the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) passed the Charter of the autochthonous, national minori-

ties in Europe in 2006. Enshrined in this charter are the self-conception of the minorities of Europe, fundamental principles of the signatories, and 13 fundamental rights of minorities, along with political goals and recommendations.

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities⁵

The Member States of the Council of Europe worked since 1993 toward the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which was adopted on February 1, 1995. 39 of the 47 current member states of the Council of Europe have ratified the convention, and 4 others have signed. As of December 2014, France, Greece, Belgium, Monaco, Luxembourg, Andorra, Iceland, and Turkey have not yet ratified the document. The convention forbids all discrimination against a person on the grounds of their being a minority, as well as forced assimilation. Furthermore, member states are obliged to protect the civil rights and liberties of minorities and to enact measures of affirmative action in their favor.

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages⁶

The Charter was adopted in 1992 in Strasbourg, but did not go into effect until March 1, 1998. As of November 2012, 25 of the 47 current member states of the Council of Europe have ratified the charter, and another 8 have signed. States that have not signed include Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Turkey. Under the charter, regional and minority languages traditionally spoken in signatory states are to be treated as threatened parts of European cultural heritage that require protection and support. The stipulated measures affect the educational system – particularly the teaching of and in regional and minority languages – the use of regional and minority languages in court and in public offices, the media, in cultural events and activities, and in the country's economic and social life.

Fundamental rights contained in the charter are selected at regular intervals as key issues and further elaborated. The right to education was passed via this process in 2007, with the idea that familiarity with one's own rights is a necessary first step in implementing them practically, keeping them up to date, and further developing them.

The practical implementation and further development of the right to education and language must be considered in light of the specific needs and situations of each individual minority, as well as their educational traditions and regional character. In the interest of a successful realization of these rights, YEN would like to emphasize the following points:

1. The ratification and implementation of legal responsibilities

Of the utmost importance for the attainment of the right to education is the ratification and timely, complete implementation of international legal documents by individual states. Principal among these are the Council of Europe's Framework

Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. To this end, we are calling for:

- All states to work toward the implementation of the policies, legal responsibilities, and measures outlined in the aforementioned documents for all their national minorities
- Minority advocacy groups to continue to take part in the monitoring process whenever possible, and to continue to strive for transparent reporting systems.

2. The holistic organization of the formal and non-formal education systems

We see social sustainability⁹ as an important factor in education. Equity is one of the most important criteria in attaining this sustainability. Other core elements of social sustainability include: the satisfaction of basic needs, accessibility of social resources, equal opportunities, and the opportunity for political and social participation.¹⁰

Accordingly, current international education standards must be applied to the education system for minorities toward the principle of lifelong learning – and in doing so, pursuing a holistic approach.

We, YEN, support the concept of sustainable education and thus the principle of lifelong learning, by offering participatory, intercultural, and integrative events and activities strengthened by a committed solidarity between the minority youth organizations. These events focus on non-formal educational opportunities, which are of special importance for young people. Youth organizations like YEN play an important and responsible role in the recognition and guaranteed quality of non-formal education.

YEN leads international seminars, exchange programs, and projects that encourage young people to try their hand in the world of international youth work. They can use what they've learned within their own group – by offering their own educational events, for example.¹¹

The self- and co-determination of minorities in the educational debate is necessary to the holistic organization of the national educational infrastructure. Thus, the inclusion of the minorities and their advocacy groups must be ensured. The self- and co-determination must be treated as central educational matters, as they ultimately affect the curricula, goals, framework (teaching materials, staff, and institutions), language education, endowment, and advancement of the educational system. Accordingly, the system must be monitored, adjusted, and judged by these criteria.

3. Language education for minorities and the right to language

Language represents an essential aspect of education. The availability and accessibility to minority-language education is thus of great importance to the implementation of a socially-inclusive and sustainable education system. The path to such a system may be summarized as such:

- The acquisition of the minority language is necessary for the preservation and growth of the personal identity of a member of a minority group.

- The parallel acquisition of the minority and majority language(s) represents a natural multilingualism which is normal for Europe and organically supports the protection of Europe's linguistic diversity.
- A successful language education is made possible by positive language politics.
- In the interest of real equality between minorities and the majorities, the particular conditions for the learning of a minority language should be discussed and coordinated with representatives from the minority.
- The minority language should, in accordance with wishes of each minority,
 - be the language of instruction in preschool and elementary school. The majority language would be taught as its own subject.
 - be represented in a substantial part of the secondary school curriculum.
- The command of the minority language should be at least that of the majority language.

In short, it could be said that education and language represent as universal human rights an indivisible unit in personal, social, and economic development. Further growth requires institutions that make the mastery of minority languages possible. Examples of the differences between educational offerings for minorities in state-run and private institutions will be elaborated in the following.

3.2 Examples from YEN member organizations

The state of education offered to minorities across Europe is manifold. Most national education systems lack a holistic approach, and the principle of lifelong learning remains unfulfilled. However, there are also a number of quite positive and innovative examples of education systems that may be seen as models for other European regions.

Kindergarten, schools up to secondary level II (until the age of 18), and opportunities for adult education are available to some minorities. Some schools instruct exclusively in the minority language, though one more often sees bilingual schools or lessons. Despite the diversity of the educational offerings there remains a substantial lack of secondary schools and universities that teach in the minority language or offer it as a field of study.

The majority of member organizations reported that there are few institutions outside of school where minorities can learn their languages. These include cultural centers, community colleges, private language schools, courses in public schools, and courses offered by their minority organizations or civil societies. Many members reported that, owing to this lack of educational opportunities, they use their mother tongues primarily in private company.

Even when there seem to be a wide range of educational offerings and sufficient opportunities for language acquisition, the statements of our members say otherwise: they report that both the number of speakers and overall proficiency in their language has sharply decreased in the last 30 years. In some cases we noticed a significant decline in the number of speakers and those who can understand the minority language. The state of reading and writing comprehension is even more dire.

Possible reasons for the decline in speakers include political decisions, a lack of opportunity to speak and hear the minority language outside the family (e.g. in school, the media, public space) – to say nothing of assimilation and discrimination.

Members of minority groups use their languages in different situations. Some report it to be the most important language, the one they use in their day-to-day lives, and thus their most meaningful identifying feature. Others say they use their language chiefly among friends and family. And in the presence of someone not proficient in the minority language, they switch to the majority language.

National and international societies, organizations, and other forces in civil society such as YEN are of decisive importance for the survival of minority and regional languages. They represent a protected space for the languages, and strive to offer opportunities for the languages and cultures of minorities to live, to be preserved, and to grow. In this way, these organizations fill a gaping hole in national education systems.¹²

The first example, the Aromanians of Romania, Albania, and Macedonia, shows the difficult situation of a non-kin-state¹³ minority regarding education and language.

The **Aromanians from Romania** are not recognized by the state as a minority. They have neither educational institutions nor language courses organized by the ministry of education. There are only a few schools in a region with a high population that offer elective courses on the culture and traditions of the minority (1 hour per week). About 350 children take part in this course. Romania shows no intention of supporting the Aromanian community and their language on an institutional level.¹⁴

Similarly, the **Aromanians of Albania** have no opportunities to receive instruction in their mother tongue. There are no educational institutions that offer Aromanian lessons. It is up to Aromanian organizations to organize language classes. More courses are available in some cities in Albania, such as Divjaka. These courses are largely offered in summer schools, and are aimed at children and adolescents.¹⁵

In **Macedonia**, Aromanian is taught as a subject in elementary school. In the region of Kruševo, it's a secondary administrative language. The state sponsors some Aromanian publications (newspapers and books) and other works on Aromanian culture, language, and history. Recently, the first Aromanian academic society in Skopje, „Constantin Belemace,” has organized symposiums on the history of the minority group and subsequently published articles on the events.¹⁶

The second examples are the situations of the Romansh people of Switzerland and the Burgenland Croats of Austria.

For the **Romansh people of Switzerland**, kindergarten and elementary schools instruct principally in Romansh. There are, however, some bilingual schools as well. During the last three mandatory years of secondary school, this is reduced to a few hours of language education per week. Some middle schools offer Romansh as a weekly language course. Only a few *Gymnasien* (the highest level of secondary school) offer students the option for a Romansh *Matura* (certificate for entrance into higher education). The Pedagogical Academy GR in Chur offers a bilingual certification program for elementary school teachers. Additionally, the

Universities of Zürich and Fribourg offer majors in the Romansh language. Overall, the offerings at the elementary level are solid and of a high quality, but the higher educational levels lack sufficient offerings.

There are organizations in every region of Switzerland that offer summer courses and intensive lessons for all levels. A considerable problem within this system is the limited amount of educational materials, some of which are now out of date. Since 2014, Friday-afternoon voluntary language and cultural classes have been offered in the larger cities of Zürich and Basel (which are outside of Graubünden, where the majority of Romansh speakers reside).¹⁷

The **Burgenland Croats of Austria** have bilingual kindergartens,¹⁸ bilingual elementary schools (with Burgenland Croatian as the instructional language until the 4th grade), as well as a few bilingual secondary schools and new secondary schools (up to the 8th grade). In these schools, instruction is conducted partially in Burgenland Croatian and partially in standard Croatian.

There are a number of bilingual *Gymnasien* (5th–12th grade) in Oberwart. And in a few other *Gymnasien* and vocational secondary schools, Croatian is offered as a mandatory and/or elective subject. The Pedagogical Academy of Eisenstadt offers elementary school teaching certification programs (1st–4th grade). For *Gymnasium* instructors, the department of Slavic studies at the University of Vienna offers seminars and exercises ranging from 2–4 hours per week.

Beyond that, one can learn Burgenland Croatian in cultural centers and societies or in community colleges. The Burgenland Croatian Center in Vienna, among others, offers weekly and intensive language courses.¹⁹ Additionally, the Croatian Cultural Society in Burgenland (HKD) organizes summer courses for children.²⁰

The main problem for Burgenland Croats is a lack of sufficiently-trained personnel, and the fact that most educational materials are only available in standard Croatian. The teaching program for *Gymnasium* instructors is additionally insufficient. About 50% of Burgenland Croats in Austria use their mother tongue regularly, and are proficient in its reading and writing.²¹

The third examples are the Lusatian Sorbs in Germany, the West Frisians in the Netherlands, and the Ladin people in Italy.

The situation of the **Sorbs in Upper and Lower Lusatia (Germany)** is associated with a different approach to language education.²² Upper and Lower Sorbian is passed on as a mother tongue, with the help of the WITAJ-Project, or as a second or foreign language. The various educational systems of Saxony and Brandenburg also play important roles. Different educational institutions run preschools, elementary schools, secondary educational programs, and offer adult education.

There are a large number of preschools in Upper and Lower Lusatia in which children are spoken to in Sorbian. There are also a variety of methods and forms of Sorbian-language education: The teaching of the language varies in method, scope, and intensity. The immersion method (WITAJ's model) is the most intensive form. The day-to-day activities in preschools are led by the educators entirely in Sorbian – either with the group as a whole (complete immersion) or in smaller groups (partial immersion). The basic principle could be described as „one person – one language;” languages are not switched in communication with the children.

The Sorbian language has been most successful in schools that teach to the principle of „2plus.“ 2plus teaches the children to read in their mother tongue, with the parents deciding which language that is. Reading instruction in the second language runs parallel to this instruction. Along with a number of middle schools, there's an Upper Sorbian *Gymnasium* in Bautzen and a Lower Sorbian *Gymnasium* in Cottbus.

The University of Leipzig has the only Sorbian Institute in Germany, where Sorbian teachers for Saxony and Brandenburg are trained. The university takes into special consideration the particular needs of teachers in Sorbian schools and schools with Sorbian programs. Seminars on Sorbian language and culture are additionally offered at universities in Prague (Czech Republic) and Lviv (Ukraine).

The state educational institutions in Brandenburg and Saxony as well as the WITAJ Language Center offer numerous continuing education programs for child care professionals and teachers. Lower Sorbian classes are organized by the Cottbus School for Lower Sorbian Language and Culture, while Upper Sorbian courses are offered by different institutions, societies, and agencies.

Despite the strong traditional bonds of the Sorbian language with family, church, and school, it has experienced a notable decline in daily usage. In the face of economic issues (unemployment, better chances elsewhere for social mobility, relocation of the coal industry), language acquisition represents a big challenge for families. One reason is the image of the language – even today, many are unaware of the advantages enjoyed by bilingual children. Other issues include the closure of rural schools and a marked shortage of teachers who speak Upper or Lower Sorbian with native fluency.²³

Friesland (official and in Frisian: Fryslân) is one of the 12 Dutch provinces in the northern part of the country. The capital city is Ljouwert/Leeuwarden. Alongside standard Dutch, West Frisian is the other official language of the province. A majority of the residents of Fryslân speak West Frisian (75%), but despite bilingual education, West Frisian literacy remains low.

A rather unique feature about the region is that it promotes multilingualism, and has revealed an overall plan to strengthen Frisian. This is expressed in the campaigns of Afûk,²⁴ in trilingual schools, as well as in campaigns promoting the benefits of multilingualism to parents. Afûk is an important regional force for the promotion of the Frisian language. Afûk's goal is to raise awareness and use of the Frisian language and culture, as well as to promote Fryslân and its regional culture. Of particular interest is „Praat mar Frysk,” its West Frisian awareness campaign, which is aiming above all else to promote the use of Frisian through social media.

Fryslân has a large number of play groups and preschools that operate in West Frisian. West Frisian is mandatory for elementary school students, as well as in some middle schools, often as the language of instruction. Another interesting feature of Fryslân is the size of its schools: on average only 125 students. A major achievement of Fryslân in the last 10–15 years has been the founding of trilingual schools (West Frisian, Dutch, and English). Frisian is, however, rarely the language of instruction in secondary schools. There is neither a monolingual West Frisian secondary school, nor bilingual schools with equal an equal share of Dutch and Frisian.

Bachelor's and master's programs in Frisian Language and Culture are offered at the Universities of Groningen, Amsterdam, and Leiden. It's even possible to become certified as a teacher of Frisian at the NHL Hogeschool and Stenden Hogeschool in Leeuwarden/Ljouwert. The University of Groningen has recently begun offering new bachelor's and master's programs on minorities and multilingualism with a focus on Frisian.

Adult education generally takes place in Dutch. However, Afûk offers additional Frisian courses, which are attended yearly by about 1000 students. Afûk also facilitates correspondence courses. To this end, teaching and learning materials from the Edufrysk project have been digitalized. The Folkshegeskoalle Schylgeralân is a cultural community college which offers informal education adults, including courses and workshops on Frisian language and culture. A two-week intensive language course is offered yearly, in partnership with Afûk.

While Frisian is currently recognized and accepted by all political parties, the implementation of pro-Frisian politics is moving slowly. The growing awareness and consideration of Frisians does not mean more Frisians are getting involved in the protection and advancement of their language. Nevertheless, the number of speakers can be considered stable, although the speech quality is on the downturn and Frisian is moving continually closer to Dutch.

More than half of the population speaks West Frisian as their mother tongue at home, in their social lives, and in their day-to-day public lives. Frisian may be best viewed as a language that's strong in informal community life, but weaker in its written usage.²⁵

Ladinia in the autonomous minority region of South Tyrol, Italy is the homeland of the Ladin language group of South Tyrol. Ladinia has its own unique school system, which sets itself apart from the rest of the country – the „parity model”. This system originated in 1996, based on two fundamental principles:

1. The school must promote the cultural and social development of the population of Ladin regions, the Ladin language, and Ladin culture.;
2. The school must guarantee the necessary education for a multilingual region through the equal knowledge of German and Italian within the framework of the parity model.

This model applies from the first grade in elementary school all the way through the *Matura*. Every town in Gröden and Gadertal (with the exception of the village of Kolfuschg) has its own elementary school. To support, manage, and further the schools of Gröden and Gadertal, the Ladin School Board was founded in the 1970s. This institution oversees various aspects of the schools' operations.

By kindergarten-age at the latest, every child in the Ladin valleys of South Tyrol will have come in contact with all three languages (Italian, German, and Ladin), as all three are spoken in all kindergartens. In the kindergartens of Grödnertal, for example, the language of instruction rotates weekly – one week courses will be taught in Ladin, the next week German, and the week after in Italian. Every child is spoken to by the teachers in his or her mother tongue, which fosters security and trust. The use of the mother language supports the development of the cognitive and communicative abilities of every child.

Multilingual literacy begins in elementary school. „When I was a child, my parents had to decide if they wanted to send me to first grade in Italian or German. But the thinking has changed here,” reports one of our Ladin members. Subjects are taught in equal parts German and Italian. Even within one subject, some of the content is taught in German, some in Italian. Ladin is taught alongside the two. The Ladin language remains the auxiliary language for lessons, should a child need a translation or instruction in his or her mother tongue. The languages are divided into different subjects in the middle and secondary schools. For example, natural history will be taught in German, while geography is taught in Italian. In turn, music and religion are trilingual.

With the new secondary school reforms, Ladin lessons are being increased from one to two hours per week, while all other subjects, in line with the parity model, are divided equally. English continues to be taught as a foreign language. In some fields, such as the tourism program at the economic secondary school in St. Ulrich, one can learn Spanish as a foreign language, or, at the modern language secondary school in Stern im Gardetal, French.

In the last ten years, a chair for Ladin Studies has been developed in the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Brixen. This offers an educational opportunity for aspiring teachers who want to teach in Ladin schools in the parity model. Accordingly, some classes in the Faculty of Educational Sciences are taught in German, others in Italian, and others still in Ladin.

In this light, the contemporary Ladin school model opens up the way to new languages and cultures, and in a much stronger way than traditional foreign language lessons. Students within the parity model should feel as comfortable in German as in Italian culture. All that's necessary is high-quality language education which has cultural exchange as its goal.²⁶

Conclusion

The Ladin speakers of Italy, with their trilingual kindergartens and schools, for example, have excellent access to education. The educational model of the West Frisians in the Netherlands has also proven itself progressive, and can have a positive influence for the development of other educational systems. The educational opportunities in regard to the Romansh people, the Burgenland Croats, and the Lusatian Sorbs show a more mixed picture: While they have good legal conditions, the systems in practice show a number of shortcomings – out-of-date educational materials, a teacher shortage, insufficient teaching methods, inadequate language education at the higher levels and in the universities, a lack of public recognition, prejudices against the language, and insufficient understanding of the struggles faced by minorities.

The Aromanians in Romania and Albania have no state-funded educational opportunities at their disposal. That points above all else to the lack of any official recognition of the minority, as well as educational politics that either ignore, or shut out autochthonous minorities entirely.

The examples show the differences in that state of education for the minorities of Europe, and the important role that independent educators – such as NGOs, clubs, and minority associations and cultural organizations – are taking on in minority education. Nearly every minority group has to fight decreasing numbers of

speakers; some languages will even threaten with extinction if action isn't taken in the future. In the interest of bettering the educational opportunities of autochthonous minorities of Europe, we have developed the following proposals and recommendations.

3.3 Recommendations

What are we calling for?

1. The ratification and implementation of legal responsibilities

As initially stated, the ratification and complete implementation of international legal documents is vital to realization of the right to education and language – above all, the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

YEN needs to analyze issues faced by minorities and push harder for the recognition of the deficits that exist at all political levels. This can happen through political lobbying, monitoring, resolutions, media reporting, petitions, and demonstrations. To this end, we recommend the strengthening of work with other civil-society groups to put pressure on the various states.

2. The holistic organization of formal and non-formal education systems

Following international education standards, the organization of the education system for minorities needs to be oriented around the principle of lifelong learning. The organization of the education system ensures the direct link to the affected minority and its advocacy groups. Central to this goal are the co- and self-determination of the minority groups regarding the curricula, goals, framework (teaching materials, staff, and institutions), language education, endowment, and advancement of the educational system.

YEN plans to take the following measures:

- The creation of more exchange opportunities for students and teachers from minority regions across the whole of Europe
- More extensive cooperation with universities: Guest lectures at universities through YEN members on the topic „Minorities in the National Education System“
- Promotion of minority pedagogy: to motivate young people to complete their studies in minority pedagogy, we're aiming for a cooperative effort with the Institute for Minority Pedagogy at University College of South Denmark and the Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Flensburg
- The coordination of conferences and seminars on minority pedagogy under the aegis of YEN
- Helping to organize language courses within our member organizations
- The cooperative development of training modules for teacher and childcare training programs
- To push for the networking and merging of stakeholders in the field of education.

3. Language education for minorities and the right to language

Language is an essential aspect of education. Therefore the availability and accessibility of language education for minorities is of the utmost importance to the implementation of a socially inclusive and sustainable education system. Institutions that make the acquisition of minority languages possible thus require additional support.

YEN plans to take the following measures:

- Living language: the use of the minority language in educational institutions; such as in lessons and kindergartens
- The development of specific educational materials (e.g. podcasts, videos, music, templates, publications, apps)
- Research: YEN and its alumni network's support of academic theses on the topic of the education and languages of European minorities
- The development and expansion of merchandise and products (e.g. minority-language dictionaries, stickers, sweatshirts, flyers, buttons, specialties of the various minority regions)

4. Sensitization and raising public awareness

Sensitization and raising public awareness must be a high priority in our future work. Engagement with minority problems can be focused and successful only when the facts about and challenges faced by European minorities are well-known.

YEN plans to take the following measures:

- A Europe-wide information and public relations project, primarily with the help of social media and the informational channels of our member organizations
- YEN-sponsored campaigns and activities about minorities and their languages' importance, benefits, and facts. For example:
 - Classroom visits during YEN seminars
 - „Language Flashmobs” during YEN seminars, with the goal of increased public awareness of the seminars in individual European regions
 - Themed social media campaigns
 - Spreading „best-practice examples” of how languages and knowledge about them can best be disseminated; for example, Afûk's promotion of West Frisian, or the European language campaign „language diversity”, in which YEN has been partner
- Evaluation and development based on these best-practice examples – reworking, translation, and expansion of materials in minority languages, such as information for parents on multilingual education, schools, and the benefits of multilingualism
- Staging of diversity festivals, like the 2015 festival in Lusatia, Germany, with the goal of breaking down language barriers through intercultural and interlingual communicational activities such as theater, music, singing, and dance

- Organization, staging, and participation in study sessions of the Council of Europe, such as „Mind Your Language” 2015 in Budapest, Hungary.

3.4 Endnotes and further reading

- ¹ See <http://www.humanrights.ch/de/menschenrechte-themen/sozialrechte/bildung/>.
- ² Source: AUSSCHUSS FÜR WIRTSCHAFTLICHE, SOZIALE UND KULTURELLE RECHTE Einundzwanzigste Tagung 15. November-3. Dezember 1999 DURCHFÜHRUNG DES INTERNATIONALEN PAKTES ÜBER WIRTSCHAFTLICHE, SOZIALE UND KULTURELLE RECHTE Allgemeine Bemerkung 13 (Einundzwanzigste Tagung, 1999) Das Recht auf Bildung (Artikel 13 des Paktes).
- ³ <http://www.humanrights.ch/de/menschenrechte-themen/sozialrechte/bildung/>.
- ⁴ Federal Union of European Nationalities: The right to education for the autochthonous, national minorities in Europe. Tallinn 2007.
- ⁵ Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/157.htm>.
- ⁶ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: <http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/148.htm>.
- ⁷ language diversity: Linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Europe. 2014. p. 3, 8, 17. See: http://language-diversity.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2014/09/3_Our-language-diversity-campaign_Linguistic-diversity-and-multilingualism-in-Europe.pdf.
- ⁸ Based on the „4A-Scheme” of the United Nations, the right to education is comprised of 4 factors: availability, access, acceptability, and adaptability.
- ⁹ Helge Majer: Ganzheitliche Sicht von sozialer Nachhaltigkeit. Stuttgart. p.10. See: http://unw-uhl.de/pdf/pdf_doc_neu/Helge_Majer2/Soziale%20Nachhaltigkeit.pdf.
- ¹⁰ Helge Majer: Ganzheitliche Sicht von sozialer Nachhaltigkeit. Stuttgart. p.2–3. See: http://unw-uhl.de/pdf/pdf_doc_neu/Helge_Majer2/Soziale%20Nachhaltigkeit.pdf ¹¹ Ausführlich zum Thema non-formale Bildung siehe Kapitel „Ehrenamt”.
- ¹¹ See the chapter „Volunteering” for a more in-depth look at non-formal education.
- ¹² Summary of the YEN member organizations’ answers from the 2nd questionnaire.
- ¹³ Non-kin-state minorities are to be understood as ethnic groups that have no parent country of their own.
- ¹⁴ From written responses from the Aromanian Youth Council (CTArm).
- ¹⁵ From written responses from the Vlach Youth Council of Albania (VYCA).
- ¹⁶ From written responses from the Vlach Youth Council of Macedonia (VYCM).
- ¹⁷ From written responses from the Gjuventetgna Rumantscha (GiuRu).
- ¹⁸ The Federal Educational Academy for Kindergarten Pedagogy (BAKIP) See: <http://www.bakip-basop.at/bakip1.html>.
- ¹⁹ See also <http://www.hrvatskicentar.at/deutsch/kulturverein.htm>.
- ²⁰ See also <http://www.hkd.at/index.php/hr/>.
- ²¹ From written responses from the Hrvatski akademski klub (HAK).
- ²² The Sorbs of Lower Lusatia (Brandenburg, Germany) also describe themselves as Wends.
- ²³ See also „The Lusatian Sorbs”: <http://language-diversity.eu/en/knowledge/regions-of-europe/die-sorbenwenden-in-der-lausitz/>; and a written response of the Sorbian youth organization Pawk.
- ²⁴ See <http://afuk.nl/>.
- ²⁵ See also „The Frisians in the Netherlands”: <http://language-diversity.eu/en/knowledge/regions-of-europe/die-westfriesen-in-den-niederlanden/>; written response from Frysk Ynternasjonaal Kontakt (FYK).
- ²⁶ From written responses from the Südtiroler Jugending (SJR).

Further reading

- Anti-Rassismus Informations-Centrum, ARIC-NRW: Interkulturelle und antirassistische Erziehung in der Schule. Handbuch für LehrerInnen (2001).
- Cahiers of „language diversity – a European campaign dedicated to raise awareness for multilingualism and cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe” (FUEN, 2014). See <http://language-diversity.eu/en/products/lehrmaterial/broschuren/>.
 - What lies behind it?
 - The products of our diversity toolkit
 - Linguistic diversity and multilingualism in Europe
 - Literature about multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Europe
- Christiane Hof: Lebenslanges Lernen. Eine Einführung. Kohlhammer Urban Verlag (2009).
- Lisbet Mikkelsen Buhl, Anke Tästensen & Michaela Wagner: Mindretalspædagogik – Minderheitenpädagogik. Hrsg. Alexander von Oettingen, Leo Komischke-Konnerup. Klim Verlag (2012).

4. ROMA STRATEGY

**„Every attack on minorities is
also an attack on our
democratic principles.“**

Romani Rose

With a population of more than 10 million, Roma¹ make up the largest minority in Europe. That's a larger population than a number of EU member states. Although the Roma live in Europe for centuries, their day-to-day lives are marked by the struggle for respect, rights, and recognition. The history of Roma minority has been shaped by prejudice, oppression, persecution, and discrimination. Antiziganism and racism are present in our culture, and are still accepted by large parts of society in Europe. Roma face the most discrimination of any minority in Europe. We–YEN–refuse to accept this, and stand with the Roma; together we are stronger in the fight for our rights!

4.1 Why did YEN develop a Roma Strategy?

We, as the Youth of European Nationalities, are the European umbrella organization of all autochthonous and ethnic minorities. We understand the responsibility that entails, and we stand for the rights of the representatives of all minority youth. Through exchange with our member organization SUMNAL and our European partner organizations, we have learned much about the situation of the Roma and become familiar with their terrific projects. We also found that our work as YEN and our potential as a European umbrella organization were met with great interest. We want to strengthen and deepen our collaboration with our partner organizations in the future, so that we can always rely on the support of our Roma partner-organizations.

As such a large minority, the Roma have built up a large and active network of youth organizations worldwide. Members of this network at the European level include The Forum of European Roma Young People (FERYP) and ternYpe –The International Roma Youth Network – organizations that work in the interest of the Roma. In SUMNAL, we have a Macedonian Roma member organization which is also active in FERYP. Overlaps like these between our organizations make the active cooperation to solve similar issues possible.

One thing is clear to all minorities: when the rights of one minority are violated, the rights of all minorities have been violated. When, for whatever reason, a minority is attacked, another minority might be next. Thus for us as YEN it is fundamental: We stand in solidarity together as minorities!

We, as members of different minorities, want to learn from one another. In this spirit we hold seminars where young people from different minorities can meet to discuss the problems, challenges, and victories of their work, and national and European minority politics as a whole.

With an average age of 25, Roma represent the youngest population group in the European Union. The experiences of these years affect the rest of a person's life–

so discrimination and social exclusion are a huge influence on young people's development. Through our seminars, we focus on discussing ways we can better the lives of European minority youth. We aim to achieve an intensive exchange of ideas between all minorities, and through that, learn more about the situation of the Roma minority. For only those who listen to one another and work together can rise up and achieve something together!

Beyond that, we intend to improve exchange on the European level by working even more closely with our members and partners. We intend, through tight co-operation with Roma organizations, to learn from one another and to bring our experience as an international minority organization into the current discourse. Our goal, as YEN, is to strengthen the political opportunities of organization at a European level and to make the most use of our potential. For we – YEN – along with our partners ternYpe and FERYP, are the only youth organizations that fight for the preservation and development the rights of minorities and nationalities. Therefore, it is our shared responsibility to actively work for the rights of minorities and to foster intercultural dialogue.

4.2 Background

The history of the Roma is a history of Europe. Roma live here for over 1000 years. As linguistic analysis has proved, the ancestors of today's European Roma came originally from areas in modern-day India and Pakistan. Alongside this Indian heritage, elements from other nationalities and countries are to be found in Roma language and culture. Conversely, elements of Roma language and culture are reflected in those of other nationalities. Thus there are many different expressions of identity, language, and culture within the different Roma communities.

The Roma are a concrete part of European cultural history. Many historical aspects, such as the historical oppression, slavery, forced assimilation, and persecution of Roma minorities remain, to some extent, unknown and often simply not-talked about within majority populations. The hatred of the people stigmatized as „gypsies“ is wide-reaching and burned deeply into the cultural memory of European society.²

Domestic developments in many European countries are alarming. The additions in 2004 and 2007 of countries in Eastern and Southeastern Europe to the EU led, at first glance, to a better legal situation for the minorities living there. Upon closer examination, however, little has changed. Both the integration of Roma into national institutions and the enshrinement of minority rights in the national legal systems that came with entrance into the EU have in no way changed the desolate situation of the Roma. Antiziganism remains deeply rooted at all levels of society and, for many, a perfectly acceptable stance toward Roma. We can see in the current rise of European right-wing populist movements not just an anti-minority stance, but one particularly aggressive against Roma. It comes as no surprise, then, that even Roma in the „old“ EU countries live in precarious circumstances. Countries such as France and Greece have neither signed nor ratified conventions for the protection of minorities. Minority rights can only work for the protection for minorities when they have been properly implemented and adherence to them is maintained by various independent authorities.

The situation for Roma in many European countries is characterized by a structural and institutional discrimination which leads to poverty, social isolation, and a lack of any real chances. Especially in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Roma live on the edge of society, and are not only often actively excluded, but sometimes openly persecuted. Anti-Roma protests, unemployment, ghettoization, limitation of the freedom of movement, systematic exclusion by government and non-government institutions, nonexistent or limited access to healthcare, social welfare, and education systems: parts of daily life for many Roma in Europe

4.3 National and international initiatives

European governments are aware of the above-mentioned problems. In 2005, 12 European countries signed *The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015*, and pledged, through more active and comprehensive elimination of discrimination against Roma, to work to close the gap in the quality of life and educational situations between Roma and non-Roma. Whether the Roma decade and the national Roma strategies associated with it succeeded, remains debated. However, it is clear that the problems faced by Roma minorities were brought into focus within European and national debates, and thus enjoyed more public awareness than before. One measure of the Roma decade was the creation of the *Roma Education Fund (REF)*. The REF supports initiatives for a high-quality education for Roma (especially in the dismantling of segregation in existing education systems), awards scholarships, and supports educational programs from Roma and non-Roma organizations. In 2011, the EU also adopted a Roma strategy, placing „special responsibility” on European society, which calls for the active protection of civil rights and the social and economic inclusion of Roma. The strategy gives EU member states until 2020 to present reform programs which protect Roma access to education, employment, healthcare, and housing. In any case, member states still face great challenges. Problems in the implementation of the strategy include still-insufficient political awareness, a lack of structures necessary for proposed implementations, and the short-term time frame of the project.

Education is continually identified as the key to inclusion. The improvement of regional educational projects of Roma organizations is an important starting point for the strengthening of Roma society. Only the advancement of individual initiatives and responsibilities leads to an equal partnership between representatives of the interests of Roma and non-Roma.

Our Macedonian member organization, SUMNAL, is an example on a regional Roma organization working for better educational opportunities for Roma. Founded as 2004 as a citizens' initiative, SUMNAL orients their work around the needs of individual Roma communities in Macedonia. Through their seminars, tutoring programs, and workshops on different subjects (gender equality or anti-discrimination, for example), they make contributions to the education of children and adolescents that betters the social situation of the local Roma community. SUMNAL's goal is to support the active societal participation of young Roma, and to contribute to the construction, development, and strengthening of multi-ethnic Macedonian society.

We support the efforts of SUMNAL. In August 2014, together with SUMNAL and FERYP, we put on the *YEN Roma Event* in Ohrid, Macedonia. 16 minorities from 10 countries came together to learn more about the situation of the Roma, to

exchange idea, and to develop collaborative projects. The seminar was accompanied by publicity events to increase awareness of the situation of the Roma in the local community and to say, „We're here, we're united, and we have many voices!"

The **Council of Europe** has worked since the 1990s for the protection of minorities in Europe, and in 2011, it introduced the *Roma Youth Action Plan (RYAP)*. The plan is a reaction to the challenges faced by Roma youth in Europe. The plan entails projects aimed at strengthening the opportunities for engagement by Roma youth and making participation in decision-making processes and political structures at the European level possible. Roma youth organizations, such as our partners FERYP and ternYpe, are in charge during their development and implementation.

In order to strategize in the present on how to affect the future, it's important to know the past. To this end, ternYpe introduced the *Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative*. The initiative aims to raise awareness of the genocide of Roma by the National Socialists during World War II, casting light into a dark corner of history. It is estimated that a half a million Sinti and Roma were killed in Hitler's Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe. For example, the murder of nearly 23 000 Sinti and Roma in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp is still relatively unknown, to say nothing of any official recognition. The wider recognition and processing of crimes against humanity like as these are made possible by the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative. This also gives Roma and non-Roma youth organizations the opportunity to get to know one another, to network, and to develop strategies on how to prevent discrimination in the future. The initiative is an example of how open and honest engagement of history leads to a better understanding of identity and heritage; memorial work can bring strength to the identity of Roma youth.

We actively support our partners in their work and stand for the historic documentation of genocide and their strengthening of the Roma youth movement. We believe that, for active young citizens, the understanding of history and law is vital to changing the future.

4.4 Recommendations

We want to come together with Roma people in greater solidarity, and benefit from a Europe-wide exchange of experiences and knowledge.

- We stand against all forms of discrimination, antiziganism, and hate speech.
- We are working against the oppression of minorities, in particular against the historic oppression of the Roma.
- We are helping to build both a strong Roma youth movement and a strong youth movement of all minorities.

What we're calling for:

1. The official recognition of the genocide by the National Socialists of the Roma people during the Second World War, as well as recognition of the historically established oppression of the Roma.
2. The recognition of Roma minorities as national minorities and the ratification and implementation of pertinent documents regarding protection of minorities.

3. The strengthening of the European Union's competence framework regarding the protection of minorities.
4. The complete and equitable participation of Roma minorities in all decision-making processes at all political levels.
5. The support of projects and events put on by Roma minority and youth organizations.
6. The development of effective European strategies for fighting racism and antiziganism.
7. The strengthening and support of Roma grassroots movements and the dialogue between Roma and non-Roma youth organizations.

What we are doing:

On the political level:

We – YEN – will boost our representation of these shared interests on political levels accessible to us, such as the European Youth Forum, the Advisory Council of the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, the European Dialogue Forum, the European Parliament, the EU Commission, and within national governments and institutions.

On the civic level:

- „YEN-Roma Tandem:” We–YEN–will work more closely and toward more intensive dialogue with local and international Roma youth organizations. This will be facilitated by a partnership between every YEN member organization and a Roma organization.
- „Minorities Write History:” Through a longer-term process, we will work on creating a minority history book, parts of which will be written by each respective minority group. We will systematically work on the documentation of Roma history, which will lead in turn to the emancipation and reappraisal of history.
- „Borderland Demonstrations:” To draw attention to the limitations on freedom of movement of many Roma, and to show that this freedom is not self-evident for all people, we will simultaneously cross different European borders together. In doing so, we will take a stand against discrimination against the Roma.
- We actively support the „No Hate Speech Campaign” of the Council of Europe, and lead an „Online and Offline Campaign Against Discrimination” ourselves.

4.5 Endnotes and further reading

¹ The phrase „Roma” refers in this document to Roma, Sinti, Kale, and other related groups in Europe, including Pavee, Dom and Lom. This corresponds to the 2014 definition by the Council of Europe.

² cf. Assmann, Jan: Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen. München 1992.

³ The Documentation and Culture Centre of German Sinti and Roma: www.sintiundroma.de.

5. VOLUNTEERING

„Selfless and noble deeds are the most radiant pages in the biography of the soul.“

David Thomas

5.1 What is volunteering?

The European Youth Forum's definition of a volunteer is as follows:

The word „volunteering“ has its origins in the Latin „volunt“, meaning „to will“.

„A volunteer is a person who carries out activities benefiting society, by free will. These activities are undertaken for a non-profit cause, benefiting the personal development of the volunteer, who commits their time and energy for the general good without financial reward.“

Volunteering is an important component of a democratic society, which increases the quality of life for volunteer and society alike. Through their actions, volunteers gain the respect of others, meet new people, and enjoy themselves. They develop greater personal capabilities and competence, build confidence, and forge stronger self-esteem. Additionally, volunteering helps create a greater sense of belonging and encourages social integration; people from all walks of life can take part—regardless of educational background or income. Volunteering makes it possible for people who would normally never meet or work together to cooperate towards a common goal.

Benefits for the community

Volunteering opens doors to stronger communities through the development of solidarity between people from different cultures and economic- and social backgrounds. This solidarity strengthens trust and common understanding between and within different communities. This leads in turn to a greater decision-making capability. All in all, volunteers play a big role in a healthy community.

Benefits for society

While many aspects of modern society driven by the pursuit of economic and material gain, volunteer work presents a necessary counterbalance. Extra-institutional social structures rely upon the voluntary efforts of highly-engaged individuals. It follows, then, that people work together for the common good of society. Implicit in the terms „volunteering“ and „volunteer engagement“ is the fact that material compensation is neither expected nor sought after. To volunteer means also to bring people together to engage with a common issue. This leads to the democratic emancipation of the individual as an active citizen, who in turn can make positive contributions to society. The European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers states:

„Therefore the value of volunteering needs full recognition as creating a sense of European identity and active citizenship, contribution to public good, human and

social capital. Further it is a source of economic growth, a pathway to integration and employment, a positive outcome in itself and a mechanism for improving cohesion. Volunteering also reduces economic, social and environmental inequalities.”²

Today's society presents many opportunities for engagement as a volunteer. Active citizens are free to take part in a field of their choice—be it religious, political, cultural, or one of many others. Volunteering's importance is being recognized more and more by various institutions and society as a whole. This recognition is evident: The United Nations declared 2001 „Year of the Volunteer,” and more recently, The European Parliament marked 2011 as the „European Year of Volunteering.”

The **Eurobarometer 2011** shows that 24% of those surveyed take part in volunteer activities either regularly or occasionally.³ Accordingly, a 2007 report by the European Commission states that almost 80% of EU citizens consider it important to volunteer or help others (6th place). That places volunteering higher on the list of priorities than religion or politics.⁴ This illustrates a huge gap between the appreciation of volunteer work and those who actually volunteer. The discrepancy in numbers of active volunteers in the EU member states is immense: The Eurobarometer survey results vary from as low as 9% of the total population in Poland, to 57% in the Netherlands. The survey shows that over a third of the populations of Denmark, Finland, Austria, Luxembourg, Germany, and Slovenia volunteer regularly or occasionally. Malta, Spain, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, Portugal, and Poland all fall below the EU average.⁵ These very different results are often the products of a well-educated volunteer sector and a long-standing tradition of volunteer work in some EU member states – in contrast with other countries' volunteer sectors, which are only now developing.⁶ To best meet the needs of all, YEN offers a wide range of volunteer activities. Accordingly, we are simultaneously working against obstacles to volunteer activity, for YEN is a vibrant, active network that can only survive with the help of motivated volunteers. At the heart of volunteering with YEN is personal growth through non-formal learning.

The importance of non-formal learning

Non-formal education may be defined as a learning process that happens alongside the conventional (formal) educational and school systems and which does not normally lead to any kind of certification. This process takes place outside the traditional educational institutions and tends toward self-directed learning. Those who engage voluntarily take on an active role in the learning process. Unlike informal learning, in which learning happens in a less directed manner, participants in non-formal learning are as a rule aware when they are learning something.

Youth organizations such as YEN play a role of importance and responsibility in the recognition and guaranteed quality of non-formal education. They are among the main providers of non-formal learning and emphasize the necessity that non-formal and formal learning be treated equally in the education debate.

YEN leads events such as international seminars, youth exchange programs, and projects with the goal of opening up intercultural dialogue. Participants are encouraged to try their hand in the realm of international youth work; they strengthen their identities, take on responsibility, and apply what they've learned within their own minority – to set up, for example, their own educational offerings.

Recognition in volunteering

Volunteer work is important to the Europe in that it supports an active citizenry and leads to direct influence of citizens on local level. Therefore, it plays a vital role in the development of citizenship and democracy. For this reason, recognition of volunteer work is of the utmost importance. The EU recommends the acknowledgement of non-formal and informal learning in order to recognize the abilities and competences of volunteers.⁷

We gave our YENies (YEN volunteers) a questionnaire asking them how recognized they felt as volunteers. 30 of 49 said they felt recognized, as opposed to 10 who said they did not, and a further 9 who did not respond. The form of recognition most reported by those surveyed was their being seen as an expert in their field – referring especially in this case to the recognition their local organizations received. Other forms of recognition included praise, thanks, appreciation, social recognition, and recognition through media. Those surveyed also reported feeling like a positive role model for other youth as a form of recognition, especially when those they influence begin to get involved. Only a small number considered receiving university marks or certificates as recognition.

Recognition on the part of employers is problematic, as they often don't recognize skills developed through non-formal education as such, yet complain in turn about the lack of soft skills among applicants. YEN supports the initiatives of the European Youth Forum (YFJ) to recognize not only school and university marks as qualifications, but also those qualifications obtained through volunteer councils and youth organizations.

The „Volunteer Time Recognition“ of the European Youth Foundation (EYF) represents an important first step. This system recognizes, for example, the work of volunteers planning a seminar by calculating the hours they worked into the project's budget. Thus it becomes possible to show the voluntary unpaid work compared to the contributions of the sponsors and partners.

YEN plans to implement the recognition of volunteer work in various ways. Independent of verbal recognition, established certificates like the „Youth Passport“ and the „Portfolio for Youth Workers and Youth Leaders“ of the Council of Europe will be introduced and adapted to fit the needs of the youth. It's important that they have means to recognize and value their own growth.

5.2 What does volunteering mean for YEN and its members?

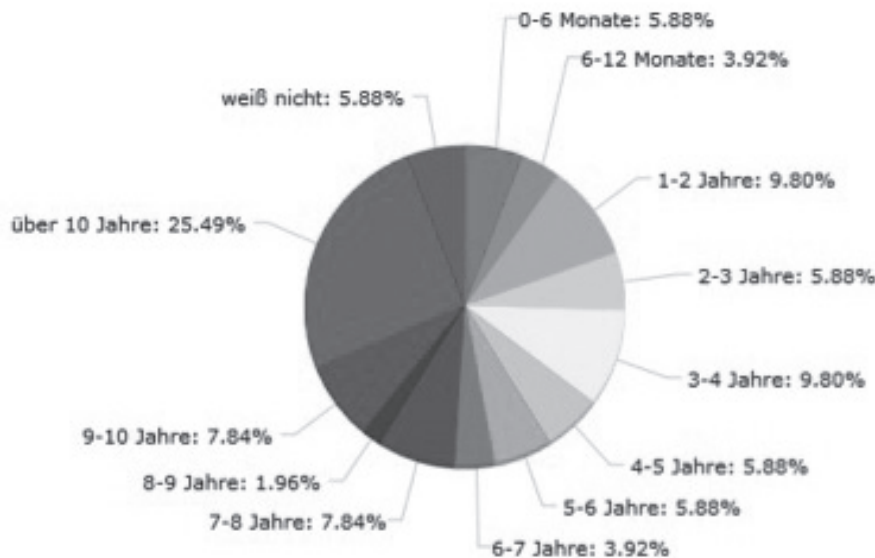
We asked our volunteers with a questionnaire about why they spend their free time working with YEN. Above all else, our volunteers said they want to support their communities and strengthen their own skills. When asked what „volunteering“ means to them, the top answers (among many) were:

- Volunteering is not mandatory; one does it of one's own free will.
- One doesn't get paid for volunteering; one is rewarded.
- Volunteering is fun!

Through this work, they want most of all to stand up for the rights of their minority group. One can exchange ideas with peers, have new experiences, and make friends. Through YEN, our volunteers have the opportunity to step out of their own

environments, become active in new fields, and broaden their horizons. Moreover, they have the chance to participate in the democratic process.

The most active YENies are between 20 and 24 years old, pretty balanced in terms of gender and the majority are either current students or have already completed their studies. According to our survey, 25% of YENies have taken part in volunteer work for more than 10 years. This further emphasizes the significance that they claim volunteer work has taken on in their lives.

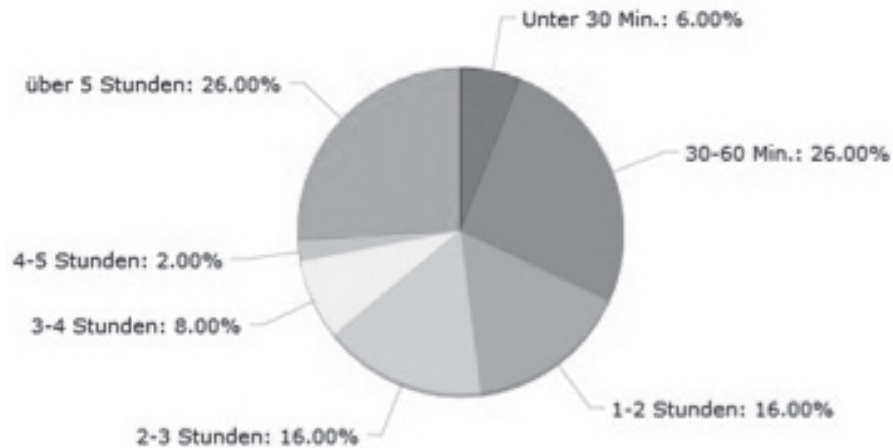


Number of years that YENies have been active in volunteer work (51 surveyed)

We are of the opinion that long-term engagement with YEN and other member organizations constitutes an important part of the lives of volunteers. It is thus our goal to work with young people as long as possible, keeping in mind the generational turnover. It is of particular importance in youth organizations with high turnover to assure that knowledge is securely passed on.

The main motivation of YEN volunteers is to do something meaningful with their free time that helps in the preservation of their cultures and the strengthening of their identities. Many start very young and initially just enjoy the exchange of ideas at the seminars. But as they grow, so does their sense of responsibility. Our surveys show that, along with YEN and their various minority organizations, 70% of YENies are active in other fields as well, such as youth education, creative work, and student organizations.

Time is always a limiting factor in volunteer work. We wanted to find out exactly how much time YENies devote to volunteering. 40% spend 30–120 minutes per week, 26% spend 2–5 hours, and another 26% upwards of 5 hours. It also became clear that time spent volunteering has a direct relationship with long-term participation. That is to say, the longer volunteers were with the organization, the more time they regularly put in and the more invested they became. We see this as an affirmation of our efforts to build a more active citizenry. YEN provides our volunteers the opportunity to first gain an understanding of short-term engagement, and then to become active in the long term as part a work group or the board.



Weekly time spent volunteering by YENies (50 surveyed)

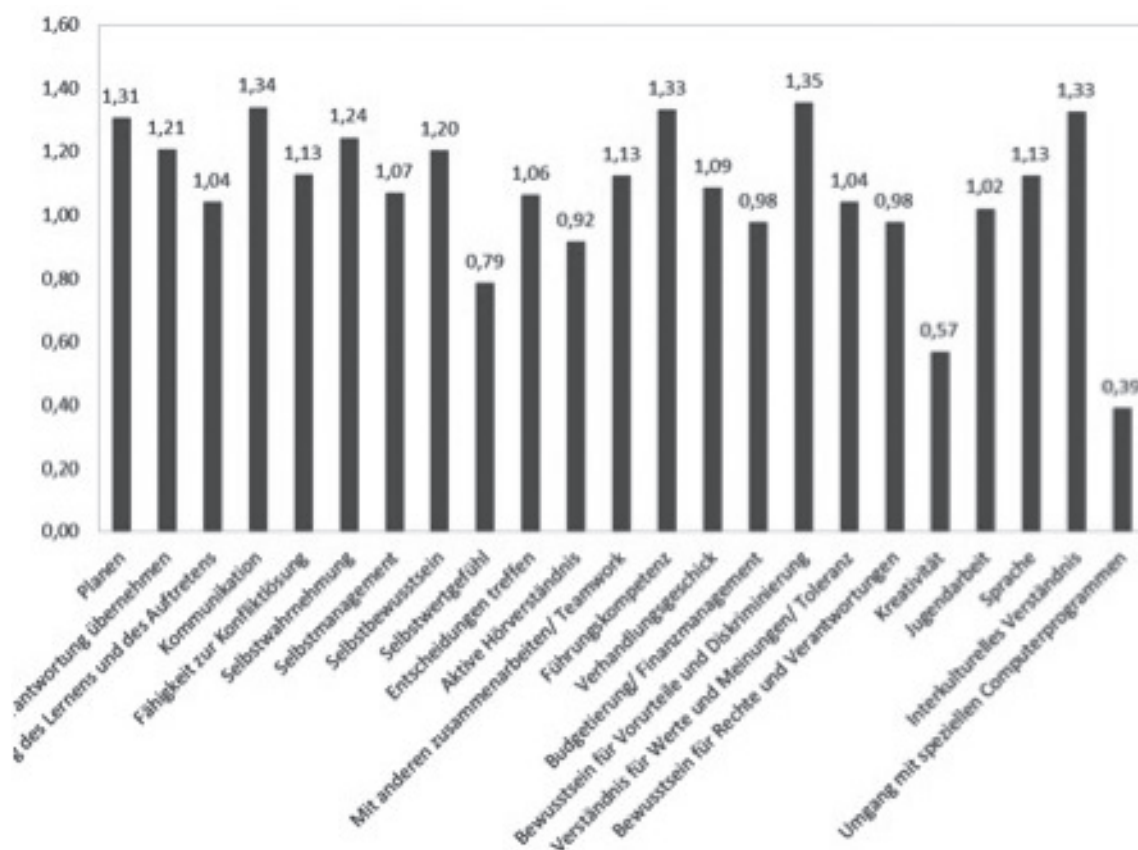
YENies come close to the ideal of the active citizen. They engage over an extended period and with great intensity with issues at a local and European level, making positive contributions all the while to society as a whole.

Short-term engagement and seminars

„YEN seminars are hotbeds of interesting cultural and political exchange. The common goal of engagement with the minority group in question leads to very interesting discussions, learning huge amounts from one another, and the opportunity to work out problems and their solutions together. Plus, YEN seminars are so much fun. It's really fascinating to get to know the different minority regions of Europe in depth.” – A YEN volunteer

One of the primary results of YEN seminars are friendships that reach all across Europe. These lead to better understanding and knowledge of other cultures and, through this, to a collective „European Family.” This network feels like a family for our participants in that they know they will be appreciated for who they are. And at the same time, they're working together during the seminars toward a common goal. They have the chance to make a difference, to change the way things are. Through the seminars they gather all kinds of new experiences, take them home, and use them there to become more active on a local level.

With its seminars, YEN wants to help young people become more capable. The attention is directed above all else at communication, the breaking down of prejudices, building understanding for other cultures, and strengthening their senses of self. Together, these skills will help them grow personally and to gain more recognition in society. Furthermore, young people with good „soft skills” have better chances in the job market.



Average improvement of skills at YEN seminars

This diagram shows the average improvement of skills of YEN seminar participants since they started taking part. Those surveyed reported what level they felt they were at when they started volunteering, and how they felt at the time of the survey. They were additionally asked to check the 5 skills they found most important.

One can see in the diagram that all skills improved across the board. The smallest increases can be seen in the categories „Creativity,” „Proficiency with Special Computer Programs,” and „Active Listening Comprehension.” These results may be explained by the fact that most participants were already capable in these fields beforehand.

The skill that was reported to have been developed the most is „Awareness of Prejudice and Discrimination.” This is the result of participants meeting other minorities and having the opportunity to exchange views on issues that affect them. The second-best improvements were in „Communication” and „Teamwork,” which can be ascribed the workshop-nature of YEN seminars.

YEN seminars offer workshops in which the participants can discuss current and recurrent issues that affect minorities. These workshops are normally led by experts familiar with non-formal teaching methods. Our goal is to increase the number of workshop leaders from within our organization. To this end, we offer training for trainers, which equip participants with additional qualifications and further specific methodological skills. They can subsequently lead YEN workshops themselves and build up more experience through additional training. This not only provides YEN with better-qualified workshop leaders, but also offers our

member organizations better trainings and the opportunity to raise the quality of youth work on a local level. Trainers also network among themselves, develop new projects, and get motivated to work further with YEN. This ensures YEN a more sustainable network and longer-term engagement from volunteers.

Long-Term engagement and work with the YEN-board

YEN is made for young people by young people. That requires time and long-term engagement by motivated volunteers. Owing to frequently meager financing, this engagement must remain unpaid; the costs, however, are covered by the organization. We are convinced that volunteering in the management structure of an international non-governmental organization is an attractive and often one-time opportunity for young people to work at this level. Both sides profit: YEN, from the support of motivated volunteers; and the volunteers, who can build new skills and refine those they already have through work in the seminars. Communication with colleagues on the board or work groups is more complex and multi-faceted than during the seminars. In this sense, we offer a wide range of opportunities for long-term engagement by young people.

After taking part in the seminars, YENies often join YEN's work groups, through which they can have a say in YEN's political direction, take part in its structural development, and take up communications duties within the organization. The groups are elected for a year at a time by the general assembly, who, in doing so, delegates them the responsibility to report their work back to the general assembly. Each group has a coordinator and a work plan, which is to be completed within the year. The coordinators moderate discussions within the group, oversee the completion of the work plan, and organize work group meetings. In addition, they are simultaneously members of the board and have a say in the direction of the organization.

The other members of the board, who are elected, like the coordinators, for two year terms, lead YEN in accordance with the statutes and standards set by the general assembly, and are responsible for things like resolutions, work plans, and budgets. They also represent the organization in other institutions on a national or European level. Furthermore, they work together with our partner organizations, such as the Federal Union of European Nationalities, the European Youth Forum, and the European Dialogue Forum.

Our goal is to create optimal conditions for volunteers in the work groups, the revision, and the board. To do so entails supporting their aspirations for improvement with the help of experienced volunteers and staff. The open flow of information between all involved parties is vital, as is the mutual respect and acceptance of different opinions. A positive work atmosphere, transparency, and the achievement of the goals delegated by the general assembly are necessary guidelines for the success of the work. Decisions are made democratically and dissenting opinions are welcomed by all bodies within the organization. The division of labor is regulated with transparency and communicated clearly to all volunteers. Volunteers receive no compensation, nor are they ever asked to shoulder financial burdens.

For the benefit of volunteers, the structure is checked regularly for obstacles and to be sure that it is up to date. Furthermore, the board and the volunteers in the

work groups vote on matters of communication in order to work as effectively and efficiently as possible together. Although Facebook and Skype cannot take the place of face-to-face meetings, electronic communication is used to facilitate the speediest possible understanding on important issues.

Minority organizations, like youth organizations, experience high levels of volunteer turnover. Volunteering enriches the lives of participants, but cannot come before the obligations of education, work, or family. Organizations thus often experience generational turnover, which puts them at risk of becoming a „sleeping organization” and of having inexperienced staff. In order to ensure a smooth transition between YEN generations, experienced contacts must be made available to help answer unresolved questions. These may be mentors, staff, or former volunteers who stand with the „newbies” in both word and deed.

5.3 Recommendations

What are we calling for?

- Better recognition of non-formal education.
- Sufficient assistance for non-formal education, including international travel costs.
- Reduction of travel restrictions within Europe, such as visa regulations for volunteers.

What does YEN hope to achieve in the future?

1. YEN will hold specialized training seminars, such as **Training for Trainers**. Different levels, from beginner to professional, will be offered in order to foster the abilities of volunteers and to adequately address their needs. The qualified trainers will then be able to lead future seminars or workshops for YEN.
2. YEN will create a **Pool of Trainers**, who will be able to help member organizations professionalize and internationalize their local training events. The pool will simultaneously work on building and strengthening a network of trainers. The members of the pool will be sent to events hosted by external organizations (SALTO, European Youth Forum, and Council of Europe) to gain more expertise that they can bring back to YEN.
3. YEN plans to develop a **System for Recognition of Volunteer Work** which will accurately represent the effort and achievements of short- and long-term volunteers alike.
4. YEN wants to create a **Training Handbook** specifically suited to the needs of minority groups
5. YEN plans to create a **Mentoring System** to ensure smooth generational changes in the working groups.
6. YEN will give each year **Thematic Priorities** around which the seminars and trainings will be organized.
7. YEN will lead **Seminars for Funding applicants** of its member organizations through which application processes will be defined on a European level. YEN will support its member organizations at this level as needed.

5.4 Endnotes and further reading

¹ Volunteering Charter – European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers: EYF. 2012. p.5.

² Volunteering Charter – European Charter on the Rights and Responsibilities of Volunteers: EYF. 2012. p.6.

³ Special Eurobarometer 2011. p.5.

⁴ EUROBAROMETER 2007. p.14.

⁵ Special Eurobarometer 2011. p.6.

⁶ Volunteering in the European Union – Final Report: EHK. 2010. p.7–8.

⁷ see http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/volunteering_charter_en.pdf. p.12–4.

Literature

- European Commission, Special EUROBAROMETER 273: European Social Reality, 2007.
- European Commission, Special EUROBAROMETER 275:y 2011.
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6. CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

Over the course of 14 months, the „YEN White Paper on Minority Rights“ has gone from an idea to a first version. Its conception has been a participative process by young people, and it is thus a document of applied democracy. Throughout numerous versions and suggested revisions, the editors of the individual chapters have proved their passion for discussion and readiness to compromise, and have gained in the process extensive specialized knowledge.

The White Paper is a document meant to articulate the needs and requirements of young members of minority groups, to present the work of YEN, but also to define current challenges and works to come. It outlines current significant problem areas, but considers itself by no means a finished work. Rather than working out individual topics in each chapter, common themes (that of sustainability, for example) run throughout the whole of the White Paper.

The White Paper shall remain a living document which the minorities can develop, change, and adapt to current situations at any time. Not all the conditions set out in this document will be met in the near future. Nevertheless, our intentions with it are to present the current situation of members of minority groups, to outline the problems and challenges they face, and to take part in the current social debate on cultural diversity, social inclusion, discrimination, and voluntary work. To be found in this document are also political statements intended to make clear the effect that political decisions have on the lives of young people in Europe. The White Paper shows the drive of these young people to engage, to know their rights, and to have their say in realizing social change.

After working with so many ideas, requests, and recommendations, we asked ourselves how and when they could best be implemented. In the interest of the structured and comprehensive implementation, we developed the idea of a „Minority Youth Action Plan,“ in which all activities of YEN and its members will be chronologically recorded and organized. Simultaneously, each activity will be assigned at least one recommendation as its focus. Through this, we hope to achieve the following:

1. To raise awareness of the activities of YEN and its member organizations and thereby increase opportunities for participation. As a result, the minorities and their manifold activities will too gain awareness.
2. To raise awareness of the White Paper within our member organizations by directing their activities toward a specific recommendation.
3. To monitor where and when different topics or recommendations are being worked on, and what action still needs to be taken.

The Minority Youth Action Plan is thus an instrument for planning and oversight that makes the results of our work comprehensible, transparent, and quantifiable. In this way, our members and other interested parties have the opportunity to take part in our activities, to help build our network, and to live diversity!

Ar Vretoned (AVY)
Łužiscy Serbja (Pawk)
Danske i Sydslesvig (SdU)
Kaszëbe (POMORANIA)
Deutsche Nordschleswiger (DJN, JSP)
Bălgarite v Ungarija (BIE)
Südtiroler (SJR)
Occitan (CRGJOC)
Gradišćanski Hrvati (HAK, DGMU)
Ungarndeutsche (GJU)
Elsaß-Lothringer (LVJ)
Deutsche in Rumänien (ADJ)
Romániában élő magyarok (MISZSZ)
Koroški Slovenci (KSŠŠD, Mlada EL, KDZ)
Da Nordfrasche (Rökefloose)
Ils Rumantschs (GiuRu)
Deutsche in der Ukraine (DJU)
Ruotsinsuomalaiset Nuoret (RSN)
Vajdaságban élő magyarok (VIFO)
Slovenci v Italiji (MOSP)
Westerlauwerske Friezen (FYK)
Russlanddeutsche (JDR)
Ladins (GML)
Karpatendeutsche (KDJ)
Armānji (VYCA, VYCM, Lunjina, CTarm)
Срби у Хрватској (SYF)
Sudetendeutsche (SdJ)
Batı Trakya Türkleri (Young ABTTF)
Slováci v Maďarsku (MASZFISZ)
Roma (SUMNAL)
Deutsche in Polen (BJDM)
Hrvati u Vojvodini (CroV)
Català (CELNO)
Русские в Эстонии (SiiN)



YEN JEV

Youth of European Nationalities
Jugend Europäischer Volksgruppen