

## Statement of support

The provincial executive of the Province of Fryslân expresses its support for the European Citizens' Initiative "Minority SafePack – one million signatures for diversity in Europe" and particularly welcomes the legal action brought against the European Commission in this regard.

The Minority SafePack Initiative, which has received the support of more than 1.1 million citizens all over Europe, requests the adoption of a set of legal acts to improve the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities and strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity in the European Union.

Despite the fact that the Commission has been called upon to take action for almost three decades, no legal measures have yet been adopted for the protection of national and linguistic minorities at EU level.

The European Parliament, in its resolution of 17 December 2020, endorsed the aims of the Minority SafePack Initiative and called on the European Commission to act on it and to propose legal acts. So did many national and regional parliaments in Europe, including the Dutch House of Representatives and the Provincial Council of Fryslân.

The Province of Fryslân therefore notes with concern that the European Commission has refused in its Communication of 14 January 2021 to adopt any legislative proposals in response to the Minority SafePack Initiative.

The province stresses that when it comes to promoting linguistic diversity and protecting minorities, all levels of government – including the European Union - have to assume their responsibilities in a spirit of solidarity for this issue.

Especially for the Province of Fryslân, which is responsible together with the Dutch Government for protecting and promoting the Frisian language and culture according to the Use of Frisian Act (Wet gebruik Friese taal), the implementation of the proposals focusing on language diversity are very relevant.

The Minority SafePack Initiative aims at promoting cultural and linguistic diversity under different aspects which have, so far, not been addressed at EU-level, such as the adoption of a recommendation promoting the use of regional and minority languages in all areas of public life.

Facilitating the exchange of best practices in language planning and solutions constitutes an important measure for the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity. Fryslân has gained a lot of experience to share, but as a member of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) we also want to learn from other regions in the European Union.

Given that many regional and minority languages in Europe are in danger of extinction, the Province of Fryslân also considers that the creation of a European Centre for Linguistic Diversity is urgently needed to preserve Europe's cultural heritage and put the promotion of linguistic diversity on a permanent footing. The Province of Fryslân regrets that no institution has been established so far at European level to bundle forces for the promotion of lesser used languages.

Where it comes to the different EU funding programmes, it is important that the promotion of linguistic diversity is prioritised and that funding is also available for smaller language communities. Additionally, unnecessary obstacles for the realisation of projects that promote linguistic diversity should be abolished, as addressed for instance in the proposal on state aid rules.

The Province of Fryslân believes that the assessment as now laid down in the Communication<sup>1</sup> does not do justice to the Minority SafePack Initiative. We therefore kindly call on the Commission to reconsider its position and to adopt appropriate and more concrete measures to protect and strengthen minority rights and linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe. The European Union should finally assume its responsibility for the conservation of Europe's great cultural and linguistic heritage. Regular celebration of our European language diversity is just one step, finally acting in favour of our languages is another step.

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<sup>1</sup> [European Commission replies to 'Minority Safepack' initiati \(europa.eu\)](http://europa.eu)