

Call for Papers

Difference and Belonging: Indigenous and Autochthonous National Minorities in Europe's Transforming Regions

November 12-14, 2025, Leipzig/Germany

The Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL), in partnership with the Institute of Geography at the University of Leipzig, the Sorbian Institute in Bautzen, and the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg, invites Papers for the international conference "Difference and Belonging: Indigenous and Autochthonous National Minorities in Europe's Transforming Regions" (MINREG2025).

Following the Charta of the "Federal Union of European Nationalities", more than 100 million Europeans can be assigned to one of more than 300 national minorities, that are defined and recognized with the concept of autochthony and, in some cases like the Sámi, indigeneity. Many of them live in (peripheral) rural areas and border regions. They are considered historically intertwined with their settlement area, both as a living space for practicing and contributing to cultural and linguistic diversity, but also as an economic space to live from and to contribute to its regional development.

The conference aims to bring together diverse theoretical and empirical perspectives on indigenous and autochthonous national minorities amidst current transformations aiming at sustainability. Scholars from fields such as constructivist political and human geography, rural studies, cultural landscape studies, planning and transformation studies, and the diverse disciplines of minority research are especially encouraged to contribute to this interdisciplinary dialogue. The conference will focus on the intersection of cultural, political, and socio-economic changes and their impacts on the minority communities in Europe's rural minority regions against the backdrop of the political claim of a "just" transition in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which also include an appropriate approach to cultural diversity. Key objectives of the conference include:

- **Integrating Diverse Perspectives:** Bringing together scholars from various disciplines to explore theoretical and practical approaches to studying indigenous and autochthonous national minorities. Contributions are welcomed from cultural studies, human geography, landscape research, planning and transformation studies, rural studies, comparative minority research, and similar fields.
- **Fostering Interdisciplinary Dialogue:** Promoting exchange of cultural and spatial scientific perspectives on cultural landscape negotiations, cultural diversity in societal institutions and spatial planning, competency development, and participation.
- **Examining Current Transformations:** Analyzing socio-economic and ecological changes shaping rural and/or post-industrial regions, and implications for minorities.
- **Understanding Cultural and Political Conflicts:** Investigating conflicts related to identity, belonging, and difference. This includes examining the strategic use of indigenous and autochthonous identities, as well as everyday practices and perceptions of belonging and exclusion within contemporary political and social contexts.
- **Understanding the Role of Planning and Regional Development:** Examining formal planning procedures, minority politics, and regional development practices for indigenous and autochthonous national minorities in regions, and their role in transformation e.g. coal phase-out, renewable energy, or agricultural change.
- **Promoting Comparative Analysis:** Comparing experiences and institutional conflicts in different regions and minority groups to derive broader insights into the integration and transformation of indigenous and autochthonous national minorities across Europe.

We invite contributions that especially engage with the following topics:

1. Contemporary Cultural Landscapes and Negotiations of Belonging
 - The negotiation and contestation of concepts and imaginations of cultural landscapes among indigenous and autochthonous national minorities.
 - The role of institutional resources for competency development and participation.
 - The translation and transfer of cultural and spatial concepts across diverse contexts.
2. Minority Issues in Regional Development and Transformation
 - The integration of minorities into regional planning and transformation processes.
 - The potential of specific minority groups to contribute to regional transformations, with particular attention to intersectionality.
 - The collective action spaces of minorities and their interactions with other collectives.
3. Political and Everyday Conflicts and Solutions of Difference and Belonging
 - Political and social conflicts surrounding identity, belonging, and difference among indigenous and autochthonous national minorities.
 - Everyday practices and perceptions of belonging.
 - Everyday conflicts between groups, as well as institutional conflicts.
 - Comparative analyses of similar conflicts across different minority regions.

The conference will incorporate a **combination of traditional and innovative formats** to foster active participation and dynamic discussions. Contributors are encouraged to propose potential formats and contributions, from which the conference organizers will make their selections:

- *Paper Sessions*: Research presentations followed by interactive discussions
- *Fishbowl or World Café*: Open, dynamic discussion formats to facilitate participation.
- *Panel Discussions*: Thematic panels focusing on specific aspects of the conference themes, with ample opportunities for audience engagement.

Researchers and practitioners interested in participating are invited to submit **abstracts of up to 1000 words**, including the following information:

- Working title of the paper, Name(s) and affiliation(s) of the author(s), and contact details
- A summary of the research question, methodology, and – if applicable – findings
- Format suggestions

Abstracts should be submitted to **MINREG2025@leibniz-ifl.de** by **30 June 2025**. Notifications of acceptance will be sent by 15 July 2025.

Organising Committee

- Dr. Frank Meyer, Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, f_meyer@leibniz-ifl.de
- Dr. Fabian Jacobs, Sorbian Institute in Bautzen
- Prof. Dr. Ludger Gailing, Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg

Registration and Fees

A registration fee of 60 € is required.

Registration will open on August 1st, 2025. Registration is limited to a maximum of 60 participants

Contact

For further information, please contact the conference organisers at **f_meyer@leibniz-ifl.de** or visit our website: <https://leibniz-ifl.de/>