

Open letter to Mrs. V ra Jourová and Mrs Ursula Von der Leyen,

by the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages

Subject: The European Commission's refusal to produce new legal acts in response to the demands of the Minority Safepack ECI supported by a very large majority of the European Parliament.

Dear President of the Commission,

Dear Vice-President of the Commission in charge of Values and Transparency,

Together with the over 1.1 million European citizens who have put their trust in the very demanding procedure of the European Citizens' Initiative, we express our deep disappointment at the decision of the College of Commissioners on the ECI Minority Safepack.

The dismissive decision of the Commission demonstrates a politically damaging lack of concern for the voice of citizens and lack of empathy towards the autochthonous national and linguistic communities of the EU. It is also unworthy of a European Union whose basic values and its Charter of Fundamental Rights refer to the obligation to respect and promote the rights of minorities.

While there are legal limits to what the European Union can do for the protection and promotion of traditional autochthonous national and linguistic minorities, many EU competences are of direct relevance for the special situation of persons belonging to minorities. The Commission's response should have highlighted this and should have given a concrete expression of Art. 22. of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

Failing to propose any substantive action on all 9 areas of the initiative is highly disappointing and politically careless of the feelings of citizens belonging to minority communities and speaking minority languages. This decision sends a wrong message to the expectations expressed by millions of citizens, despite the vote of a very large majority in the European Parliament expressing their strong support for the initiative and calling on the Commission to propose legal acts on it.

With this decision, the Commission also gave up on the opportunity to reinforce EU engagement on the issue of national and linguistic minorities with the Council of Europe, as the institution that is most relevant from the perspective of the protection and promotion of the rights of national and linguistic minorities in Europe.

The spirit of good and responsive administration would have meant not only that the Commission openly studies the ways in which to act upon an ECI, but also to present

its own ideas on how it can concretely and proactively address the concerns of the initiators, signatories and citizens.

With its decision, the Commission also disregarded the repeated calls of the European Parliament for the EU to support its traditional minorities, their languages and cultures.

The firm position of the Court of Justice of the European Union on the issue of Minority SafePack¹ clearly confirmed that nothing prevents the European Commission from submitting proposals, which are deemed to supplement EU action in the areas for which it is competent in order to ensure respect for the values in the EU Treaty. The European Commission however, with its decision clearly showed the lack of will to do so.

The decision of the Commission is damaging for the democratic life our Union, damaging for the trust of national and linguistic minority communities in our institutions and not least the EU's internal and international credibility when standing up for our values. We can only hope that the Commission will correct this error in the future and give the Union's national and linguistic minorities the attention they deserve.

The Co-Chairs of the Minority Intergroup

François Alfonsi

Kinga Gál

Loránt Vincze

¹ T-391/17 (Romania v Commission)