



EUROPEAN CENTRE
FOR
MINORITY ISSUES

PERSPECTIVES

2026



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FOR
MINORITY ISSUES

European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

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ABOUT THE ECMI

The ECMI is Europe's leading institution triangulating research, standards, and action around national minority protection and empowerment.

The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) is a research institute dedicated to advancing the understanding, protection, and empowerment of Europe's national minorities. By conducting **cutting-edge research**, offering **policy advice**, and **fostering dialogue**, the ECMI bridges the gap between academic insight and practical solutions to ensure respect for diversity in all aspects of society.

Founded in 1996 by the governments of Denmark, Germany, and Schleswig-Holstein, the ECMI is based in the historic Kompagnietor building in Flensburg, Germany, within the vibrant German-Danish border region. This location embodies the Centre's commitment to cross-border co-operation and cultural pluralism as a cornerstone of European heritage.

At the heart of the ECMI's mission is the belief that **cultural and ethnic diversity is a valuable human asset**. The Centre equips policymakers, practitioners, and researchers with innovative tools and knowledge to address minority-majority relations, mitigate conflicts, and foster inclusive societies. Through collaborative projects, the ECMI engages with academic institutions, NGOs, and international actors to promote constructive dialogue and shared solutions.

With a highly specialised library featuring over 3,000 items in more than 20 languages and hundreds of open-access publications concerning minorities in Europe and beyond, the ECMI serves as a **hub for knowledge** and resources on inter-ethnic relations, cultural diversity, and minority rights. Constantly bringing new research to the public, the ECMI ensures its work remains accessible and impactful.



This unique blend of expertise and accessibility positions the ECMI as Europe's premier institution for addressing the challenges of diversity and fostering a peaceful, equitable future.

OPENING PERSPECTIVES

Minority issues at the ECMI span a wide range of activities – all encapsulated in this booklet. Whether it's the academic research of our clusters, the international networking within our EU COST Action PLURILINGMEDIA, our expert advice to policymakers or our outreach via teaching and public events, we understand that there are many partners and levels in the endeavor to ensure minority protection and livelihood in Europe. This is the mission that has been given to us by our Danish and German Founders. It is one that we carry faithfully forward in 2026 – our 30th year of existence!



VELLO PETTAI
DIRECTOR

HIGHLIGHTS

PLURILINGMEDIA enters its second year in 2026, with a host of physical events planned across Europe as the funding increases for its second grant period. Workshops in Tirana, Galway and Helsinki, plus a legal-focused training school in Rijeka, will form some of the core events in this year.

This builds upon the Action's general conference in Warsaw in December 2025 with over 70 participants, all benefitting from COST Action funding. 2026 will also see PLURILINGMEDIA increase its written output, with two policy papers planned as deliverables this year as well as starting multiple edited volumes and journal special issues.



Now involving over 300 working group members from more than 40 countries, PLURILINGMEDIA has already become one of the most prominent projects in its field - helping also to grow awareness of the ECMI across the continent and beyond.



EU ENLARGEMENT AND MINORITY ISSUES

The enlargement of the European Union in the coming years will bring with it numerous political and policy-related challenges with respect to national minorities. Most notable here is the degree to which enlargement is seen as part of a 'crisis response' to the broader geopolitical crisis of our times. Drawing on an expert workshop co-organised in October 2025 with the Wilhelm Merton Centre at Frankfurt University, the ECMI will publish a series of reflection papers on how these different issues are converging.

- How as the current crisis undermined (if not fatally wounded) the existing European minority rights regime?
- What does it mean for minority rights to have EU enlargement take place as part of a crisis response situation (as opposed to more peaceful times)?
- In what ways should EU enlargement amidst crisis response expand its toolkit to incorporate more effectively conflict resolution/prevention and multilateral inter-institutional approaches with regard to minority protection?

- What could be the institutional, procedural or regulatory ways in which minority protection could be formally incorporated or mainstreamed within the EU either before or after enlargement in order to enhance the entire Europe minority rights regime in this moment of crisis response?
- How have perspectives on accession and minority protection shifted within individual accession countries during the current crisis?



The contributions from numerous well-known scholars will be published as launch material for the new Yearbook of the ECMI's premier academic publication, the Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE).

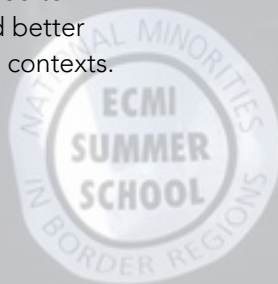
ANNUAL SUMMER SCHOOL EUROPE'S NON-KIN-STATE MINORITIES: PROFILES AND REALITIES | 23-28 AUGUST

Many national minorities have 'homeland' countries or kin-states that are neighboring or close to the country in which they live. However, far more numerous are those minorities without a kin-state. These groups need to struggle without such external help, and yet they must still fulfill the same cultural, linguistic or other needs of their communities as other minorities.

At the same time, non-kin-state minorities differ vastly in their scope and import. From large, territorially organised groups (like Catalonians), to regionally focused, but minoritised groups (like West Frisians), all the way to dispersed minorities (like Roma and Sami), there is a special need to analytically distinguish and better understand these multiple contexts.

The 2026 ECMI Summer School will profile these issues via our traditional mix of lectures, panel discussions, site visits and group work. The event will take place this time in Flensburg, as we will draw on the examples of the North Frisians and the Sinti/Roma in this region.

The Summer School will continue, however, to be the ECMI's key educational pillar, bringing together young researchers, students of minority studies, and minority practitioners interested in examining minority issues at an advanced academic level.





FELIX SCHULTE
HEAD OF CLUSTER

Ethnicity and nationalism have often led to conflict, whilst security is the central precondition for minority and majorities to flourish. This cluster focuses on both the causes of ethnic strife as well as the institutional preconditions for peace and stability.

TERRITORIAL SELF-GOVERNANCE IN TROUBLED TIMES

This theme explores territorial self-government in the context of cultural polarisation and autocratisation. It focuses on three key areas: (1) the spatio-temporal patterns through which territorial autonomies are affected by national and subnational autocratisation; (2) the proximate causes of secessionist backlash; and (3) the institutional safeguards that can enhance the resilience of territorial autonomy arrangements. By bridging the literatures on autonomy, autocratisation, and ethnic conflict, this work addresses an understudied yet increasingly relevant phenomenon in divided societies. For 2026, the theme will build on data from a successful international expert survey carried out in early 2025 as well as a case-study survey conducted in Gagauzia, Moldova.

MINORITIES UNDER REPRESSION

The danger posed by Russia's aggression against Ukraine has been felt first hand for over ten years by its Crimean Tatar minority. This research theme investigates their fate under repression, focusing on three interrelated aspects: anti-minority repression, cooperation with the occupying forces and co-optation of minority elites, as well as their protest behavior following repressive events. Particularly, we focus on three key questions: (1) How have repression patterns evolved in post-annexation Crimea? (2) How does repression influence the co-optation of Crimean Tatar elites? (3) What factors explain the occurrence of protests and various forms of civil resistance against occupying forces? To answer these questions, we integrate novel geo-coded event data with qualitative evidence and interview material, offering the first systematic documentation of these human rights violations. The research advances our understanding of unconventional political action under occupation as well as the strategies of occupying forces to establish comprehensive systems of social control.



KYRIAKI TOPIDI
HEAD OF CLUSTER

The work of the Cluster on Culture and Diversity aims to problematise the evolution of minority culture in society in light of global developments. As ethno-cultural minority groups become increasingly securitised in the European context and beyond, research during 2026 will reflect the resonance of such developments on minority identity culture formation.

NEW APPROACHES TO DIGITAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

Data management and digital governance have become powerful issues affecting the likelihood of minorities.

Researching this theme involves two streams of inquiry. The first relates to the evolving concept of indigenous data sovereignty. Previous work by the cluster has shown that ethno-cultural minority groups are victimised in digital spaces. However, problems concerning data collection and its various uses continue to grow at the expense of systems of accountability and transparency. Discussions on alternative modes of digital governance are under way. Secondly, the compatibility of existing data governance models with minority cultural diversity protection remains understudied. This research stream will explore minority-relevant, bottom-up approaches to data governance that problematise uses of 'big data' for their representational capacities and for their potential to generate new forms of power relations.

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM AND THE POLITICS OF FEAR

Freedom of religion or belief seen from a majority-minority comparative perspective is increasingly connected to populism. Projections of majoritarian religion within radical right populist parties in the European context have transformed religious identity into a marker of native identity. This transformation is carried out with the help of sanitised versions of past, ethnically homogenous welfare models or the glorification of women's traditional subordination. At the same time, the question of religious minorities continues to be used as a geopolitical lever by states seeking to exercise their national sovereignty through international influence. The aim of this research stream will be to map and interpret the legislative impact of populist strategies used against religious minorities. Research will highlight the role of majority religious actors in shaping shared values and social imaginaries of nationhood, the comparative projection of populist narratives in law-making on religious freedoms as well as the perilous interconnection between majoritarian religious claims by radical right parties with secularism.



ANDREEA CÂRSTOCEA
HEAD OF CLUSTER

In recent years, social and economic inequalities have become a growing issue across European societies. Both the 2008 global financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic had disproportionately severe effects on national minorities. The central focus of the Equality and Inclusion Cluster therefore relates to the social and economic participation of national minorities.

MINORITIES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

A major initiative for the Cluster in 2026 will be to organise a workshop focusing on business and minority rights, allowing for an exploration of the barriers, drivers, and experiences of minorities in participating in the private sector as business-owners, employers and employees. While the academic field researching business and human rights is a well-established one, the literature juxtaposing minority rights and business is less developed. The workshop will offer the opportunity for reflection on how national minorities fare in the private sector, focusing on themes such as the use of minority languages in the private sector, cross-border economic activities, discrimination in employment and ethnic businesses.

GEOPOLITICS AND MINORITY RIGHTS IN MOLDOVA

Moldova's accession to the European Union has been given a boost in recent years. However, a number of ethnopolitical challenges remain. Following a successful 2025 seminar organised in Chişinău by the ECMI on language rights, the focus of the cluster in 2026 will shift to contemporary geopolitical developments. Moldova's ethnic and linguistic composition, combined with its geographical location and historical background have all transform minority rights into a complex and highly sensitive matter. The results of the 2025 elections have confirmed Moldova's European trajectory; yet the debates that took place during the campaign have deepened existing rifts between the Romanian-speaking majority and (mostly) Russian-speaking minorities. To address these questions, the cluster will organise an open workshop, which will seek to scan the horizon moving forward.



LJUBICA DJORDJEVIĆ
HEAD OF CLUSTER

The Justice and Governance Cluster serves as the ECMI's hub for research on the European minority rights regime, including the Framework Convention and the European Charter. It examines how legal systems impact diversity management.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL? THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION AND SMALLER NON-KIN-STATE MINORITIES

The Framework Convention does not define the notion of 'national minority', leaving its interpretation to the ratifying states. The Advisory Committee for the FC has taken a broad and inclusive approach, advocating protection for all groups seeking recognition and encouraging states to consider the specific circumstances of different minorities, including through an article-by-article approach. Yet, most groups protected under the Framework Convention are classical national minorities, and its instruments are designed mainly for larger, politically relevant minorities. This focus risks overlooking smaller minorities, for whom protection may be less effective despite potentially greater need. For 2025, the Cluster will analyse whether and how Advisory Committee recommendations have been tailored to specific groups (other than Roma), and whether smaller minorities gain visibility. Second, case studies will explore the practical impact of protection instruments on selected non-kin-state minorities,

including Ruthenians (Serbia), Frisians (Germany), Vlachs (North Macedonia), Tornedalians (Sweden), and Cornish or Ulster Scots (UK).

THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION AND SOCIETAL INTEGRATION

While the Framework Convention is designed to protect national minorities, the Advisory Committee has interpreted it more broadly to include societal integration in diverse societies. This shift reflects literature noting that minority protection, despite good intentions, can sometimes reinforce segregation and 'parallel societies'. While this idea is largely uncontested, some states object to what they view as an ultra vires interpretation, arguing it transforms the Framework Convention into a general diversity management tool. To assess this concern, the Cluster will analyse the Advisory Committee's monitoring work, focusing on recommendations targeting societal integration and states' responses. Second, it explores case studies of integration strategies, assessing their alignment with the Framework Convention's standards.



MARTIN KLATT
HEAD OF CLUSTER

The Denmark-Germany border region represents not only the location of the ECMI, but also a range of minority groups that vary in their societal positions and historical backgrounds. The Cluster's aim is to study this diversity in a regional and comparative perspective.

MINORITY ISSUES IN THE DENMARK-GERMANY BORDER REGION

INTERGROUP RELATIONS IN THE BORDER REGION

The institutional framework for minority protection in the Germany-Denmark border region has long been a topic of very fruitful research. The workings of the region's model of 'functional non-territorial autonomy' for minorities have become clear. Much less apparent is how people of the region perceive this model and what they think of it. To this end, the Cluster will embark in 2026 on a multi-year programme to develop survey instruments that will study intergroup relations across the region's four minorities and their majority populations. One study will investigate the majority populations' awareness of each national minority (with regard to group size, status and rights, institutional support, etc.) as well as the majority populations' attitudes towards these minorities and their situations. A second study will be conducted amongst the national minorities on both sides of the border and will focus on the minority groups' own awareness of their situation (again, including group size, status and rights, and institutional support) as well as their attitudes towards their own situations.

INTERGENERATIONAL LANGUAGE TRANSMISSION

Following the completion of two highly successful surveys on language attitudes among North- and West-Frisian parents, this research stream will turn to a deeper analysis of the results as well as preparation of policy recommendations and stakeholder engagement. As the conclusions and possible recommendations become clearer, public events and policy outreach will begin in both regions, since the ultimate goal of the project is to use the survey data about attitudes and needs in order to craft better government resource management and minority community co-action in the name of intergenerational language transmission. An additional analytical dimension will also be opened, namely the role played by grandparents in language transmission.



SERGIUSZ BOBER
HEAD OF CLUSTER

Minority groups are active players both in politics and civil society. Whether through political parties, non-government organisations or simply community action, this cluster focuses on how minorities are involved in societal decision-making and participation.

MINORITIES AND SPORT

Although this research stream has long been a flagship of the Cluster, the year 2026 will see a new level of activity in terms of working directly with minority sports authorities. In the wake of a successful conference on minorities and football organised in March 2025 with the Welsh Government and the Football Association of Wales (along with other partners), a similar event will be held in Spring 2026 with Catalan authorities, most prominently the Plataforma per la Llengua. The theme as a whole highlights the intersection of minority identity formation through mass participation at sporting events, the role played by media (via broadcasting and print media) as well as economic development (via revenues and marketing). A special issue of the journal *Soccer & Society* entitled 'Minority Languages and Football in Europe' will be published in March.

PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES

The visibility of various languages within a given space results in the creation of a unique linguistic landscape, which can be understood as either geographic units or their digital equivalents (virtual linguistic landscapes). As such, they can be shaped by rules codified in legal frameworks, commercial initiatives aiming to commodify a given language, or various bottom-up initiatives with different degrees of coherence and lifespans. They are of high importance for minorities, serving as a possible indicator of how a given minority language is protected and perceived by the majority. In 2026, the Cluster plans to initiate work on this thematic angle by first organising an interdisciplinary scientific workshop involving researchers from different European minority settlement areas.

POLICY ADVISING

The ECMI's policy advising activities represent a cornerstone of its mission to bridge research and practice in the field of minority issues. As an international institution, the ECMI was created to network and operate across Europe broadly defined, symbolised by its close connections with European institutions focused on minority affairs. High-level representatives from the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) sit on the ECMI's Executive Board, underscoring its integral role in shaping policy discussions.

EVALUATING SERBIA'S ACTION PLAN FOR MINORITIES

For early 2026, the Council of Europe has commissioned the ECMI to produce an assessment of Serbia's official Action Plan for the support of national minorities. The nearly 100-page Plan is part of Serbia's efforts to join the European Union. It also includes one of the ECMI's key recommendations from our 2023-2025 project in Serbia – to develop an implementation monitoring system as part of the Action Plan.

MINORITIES AND OMBUDSPERSONS

Ombudspersons in many European countries also have responsibilities for monitoring minority rights, particularly in the realm of discrimination. In collaboration with the OSCE, the ECMI is completing a comparative case of best practice in this area spanning a range of countries, including Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Albania and Denmark.

EXPLORING NEW APPROACHES TO MINORITY PROTECTION IN KOSOVO

The process of normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo have stalled in recent years in part because of disagreement over how to protect the Serb minority in the country. At the request of the EU's Special Representative for the "Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue", the ECMI has begun a study of how aspects of functional non-territorial autonomy for minorities in the Germany-Denmark border region could be applied to the Kosovo situation.



REGIONAL OUTREACH

Although the ECMI's remit spans the entire European continent, we are also actively engaged in regional minority issues in the Germany-Denmark borderlands. We work with both the national minority groups of the region as well as government authorities tasked with developing policy measures for them.

MINORITY SUITCASE

Working on minority issues means also working with majority communities. In 2025, a meeting of regional ministers of culture in Germany (*Kultusministerkonferenz*) called for an increase in the attention paid to national minorities in curricula taught in German schools. The ECMI has responded to this call by developing a 'Minority Suitcase' that will contain information and activities regarding the recognised minorities in Germany for convenient use in upper-secondary school classes. Designed together with minority group representatives and didactics experts, the ECMI will present a first part of the prototype of the suitcase in early 2026. Thereafter, we will support the promotion of the suitcase in schools in Schleswig-Holstein and elsewhere.

MINORITY COMPETENCE NETWORK

The Minority Competence Network is a regional German-Danish initiative aimed at sharing information about best practice in minority policy by organising study-tours for minority groups to this special borderland area. The ECMI is one of the Network's institutional stakeholders. We promote contacts with minority organisations interested in visiting the region and we offer program content during their visit. For 2026, we will be contributing to visits by minority groups from Turkey, North Macedonia and Estonia.



PUBLICATIONS

YEARBOOK OF ETHNOPOLITICS AND MINORITY ISSUES IN EUROPE

In a era where human rights face increasing challenges and attention to minority issues is often limited—even as societies grow more diverse—there is a continuing need for academic and policy-oriented analyses that review and reflect on a year’s key minority developments. While specialised journals provide in-depth studies on specific minority relevant topics, they leave little space for an annual review of the core issues that have shaped minority developments in a specific year.

In 2026, the ECMI will launch this new Yearbook as part of the Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe (JEMIE). We will continue working with a network of partner institutions to generate cutting-edge scholarship. At the same time, we will offer the first-ever open-access platform for yearly overviews of minority issues.

Editor: Ljubica Djordjević



JOURNAL ON ETHNOPOLITICS AND MINORITY ISSUES IN EUROPE (JEMIE)

JEMIE is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal addressing minority issues across a broad range of disciplines. Featuring special issues and general contributions, JEMIE provides a platform for innovative research. In 2023, the journal was indexed in Scopus, enhancing its reach and academic recognition. The journal is indexed in Scopus, Web of Science and other databases.

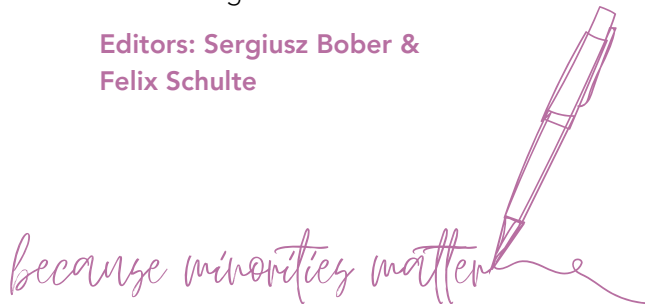
Editor: Andreea Cârstocea

Assistant Editor: Aziz Berdiqulov

MINORITIES BLOG

The ECMI Minorities Blog features multidisciplinary exchanges about challenges faced by minority communities across the world. Research-led and critically engaged, the blog examines events, public policies, and trends concerning the protection of minorities and their crosscutting relevance.

Editors: Sergiusz Bober & Felix Schulte



ECMI TEAM

Vello Pettai

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Senior Researcher

Andreea Cârstocea

Senior Researcher

Ljubica Djordjević

Senior Researcher

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Felix Schulte

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Researcher

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Communications Coordinator

Laura Seben

Project Assistant



EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Executive Board is the main strategic governance body of the ECMI. It comprises nine members representing the founders, the scientific community, as well as European institutions. The Board convenes at least biannually to approve the budget, the annual plan of activities, and other business in line with the statutes.

Garbi Schmidt, Chair

Professor, Department of Culture and Identity, Roskilde University, Denmark

Monika Wingender, Vice-Chair

Professor, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures,
University of Giessen, Germany

Johannes Callsen

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Associate Professor, Head of the Centre for Border Region Studies, University of
Southern Denmark

Rasmus Andresen

Member of the European Parliament

Linda Pieper

Substitute for Mr. Callsen

Thorsten Afflerbach

Substitute for Ms. Cornu

ADVISORY COUNCIL

To reinforce its work, the ECMI draws also on an international Advisory Council that meets every 18 months. The Council provides perspective on current ECMI activities, emerging trends and networking opportunities.

Jennifer Jackson Preece (Chair)

London School of Economics and Political Science

Florian Bieber

University of Graz

Joshua Castellino

University of Cambridge

Fernand de Varennes

Former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska

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