



# Non-Kin-State Working Group of the FUEN



# Imprint

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Visuart Mediaworks – László Mihály

## ↓ EDITOR

Ilona Tomić, Katharina Schaible

## ↓ PUBLISHED BY FUEN

Schiffbrücke 42

D-24939 Flensburg

Phone: +49 461 12855

Email: [info@fuen.org](mailto:info@fuen.org)

## ↓ EDITING, PROOFREADING

Előd Balázs-Pál

Jenni Jones

Renata Trischler

Maria Kordasch

For more information on the WG NKS  
visit our website [nks.fuen.org](http://nks.fuen.org) or scan the QR code.



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## Dear readers,

When I first visited the Ladin villages many years ago, I was impressed by the strength of their community. Without a state of their own, without a “kin-state” standing behind them, they nurture their language, their songs, and their traditions – sustained solely by the will to keep their identity alive. I later experienced something similar in the Basque Country, in Lusatia among the Sorbs, and among the Frisians: everywhere I met people who, within large majority societies, speak out with determination for their language, culture, and identity.

These experiences taught me that Non-Kin-State minorities are far more than historical footnotes of Europe. They are living testimonies to our cultural diversity – and often quiet experts in sustaining themselves under difficult conditions. For this reason alone, they deserve special attention. Many of these communities face similar challenges: a lack of political advocates, limited resources, and low visibility in the public sphere. And yet they achieve something remarkable: they preserve their languages and cultures, strengthen local identities, and demonstrate that a sense of belonging does not have to be tied to nation-states.

At the same time, these communities can also support other minorities: by exchanging experiences in language preservation, by developing joint cultural policy initiatives, or through cross-border solidarity. Many of them – such as Sorbian organisations – have become role models for modern minority policy: transparent, inclusive, and strongly rooted in civil society.

I am particularly pleased that FUEN has been promoting and supporting them for many years. This brochure aims to present the work of these minorities and makes clear why Non-Kin-State minorities matter for Europe. They remind us that democracy is more than majority rule – it also means protection for the small, space for diversity, and respect for different ways of life. They show us that identity is multidimensional and that cultural diversity is not a risk, but a resource.

I hope that this brochure will help make their voices more audible. May it inspire us to listen attentively, to support courageously, and to shape together a Europe in which every culture has its place – not despite its uniqueness, but precisely because of it.

Olivia Schubert  
President of FUEN





## Negotiating 100 times in vain is better than 10 minutes of war

The FUEN Working Community of Minorities and Peoples without a State in Europe was founded in 2017 in Rome, in the historic Palazzo Montecitorio, the Italian Parliament. We were and still are driven by the idea that together we are stronger when it comes to preserving our languages and cultures.

As peoples and minorities without a state, we are grateful to be part of the large FUEN family. Through our working group we want to develop and strengthen the networks and organisation of our members.

It is important for us to develop awareness that we are not victims in European history, but proactive cultures that participate in what is happening in Europe. Unfortunately, European history is very much characterised by wars and repeated wars, as a result of which the cultural area has lost a great deal of positive energy in its history and has given rise to many prejudices.

We as peoples without a state, such as the Frisians and the Basques, are among the oldest peoples in Europe and still live without our own state today. Even before the Roman Empire, we were peaceful and proactive.

Unfortunately, in today's Europe, nation states dominate everything - from the media and politics to sport. We therefore call on nation states and European politics to make room for minorities and peoples who do not have a state!

All minorities without a mother state are also cordially invited to join FUEN and our working group. Because only together can we assert ourselves in our culturally diverse Europe.

With this brochure, we hope that our work will be recognised more widely throughout Europe.

Bahne Bahnsen  
FUEN Vice President  
and Spokesperson of the Non-Kin-State Working Group





# Aromanians/Armăns in Romania

## Fara Armănească dit România

### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Most Aromanians/Armăns live in northern Greece, and further important settlement areas can be found in southern Albania, North Macedonia (FYROM), the Rhodope Mountains and Dobrudja. In Romania, the majority of the Aromanian/Armăn community can be found in the South-East part of the country; main cities are Bucureşti, Tulcea, Constanţa, Slobozia, Călăraşi, Voluntari. A small number of Aromanian/Armăn people can be found in several villages (mainly in the Dobrogea area and close to Bucharest/Bucureşti). Due to lack of data and different census methods, estimating the Aromanian/Armăn population is nearly impossible.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, by the 1333/1997 Recommendation regarding the Aromanian/Armăn language and culture, expressed its concerns towards the future of the Aromanian/Armăn language and culture, which are identity elements of a national minority. Concerned by the critical situation of the Aromanian/Armăn language and culture which exists for more than two millenniums in the Balkan Peninsula, the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE recommends the Council of Ministers that they encourage and invite the Balkan states, where the Aromanians/Armăns live, to support the Aromanians/Armăns especially in the field of education, religious service, mass-media and support of their cultural associations.



*The „Primuaveara a Armănjloru“ is a music and dance event organised every year in Bucharest and Constanţa.*

### → CURRENT SITUATION

In Romania, during the past census it wasn't possible for Aromanians/Armăns to identify themselves as Aromanians/Armăns, despite the requests addressed to the national institutions. Aromanians/Armăns are still not recognized as a national minority in Romania. In April 2005, the Fara Armănească dit România has started the procedure for obtaining the status of a national minority for the Aromanians/Armăns in Romania: the document called “Vrearea a armănjlor” was adopted and the fulfillment of all the procedures for the registration of the Aromanian/Armăn Community as a national minority in Romania has been decided.

The challenges that the Aromanian/Armăn community is facing are the lack of education in their native language, the lack of financial support from the state as well as lack of media resources in the Aromanian/Armăn language. The main challenge is that the language is disappearing.

### Little language course

hello – Bună-ts oara!  
homeland – Patridă  
culture – Cultură  
language – Limbă  
work – Lucru  
family – Fumealji  
community – Fară

national/international languages, processes of assimilation, and significant decline in language users. Aromanians/Armăns define themselves – depending on which dialect group they belong to – as Armăni or Rrămăni. Speakers of Aromanian/Armăn define themselves as belonging to the “fara armănească” (Aromanian/Armăn tribe), or, more rarely, to the “populu armănescu” (Aromanian/Armăn people).

## → CULTURE AND MEDIA

In Romania, the community is not currently administering any conventional media. In the past, some print magazines existed (e.g. “Armănamea”, “Arada”) – developed with the community’s own resources. Also, the Aromanians/Armăns do not own their own cultural institutions (besides the existing NGOs). In Constanta city, the local subsidiary provides financial support to the optional course on Aromanian/Armăn culture/tradition which is taking place in a few schools. In the past, the Bucharest subsidiary organised language courses for children, teenagers and adults in the frame of a project financed by EEA grants.

## → LANGUAGE

Aromanians/Armăns speak the Aromanian/Armăn language. In their own language it is called Armănească. Like many other minority languages, the Aromanian/Armăn language is under threat of significant decline or disappearance due to such factors as the dominance of

## → THE ORGANISATION “FARA ARMĂNEASCĂ DIT ROMÂNIA”

(English: The Armăn Community from Romania) The organisation holds cultural events (e.g.: “Primiveara a Armănjlorū”, “23-li di Maiu - Dzuua Natsională a Armănjlorū”, “Dzâlili a Culturâljei Armănească”, “Njica lândărushi”, “Pap Cărciun” etc.) for their main target group: the Armăn/Aromanian community from Romania. These cultural activities can both have local participants and international attendance. During the past years the organisation has

coordinated some projects that benefited from external financial support (e.g.: EEA grants) and they have been involved as partners in some other projects, e.g. projects within the European Erasmus+ programme. Since 2021 Fara Armănească dit România is organising a live podcast on a weekly basis in the Aromanian/Armăn language (live on Facebook - “Armănamea Media” page) where different Aromanian/Armăn representatives are invited.

### Contact information

Fara Armănească dit România  
str. Vasile Lascăr nr 26-28, sector 2,  
RO-020501 Bucureşti

[www.faraarmaneasca.ro](http://www.faraarmaneasca.ro)  
[office@faraarmaneasca.ro](mailto:office@faraarmaneasca.ro)

Phone: +40 723063916



## Bretons in France

### Institut Culturel de Bretagne (Skol Uhel ar Vro)

#### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The Bretons are a Celtic people. They came in Armorica in the 5th century. They came from what is now known as Great Britain. The Bretons formed an independent country for almost a millenium (an independent duchy). At the end of the Middle Ages, Brittany was incorporated into France. Currently, the Bretons are not recognized as a national minority by the French state. The Bretons lost all their cultural rights after the French Revolution in 1789.

The Bretons are located mainly in Brittany, a peninsular region located in the northwest of France. The biggest cities are Nantes, Rennes and Brest. There is also a Breton diaspora outside the geographic borders of Brittany, especially near Paris and its broader region.

#### → CURRENT SITUATION

The population of Brittany is 4,8 million inhabitants. The French State doesn't recognize any national minority in France. Therefore, no official representation exists (at the French National Assembly for example) and no laws protect officially the Breton minority nor their cultural identity. The French state only recognizes the Breton language as a heritage but there isn't any public funding from the State to protect the Breton as a living language. However, local authorities in Brittany (The Brittany region, the Breton

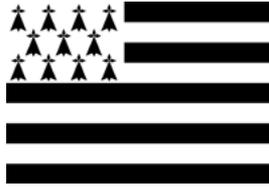
Departments, municipalities) have implemented a set of policies to protect the Breton identity.

#### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

There isn't any public media in Breton language. Several private media exist (radios in Breton language, web TV, ...) but they don't have any public funds. The Bretons have their own cultural institutions supported by the local authorities. But they are not rep-



*Traditional Breton costumes*



The flag

resented as a minority in French cultural institutions, e.g. the Ministry of Culture. The Bretons funded few education facilities to teach the Breton language at school, but it's a private system.

There is an important event that unites Bretons: Brittany Day (19 of May – St. Yves's Day). There are also lots of celebrations and traditions, e.g. fest-noz, festivals, traditional sports competitions and others.

## → LANGUAGE

The Bretons speak the Breton language (a Celtic language). It's the native language of the Bretons. In the east part of Brittany there is also a French dialect: the Galo. Otherwise, all Bretons speak French, the commonly used language. UNESCO now classifies the Breton language as severely endangered, with only 250,000 speakers.

The Bretons are called „Ar vretoned” in their native language.

### Contact information

Institut Culturel de Bretagne  
3, rue de la Loi  
FR-56000 VANNES

icb@skoluhelarvro.bzh  
www.skoluhelarvro.bzh

Phone: +33 2 97 68 31 10



### Little language course



hello – demat  
hometown – mammvro  
culture – sevenadur  
language – yezh  
work – labour  
family – familh  
community – kumuniezh



Buckweath pancake. © Arnaud

## → THE ORGANISATION „INSTITUT CULTUREL DE BRETAGNE“

The Cultural Institute of Brittany develops and promotes the Breton culture since 1981. The Institute's mission is to study and learn the Breton culture (language, history, etc.). It publishes several scientific works and offers support to Breton artists, particularly young artists (literature, theater, visual arts, etc.). It also defends the official recognition of Brittany as a nation (and minority rights of Bretons). The Institute organizes each year a few events to promote the Breton culture: the order of the Ermine (originally a chivalric order) and the interceltic youth forum.



## Catalans in Spain

### Plataforma per la Llengua

PLATA  
FORMA  
PER LA  
LLENGUA

L'ONG del català



*Catalan Tomato Bread (Pa Amb Tomàquet)*

with globally important cities like Barcelona, Palma or Ibiza. In France, in the so-called Northern Catalonia with Perpignan as its capital. And in Italy, in the city of Alghero in Sardinia.

#### → CURRENT SITUATION

Catalan has more than 10 million speakers in four different states. It is the official language of the state of Andorra, co-official in Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands (Spain) and semi-official in the city of Alghero in Sardinia. However, it is not recognized in Northern Catalonia (France). Nevertheless, it suffers constant discrimination in Spain, Italy and France, and the rights of Catalan speakers are not fully granted.

#### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Catalan is a Romance language, an evolution of vulgar Latin, distinct since the 7th century AD. At first, Catalan speakers were located in the eastern Pyrenean mountains. Between the 11th and 14th centuries, the kingdom (and language) expanded into the south, reaching Valencia, the Balearic Islands and became a widely used language all over the Mediterranean. The territories were annexed to the Kingdom of Spain in the early 18th century. Today, the Catalan-speaking minority exists in four European states: Spain, Andorra, France and Italy. In Spain, Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands,



#### Little language course

hello – hola  
homeland – pàtria  
culture – cultura  
language – llengua  
work – feina  
family – família  
community – comunitat

## → CULTURE AND MEDIA

Every region in Spain has its own public television and radio stations, which are mainly broadcasted in Catalan. In primary and secondary schools, as well as in some universities, students can study in Catalan. Every year, thousands of books as well as music are published in Catalan, and there are plays, films and newspapers, especially digital ones, in Catalan. Each region has its own national celebration, but the 24th of June is celebrated everywhere in the Catalan territories.



*The flag*

## → LANGUAGE

The common language is Catalan, which itself is divided into several dialects that have been used to separate the minority. The Catalan spoken in Valencia, for example, is called Valencian, although it is the same language, has the same codification, the same phonetic representation and the same intonation rules.

## → THE ORGANISATION "PLATAFORMA PER LA LLENGUA"

(English: The Pro-Language Platform) Founded in 1993, the Platform is a non-governmental organisation with 26,000 members that works to promote the Catalan language as an instrument of social cohesion. The organisation has offices in Barcelona, Valencia, Mallorca, Perpignan and Alghero and works in the socio-economic and audiovisual fields, in the linguistic reception

### Contact information

Plataforma per la Llengua  
Carrer Sant Honorat 7  
ES-08002 Barcelona

[www.plataforma-llengua.cat](http://www.plataforma-llengua.cat)  
[internacional@plataforma-llengua.cat](mailto:internacional@plataforma-llengua.cat)

Phone: +34 933211803



and integration of newcomers, in universities, education and administration, as well as in the international field, especially with the European institutions.



*Concurs Tísner: contest of creation of board games in Catalan for primary schools from all the Catalan-speaking areas.*



# Friulians in Italy

## Societât Filologjiche Furlane

Societât  
Filologjiche  
Furlane



Societâ  
Filologica  
Friulana

### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The Friulian community is the result of a linguistic evolution of the Latin spoken in the North-Eastern area of the Italian peninsula. Friulians represent - and have always represented - the majority of the population of the region. The first texts written in Friulian date back to the Middle Ages (13th century), and a rich literature developed from the 16th century onwards.

Friulians are located in most municipalities in the provinces of Udine (approximately 100,000 inhabitants), Gorizia (35,000 inhabitants) and Pordenone (45,000 inhabitants) in Friuli Venezia Giulia, as well as in the district of Portogruaro (Veneto). There are also numerous locations abroad where there are Friulian communities, including Toronto and Buenos Aires.

### → CURRENT SITUATION

The Friulian community consists of 600,000 people. It is protected by Article 6 of the Italian Constitution, State Law 482/1999, and Regional Law 29/2007. However, there is no distinct political party representing the community; its requests may be supported by Italian political parties. Therefore, the key challenges for the minority include self-identification as a unique identity distinct from the Italian one, lack of political representation, and recognition of language rights in public administration and schools.



*Frico is a typical Friulian dish—a potato and cheese pie characterised by a crunchy crust on the outside and a soft centre.*

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

There are a few radio channels and monthly magazines entirely in Friulian. There are TV and radio programmes and newspapers that host sections dedicated to the Friulian language. The Friulian Philological Society is the most important of the various cultural institutions aimed at language promotion. Yet, the minority does not operate any educational facility.



*The flag of Friuli is the yellow patriarchal eagle on a blue background. The origin of the flag dates back to the times of the Patriarchal State of Aquileia, also known as the “Homeland of Friuli” (Patrie dal Friûl).*

April 3rd marks the main Friulian celebration, commemorating the establishment of the Friulian Patriarchal State (1077 AD). The propitiatory fires at the start of the year, rites associated with the entry into the adult world, are among the most popular traditions.

## → LANGUAGE

The Furlans (name of the community in the native language) speak Friulian as well as its local varieties - "sonziache" in Gorizia, "concuardiese" in Western Friuli, "cjargnele" in Upper Friuli - each of which has distinct characteristics (e.g., the ending of the singular of feminine nouns) that do not deviate much from the standard language. They also speak Italian. Because of these local varieties, there exist numerous words that define the same concept.

### Little language course

hello – Mandi  
homeland – Patrie  
culture – Culture  
language – Lenghe  
work – Lavôr  
family – Famee  
community – Comunitât

## → THE ORGANISATION "SOCIETÂT FILOLOGJICHE FURLANE"

(English: Friulian Philological Society) Main activities of the Society are the organisation of cultural events, the publication of volumes and magazines in and about the Friulian language and culture, the manage-

## Contact information

Societât Filologjiche Furlane  
Palazzo Mantica Via Manin 18  
33100 Udine

[www.filologicafriulana.it](http://www.filologicafriulana.it)  
[info@filologicafriulana.it](mailto:info@filologicafriulana.it)

Phone: +39 0432501598



ment of the community's reference library as well as the Docuscuele – Regional Centre of Documentation, Research and Educational Experimentation for Friulian Schools. The most important events are the Social Congress (100 editions), the "Fraie de Vierte" (Spring Meeting), the Friulian Culture Week (10 editions). Beyond that, the Society also promotes the community's language, culture and identity through education and by preserving and promoting cultural heritage.



*The "Kiss of the Crosses" is one of the most evocative and ancient Friulian rituals.*



## Ladins in Italy

### Union Generela di Ladins dla Dolomites



#### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The Ladins speak a Romansh language, Ladin, which belongs to the Rhaeto-Romanic family.

They live for the most part in the north of Italy, in a homogeneous area (formed by the five valleys Val Badia, Gherdëina, Fascia, Fodom/Col and Anpezo), which is politically and administratively divided into three provinces and two regions (provinces: South Tyrol, Trentino, Belluno; regions: Trentino-South Tyrol and Veneto). Several thousand people declare themselves as Ladins in the area around the valleys, especially in Bolzano (Bozen), Trento (Trient) and Brunico (Brunneck).



*Anniversary of the Historic Ladin Meeting on the Sella Pass*

#### Contact information

Union Generela di Ladins dla Dolomites  
Cësa di Ladins - Streda Rezia nr. 83  
IT - 39046 Urtijëi (BZ)

[www.uniongenerela.it/en](http://www.uniongenerela.it/en)  
[info@uniongenerela.it](mailto:info@uniongenerela.it)

+ 39 0471789294



#### → CURRENT SITUATION

The Dolomites Ladins currently number around 35,000 speakers. As the oldest language group in Tyrol, they are now a minority in the provinces. Unfortunately, due to the territorial and political fragmentation, they have no common political or party-political voice; only in the individual valleys there are political movements that stand up for the political and cultural rights of the Ladin and the Ladins. Based on the laws of the Italian state, noteworthy are the state constitution, the provisions in favour of Ladins in the autonomy statutes of the provinces of Bolzano and Trento (e.g. decree no. 574 of 15 July 1988) and the Italian law on minorities no. 482 of 15 December 1999.

## → CULTURE AND MEDIA

There is an online Ladin daily portal, [www.lausc.it](http://www.lausc.it), and the weekly newspaper “La Usc di Ladins”. Both media outlets are supplied with fresh local news by a team of 12 editors and journalists in the five offices of the Union Generela di Ladins dla Dolomites (in all Ladin valleys). The national broadcast station Rai Ladinia, located in Bolzano, also reports daily on events in the Ladin valleys with short radio and television news programmes.

There are three cultural institutes with a total of four seats, a Ladin department for the training of the Ladin teaching staff at the Free University of Bozen–Bolzano (based in Bressanone) and the Union Generela di Ladins dla Dolomites as an umbrella organisation for Ladin cultural organisations, which carries out projects and events for the Ladin community as a whole.

## → LANGUAGE

Five official idioms and dozens of village dialects are spoken in Dolomites Ladinia. Since the 1990s there were also efforts to establish a Koiné (“Ladin Dolomitan”), a standardised language which was unfortunately rejected by the local language legislation and is therefore only used by the editors of La Usc di Ladins, the University of Bolzano and the Union Generela di Ladins dla Dolomites.

## → THE ORGANISATION "UNION GENERELA DI LADINS DLA DOLOMITES"

(English: General Union of the Dolomites Ladins) Since its foundation in 1951, the Union Generela di Ladins dla Dolomites has continuously organised cultural meetings for all Ladins, such as the school choir festival “Cianta con nos”, as well as projects and seminars on the Ladin language and media. A Ladin congress and the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Ladin flag were planned for 2020, but had to be postponed to 2023 due to the pandemic. The Ladins have also felt the effects of the provincial borders during the pandemic, as each province/region in Italy has gone its own way in restricting meetings and cultural events.

### Little language course

hello – bon di  
home – enciasa  
culture – cultura  
language – lingaz  
work – laour  
family – familia  
community – comunité



*The biennial meeting of the young choirs of Ladinia “Cianta con nos” (Sing with us).*



## Lezghins in Russia

### ФЕДЕРАЛЬНАЯ ЛЕЗГИНСКАЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-КУЛЬТУРНАЯ АВТОНОМИЯ



#### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The Lezghins are an autochthonous people of the Eastern Caucasus. Their lands were part of the ancient state of Caucasian Albania until the 7th century AD, one of the first countries in the world to adopt Christianity. Since the 7th century, Islam has penetrated into the Lezghian lands. From the 19th century onwards, the Lezghian lands have been part of Russia and after the collapse of the USSR, the southern territory became part of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. Lezghins continue to live in their historical land: the regions of southern Russia (the republic of Dagestan) and the north of the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, they are also settled in some large cities outside of this area: e.g. Makhachkala, Kaspiysk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Krasnodar and others in Russia as well as Baku and Sumgait in Azerbaijan Republic. Within the vicinity of the minority is Derbent, the oldest city in Russia with its unique architecture, the Caspian Sea, the largest salt lake in the world as well as the village of Akhty and ancient mountain villages where the traditional way of life has been preserved.

#### → CURRENT SITUATION

Today, the minority has 488,608 members in Russia and 180,300 to 363,000 in Azerbaijan. In Russia, the Lezghian language is one of the 14 official languages whereas in Azerbaijan it has no official status. The rights of indigenous people and national minorities are protected by the Constitution and several special laws and regulations in Russia: e.g. the 1999 Federal Act on guarantees of the rights of indigenous minorities of the Russian Federation and the law on national and cultural autonomy (1996). In addition, there are laws of individual republics within the Russian Federation. In the Republic of Azerbaijan however, the right of people to their own language and identity is specified in the Constitution, but there are practically no legal mechanisms for the implementation of these rights. The biggest challenge for the minority in all regions is the loss of the native language and ethnic identity.



*A group of men from Laza village, Azerbaijan, in 1880.*

## → CULTURE AND MEDIA

In Russia, media in the languages of indigenous peoples and national minorities are managed by regional authorities. Television, newspapers and radio in the Lezghian language in the Republic of Dagestan are fully funded from the state budget. Meanwhile, there is only one newspaper in the Lezghian language, "Samur" in Azerbaijan, which in recent years has been published only in electronic form. It is created by the efforts of individual representatives of the local Lezghian community at their own expense. The authorities of the Republic of Azerbaijan do not finance media in the Lezghian language.

There are no educational institutions managed by the Lezghian community at the moment, they are managed by the State.

## → LANGUAGE

The Lezghins speak Lezghin (Lezgee), which belongs to the Lezghin sub-group of the Nakh-Daghestani group of the North Caucasian language family.

### Contact information

Federal Lezghin National and Cultural  
Autonomy  
21b1 Podsosensky lane  
RUS-101000 Moscow

[www.flnka.ru](http://www.flnka.ru)  
[info@flnka.ru](mailto:info@flnka.ru)

Phone: +7 495 6322699  
Youtube, Telegram: @FlnkaRu

### Little language course

Hello – Salam aleykum (Салам алейкум)  
Home – Khayi chil (Хайи чил)  
Culture – Medeniyat (Культура)  
Language – Chal (Чал)  
Work – Kvalakh (Квалах)  
Family – Khizan (Хизан)  
Community – Kvatal (Кватал)

## → THE ORGANISATION "ФЕДЕРАЛЬНАЯ ЛЕЗГИНСКАЯ НАЦИОНАЛЬНО-КУЛЬТУРНАЯ АВТОНОМИЯ"

(English: Federal Lezghin National and Cultural Autonomy, FLNCA) The FLNCA is the largest Lezghin NGO of Russia. Among the main activities of the FLNCA are the organisation of ethno-cultural events, including traditional holidays of Lezghin people, literary evenings, anniversaries of outstanding Lezghins, folk music concerts, poetry contests as well as (youth) forums, conferences, thematic seminars and round tables related to the study of the history of the Lezghin people and promotion of the unique historical and cultural heritage. The organisation also works on the representation of the Lezghian community in international structures – the UN, OSCE, European Parliament, Council of Europe – and is committed to human rights work and the preparation of analytical reports on the situation of minorities in Azerbaijan. All this work follows the main goal to preserve and develop the native languages and protect the national and cultural interests of the Lezghins of Russia and abroad.



# The Lusatian Sorbs in Germany

## Domowina



DOMOWINA

### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Sorbs belong to the Western Slavs and settled down in Lusatia around 1400 years ago. An officially recognised ancestral settlement area is defined in the state laws and ordinances of Saxony and Brandenburg. Most of the Sorbs live in the triangle formed by Berlin, Görlitz and Dresden, which is called Lusatia. The cultural and administrative capitals include Cottbus in Lower Lusatia and Bautzen in Upper Lusatia, whereas the language is mainly heard in everyday life in the so-called “core settlement area” between Kamjenc/Kamenz, Wojerecy/Hoyerswerda, Slepó/Schleife and Budyšin/Bautzen. The Sorbs were subject to Germanisation from the 10th century until the recent past and were never able to establish their own state.



Custom of throwing the maypole. (c) Domowina

### Contact information

Domowina – Bund Lausitzer Sorben  
e.V./Zwjazk Łužiskich Serbow z. t./  
Zwězk Łužyskich Serbow z. t.  
Póstowe naměsto / Postplatz 2  
D-02625 Budyšin / Bautzen

[www.domowina.de](http://www.domowina.de)  
[sekretariat@domowina.de](mailto:sekretariat@domowina.de)  
[instagram.com/domowina.zt](https://www.instagram.com/domowina.zt)  
[facebook.com/domowina.de](https://www.facebook.com/domowina.de)

Phone: +49 3591 550102



### → CURRENT SITUATION

There are around 60,000 Sorbs living in Germany. These include the Upper Sorbs in Upper Lusatia in Saxony and the Lower Sorbs/Wends in Lower Lusatia in Brandenburg. The two groups differ both linguistically and culturally. Sorbs are generally German citizens. The Sorbian people are recognised as a national minority in Germany. The language and culture of the Sorbs is protected in the respective state constitutions. In addition to their language Sorbs have an officially recognised flag and anthem. The key challenges at present are the preservation and revitalisation of the Sorbian language, the safeguarding of mother-tongue teaching in schools and the expansion of the use of Sorbian in the public sphere.

## → CULTURE AND MEDIA

Over the course of a year, the Sorbs celebrate around 30 festivals and customs, although there are also regional differences. The “Ptači kwas” (wedding of the birds) in January and the Sorbian-Wendish „Zapust“ (carnival) are particularly impressive.

There is an Upper Sorbian daily newspaper “Serbske Nowiny” and a Lower Sorbian weekly newspaper “Nowy Casnik”. The Sorbian cultural monthly magazine “Rozhlad” and the children’s magazine “Płomje” are published in both Sorbian languages. There are also the Catholic magazine “Katolski Posoł” and the Protestant church newspaper “Pomhaj Bóh”. Moreover, there are also Sorbian radio stations on MDR and RBB. Both produce a monthly TV magazine programme. There are a number of cultural organisations and institutions: Założba za Serbski lud (Foundation for the Sorbian people), Rěčny centrum WITAJ (Language Centre - a department of the Domowina), Němsko-Serbske ludowe dźiwadło (German-Sorbian theatre), Serbski ludowy ansambl (Sorbian national ensemble), Ludowe nakładnistwo Domowina (publishing house), Serbski institut (Sorbian Institute), Chóšebuz a Serbski muzej Budyšin (Sorbian museum in Cottbus and Bautzen) and others.

## → LANGUAGE

There are two written Sorbian languages (standard varieties), Upper Sorbian (hornjoserbšćina) and Lower Sorbian (dolnoserbšćina), but a distinction is usually made between Lower Sorbian, Upper Sorbian and the group of border dialects in between. While Upper Sorbian is closer to Czech and Slovak, Lower Sorbian is more similar to Polish. The Lower Sorbian language is acutely threatened with extinction, the Upper Sorbian slowly too.



### Little language course (Upper Sorbian/Lower Sorbian)

Hello – witaj / witaj  
home – doma / doma  
culture – kultura / kultura  
language – rěč / rěc  
work – dźěto / žěto  
family– swójba / swójzba  
community – zhromadnosć / zgromadnosć

## → THE ORGANISATION "DOMOWINA"

The “Domowina” - Federation of Lusatian Sorbs was founded in 1912 and is a member of FUEN since 1990. The umbrella organisation unites 200 local, regional and transregional groups and associations with around 7,500 members as well as individuals in a strong network of Sorbian civil society. Its activities are therefore very diverse and range from specific cultural events to political work. Current topics include issues relating to the next generation, such as passing on the language to the next generation, the lack of Sorbian-speaking teachers and the continuation of existing tasks, as well as overcoming new challenges, such as structural change due to the disintegrating lignite industry or digitalisation.



Bilingual street sign. (c) Domowina



# Meskhethian Turks in Russia

## Interregional Society of Meskhethian Turks "VATAN"



### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Meskhethian Turks (the self-designation of the Ahiska Turks) are the indigenous people of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region (the historical name of Meskhethi), which is located in the southern regions of Georgia with the main city of Akhaltsikhe. Historically, this land was part of the Georgian Kingdom until the 13th century, when it became the independent Principality of Samtskhe Saatabago, and then was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. With the end of the Russian-Turkish War of 1828-29, it came under Russian rule, and in 1918, when the Georgian Democratic Republic was established, it again became the territory of Georgia. From 1921 to 1991, the region was part of the Georgian SSR.

Forcefully deported from their homeland to Central Asia in 1944 by the Stalinist regime and fleeing from Uzbekistan after the 1989 outbreak of violence in the Ferghana Valley, the minority of the Meskhethian Turks is currently living dispersed in nine different countries: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and the United States.

### → CURRENT SITUATION

Today, the minority has 100.000-120.000 members in the Russian Federation and about 600.000 in the world. In Russia, Meskhethian Turks live in about 20 regions of the country.

For 80 years now, Meskhethian Turks have not been able to achieve the right to return to their histor-



### Little language course

hello – Selam aleykum (Селам алейкум)

homeland – Vatan (Ватан)

culture – Medeniyet (Медениет)

language – Dil (Дил)

work – Ish (Иш)

family – Ayle (Айле)

community – Toplum (Топлум)

ical homeland. This is one of the main goals of the community.

Despite the commitments made before joining the Council of Europe in 1999, Georgia has not solved this problem. The legal mechanisms adopted by the Parliament of Georgia for the repatriation of the population deported from its territory turned out to be a formal satisfaction of the requirements of the Council of Europe and did not lead to the return of Meskhethian Turks. One of the biggest challenges for the minority in all countries is the loss of the native language and ethnic identity.

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

In Russia, the regional branches of the public organisation "VATAN" participate in the cultural life of the society (holidays, festivals, exhibitions), that introduce the customs and traditions of the Meskhethian

Turks. In the Rostov region, where the largest community of Meskhetian Turks lives, there is the Ahiska-Turkish Cultural Center. The religious holidays of Kurban bayram (Eid al-Adha) and Uraza bayram (Eid al-Fitr) are widely celebrated. Every year, November 14 marks the memorable date of the deportation of Meskhetian Turks.

To disseminate information about the current life of community, there is a website of the public organization "Vatan". The Meskhetian Turks like to communicate with each other via social media. There are many groups called "Vatan", Ahiska, Ahiska-music, Ahiska tradition on Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Odnoklassniki, Tik-Tok.

## Contact information

Interregional Society of Meskhetian Turks "VATAN"  
art. 285, 22/1, Domodedovskaya st.  
RU Moscow, 115551

[moomt.vatan@mail.ru](mailto:moomt.vatan@mail.ru)  
[www.moomtvatan.ru](http://www.moomtvatan.ru)

Phone: +7 (909) 937-04-70



Janpolat Gakhromanov: *Deportation*. 2018

## → LANGUAGE

Meskhetian Turks speak an Eastern Anatolian dialect of the Turkish language. Recently, the Latin alphabet (Turkish version) has been increasingly used. Previously, Cyrillic was used more often.

## → THE ORGANISATION „INTERREGIONAL SOCIETY OF MESKHETIAN TURKS «VATAN»“

The organisation "Межрегиональная общественная организация месхетинских турок «Ватан»". (English: Interregional Society of Meskhetian Turks "VATAN"). VATAN is the largest Meskhetian Turkish NGO of the Russian Federation. The organisation was founded in 1990 as the All-Union Society of Meskhetian Turks "VATAN". After two years, it became an international society. In 2017, the organisation was re-registered as an interregional society. In addition to socio-cultural activities within the country, VATAN is active in the international arena. The organisation works on the representation of the Meskhetian Turks community in international structures - the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Parliament, the Council of Europe - and is committed to human rights work and the preparation of analytical reports about the Meskhetian Turks. VATAN fights for the return of the Meskhetian Turks to their homeland.



# North Frisians in Germany

## Friisk Foriining

### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

When the conflict between Danes and Germans escalated in Schleswig in the 19th century, the Frisians had already been living on the mainland and the islands for a long time, probably having migrated from the area that is now the Netherlands. The Frisian language was spoken on an equal footing in the multilingual area at the time, with the exception of public areas such as schools and churches. There are only a few Frisian village communities left, mainly on the islands of Amrum and Föhr. On the mainland, Risum-Lindholm has a rich cultural life in Frisian (theatre, school lessons etc.).

### → CURRENT SITUATION

The Frisian minority is protected by the constitution of the state of Schleswig-Holstein. Institutional support from the state of Schleswig-Holstein is limited to just a few umbrella organisations. Professional or full-time structures could not be financed in this way. The Federal Ministry of Culture and Media supports the minority with project funding of up to €350,000 per year. There are no compulsory Frisian lessons in schools. Safeguarding and developing the Frisian language is the greatest challenge for volunteers.



*The Danish Queen Margrethe II visiting the Frisians and welcomed by Bahne Bahnsen.*

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

The public broadcaster does not fulfil its obligation to broadcast Frisian programmes. On Föhr, Friisk Funk operates as a predominantly privately financed broadcaster. The central scientific institution is the Nordfriisk Instituut, which is run by a voluntary organisation. The Frisian Council is the umbrella organisation for Frisian associations. The Biike fire on 21 February is lit throughout North Friesland and the year is bid farewell with Rumelput or Üt tu kenknen.



*The flag*



A North Frisian custom is the setup of the “Jöölboom“, the North Frisian christmas tree.

## → LANGUAGE

The Frisians speak Frasch or Friesk (mainland), Fering (Föhr), Öömrang (Amrum), Sölring (Sylt) or Halunder (Heligoland).

## → THE ORGANISATION "FRIISK FORIINING"

Friisk Foriining (English: Frisian Association) offers traditional events once a year (winter festival, Biike Burning, Känkentuur) as well as special offers for children (excursions), families (family holidays) and senior citizens (senior citizens' afternoons). Friisk Foriining produces a Frisian podcast and posts on Facebook and Instagram. In autumn, the four-day autumn college offers an opportunity to exchange ideas, learn and get to know each other. Politically, Friisk Foriining is committed to political equality.



## Little language course

Hello – Dach!  
Home – Di hiimstoun  
Culture – Jü kultuur  
Language – Di spräke  
Work – Dåt årbe  
Family – Jü familii  
Community – Jü gemiinschap



Every year on February 21st, more than 60 fire signals, so-called “Biiken”, are lit.

## Contact information

Friisk Foriining  
Süderstr. 6  
D-25821 Bredstedt/Bräist

[www.friiske.de](http://www.friiske.de)  
[info@friiske.de](mailto:info@friiske.de)

Phone: +49 46716024154





# Ромакс in Bulgaria

## ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ИНСТИТУТ - ПОМАК



EUROPEAN  
INSTITUTE  
ПОМАК



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ  
ИНСТИТУТ  
ПОМАК



### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Where the Pomaks in Bulgaria live nowadays, the Thracians lived in the past. Therefore, the most popular theory of their origin is that they are successors of the Thracians. Other scholars consider the Pomaks as Slavs, that have been Islamized by the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Today, the Pomaks are mostly Muslims and speak a Slavic language.

After the secession of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Bulgarian nation-state in 1787, the sorrowful history of the Pomaks began. They were humiliated by the Bulgarian majority, forcibly christianized, assimilated, deported and resettled. Today the Pomaks live in five countries of the Balkans. The majority, about four million Pomaks, live in Turkey. In Bulgaria, the Pomaks were last counted in the censuses 70 years ago. Since then, there are no official statistics. In Bulgaria, according to censuses, the number of Pomaks fell from 500,000 to 135,000 between 1878 and 1934.



*Pomak women are very proud when they become mothers. They breastfeed their children for a long time and prefer to look after them themselves rather than send them to nursery school.*

### → CURRENT SITUATION

It is estimated that 250,000 to 300,000 Pomaks live in Bulgaria today. The minority is not recognized or politically represented. Due to the Bulgarian state's resettlement policy in the last century, almost all Pomaks from the north of the country have relocated to Turkey. Most of the minority lives in the Rhodope Mountains in southern Bulgaria. The Pomaks who fled to Turkey have re-established their villages in mountains. Almost all Pomaks live in rural mountain villages. On the one hand, isolation is welcome to the Pomaks in preserving their identity, culture and religion; on the other hand, it hinders economic progress.

## → CULTURE AND MEDIA

Due to several hacker attacks, the website of the European Institute Pomak was only in use from 2012 to 2017 and the lost information could no longer be restored. The Pomaks like to communicate with each other via Facebook. The most popular Facebook pages are: Pomak Soul; Pomak News; Pomak Traditions; Pomak Heart. Other Pomak cultural associations in Europe are also active on the Internet, such as the Pomak Exchange Cultural Center, the Pomak Cultural Association Hamburg, and Facebook pages such as Pomak Soul, Pomaknews, Pomakistan, or Pomakajans.

Pomak culture is a compilation of ancient pre-Christian customs related to the annual cycle as well as Muslim religious practices and modern customs that have emerged more recently. As Muslims, the Pomaks observe the fasting month of Ramadan and celebrate the breaking of the fast and the Feast of Sacrifice. There are many old customs that are still preserved and practised today. One example of a modern custom is Kurtlusch Bayram, the festival of liberation and celebration of the return of the Pomak names that has been celebrated since 29 December 1989. This date marks the end of the attempts of the Bulgarian state to change the names of Pomak people to assimilate them.

### Contact information

European Institute Pomak  
10 Chavdar Voyvoda Str  
BG-4700 Smolyan

[www.europeaninstitute.bg](http://www.europeaninstitute.bg)  
[facebook.com/groups/www.eipomak.eu](https://facebook.com/groups/www.eipomak.eu)  
[eipomak@eclipso.eu](mailto:eipomak@eclipso.eu)

Phone: +359 896755454



## → LANGUAGE

The Pomaks speak a South Slavic language, which is very close to the Bulgarian and Macedonian languages. There are also many Arabic and Persian words in the language, which have been infused through the ancient Ottoman language. The Pomaks call themselves Pomaci or Pomasko malcinstvo v Bolgarije- the Pomak minority in Bulgaria.



### Little language course

hello – Seljam / Селям  
homeland – Doma / Дома  
culture – Kultura / Култура  
language – Ezikj / Езикъ  
work – Rabota, Izmetj /  
Робота, Изметъ  
family – Aile, Familje, Rod /  
Аиле, Фамилъе, Род  
community – Mahalo, Um-  
metj / Махало, Умметъ

## → THE ORGANISATION "ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ ИНСТИТУТ - ПОМАК"

The European Institute Pomak (EIP), founded in 2012 and a member of FUEN since 2017, operates primarily online media. The Pomaks in Bulgaria do not have educational institutes and associations. The EIP has organised working meetings with the representatives of the Pomaks in Greece and Turkey. The main focus of their work is the recognition of the minority by the Bulgarian state.



## Pomaks in Greece

### ΠΑΝΧΕΛΕΝΙΤΣΕΣΚΙ ΠΟΜΑΤΣΚΙ ΣΕΓΓΙΟΥΣ

#### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Greece is one of the five countries in which the Pomak settlements are spread. The Pomaks, as a Muslim ethnic group divided by state borders, have a special position in the Balkan region, which is characterized by the efforts of different nationalities to form their own nation-states. Presumably, the Pomaks were Islamized under Ottoman rule, which also leads to the most popular interpretations of the origin of the name: “Pomak” is said to mean “torture” or “forced Islamization” in Bulgarian - which is very similar to the language of the Pomaks. According to another theory, it derives from “pomagam – help”, as they converted in faith and thus assisted the Muslim conquerors in running the state. Throughout history, the Pomaks mostly lived loyally under the foreign rule of other ethnic groups.

In Greece, most Pomaks live near the Bulgarian border in Western Thrace, where many villages have a majority Pomak population. Many Pomaks live in Komotini, Xanthi, and Didimotikon, along with Turks and Greeks. During the Greek-Turkish population exchange, many of them left the country and their original settlements in Xanthi and Rodopi. The remaining villages are often remote and isolated.

The Greek Constitution of 1975, amended in 1978, guarantees protection of life, human dignity and freedom for all people living in Greece. However, for a long time in the 20th century, the Greek government tried to prevent cross-border Pomak contacts, under the pretext of national security, prevented the granting of building permits to Pomaks, and banned Pomak names.

#### Contact information

Panhellenic Pomak Association  
Platia Emporiou 45  
GR-67100 Xanthi

[kepoer@yahoo.gr](mailto:kepoer@yahoo.gr)

Phone: +30 6978091225



*Wreath tribute at the Fortress – Monument of Nymphaea (anniversary of German attack, 6.4.1941 - Battle of Metaxas Line) by the President of the Panhellenic Pomak Association Mr. Imam Ahmed*

## → CURRENT SITUATION

Censuses from 1951 confirm 18,700 Pomaks in Greece; today there are about 30,000. Censuses prove difficult, however: depending on the focus of the survey, religious, ethnic, or linguistic minorities are distinguished, leading to controversial results for the Pomaks.

In Greece, a rapprochement of the Pomaks with the Turkish minority can be observed, as no teaching is given in Pomak and Muslim religious instruction is given in Turkish.



*Hinderlez Festival (spring season's reception) in the mountainous Pomak village of Thermes (Prefecture of Xanthi)*

## → CULTURE AND MEDIA

No programs are broadcast in Pomak in the radio media, and print media are also scarce. A newspaper is published by the Center for Pomak Studies in Komotini, but the attempt to reproduce the Pomak language in Cyrillic script was met with little response.



### Little language course

hello – Seljam / Селям  
homeland – Doma / Дома  
culture – Kultura / Култура  
language – Ezikj / Езыкь  
work – Rabota, Izmetj / Робота, Изметь  
family – Aile, Familje, Rod / Аиле, Фамилье, Род  
community – Mahalo, Ummetj / Махало, Умметь

## → LANGUAGE

The Pomak language is a Slavic language and belongs to the South Slavic language family. The language is very similar to Macedonian and Bulgarian. The language contains many Persian and Arabic words that came from the Old Ottoman language. Nowadays, many abstract words are adopted from the Greek language. Cyrillic, Latin and Greek alphabets are used for writing.

## → THE ORGANISATION "ΠΑΝΧΕΛΕΝΙΤΣΕΣΚΙ ΠΟΜΑΤΣΚΙ ΣΕΓΙΟΥΣ"

The Panhellenic Pomak Association has represented the Pomak minority in Greece since 2009 and joined FUEN in 2019. The association is based in Komotini. The association is committed to the preservation and the learning of the Pomak language. A significant part of its activity is the weekly publication of a Pomak newspaper. The association has about 2,000 members.



Lia Rumantscha

# Rhaeto Romansh in Switzerland

## Lia Rumantscha

### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Rhaeto Romansh is located and used in parts of Graubünden, the east of present-day Switzerland. The number of speakers of Rhaeto Romansh is slightly declining. The largest towns and villages are Chur, the capital of the canton of Graubünden, and Ilanz/Glion, Mustér, Savognin, Scuol, Zernez and Val Müstair.

### → CURRENT SITUATION

There are approximately 60,000 speakers of Rhaeto Romansh. The language has an emblematic political recognition, and its protection is regulated by law. In fact, the language is enshrined in the constitution as a national language. However, there are also challenges such as demographic change, migration of the population from the core area to non-Rhaeto Romansh areas and the ubiquitous presence of the German language.

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

Several medias deal with the concerns of Rhaeto Romansh people and cover local news and customs such as Chalandamarz in the Engadine valley, one of the community's most iconic events. There is the Fundaziun Medias Rumantschas ([www.fmr.ch](http://www.fmr.ch)), whose services for all Rhaeto Romansh media are financed by public funds, Radiotelevisiun Svizra Rumantscha, a public



*From its headquarters in Chur, Lia Rumantscha supports, promotes and coordinates the work of regional associations, inter-regional bodies and Rhaeto Romansh organisations outside Graubünden. © Ralph Feiner*

radio and television station as part of SRG SSR ([www.rtr.ch](http://www.rtr.ch)), as well as the daily newspaper La Quotidiana and some regional newspapers.

### → LANGUAGE

There are five idioms (regional varieties that are spoken and written): Sursilvan, Sutsilvan, Surmiran, Puter, and Vallader. There are also many local dialects such as Emsler Romansh or the dialect of Bergün, as well as, since 1982, Rumantsch Grischun, an inter-regional standardized written language.

## → THE ORGANISATION "LIA RUMANTSCHA"

The Lia Rumantscha (LR, [www.liarumantscha.ch](http://www.liarumantscha.ch)) was founded in 1919 as an umbrella organisation for all Romansh associations in accordance with article 60 ff. of the Swiss Civil Code. The LR sees itself as an institution acting in the general public interest and is politically and denominationally neutral. It fulfils a public-service mission through its function of using funds from federal and cantonal sources for the promotion of the Romansh language and culture. From its head office in Chur, the LR supports, fosters and coordinates the activities of regional organisations that work in favor of the Romansh language and culture. It campaigns actively for the promotion and maintenance of Romansh at home and school, in the church and in public life and also sets out to represent the Romansh community in the various fields of political and social life both inside and outside the traditional Rhaeto Romansh-speaking territory.

Main activities include translation and proofreading as well as editing the dictionary Pledari Grond ([www.pledarigrond.ch](http://www.pledarigrond.ch)). Lia Rumantscha also offers language courses ([www.curs.ch](http://www.curs.ch)) and language, education and culture-specific counselling. The organisation contributes to a progressive language policy and public relations work. It also publishes media for

### Contact information

Lia Rumantscha  
Via da la Plessur 47  
CH-7001 Chur / Cuira

[www.liarumantscha.ch](http://www.liarumantscha.ch)  
[info@rumantsch.ch](mailto:info@rumantsch.ch)

Phone: +41 812583222



### Little language course



hello – bun di  
home – patria  
culture – cultura  
language – lingua  
work – lavur  
family – famiglia  
community – cuminanza

children and young people and offers cultural activities, e.g. writing competitions for children and young people such as "Plima d'aur/Pledpierla". Two of the organisation's main concerns are Rhaeto Romansh outside the traditional linguistic areas as well as digital transformation.



*Lia Rumantscha offers online and offline Rhaeto Romansh language courses.*



# Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Otaharin



### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The Roma are an Indo-Aryan ethnic group from the regions of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Punjab in modern-day India. The migrations of the Roma began in the 10th century. In the territory of present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Roma population has been living for over 600 years. Until the 20th century, the Roma way of life was characterised by a nomadic style, but due to urbanisation, Roma settled in cities and sought to integrate into local social structures. The Roma population inhabits cities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, creating communities in different parts of the country. Cities where Roma make up a significant part of the population are Brčko, Bijeljina, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Kakanj, Mostar, Tuzla, Prijedor, Zenica, and Teslić.

Over centuries the Roma population has been marginalised and persecuted and was exposed to discrimination and non-acceptance by the majority population, as well as racist legal frameworks in the countries they inhabited. Undoubtedly, this significantly impacted the development of Roma culture, language, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The culmination of mistreatment towards the Roma occurred during World War II when Nazi Germany and its allies sought to eradicate Roma from the face of the earth. The genocide against the Roma (Porajmos) claimed between 500,000 and 1,500,000 lives, representing 25% to 50% of the total Roma population.

### → CURRENT SITUATION

It is very difficult to accurately determine the number of Roma worldwide, especially in the Balkan countries.

According to the OSCE Mission data from 2014, there are a total of 35,644 Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Non-governmental organisations claim the number to be around 80,000. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Roma are the most numerous among the 17 represented national minorities but are still excluded from active participation in state politics. The European Court of Human Rights found in December 2009 that the Bosnian constitution discriminates against Roma and Jews. Although Roma have the right to vote, they cannot stand for candidacy in the electoral process. However, steps have been taken towards Roma inclusion: In September 2008, Bosnia and Herzegovina signed a declaration that includes adopting an Action Plan for Roma Inclusion and an Anti-Discrimination Law. Despite those efforts, the Roma community continues to grapple with poor living conditions, lack of education, and scarce employment opportunities remain prevalent.

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the media is mostly controlled by the majority ethnic groups. There are no Romani radio, newspapers or TV stations, and there are no special programs in the Roma language on public services. With the support of donor funds in recent years, magazines for Roma (Voice Roma, Black and White World, and Amarodrom) and the web portal „Točak” and „Udar” have been launched, focusing on Roma in the Balkans. There are numerous Roma associations that carry out activities and initiatives aimed at achieving the inclusion of the Romani population that is diverse in its religious practices. Major Roma holidays are: Christmas (Božić) or Little Christmas (Mali Božić) -

often called "Vasilica" on 14th of January; Đurđevdan (Ederlezi) on 6th of May and Sveti Ilija on 2nd of August. Also Bajram has gained significance among many Roma since the mid-90s. Other important dates include: International Roma Day (April 8th) and World Roma Language Day (November 5th).

## → LANGUAGE

The Roma language belongs to the Indo-European language family. However, it is not accurate to speak of a single Roma language, it is rather a linguistic group consisting of various dialects. Due to the nomadic lifestyle, the Roma language has undergone significant changes throughout its history, enriching its vocabulary with numerous Persian, Armenian, Arabic, Turkish words, as well as words from other languages. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the most prevalent dialects are the Gurbet dialect and the Arlija dialect. The specificity of the Gurbet dialect is often reflected in the use of loanwords and neologisms influenced from local languages.

## → THE ORGANISATION "OTAHARIN"

The "Center for Integrative Inclusion of Roma men and women Otaharin" was established in 2005 with the mission of increasing the level of educational, social, and economic integration of the Roma population. Ota-

## Contact information

Otaharin - Centar za integrativnu inkluziju Roma i Romkinja  
Dositeja Obradovića 4/1

BA-76300 Bijeljina

[www.otaharin.org](http://www.otaharin.org)  
[ugotaharin@teol.net](mailto:ugotaharin@teol.net)

Phone: +387 55 250 543



harin organises various types of educational activities, provision of social services, and daily care services for children and youth. Furthermore, the center collaborates with institutions, government representatives, and all relevant stakeholders to combat human trafficking, discrimination, and anti-Gypsyism. The organisation's focus is on supporting marginalised individuals with a focus on the Roma population, improving access to education for marginalised groups, support for housing, social protection, healthcare, and economic empowerment with a focus on women. The association uses its own channels such as the website and social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

(c) Museum "Semberija", Otaharin,  
and Dejan Ćosić, ethnologist from Bijeljina.



*Celebrating the International Roma Day - April 8th in the City of Bijeljina. The flag of the international Roma movement was adopted in 1971 and is blue and green, with the option to add a red flame, wheel, or a thin red stripe*

## Little language course

hello – B/C/S: Zdravo, Minority language: -  
homeland – B/C/S: Domovina, Minority language: Puv  
culture – B/C/S: Kultura, Minority language: Kultura  
language – B/C/S: Jezik, Minority language: Ćib  
work – B/C/S: Rad, Minority language: Rado  
family – B/C/S: Porodica, Minority language: Familija  
community – B/C/S: Zajednica, Minority language:  
Zajednica

(B/H/S = Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian)





## Rusyns in Hungary

### Всдержавное Русинське Самосправованя



#### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The National Self-Government of Rusyns in Hungary was founded in 1998. However, Rusyn nationality in Hungary officially was acknowledged only in 1991. The first settlements where the Rusyn minority was represented were Komlóska, Sárospatak, Múcsony, Baskó and Irota. At the beginning, there were only five self-governments, and over the years the number has become 42. The National Self-Government of Rusyns is not a political organisation. Regardless of how the government in the state changed, it remained unchanged. Over the years of its existence, the number of people in the minority has increased significantly.

Today there are: one National Self-Government of Rusyns, two County Self-Governments and 42 Local Self-Governments all over Hungary. The minority is widely represented in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Hajdú-Bihar counties, in such towns as Debrecen, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza, also in Pécs, Dunaújváros and of course in Budapest. In many Hungarian towns there are castles and monuments of Rákóczi II., in whose army Rusyns fought. Máriapócs and Sajópál-fala have always been Rusyn Indulgence places and places of pilgrimage. In many settlements you can see Rusyn country houses.



*Rusyn National Holiday in Edelény 2022. Singing: "Ruszinok" folklore group, dancing: junior group of Rusyn dancers.*

#### → CURRENT SITUATION

According to the last census in 2022, 7,111 people confessed as Rusyn. For comparison, in 2011 this figure was 3,882 persons, and in 2001 - 1,098 persons. The Rusyn minority is not politically recognised in Hungary, but the nationality is represented by a spokesperson in the Hungarian Parliament since 2014. Today, there are no challenges because of the support of the Hungarian government.

#### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

The minority publishes its own bimonthly newspaper „Ruszin Világ” („Rusyn World”) and is also represented on the website [www.ruszin.com](http://www.ruszin.com). State media also allows it to appear regularly on radio and television. The National Self-Government manages two cultural

institutions, the István Udvari Hungarian Library of Rusyns and the Atanáz Fedinecz Hungarian Rusyns Museum Collection of Public Interest and Exhibition Place. There are five fixed national celebrations per year: Memory of academic Antal Hodinka, celebration of Ferenc Rákóczi II., Rusyn National Day, Indulgence feast and Masterpieces of Rusyn Art.



The flag

### Little language course

hello – Добрий день!  
homeland – Отцюзнаина  
culture – Култура  
language – Язык  
work – Праца  
family – Фамілія  
community – Спoлoчнoсть

## → LANGUAGE

The Rusyns/Русины speak Rusyn and Hungarian languages.

## → THE ORGANISATION "ВСЕДЕРЖАВНОЕ РУСИНСЬКОЕ САМОСПРАВОВАННЯ"

(English: National Self-Government of Rusyns in Hungary) The goal of the National Self-Govern-

## Contact information

National Self-Government of Rusyns  
in Hungary  
Gyarmat u. 85/B  
HU-1147 Budapest

[www.ruszin.com](http://www.ruszin.com)  
[ruszin.onkormanyzat@gmail.com](mailto:ruszin.onkormanyzat@gmail.com)

Phone: +36 1 468 26 36



Traditional Easter Rusyn gastronomic presentation in Pécs 2019.

ment of Rusyns in Hungary is to preserve the culture and language as well as the heritage, traditions and celebrations. In the course of a year, the organisation hosts the five fixed national celebrations. Besides that, it organises Christmas and Easter celebrations, different exhibitions and book presentations etc. The main topic for the organisation in 2023 was the codification of Rusyn language used in Hungary and in 2024, the municipal elections. The organisation publishes its own bimonthly newspaper "Ruszin Világ" ("Rusyn World").



# Saterland Frisians in Germany

## EBLUL Deutschland - Komitee für Regional- und Minderheitensprachen

### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The Frisians settled in the eastern North Sea coastal region in the early Middle Ages. In the High and Late Middle Ages, the traditional dwellers gradually settled in new areas, including Saterland. Due to its isolated location in the marshes, Saterland formed a linguistic island where Frisian language was preserved until the early 20th century. In the late 20th century, new roads and mass media changed the situation. New inhabitants were not proficient in the language and the Saterlanders began to raise their children using High or Low German. The municipality of Saterland consists of the villages of Wittensand, Bollingen, Strücklingen, Ramsloh, Scharrel and Sedelsberg. The largest village is Ramsloh with about five thousand inhabitants. Larger towns in the vicinity are Leer and Oldenburg. There are historical contacts with the Frisian minority in the Dutch province of Fryslân, who speak a language related to Saterland Frisian.

### → CURRENT SITUATION

The Saterland Frisians are a recognised minority as part of the Frisian ethnic group. Today, an estimated one thousand to two thousand people speak Sater-

land Frisian. The language is classified by UNESCO as “threatened with extinction” and is protected and promoted in the state of Lower Saxony as part of the Frisian language.

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

The citizens’ radio station Ems-Vechte-Welle publishes a program in the Saterland Frisian language every two weeks. However, Saterland Frisian is hardly represented in the print media: the regional newspapers in Saterland occasionally print stories and columns in Saterland Frisian. The most important cultural representative of the Saterland Frisian language community is the Seelter Buund association. The Saterland Frisians traditionally belong to the Catholic religion and the carnival is therefore a very significant event for them.

### → LANGUAGE

The traditional language of the Saterland Frisians is Saterland Frisian, the last remaining dialect of East Frisian. Within Saterland Frisian there are small phonological and some rare lexical dialectal differences, but these do not stand in the way of communica-

tion. Many Saterland Frisians (also) speak High and Low German. The Saterland Frisians refer to themselves in Frisian as "Seelter".



The crest

## → THE ORGANISATION "EBLUL DEUTSCHLAND - KOMITEE FÜR REGIONAL- UND MINDERHEITENSPRACHEN"

(English: EBLUL Germany - Committee for regional and minority languages)

The Saterland Frisians are represented in the European Bureau for Minority Languages EBLUL. The Oldenburgische Landschaft, supported by the Municipality of Saterland, has founded the Seeltersk-Kontoor in Ramsloh, to research and support Saterland Frisian. The most important challenges for the language are

### Contact information

EBLUL Deutschland – Komitee für  
Regional- und Minderheitensprachen  
Humboldtstraße 15  
D-26121 Oldenburg

[www.seeltersk.de](http://www.seeltersk.de)  
[kalleschramm@icloud.com](mailto:kalleschramm@icloud.com)

Phone: +49 4492 921 028



### Little language course



hello – Moin  
home – Bäddestede  
culture – Kultuur  
language – Toal  
work – Wierk  
family – Foulk  
community – Meente

to advance the emancipation of the speakers, to give the language a higher social status and to inspire younger generations for it.



The Saterland Frisian game "Dubbel Plezier!" is a fun way for children to learn or practice the Sater Frisian language. © Henk Wolf



# West Frisians in the Netherlands

## Ried fan de Fryske Beweging



**De  
Fryske  
Beweging.**  
sûnt 1945

### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Between 400-200 BC the first people settled in the area of the Province of Fryslân. The ancient area of settlement of the Frisians is the region between Rhine and Weser. Since the expansion of the North Frisians to the North Frisian Islands and the neighbouring mainland, North and West Frisian have evolved separately from one another. Since 1815, Friesland has been a province of the newly established Kingdom of the Netherlands. Since then, the Netherlands has been a modern centralistic state and today the most important decisions are taken in the administrative capital The Hague.

### → CURRENT SITUATION

In 1997, the name of the province of Friesland was officially changed into the Frisian name of Fryslân. On 4 June 2013, the Dutch parliament voted unanimously in favour of an act on the use of the Frisian language. The act confirms the status as Frisian as second official language of the Netherlands and regulates the use of the Frisian language in education, public administration and in the legal system. The act also forms the legal basis for the covenant on the Frisian language and culture between the national government and the Province of Fryslân.

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

Fryslân has its own radio and television broadcaster. "Omrop Fryslân" but not a Frisian-language newspaper. Unfortunately, the language is hardly visible in the written media.

### → LANGUAGE

(West) Frisian (Frysk) is an autochthonous minority language, which is spoken by approximately 350,000 people in the Dutch province of Fryslân. The language belongs to the Frisian sub-branch of the West-Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. The closest related languages are Dutch, North Frisian and Sater-Frisian as the sole remaining part of East Frisian.

The Province of Fryslân has about approximately 660,000 inhabitants. According to a survey by the Province of Fryslân, 94% of the inhabitants of Friesland understand Frisian, 74% can speak the language, 75% of the inhabitants can read Frisian and 26% can write it. More than half of the inhabitants indicated that Frisian is their mother tongue.



*The flag*

→ **THE ORGANISATION "RIED FAN DE FRYSKE BEWEGING (RFDFB)"**

(English: Council of the Frisian Movement) is an organisation that was founded in 1945, and which works for the preservation of the Frisian language and culture. Fryslân is officially a bilingual province, but the reality is different. There is still a long way to go in any domain. The Ried's focus is on the strengthening of the educational system, on the visibility in daily life and economic value of the language.



*Sheep on seedike*

**Little language course**

hello – goeie  
homeland – heitelân  
culture – kultuer  
language – taal  
work – wurk  
family – famylje  
community – mienskip

The Ried has a daily Frisian newspaper online: ItNijts.frl. It issues four times a year a newsletter.

→ **For more information:**

Eric Hoekstra *The Frisians, A frank and amusing guide to what makes the Frisians FRISIAN.*  
Xenophobe's Guides 2017

**Contact information**

Ried fan de Fryske Beweging  
Boterhoek 1  
NL-8911 DH Ljouwert

[www.fryskebeweging.nl](http://www.fryskebeweging.nl)  
[ynfo@fryskebeweging.frl](mailto:ynfo@fryskebeweging.frl)

Phone: +31 515559597

*Frisian landscape  
with clouds*





# Yenish in Switzerland

## Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse



### → HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

The Yenish are a centuries-old European population that lives in the Alpine region, but also the areas to the west and east of the former German Empire, where they were expelled. They traditionally live from trade and crafts, which they offer to the majority population, and are therefore both a separate group on the fringes of the majority society but also closely linked to it. Their way of earning a living has led some families to adopt a semi-nomadic lifestyle. However, discrimination and persecution have also deepened rifts. One traumatic period was the removal of children and the tearing apart of families between 1927 and 1972, carried out by the state affiliated “Pro Juventute” foundation; the aim was to destroy the Yenish culture and way of life and is considered genocide by the Radgenossenschaft.

There are focal points in many urban and rural areas across Europe. In Switzerland, particularly in the canton of Graubünden, in Germany in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Hesse, there are focal points in Alsace-Lorraine, in Paris, in the south of France and in Luxembourg, and there are caravan settlements in the Netherlands. A kind of coming out is underway, which is leading to more and more people acknowledging their Yenish origins and, as a result, more regions characterised by Yenish are becoming recognisable.

### → CURRENT SITUATION

The number of Yenish in Switzerland is estimated at 35,000, and ten times as many in Europe as a whole. However, these are only extremely rough estimates and there are no censuses. The Yenish have been recognised as a national minority in Switzerland under the proper name “Yenish” since 2016, based on the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Yenish language is also recognised as a non-territorial minority language. A few hundred Yenish people are still travelling in caravans during the summer months. Their way of life is of great symbolic importance, but over the decades, the opportunities to hold on to them have dwindled. Latent racism, which is often expressed in the hostile attitude of local authorities must be countered by constant education and opportunities for encounters.

### → CULTURE AND MEDIA

The Radgenossenschaft, founded in 1975, regularly publishes the magazine “Scharotl” (English: wheel or Yenish caravan), the first and only Yenish magazine internationally. It also runs its own museum in Zurich-Altstetten, which also serves as a meeting place and place of business, and a campsite, Rania near Zillis (Graubünden), with a restaurant, permanent chalets and pitches for day tourists, where Yenish and non-Yenish people meet. Market events and family celebrations are organised there. The square is maintained by the Radgenossenschaft as a Yenish cultural site.



## → LANGUAGE

The Yenish have their own language, Yenish, which is documented in individual words as early as the end of the 15th century (Sebastian Brant, *Narrenschiff*) and which can be found in variants in many European regions. Yenish people grow up at least bilingually. Among themselves, they speak Yenish (in Switzerland: “Jänisch”) and the language of the majority, i.e. German, French, Italian and Romansh. Yenish uses words from the majority languages, which are creatively and almost poetically transposed. Because of the persecution they have experienced, many Yenish regard their language as a secret language; it is a cultural point of reference

### ← Little language course

As Yenish consider their language to be a secret language, here is just one well-known greeting: “En qwante Schei” - have a nice day.

## Contact information

Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse  
Hermetschloostrasse 73  
CH-8048 Zürich

Präsident: Daniel Huber

[www.radgenossenschaft.ch](http://www.radgenossenschaft.ch)  
[info@radgenossenschaft.ch](mailto:info@radgenossenschaft.ch)

Phone: +41 44 432 54 44



and a help in times of danger. However, many Yenish have also grown up without this language because of the child abductions they experienced.

## → THE ORGANISATION "RADGENOSSENSCHAFT DER LANDSTRASSE"

The Radgenossenschaft is the oldest Yenish organisation still in existence in Europe and the umbrella organisation of the Swiss Yenish and Sinti, supported by the Swiss Confederation. Its central task is to be the political voice of the Yenish and Sinti, whereby it also supports the interests of the Roma. The Radgenossenschaft promotes all efforts that strengthen the minorities: creation of living space, in particular the creation of places to stand and pass through; social support; promotion of culture with events as well as the promotion and preservation of the Yenish language; management of a museum/documentation centre; promotion of education through integration in regular schools and didactic support while traveling; maintenance of relations with the authorities and international friendship. On its website, the Radgenossenschaft publishes its annual activity reports.



## Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)

Founded in Paris in 1949, the Federal Union of European Nationalities is one of the most important players in the field of minority protection in Europe. As an umbrella organisation, it brings together 114 minority organisations and is present in 36 countries. It is the main advocate of Europe's autochthonous national minorities, nationalities and language groups and defines itself as a mutual support community that represents the interests of European minorities at regional, national and, above all, European level.

It maintains a large network of European regions, policy makers, scientific institutes, cultural and educational institutions, youth organisations, media and other associates, and works to preserve and promote the identity, language, culture, rights and traditions of European minorities. It regularly participates in meetings and conferences of international organisations such as the EU institutions, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the OSCE. Six working groups operate under its umbrella: the working groups of the German, Slavic, Turkish and Hungarian communities, the working group on education and the working group of minorities without a kin-state.

The FUEN is headed by the Presidium, elected by the Assembly of Delegates and consisting of the President, six Vice-Presidents and the President of the YEN. Since 2016, the Presidium has been chaired by Loránt Vincze, a member of the Hungarian community in Romania.



### Contact information

Föderalistische Union Europäischer  
Nationalitäten  
Schiffbrücke 42  
D-24939 Flensburg

[www.fuen.org](http://www.fuen.org)  
[info@fuen.org](mailto:info@fuen.org)

Phone: +49 46112855





*Participants of the FUEN Congress 2022 in Berlin, Germany*

*Team Südtirol celebrating their win in the men's finals at EUROPEADA 2022 in Klagenfurt, Austria*

*Olivia Schubert, President of FUEN, at the FUEN Congress 2025 in Bolzano - Bozen, South Tyrol*



Over the last few years, FUEN has expanded and consolidated its team and presence, operating three offices - in Flensburg, Berlin and Brussels. The success of the Minority SafePack European Citizens' Initiative, coordinated by FUEN, gave the organisation a new kind of visibility and a consolidated position.

In addition to its advocacy and lobbying work, FUEN is committed to changing the general perception on minorities, highlighting their economic added value, facilitating their involvement in the decision-making process and even showcasing their football talents at EUROPEADA.



## Coordination & activities of the Working Group Non-Kin-State



The Non-Kin-State Working Group was launched by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) in 2017 and is the second youngest initiative under the FUEN umbrella. “Non-Kin-State” means “without a mother state” and Non-Kin-State minorities are characterised by the fact that they do not correspond to any nation state in terms of culture or language.

The activities of the Non-Kin-State Working Group are primarily based on the working meetings, which take place twice a year: on the one hand as part of the FUEN annual congresses, and on the other in the form of the annual meetings, at which representatives of minorities without a mother state and experts come together to focus on topics that correspond to the specific needs and challenges of this minority group. After the inaugural meeting in Rome, Italy in 2017, the annual meetings have been held in Berlin, Germany (2018), Constanta, Romania (2019), online due to the COVID-19 pandemic (2020), Dagebüll, Germany (2021), Velingrad, Bulgaria (2022), Altafulla, Catalonia, Spain (2023) and Lübbenau/Spreewald, Germany (2024).



*Participants of the annual Meeting of the Non-Kin-State Working Group in Altafulla, Catalonia in 2023.*

In line with the principle of solidarity, the working group’s activities focus on dialogue between members. The main focus here is on the strengths and successes of the minorities, which are presented by members and guest speakers in the form of best-practice presentations during the annual meetings. The aim of this exchange of experiences is to help minorities without a mother state to find solutions to existing problems. The overarching goal is to show the minorities without a mother state ways to help themselves based on constructive exchange, thereby



*Spokesperson Bahne Bahnsen with a young Pomak bride at the Annual Meeting of the Non-Kin-State Working Group in Velingrad, Bulgaria in 2022.*

strengthening minority communities and ensuring the long-term survival of their languages and cultures.

The spokesperson for the mandate (2022-2025) for the working group is FUEN Vice President Bahne Bahnsen (representative of the North Frisians in Germany).

## Contact information

If you have any further questions or are interested in becoming a member of the Working Group of Non-Kin State Minorities, please contact us.

For more information and the latest news, please visit our NKS WG website, where you can also subscribe to the newsletter:

FUEN / WG NKS Coordinator  
Katharina Schaible  
E-mail: [info@fuen.org](mailto:info@fuen.org)  
Web: [nks.fuen.org](http://nks.fuen.org)



*Participants of the annual Meeting of the Non-Kin-State Working Group in Constanta, Romania in 2019.*



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