

## The four national minorities in Germany

There are four recognised autochthonous (from the Old-Greek word for “native to the soil”), national minorities:

- ▶ the Lusatian Sorbs,
- ▶ the Danes in South-Schleswig,
- ▶ the German Sinti and Roma
- ▶ and the Frisians.

They are granted special protection by the Federal Republic of Germany and its Lands and receive specific support.

Furthermore the minority languages spoken besides German are under governmental protection: these are Danish, North- and Sater-Frisian, Upper and Lower Sorbian and the language Romanes that is spoken by the Sinti and Roma. Additionally, also the regional language of Low German (“Platt”) is protected in Germany.

## Contact

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THE AUTOCHTHONOUS  
AND NATIONAL MINORITIES  
IN GERMANY

LUSATIAN SORBS  
DANES IN SOUTH-SCHLESWIG  
GERMAN SINTI AND ROMA  
FRISIANS

Minderheitensekretariat  
der vier autochthonen nationalen Minderheiten  
und Volksgruppen Deutschlands



## What is an autochthonous, national minority?

An autochthonous, national minority should be understood as a community,

- ▶ that is resident in an area of a state territory or scattered around a state territory,
- ▶ that is of smaller number than the rest of the state population,
- ▶ the members of which are citizens of that state,
- ▶ that is distinguishable from the state's other citizens by reason of their ethnic, linguistic or cultural characteristics and who wish to preserve these characteristics,
- ▶ the members of which have been resident in the area in question for generations.

The German Sinti and Roma are an exception. They are living across the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany.

## The Minority Secretariat

In 2005 the Minority Secretariat in Berlin was established for the associations of the national minorities in Germany.

The Minority Secretariat of the four autochthonous, national minorities is the liaison-office for the associations of the minorities with the federal institutions, in particular the German Federal Parliament, Federal Government and Federal Council.

Its main task is observing and monitoring the parliamentary work in the Federal Republic of Germany and its committees in view of minority-related interests and issues.

### Main activities:

- 1 Representation of and being the contact partner for the autochthonous, national minorities
- 2 Coordination, planning and steering minority policy in Germany from the perspective of the minorities
- 3 Observing and monitoring of legislation and implementing provisions of legal acts
- 4 Elaborating statements and positions in relation to subjects that are relevant to the minorities
- 5 Giving advice and disseminating knowledge
- 6 Public relations
- 7 Development of and maintaining contacts with networks, organisations and institutions on regional, national and European level
- 8 Developing and training of young talent
- 9 Management and organisation of events and projects

## The Minority Council

The Minority Council deals with the fundamental matters related to the four autochthonous national minorities: the Danes, Frisians, German Sinti and Roma and the Lusatian Sorbs. It works for their promotion and protection and together the Council represents the interests of the four minorities vis-à-vis the German Federal Government and the German Federal Parliament.

The Minority Council consists of the chairs and two other representatives of the four autochthonous, national minorities in Germany:

- ▶ Domowina – Federation of Lusatian Sorbs/  
Zwjazk Łužiskich Serbow/  
Zwězk Łužyskich Serbow/  
[www.domowina.de](http://www.domowina.de)



- ▶ Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF)  
[www.syfo.de](http://www.syfo.de)



- ▶ Südschleswigscher Wählerverband (SSW)  
[www.ssw.de](http://www.ssw.de)



- ▶ Central Council of the German Sinti and Roma  
[www.zentralrat.sintiundroma.de](http://www.zentralrat.sintiundroma.de)



- ▶ Frasche Rädj/Friesenrat Sektion Nord, Seelter Buund  
[www.friesenrat.de](http://www.friesenrat.de)



The chairmanship of the Minority Council is arranged according to the principle of rotation. The joint meetings of the Minority Council take place several times during the year.

