

Factsheet

3rd CONVIVENZA Seminar

Strengthening self-leadership and collective responsibility in minority communities

In line with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, the *CONVIVENZA Foundation - The International Center for Minorities* supports inclusion, intercommunity dialogue, and international mechanisms that promote full respect for minority rights and the principle of non-discrimination. In doing so, it contributes to cultural diversity, social cohesion, stability, and democratic societies across Europe.

However, despite growing recognition of these rights, minorities continue to face systematic violations and structural discrimination. Social tensions, increasing hate speech and politically motivated attempts to exploit differences all undermine protections for Small Peoples. A survey conducted in 2021 by Eurac Research and the CONVIVENZA Foundation reaches a similar conclusion. It shows that although the quality of livelihoods and institutions differs among Small Peoples in Europe, there is considerable room for improvement in areas such as language rights, education, digitalization, healthcare, and more. An overview of the survey can be found in Volume 6 of the CONVIVENZA Book Series (2023).

To address this situation the CONVIVENZA Foundation has been supporting small linguistic, cultural, and religious communities in Europe for nearly twenty years through small-scale but tangible projects. Its work focuses on fostering self-leadership and strengthening communities' ability to drive their own development. This approach shifts the focus from debating how minorities' lives and institutions can be protected to enhancing their self-empowerment and collective responsibility.

One key project that follows this approach is a long-term initiative launched in 2015. The project is based on the foundation's method, the "Governmental Learning Spiral" (GLSp), an approach designed to enhance innovation and learning in politics and to identify solutions in polarized and complex political environments. The method is described in the foundation's manual as well as in Volume 7 of the CONVIVENZA Book Series (2026).

This initiative involves approximately forty selected experts and representatives of different linguistic, cultural, and religious communities across Europe. Each delegation consists of one civil society participant and one government official. Participants represent communities such as Aromanian, Sami, Ladin, Friulian, Rhaeto-Romansh, Jenish and Sinti, Sorbian, North Frisian, West Frisian, Carpatho-

Rusyn, Kashubian, Roma, Breton, Basque, Galician, Corsican, Meskhetian Turks, and Crimean Tatars, originating from more than fifteen Central and Eastern European countries.

To date, the project has completed two GLSp cycles. The first took place in 2015, when participants met in Zuoz (Canton Grison/Switzerland) to review the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and developed a set of concrete recommendations on how it could be improved. In 2021, a second cycle was launched. Based on the aforementioned survey evaluating the impact of the Framework Convention and the Scuol Recommendations, a further seminar was held in Müstair (Canton Grison/Switzerland), where practical measures and related implementation plans were developed. These measures focused primarily on language rights and political participation in a digital world and were summarized in Volume 6 of the CONVIVENZA Book Series (2023).

This year, the foundation plans to organize a third cycle with the aim of reviewing, complementing, and updating the measures developed during the second seminar. It will be conducted as a hybrid event, with participants joining online while board members of the foundation meet at a conference venue in Bern. The participants of the event will be composed of the contributors to the first and second seminars, selected representatives of the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), as well as representatives of Small Peoples who have not yet been involved in the project. Particular emphasis will be placed on participants under the age of thirty-five.

The goal of the seminar is to enhance learning from each other's experiences and expertise and to apply these new insights to the respective contexts. In addition, a declaration on self-leadership and collective responsibility will be drafted. The results of the seminar will be shared and validated with a wider interested audience in a public session on the second day of the seminar. These results will be summarized in Volume 9 of the CONVIVENZA Book Series, which will be published on the occasion of the 20th jubilee of the Foundation in 2027.

The event is scheduled for November 23, 2026, from 1:30 pm to 5:00 pm, and November 24, 2026, from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm. The public session will be held from 9:00 am to 10:30 am. A detailed agenda will be sent to the invited participants at the end of October 2026. The conference language will be English. The seminar is organized under the auspices of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and funded by the CONVIVENZA Foundation and the Canton of Grisons as the main sponsors.

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