

The french philosopher Charles de Montesquieu said once: I am human by the need of necessity. French by chance.

I put this quote at the beginning of my short introduction of our discussion to draw attention to our similarities: We are; minority or majority, first of all human beings. The national identity which identifies us as hungarian, french or german depends on where we are born, whoms children we are and on the language and culture.

All of us know, that the „dream“ of the states to establish ethnic unity within their borders, could not and can not be realized. Minorities were formed within the state, because borders got moved by accident or because of the migration of peoples which caused settlements of people, who have been spoken their language and celebrate their culture for hundreds of years and who are placed as islands within the state.

I will give you some numbers out of the new book of our former president Christoph Pan. His book got published with the support of the European Union and shows an empiric analysis of the minorities in Europe.

The 45 states of Europe count 337 ethnic and national minorities with almost 105 million members. This is equivalent for about 14% of the total population.

In most of the European states is the minority of the Roma represented (28), followed by the ethnic group of the Germans (22), as well as Russian, Hungarian and Slavonian minorities are strongly represented.

According to the statistical materials of the EU, is the number of nations 87, of which 33 are considered as nations.

90 languages are spoken in Europe, of which 37 are considered national languages and 53 are considered „stateless languages“ (Sorbian, Frisian, Rhaeto-Romanic). According to official records of the EU 40 million citizens of the expanded Union speak a regional- or minority language. This amounts to almost ten percent of the citizens of the Union.

What is the legitimation of FUEV to speak for the autochthonous and national minorities?

FUEV represents 84 minority organisations in 32 countries. FUEV is a democratic association. Every organisation which is a member of FUEV pays a membership fee and the chair, which comprises seven persons, gets elected every third year. The composition of the chair is distributed in three members of minorities without kin-state and four members with kin-state.

Coming to the aims...

I will permit myself to give a quote of one of the founders of FUEV, the Frisian Dr. Frederik Poulsen. This quotation was coined by him in his festive lecture in the year 1989, in which FUEV celebrated its 40 years existence. I will quote now:

“ The victors of the second world war were of course right, the problematic of minorities had often been, not only in the world wars, the reason for war. They did not see, that the minorities themselves have not had the guilt for the wars, but the unsolved problematic of the minorities. They did not see that whether the denial of the existence of minorities nor their expulsion could solve the problem.

Looking back, it can not be denied, that the establishment of the council of Europe and of our Union, if we disregard the different dimensions, both contributed and still contribute, a change of mind in the post-war politics of the super powers and the UNO, concerning minorities.” Explained the in the meantime deceased Frisian Frederik Poulsen in Versailles.

The problematic of the minorities is, with a few exceptions, quite similar everywhere.

The nation states put in different ways assimilation pressure on the minorities and the minorities use in return their status as a minority against this pressure.

How can this vicious circle be stopped?

It is essential to reduce misgivings and fears. The nation states are on the one hand afraid of minorities following separatistic aims. The minorities are on the other hand afraid of Assimilation and the problematic of their own identity.

FUEV wants a cooperation with the nation states and an integration of the minorities by protecting their own cultural and linguistic identity.

FUEV wants the possibility to want the difference, without losing itself.

We have to know more about each other. Because knowledge is the basement of good politics.

Our request is therefore, give us, the minorities, the possibility of a platform like it is considered here, to reduce your misgivings and our fears.

In the often named house of Europe have to be rooms with windows for minorities.