



# Dialog

*Minorities &  
Minority Policy*



# Forum

*National Minorities  
and Ethnic Groups  
in Schleswig-Holstein  
and in Nordschleswig/  
Region Syddanmark*



# Norden

*Information  
Coordination  
Cooperation*



## What does the DialogForumNorden stand for?

The DialogForumNorden (DFN) is composed of the four national minorities and ethnic groups in Schleswig-Holstein and Nord-schleswig / Region Syddanmark (North Schleswig / Region of Southern Denmark) as well as institutions, organizations and politicians that deal with minority issues. These stakeholders have joined forces to exchange information and, if need be, take a common position when minority affairs are concerned. In doing so, the independence and autonomy of the individual organization or institution will be respected and maintained. In this way the participating parties aim to pool their interests and to boost their bargaining power through coordination and cooperation.



## Why protect minorities – what's the benefit for the majority?

The protection of minorities can affect each and every one of us, at least at “second glance”. That is why everyone should deal with the issue what asserting and defending one's rights vis-à-vis the majority population means and what is involved when one needs to rely on tolerance and acceptance.

Minorities are a source of enrichment for society as a whole. They act as intercultural mediators and are able to show the majority population different ways how every European can deal with several identities: an identity as a representative of a region, as a member of a nation and /or people and as a European citizen. Europe is all about diversity – minorities, endowed as they are with their own identity, language and culture, are natural bearers of such diversity.

## Who are the members of the DialogForumNorden?

*The Commissioner of the Minister-President for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, Border Area Activities and Low German* [www.schleswig-holstein.de](http://www.schleswig-holstein.de)

*A permanent representative from the European Affairs Committee of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein* [www.sh-landtag.de](http://www.sh-landtag.de)

*The Director of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein*  
[www.sh-landtag.de](http://www.sh-landtag.de)

*Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger, BDN (umbrella organization of the German minority in Denmark)* [www.bdn.dk](http://www.bdn.dk)

*Sydslesvigsk Forening, SSF (umbrella organization of the Danish minority in Germany)* [www.sydslesvigsk-forening.de](http://www.sydslesvigsk-forening.de)

*Frasche Råd – Friesenrat Sektion Nord e.V. (Frisian Council, Section North)* [www.friesenrat.de](http://www.friesenrat.de)

*Verband deutscher Sinti und Roma e. V., Landesverband Schleswig-Holstein (Association of German Sinti and Roma, Schleswig-Holstein Section)* [www.sinti-roma-sh.de](http://www.sinti-roma-sh.de)

*Südschleswigscher Wählerverband, SSW (South Schleswig Voters' Association)* [www.ssw.de](http://www.ssw.de)

*Jaruplund Højskole* [www.jaruplund.de](http://www.jaruplund.de)

*Nordfriisk Instituut (North Frisian Institute)*  
[www.nordfriiskinstituut.de](http://www.nordfriiskinstituut.de)

*The Commissioner for Minorities of the European University of Flensburg* [www.uni-flensburg.de](http://www.uni-flensburg.de)

*Europäische Akademie Schleswig-Holstein, EASH (European Academy)* [www.eash.de](http://www.eash.de)

*European Centre for Minority Issues, ECMI* [www.ecmi.de](http://www.ecmi.de)  
*Federalist Union of European Nationalities, FUEN*  
[www.fuen.org](http://www.fuen.org)

*Region Syddanmark* [www.regionsyddanmark.dk](http://www.regionsyddanmark.dk)

*Region Sønderjylland-Schleswig* [www.region.dk](http://www.region.dk)

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## The Minorities Commissioner

is appointed by the Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein and works independently in an honorary capacity. The respective Commissioner has contributed to creating an atmosphere of understanding and mutual appreciation for many decades now and has brought together majorities and minorities in matters related to minority affairs. The Minorities Commissioner serves as the chair of the DialogForumNorden.

## The State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein and its minority policy

Minority policy does not only require sensitive support but also needs continual development. Those two facets must go hand in hand with reliable structures, a sympathetic ear to listen to problems and a willingness to find mutually beneficial solutions. These guiding principles were the reason to create and establish bodies representing the German minority in North Schleswig (Denmark),

the Frisian ethnic group and the minority group of German Sinti and Roma in Schleswig-Holstein, with the respective President of the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein acting as their chair. Lawmakers from all parliamentary groups in the State Parliament and the German Federal Parliament, respectively, the Minorities Commissioner appointed by the Minister-President as well as representatives of the respective minorities and ethnic groups also serve on these bodies. The members meet twice a year to discuss pertinent issues in a consensus-based spirit and to provide assistance as needed. The Frisian ethnic group, the Danish minority and the minority group of German Sinti and Roma in Schleswig-Holstein are guaranteed protection and support by Article 6 of the Constitution of Schleswig-Holstein. The special significance which Schleswig-Holstein's State Parliament attaches to minority policy is also reflected in the fact that the "Committee on Federal and European Affairs, Cooperation in the Baltic and North Sea Regions and Minorities" is the responsible committee to deliberate these issues. The Report on Minorities submitted by the State Government as well as the cross-border and Europe-wide importance of minority policies takes center stage in these debates. In each legislative term the Committee appoints one of its members to serve as a Permanent Representative on the DialogForumNorden (DFN). The Director of the State Parliament holds a membership in the DFN as well.



## The German minority in North Schleswig (Denmark)

The Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger (BDN) is the umbrella organization of the German minority in Denmark, representing the political, cultural and economic interests of this group.

The German minority in North Schleswig, i.e. north of the German-Danish border, has existed by this name since the referendum in 1920. Nowadays, some 15 000 members out of a total population of 250 000 living in North Schleswig belong to the German minority. The German minority maintains its own kindergartens, schools and libraries; engages in church and social work; publishes its own daily; and offers sports and social activities through a broad spectrum of organizations. The General Secretariat is located in Apenrade/Aabenraa.

The BDN is the sponsoring organization of the German minority's political party called Schleswigsche Partei (SP) and it also manages the Secretariat of the German Minority in Copenhagen. The Secretariat, acting on behalf of the minority's competent bodies, represents the interests of the German minority vis-à-vis the Folketing, the government and the central administration in Copenhagen. The German minority aims to expand and intensify cooperation across the German-Danish border and is an advocate for a Europe united in diversity in which national and cultural identities are respected. The German minority feels an obligation to help prevent or resolve conflicts in Europe wherever possible by contributing its experience in minority policy in the German-Danish border region.

## The Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein

The Danish minority living in Schleswig, the northern part of Schleswig-Holstein, consists of some 50 000 German citizens whose self-identification is Danish. The Danish minority maintains a wide range of organizations which cover almost every area of public life such as culture, politics, education (57 kindergartens with app. 2 200 children – 46 school with app. 5 700 students), newspapers (one daily), health services, sports, eldercare and church. The cultural organization Sydslesvigsk Forening e. V. (SSF) is the Danish minority's largest organization and its principal contact. The head office of this umbrella organization – the Dansk General Secretariat – is located in Flensborghus in Flensburg. The Danish minority in Schleswig operates its own folk high school Jaruplund Højskole, which was established in 1950. Among other things, the educational center aims to disseminate information on the development of the historical and contemporary interconnections in the border region; convey an idea of the cultural diversity found in that part of the state; and encourage interest in German-Danish cooperation in the context of fostering good neighborly relations within Europe.

Along with the Frisian ethnic group and the minority group of German Sinti and Roma, the Danish minority is guaranteed protection and support by Article 6 of the Constitution of Schleswig-Holstein. The Frisians and the Danish minority are participating actively in politics through their joint party, the South Schleswig

Voters' Association (SSW). The SSW is represented in the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein, also as a result of being exempted from the 5% electoral threshold. To gain a seat in parliament, the party must obtain the same minimum number of votes as needed by the candidate winning the mandate with the least number of votes. The SSW does not only champion the causes of the minorities but is also actively involved in shaping policy across all of Schleswig-Holstein.

## **The Frisian ethnic group in Schleswig-Holstein**

The North Frisians' settlement area is situated in the district of Nordfriesland and on the island of Heligoland. The Frisian language is the North Frisians' most important feature of identification. The language, actively spoken by some 10 000 people in North Friesland, is protected as a minority language by the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. About 50 000 people identify themselves as North Frisians.

Roughly 950 students take part in Frisian language lessons at schools in North Friesland and on the island of Heligoland and very many children are introduced to Frisian in kindergarten. The umbrella organization of all Frisian associations and organizations the Frische Rädj – Frisian Council, Section North e.V. – is a registered association whose office is located in Bräist / Bredstedt. It functions as a point of contact for public authorities and main-

tains relations to the Frisian communities in Lower Saxony and the Netherlands. The Nordfriisk Instituut in Bräist / Bredstedt is the central scientific institution in North Frisia for the preservation and promotion of and research on the Frisian language, history and culture. It advises and supports volunteers who work in the Frisian associations as well as university students and teachers; runs a comprehensive documentation service; and publishes various books and magazines.

Since 1998 the Frisian ethnic group has also been included in the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Protection and support of the Frisian ethnic group have been guaranteed by Schleswig-Holstein's constitution since the year 1990. By adopting a Law on the Promotion of the Frisian Language in the Public Sphere in 2004, the State Parliament of Schleswig-Holstein laid the groundwork for introducing highly visible bilingual signage in North Friesland and on Heligoland, such as bilingual place-name and train station signs or bilingual signposting for state authorities. Thanks to this piece of legislation, Frisian currently is on the way to becoming the second official language in North Friesland and on Heligoland.

## **The German Sinti and Roma in Schleswig-Holstein**

Approximately 60 000 German Sinti and 10 000 German Roma live in Germany and have been recognized as a national minority

since 1995. The language spoken by the Roma, Romani, has been legally recognized and protected in accordance with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages since 1998. The Sinti und Roma minorities are long-established national minorities all across Germany; they were first mentioned in an official document in the diocesan town of Hildesheim in 1407. For historical reasons, members of the minority predominantly live in urban centers, especially in the former West German states, rather than in rural areas. The Schleswig-Holstein Section of the Association of German Sinti and Roma represents the estimated 6 000 members of the German Sinti and Roma communities living in Schleswig-Holstein. Staffers at the office in Kiel provide counseling in social matters and actively maintain and cultivate the history, culture and traditions of their national minority. The Schleswig-Holstein Section engages in public relations and lobbies for the political and social acceptance of the German Sinti and Roma. In addition, the Schleswig-Holstein Section focuses on educational activities; it is the legal entity responsible for the jobs created as part of an award-winning project for female mediators and thus for 12 educational guidance officers who have been working at schools in Schleswig-Holstein since the academic year 2014/15. A cooperative housing project called “MARO TEMM” has evolved into a location where the Sinti and Roma minorities can preserve their special cultural characteristics as well as the Romani language. Children in particular are to be encouraged and empowered to cope with and live in the two different cultures. The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma with its documen-

tation and cultural center based in Heidelberg is the largest umbrella organization for the various state sections at the federal level. The Schleswig-Holstein Section is a member of this organization. Besides the Danish minority and the Frisian ethnic group, the minority group of German Sinti and Roma in Schleswig-Holstein has also been guaranteed protection and support by the state’s constitution since 2012.

## Publication details

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