



## Press release

December 2011

### FUEN launches proposals to strengthen regional and minority languages

The agenda of the European Union is not filled with only rescuing the Euro. The day-to-day political life continues despite the dramatic negotiations. Of particular importance right now are the negotiations on the new financial budget of the EU for 2014+. The future funding programmes and funding guidelines of the European Union are under discussion.

In the course of these negotiations, the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) is committed to strengthen the position of the regional and minority languages in the funding programmes of the EU and for this reason it made a catalogue with proposals (see attachment).

FUEN will discuss the future of the small and smallest languages at its congress in Bozen / Bolzano – Italy on the 17 – 18 January (see attachment).

One of the main speakers will be former Member of the European Parliament Michl Ebner, who achieved an absolute majority in 2003 for his “Report with recommendations to the Commission on European regional and lesser used languages – the languages of minorities in the EU – in the context of enlargement and cultural diversity”. The report includes extensive demands to the European Commission. Amongst other things it called for the establishment of a language agency with particular regards for the regional and minority languages as well as a specific funding programme for these language groups. In the opinion of FUEN, these mandatory recommendations that were adopted back in 2003 have not or only unsatisfactorily been implemented.

Apart from the conference in Bozen/Bolzano, FUEN also invites all to the European Parliament for a “FUEN Lunch Debate” with the support of MEP Herbert Dorfmann (EPP), to discuss together with the members of the parliament and other interested persons on possibilities to improve the funding opportunities for the smaller and smallest languages within the future EU programmes.

“We are of the opinion that since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has a moral if not a legal obligation to consult with the member states how to confront the extinction of the smaller and smallest languages in Europe. This requires a concept and a strategic approach – and these have to be elaborated by the European Commission together with the representatives of the affected language groups and those who represent them on the European level”, according to FUEN-vice-president and vice-president/regional assessor of the autonomous region Trentino-South Tyrol, Martha Stocker.

FUEN worked out three concrete main demands and implementation proposals after consultations with several EU politicians and interest groups. Amongst other things a scheme for micro-projects for regional and minority languages should be made possible. The establishment of so-called “Language Diversity Centres” should lead to more networking and coordination of the responsibilities on the European level. And last but not least the central demand of FUEN is that the European Commission should develop a common strategy together with the language groups and their interest groups.

“We realise that the European Commission would like to do more for linguistic diversity and in particular for the smaller and smallest languages in Europe. We have made a proposal on how we can concretely address this. We expressly welcome the fact that several MEPs – among them Herbert Dorfmann and Carl Haglund – are committed to make sure that the “endangered languages” are taken into account in the upcoming funding programmes. We have the chance to improve the conditions and together we should use it”, said Martha Stocker.