

An aerial photograph of a large, circular stadium with a retractable roof. The stadium is surrounded by a road and greenery. The text "Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages" is overlaid on the top half of the image.

Intergroup on Traditional Minorities,
National Communities and Languages

ACTIVITY REPORT

2019-2024

Message from the Co-Chairs of the Minority Intergroup

Dear Colleagues, dear Friends,

The Intergroup on Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages in the European Parliament is the only forum where European legislators can receive first-hand information about the challenges linguistic and minority communities face. Since its foundation in 1983, the Intergroup has been the most prominent informal cross-party platform providing support for traditional minority communities and promoting the dissemination of best practices.

Despite the declarations of intent and, the founding values of the Union as established in the Treaties of the Union and the Copenhagen accession criteria, that include the respect for and protection of minorities, linguistic rights and diversity in the European Union are in decline. The Minority Intergroup has an essential role in combating this trend of cultural impoverishment across Europe. Throughout this parliamentary mandate, our Intergroup was yet again one of the most active ones of the European Parliament. We held a total of 25 ordinary meetings, in which we welcomed distinguished guests, including European Commission Vice-President Dubravka Suica, Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur for Minority Rights, Gabriel N. Toggenburg, Senior Legal Advisor at the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and Constanze Itzel, the Director of the House of European History, among others. The Intergroup focused on the concerns raised by various minority and linguistic communities, guided by the active participation of our Members, with concrete case studies and experiences. Many representatives of minority communities have been able to make their voices heard and inform Members about grave rights deprivations thanks to the Intergroup.

The European Parliament's deliberation and overwhelmingly positive vote on the Minority SafePack European Citizens' Initiative, also aided by the Intergroup, marked a significant milestone in the EP, yet its translation into legislation at the European level has encountered obstacles, remaining a work in progress.

In 2023, a similarly overwhelming large majority supported MEP Vincze's Report on institutional relations between the EU and the Council of Europe. The latter highlighted minority protection as a central theme, advocating for the accession to and implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the EU. Additionally, it emphasized the importance of all member states adhering to the Copenhagen criteria, not solely prior to accession, but consistently thereafter, too.

In addition to our traditional meetings in Strasbourg, we organised two conferences in Brussels. One focused on minority rights in the EU enlargement process, while the other was entitled "Let's act against the decline of linguistic rights in the European Union". Our intergroup commissioned a study, which highlighted the decline

“Europe must change its policies if it is to live up to its motto “United in diversity”.

of regional and minority languages over the last decade, since the adoption of MEP Alfonsi's Report on endangered European languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union in 2013. One resounding conclusion emerged: Europe must change its policies if it is to live up to its motto “United in diversity”.

In addition, at the initiative of our Intergroup, a handover ceremony of dictionaries in minority languages took place at the House of European History in 2023 to mark the European Day of Languages, highlighting the role of these languages and their speakers in the history of the EU.

We strengthened collaborative ties with partner organizations and NGOs, such as FUEN, NPLD, ELEN, MIDAS and minority representatives across Europe.

Through proactive engagement in agenda setting and legislative processes, we have been able to propose debates and resolutions on national minorities, such as the plenary debate on the Rights of minorities on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

As part of the Conference on the Future of Europe, we campaigned for the strengthening of minority rights, this proposal being the second most supported one by the citizens on the official platform set up by the Commission.

The fruitful cross-party cooperation among our members also led to amendments to EP reports such as the revision of the EU Treaties and the latest initiative aimed at implementing the Geo-blocking Regulation.

“Promoting national minorities and their languages is essential to ensure their continued presence and relevance in our rapidly changing world.”



Initiating dialogues with national authorities and the Commission, we addressed critical issues such as minority education, linguistic rights and discrimination. Moreover, Intergroup members actively contributed to drafting numerous questions for written answers to the Commission and gave their support to European Parliament petitions focusing on minority rights. The work of the Intergroup served also as inspiration for a scientific study exploring the significance of ‘Minority and minoritised languages as part of the European linguistic and cultural diversity’ that was commissioned by the European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs.

The Intergroup sincerely thanks all those who have supported its initiatives over the years and hopes that the collaboration to create a more supportive EU environment for traditional national and linguistic minorities will continue in the next mandate.

Promoting national minorities and their languages is essential to ensure their continued presence and relevance in our rapidly changing world. It is an imperative to keep minority communities visible and actively engaged, particularly by involving more young people in advocating for their rights and interests. The upcoming European elections present both opportunities and challenges for our communities. We firmly believe that traditional national minorities and linguistic communities have a place in European politics and policy-making. Our ongoing mission remains dedicated to improve the lives of minorities within the union.

It is a great pleasure to present the Minority Intergroup 2019–2024 Activity Report. In this report, you will find an overview of the Intergroup activities highlighting key moments from this ninth parliamentary term.

Loránt Vincze, Kinga Gál, Francois Alfonsi
Co-Chairs of the Minority Intergroup

Event Calendar 2019-2024

2019

- > **19.09.2019** First informal meeting of the supporters of the Minority Intergroup



- > **11.05.2020** Remote meeting to discuss topics closely related to the COVID crises
- > **15.10.2020** Public hearing in the European Parliament on the European Citizens' Initiative entitled 'Minority SafePack – one million signatures for diversity in Europe'
- > **17.12.2020** European Parliament resolution on the European Citizens' Initiative 'Minority SafePack – one million signatures for diversity in Europe'

2020

- > **15.01.2020** Minority Intergroup received official endorsement from the Conference of Presidents
- > **30.01.2020** Constitutive meeting of the Minority Intergroup for the 2019-2024 parliamentary term
- > **13.02.2020** First regular meeting: Minority SafePack ECI



2021

- > **19.01.2021** Open letter to the European Commission to express deep disappointment about the Commission's response to the Minority SafePack ECI signed by over 60 Members
- > **25.03.2021** Meeting: the future of Minority SafePack ECI after its dismissal by the Commission and the situation of the Hungarian minority community living in Ukraine, proposed by MEP A. Bocskor



- > **01.06.2021** Meeting: European Commission Vice-President Dubravka Šuica on the Conference on the Future of Europe and presentation of the MINET – minority magazine project, proposed by MEP H. Dorfmann
- > **29.06.2021** High-level conference entitled 'Council of Europe norms and standards on national minority rights: Results and challenges' with the participation of the Co-Chairs
- > **08.07.2021** Meeting: presentation of the French Molac's Law on the protection and promotion of the heritage of regional languages, proposed by MEP F. Alfonsi and coordination on the Conference on the Future of Europe



- > **21.10.2021** Meeting: Basque Radio-television projects (EITB), proposed by MEP I. Bilbao Barandica and exchange with the Commission regarding geo-blocking
- > **11.11.2021** Meeting with NGOs & stakeholders committed to the promotion and protection of regional or minority languages
- > **25.11.2021** Meeting: cooperation between the Council of Europe and the EU in minority protection, initiatives of Hungarian CoE Presidency, proposed by MEP K. Gál, and

application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, presented by Gabriel N. Toggenburg

2022

- > **20.01.2022** Meeting: the Silesian regional identity, proposed by MEP Ł. Kohut and the closer cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe on minority issues
- > **17.02.2022** Meeting: ideas for the Conference on the Future of Europe and situation of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, proposed by MEP A. Bocskor
- > **07.04.2022** Meeting: 100th anniversary of the Åland Autonomy, proposed by MEP N. Torvalds and Turkish community in Western Thrace, in Greece
- > **20.04.2022** Hearing organized by the Petitions Committee on cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU
- > **05.05.2022** Meeting: Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and European Language Equality (ELE) EU Project
- > **09.06.2022** Meeting: Ladin-speaking community of Belluno, proposed by MEP H. Dorfmann and Hungarian community in Slovakia
- > **05.07.2022** Co-Chairs of the Minority Intergroup met Dubravka Šuica, Commissioner for Democracy and Demography
- > **07.09.2022** Conference 'Let's act against the decline of linguistic diversity in Europe & for the promotion of national and linguistic minority rights!' organised by the Intergroup



- > **22.09.2022** UN commemorated the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and to critically assess progress of the landmark document
- > **06.10.2022** Meeting: Constanze Itzel, Director of the House of European History and Association of the German Social Cultural Societies in Poland (VdG)
- > **24.11.2022** Meeting: closure of border crossing points in Catalonia and in the Basque Country and Poles in the Vilnius Region, proposed by MEP W. Tomaszewski
- > **06.12.2022** Intergroup visited the permanent exhibition of the House of European History
- > **15.12.2022** Plenary debate on the 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities

2023

- > **16.02.2023** Meeting: preserving the mother tongue in Alsace and the Online Language Support of Erasmus+

- > **16.03.2023** Meeting: presentation of the study "Assessing the European Union's support to Regional and Minority Languages: 10 years after the Alfonsi resolution (2013-2023)"
- > **23.03.2023** Conference 'Minority rights in the EU enlargement process' organised by the Co-Chairs of the Intergroup with Commissioner Várhelyi, responsible for Neighbourhood and Enlargement



- > **18.04.2023** European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2023 was adopted on the institutional relations between the EU and the Council of Europe (2022/2137(INI))
- > **20.04.2023** Meeting: the future of languages in the audio-visual sphere: the Galician case, proposed by MEP A. Miranda, and the National Council of the Hungarian Ethnic Minority in Serbia, proposed by MEP A. Deli



- > **11.05.2023** Meeting: Slovenian minority in Carinthia and the CONVIVENZA Foundation, the International Center for Minorities
- > **15.06.2023** Meeting: preparation of the dictionary hand-over event on the European Day of Languages and the representative of the House of Commons of Canada from Bloc Québécois
- > **14.09.2023** Meeting: the case of Öömrang Ferian versus the EU Intellectual Property Office, proposed MEP N. Herbst and the Mikó Imre Minority Rights Legal Services Assistance's activities for the protection of the Hungarian minority in Romania, proposed by MEP L. Vincze and MEP I. Winkler
- > **26.09.2023** Handover ceremony of minority language dictionaries to the House of European History to celebrate the Day of European Languages
- > **26.09.2023** Podium discussion organized by FUEN "Minority Languages as Part of the European Linguistic and Cultural Landscape: Role of Minority NGOs in preserving diversity in Europe"



- > **19.10.2023** Meeting: the digital presence of Catalan and Basque language on the internet, proposed by MEP C. Puigdemont i Casamajó
- > **23.11.2023** Meeting: Ladins of the Dolomites, book presentation, proposed by MEP Herbert Dorfmann and the Turkish community in Western Thrace as well as the Turks of Rhodes-Kos



- > **23.12.2023** European Parliament resolution of 13 December 2023 was adopted on the implementation of the 2018 Geo-blocking Regulation in the digital single market (2023/2019(INI))
- > **14.12.2023** Roundtable discussion on Minorities' Political Participation at national and EU level, with the FUEN European Dialogue Forum and Members of the National Assembly of France

2024

- > **08.02.2024** Last ordinary meeting: Friulian language initiatives, Alsatian on immersive schools and Elhuyar, basque foundation on language technologies for minority and regional languages
- > **29.02.2024** Ninth legislative term closing event of the Minority Intergroup, in Strasbourg



Public conference “Let’s act against the decline of linguistic rights in European Union on 7 September 2022

The aim of the high-level conference, organized in cooperation with the Minority Intergroup, was to bring together MEPs, academics, civil society, representatives of international organizations and NGOs working for the promotion and preservation of regional and minority languages, such as the Head of the Division for National Minorities and Minority Languages of the Council of Europe, the UN Special Rapporteur for minorities, FUEN and ELEN.

The first part of the conference was dedicated to an assessment of the situation of linguistic diversity in the EU, followed by a presentation of good practices and promising projects for the future. The preservation of minority languages through audiovisual media was discussed with the Basque Television and Radio, furthermore, the teaching of regional and minority languages in immersive education system with President of Seaska, and the future of minority languages in the digitalization process with the Eurovision Song Festival for Minorities (LIET).

The conference conclusions emphasized the need of a comprehensive EU legal framework as well as strengthened international cooperation to protect and promote national and linguistic minorities. The event was concluded by a musical interlude of Doria Ousset, the Corsican singer and winner of the 2022 LIET contest.

Study “Assessing the European Union’s support to Regional and Minority languages: 10 years after the Alfonsi resolution (2013-2023)” – presentation at the Intergroup

On 16 March 2023, Vicent Climent-Ferrando, researcher at Pompeu Fabra University and UNESCO Chair on Language Policies for Multilingualism, presented to the Intergroup a study co-funded by several MEPs. It traces the evolution of EU support for regional and minority languages over the period between 2013-2023 using public policy analysis, and its conclusions are more than alarming. In particular, the study highlights a significant difference between EU institutions’ rhetoric pretending support for regional and minority languages as part of Europe’s diversity versus the real actions, the lack of data and statistics on endangered languages, and on their funding. Moreover, it highlights that priority is given to languages from an economic point of view, creating a false hierarchy between useful and less necessary languages. The lack of consideration for minority and regional languages in the development of language technologies, which contributes to their digital extinction, is another important point raised by the study.

The Commission justifies its reluctance concerning regional and minority languages with the lack of EU competence in the field. This study demonstrates the opposite, Member States and the Commission have cooperated in the field of language learning through the Open Method of Coordination, the EU instrument used to identify “good policy practice from among the grand reservoir of diverse policy approaches in the European arena and propose common actions”.

The Commission’s only initiative in favor of minority and regional languages is rather disappointing. The Intergroup has called on the Commission to contribute to the safeguarding of minority and regional languages according to the provisions of the Treaties. We have persistently denounced the Commission’s approach that regional and minority languages are solely the concern of Member States, despite being vulnerable to assimilation. The Intergroup reiterated its call to the Commission for ambitious action to improve and support minority and regional languages within EU multilingualism policies.



The Minority SafePack European Citizens' Initiative

The Minority SafePack European Citizens' Initiative (MSPI) stands as a key proposal within the European Union, advocating for the protection and promotion of the rights of traditional national and linguistic minorities. Launched in 2013, the MSPI presented a comprehensive package of legislative proposals aimed at strengthening minority rights, language preservation, and cultural safeguarding across the EU.

Despite initial refusal by the Commission, the MSPI persevered through legal disputes to see nine key proposals registered. These proposals covered diverse areas such as the promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, funding for small linguistic communities, research about the added value of minorities, reception of audio-visual content in the minority languages and the establishment of a Language Diversity Centre, among others.

A landmark ruling by the General Court of the European Union in September 2019 reaffirmed the significance of the MSPI's objectives, emphasizing the EU's commitment to upholding minority rights and fostering cultural and linguistic diversity.

The MSPI garnered substantial support from citizens across Europe, 1,123,422 statements of support were validated, surpassing the required thresholds in 11 Member States and paving the way for its presentation to EU institutions. After a successful campaign, the MSPI's legislative proposals were formally presented to the European Commission in February 2020, followed by a public hearing in the European Parliament later that year, where they received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Subsequently, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in December 2020 with 524 votes in favour, 67 against and 103 abstentions, urging the Commission to act on the MSPI and propose legal measures in line with EU treaties and regulations

However, despite widespread endorsement from many regional parliaments, MEPs and NGOs, the European Commission announced its decision not to initiate legal acts based on the MSPI in January 2021. This decision generated disappointment across Europe, highlighting the significance of the MSPI's objectives.

In response, the Citizens' Committee of the MSPI pursued legal recourse by filling a request for the annulment of the Commission's decision with the General Court of the European Union in March 2021. Despite their efforts, the Court upheld the Commission's decision in November 2022. The MSPI's Citizens' Committee lodged an appeal with the Court of Justice of the European Union in January 2023, seeking further judicial review.

As anticipation mounts for the CJEU's ruling in 2024, the MSPI remains emblematic of the ongoing struggle for minority rights and cultural preservation within the European Union, underscoring the complex interaction between citizen advocacy, legal frameworks and institutional responses on matters of profound societal importance.






To mark the European Day of Languages, the Minority Intergroup, in collaboration with FUEN, launched a campaign to gather dictionaries in the languages of linguistic minorities across the European Union. Nearly 70 dictionaries were collected and presented at the House of European History. Through this symbolic gesture, the Intergroup aimed to raise awareness of the importance of these languages and provide them with greater visibility. During a hand-over ceremony, the Minority Intergroup formally delivered the collected dictionaries to Mrs. Constanze Itzel, Director of the House of European History. Othmar Karas, First Vice-President of the European Parliament, inaugurated the event. Distinguished guests such as Mr. Bingen Zupiria, Minister for Culture and Language Policy of the Basque Government, and Mr. Fernand De Varennes, United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, addressed the audience, further emphasizing the importance of linguistic diversity and minority languages within the European context.



European Parliament resolutions at a glance

European Parliament resolution of 17 December 2020 on the European Citizens' Initiative 'Minority SafePack – one million signatures for diversity in Europe' (2020/2846(RSP))

 On the 17th of December, the European Parliament concluded its evaluation of the Minority SafePack European Citizens' Initiative (MSPI) by adopting a resolution in favour of the initiative, garnering 75% of the votes, with 524 votes in support, 67 against, and 103 abstentions. This resounding endorsement sent a clear message to the European Commission to proceed with legislation based on the proposals outlined in the MSPI. In its resolution, the European Parliament expressed its support for the MSPI and urged the Commission to take action and propose legal measures based on the EU Treaties. It emphasized the importance for the Union to stimulate actions by its Member States to safeguard the rights of national and linguistic minorities. Additionally, it called upon the Commission to formulate a framework of EU minimum standards for protecting the rights of persons belonging minorities. These standards should be firmly entrenched within a legal framework that upholds democracy, the rule of law, and fundamental rights across the EU. Furthermore, the resolution advocates for a synergistic collaboration between the EU and the Council of Europe in safeguarding the rights of national and linguistic minorities.

Resolution on the institutional relations between the EU and the Council of Europe

 In the European context, the Council of Europe (CoE) established significant minority protection standards and a monitoring system in the 1990s, notably through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). These instruments have served as crucial benchmarks for assessing the progress of EU candidate countries towards accession under the Copenhagen criteria. Consequently, the European Commission has extensively relied on CoE standards. Despite this, the Commission's collaboration with the CoE on national minority rights has largely been confined to the accession process, even as its monitoring of the rule of law and democracy within Member States has gained prominence. In its Resolution on the institutional relations between the EU and the Council of Europe

(2022/2137(INI)), Rapporteur: Loránt Vincze, Shadow-rapporteur: Francois Alfonsi, adopted on 18 April 2023, the European Parliament firmly advocated for a shift in this approach. It emphasized the continued importance of the FCNM as a cornerstone for democratic life within the Union. The Parliament stressed that the standards set forth in the FCNM should be incorporated into the EU's monitoring of the rule of law and fundamental rights. Furthermore, the Parliament called for the European Union to pursue accession to both the Framework Convention and the Language Charter, signalling a deeper commitment to upholding minority rights. Strengthening and formalizing interinstitutional ties on minority rights would bring mutual benefits for both the EU and the CoE, while also improving the situation for traditional national and linguistic minorities across Europe.

Resolution on the implementation of the 2018 Geo-blocking Regulation in the digital single market

The adoption of the resolution of 13 December 2023 on the implementation of the 2018 Geo-blocking Regulation in the digital single market (2023/2019(INI)) in December 2023 marks a significant step towards addressing the challenges faced by linguistic minorities in accessing digital content across borders. The recognition of the negative impact of geo-blocking practices on citizens in cross-border regions and linguistic minorities highlights the importance of ensuring equal access to cultural and multimedia content for all European citizens. This imperative aligns closely

with one of the proposals outlined in the Minority SafePack Initiative.

The report's emphasis on the need for tangible solutions for legal access to cross-catalogue content across borders is particularly crucial for linguistic minorities. Access to content in their minority language is essential for preserving their language and culture. However, current regulations often create barriers that prevent minority communities from accessing such content. The denouncement of limited improvements in the cross-catalogue availability of audio-visual content and live sports events

further underscores the challenges faced by linguistic minorities. These communities rely on access to diverse cultural and multimedia content to maintain their cultural identity and linguistics heritage. By calling on the Commission to propose minority-friendly solutions, the majority of the Parliament has demonstrated its commitment to addressing the needs of linguistic minorities in the digital single market. It is imperative that further improvements are made to ensure that all European citizens, regardless of their linguistic background, have equal access to digital content.

Resolution regarding the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations during 2022

The European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2023, regarding the outcome of the Committee on Petitions' deliberations during 2022 (2023/2047(INI)), highlighted the ongoing presence of petitions concerning the rights of national minorities on the agenda of the Committee on Petitions. Of particular concern were discriminatory practices related to their right to education in their mother tongue and the broader issue of language usage.

An important event in this context was the public hearing on cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU, organized by the committee on 20 April 2022. This hearing examined the multifaceted challenges confronting the use of minority languages and explored avenues for safeguarding and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity within the EU.

In conclusion, the report underscores the imperative for the EU to extend support for the teaching and use of regional and minority languages.

Minority Intergroup meetings summary 2019-2024

2020

30 January

At the constitutive meeting of the Minority Intergroup for the 2019-2024 parliamentary term, MEPs Kinga Gál, Loránt Vincze and François Alfonsi were unanimously elected Co-Chairs of the Intergroup.

13 February

During the first regular meeting of the Intergroup, the main topic was to discuss the concrete steps in which each Member could further the goals set in the Minority SafePack European Citizens' Initiative - one million signatures for diversity in Europe.

11 May

Intergroup Members held an online meeting to discuss topics closely related to the COVID crises. Co-Chair Loránt Vincze presented survey results on COVID-19's impact on minority languages, revealing that only half of the cases provide partial information on minority communities' mother tongues. Recommendations included emergency hotlines in minority languages and enhanced online education. Guest speaker Ms. Edita Slezáková, president of European Association of Daily Newspapers in Minority and Regional Languages (MIDAS), emphasized the financial struggles of minority language newspapers during the pandemic.

2021

25 March



The Minority Intergroup discussed the Minority SafePack ECI and ways to realize its goals despite the European Commission's negative response. After the dismissive communication of the European Commission of 15 January, several regional and national parliaments have issued resolutions condemning the refusal of the Commission to take action on the ECI, while the initiators were considering launching an action for annulment of the Commission communication before the CJEU. In the second half of the meeting, further to the proposal of MEP Andrea Bocskor, the situation of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine was presented by the President of the Cultural Alliance of Hungarians in Sub-Carpathia (KMKSZ). The Sub-Carpathian Hungarians have been subject to

restrictions related to their linguistic, educational and representation rights since 2017. Since Local Elections in 2020, their NGOs, media, representatives in local councils were severely targeted by negative media propaganda, direct political pressure and threats from far-right nationalists and the State Security Services as well. Further to the concerns raised, the Co-Chairs of the Intergroup decided to write a letter to the Ukrainian Embassy.

1 June

European Commission Vice-President Dubravka Šuica, responsible for the Conference on the Future of Europe was the guest speaker of the meeting. The exchange with the Vice-President focused on the exploration of possible cooperation in the framework of the Conference concerning rights of traditional national and linguistic minorities, and the equal participation of citizens and regions in the debate. In the second part of the meeting the 'Minet' project was presented by its director Peter Paul Kainrath. Minet or 'minority network', is a television series „minet – minority magazine“, first broadcasted in 2004. More than hundred TV-series and reports about different minorities and minority topics were produced with the aim to explain the complexity of the term “minority” through the television/internet and to illustrate its meaning in pictures from a non-political perspective.

8 July

The French Molac's Law on the protection and promotion of the heritage of regional languages and the decision of the French Constitutional Council to weaken was on the agenda of the meeting, upon the proposal of Co-Chair François Alfonsi. The French MP Paul Molac presented the law and the decision of the French Constitutional Council and its consequences. The second part of the meeting was dedicated to a discussion on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

21 October

The Basque Radio-television Euskal Irrati Telebista (EITB) on the proposal of MEP Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, presented “Primeran” OTT. David versus Goliath or how to use the skills of the giant and substitute the slingshot for the “euskalbits”. This responds to the dilemma of how to contribute to the preservation and growth of a minority language and culture from an audiovisual group of public nature in a small European country in the digital age. In the second half of the meeting, an exchange of views was held with experts of the European Commission regarding geo-blocking - a regulation that has concrete impact on the media and cultural content access of national and linguistic minority communities all over Europe, especially on those living in border regions.



25 November

The possible ways of cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union in the field of the protection of traditional national and linguistic minorities have been examined at the meeting. The Hungarian Presidency of the CoE set as key priority the promotion of the effective protection of national minorities. A series of high-level conferences were organized. The outcome were presented by Mr. Ferenc Kalmár,

Ministerial Commissioner, former member of PACE and Ms Katalin Szili, Special Envoy. In the second part of the meeting, an exchange of views was held with Mr. Gabriel Toggenburg from the European Fundamental Rights Agency on the current application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Mr. Toggenburg informed the Intergroup about the Commission's new strategy on the Charter as well as the concerning Council conclusions. The Commission in its reply to the Minority SafePack European Citizens' Initiative underlined that the rights of persons belonging to minorities will form an integral part of the thematic annual report related to the Charter.



2022

20 January

In the first half of the meeting, the history of creation of the Silesian regional identity and the process of recognition of Silesian language as a regional language was presented further to the proposal of MEP Łukasz Kohut. In the second part of the meeting, the Intergroup welcomed Ms Elise Cornu, Head of Division of National Minorities and Minority Languages, in the Anti-Discrimination Directorate -

DG Democracy of the Council of Europe. Besides presenting the activities of the Division of National Minorities and Minority Languages, the participants discussed the possibilities of a closer cooperation between the European Union and the Council of Europe in the field of minority protection.



17 February

We want to make the voices of national and linguistic minorities heard at the Conference on the Future of Europe! The Intergroup of the European Parliament joined forces with the largest European NGOs representing traditional national and linguistic minority organizations (the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), the European Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) and the European Language Equality Network (ELEN)) in order to submit common ideas on the official platform of the Conference on the Future of Europe. In the second half of the meeting, on the proposal of MEP Andrea Bocskor, the situation of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine was discussed. The President of the Cultural Alliance of Hungarians in Sub-Carpathia underlined that the Hungarian minority in Ukraine sought to protect existing rights, not gain additional ones, including language, identity and culture. An alternative report prepared by Hungarian researchers

and NGOs in response to Ukraine's Fifth Periodic Report on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was also presented aiming to nuance and clarify the fifth periodic report of the Ukrainian government.



7 April

Happy 100th anniversary to the Åland Autonomy! On the proposal of former co-chair of the Intergroup, MEP Nils Torvalds the current and historical contexts of the autonomy of Åland were presented as an example of a successful solution for regional governance. In the second half of the meeting, the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF) highlighted the difficulties and challenges encountered by the Turkish community in Western Thrace, in Greece.

5 May

More visibility shall be given to the protection of the human rights of minorities. The war in Ukraine should also serve as a reminder for Europe how important the protection of minorities was. On the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration of the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, the

Intergroup welcomed Dr Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. In the second half of the meeting, Prof. Dr. Georg Rehm, Principal Researcher and Research Fellow at the German Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI) in Berlin and co-Coordinator of the ELE project, the European Language Equality EU Project, the project aims to achieve digital language equality in Europe by 2030. The project, with a consortium of 52 partners, responds to the European Parliament's resolution "Language equality in the digital age," passed with strong support in September 2018.

9 June

Representatives of the Ladin-speaking community in the province of Belluno in Veneto presented the challenges the minority is facing further to the proposal of MEP Herbert Dorfmann. In the second part of the meeting, the Chairman of the Szövetség-Aliancia Party, Krisztián Forró gave an overview of the situation of the Hungarian community in Slovakia. Among others, he spoke about the results of the 2021 census results, and emphasized the need for better safeguards and the right of the minority to decide on relevant issues such as culture, education, and local, regional development. The legal effects of the so-called Benes-decrees have been raised as an unsolved issue.



6 October

The first topic on the agenda was a presentation by Dr. Constanze Itzel, Director of the House of European History, about the activities and projects of the Museum and the possibilities of future cooperation with the Intergroup. The Director pointed out that a cooperation between the Museum and the Intergroup could contribute to the European project and enlarge the Museum's collection with valuable data, information and images about different autochthonous minority communities living in the EU. In the second half of the meeting, the representatives of the Association of the German Social Cultural Societies in Poland (VdG) presented the challenges this minority had to face since the teaching of German as a minority language was reduced from three to one hour per week by the decree of the Polish Ministry of Education and Science. The Members of the Intergroup expressed their support and agreed to send a letter to the European Commission raising its attention to this ongoing case of discrimination.



24 November

In the first part of the meeting, an overview was given of the ongoing closure of border crossing points in Catalonia and in the Basque Country by the French

authorities under the pretext of continuous terrorist threats, and COVID-19 pandemic. This undermining measure hindered the close personal and economic ties that have developed within a cultural community that shares a common language, while causing disruption and mobility problems. Local mayors and members of the General Assembly presented the case. In the second half of the meeting, further to the proposal of MEP Waldemar Tomaszewski, the Intergroup heard about the Poles in the Vilnius Region, who have been fighting for their schools for over 30 years. The reform of 'Millennium Schools' poses a great threat to the schools of national minorities in the Vilnius region, where the government disagrees to register and finance classes in which the number of students does not reach the predetermined limit, although these limits should not be applied in schools of national minorities.



2023

16 February

In the first half of the meeting, the Intergroup heard about the possibilities of preserving and passing on the mother tongue in Alsace. A general overview about the changes introduced in the last years and

their impact on minority communities in Alsace was given, furthermore, the particularities of bilingual schools and the language teaching system in the region was highlighted. In the second half of the meeting, the online language support (Online Language Support, OLS) of Erasmus+ was in the focus that is not available for minority languages in Spain. Considering that the platform now provides the opportunity to learn other non-EU languages as well, such as Macedonian, Serbian or Turkish, it would be essential that this opportunity was available in minority or regional languages, such as Basque, Galician and Catalan in Spain.



16 March

Dr. Vicent Climent-Ferrando, from Universitat Pompeu Fabra Barcelona presented the main conclusions of the study "Assessing the European Union's support to Regional and Minority Languages: 10 years after the Alfonsi resolution (2013-2023)".

20 April

On the initiative of MEP Ana Miranda, the "Audiovisual, a strategic fight for the future of languages: the Galician case" was presented by A Mesa pola normalización lingüística and the Asociación Galician Association of Independents Producers. Findings show that the development of minority languages is affected and limited by the exclusion of their presence and by the availability to use them. In the second half of the meeting, further to the proposal of MEP Andor Deli, the focus was on the situation of the Hungarian community in Serbia by the National Council of the Hungarian Ethnic Minority in Serbia. The legal standing, the internal organisation, the duties of the body and the challenges the organisation faces were all covered.



11 May

The Slovenian minority in Carinthia described the challenges of implementation of minority rights in Austria. Experts represented the Council of Carinthian Slovenes and the Enotna lista. In the second half of the meeting the guest was the CONVIVENZA Foundation, the International Center for Minorities. This Swiss non-profit foundation offers non-partisan expertise and a dialogue platform to develop solutions for minority and diversity issues. Their presentation focused on the protection of autochthonous people without their own state or kin-state.

15 June

In the first half of the meeting, the Members of the Intergroup had a preparatory discussion with the Director of the House of European History, Ms. Contsanze Itzel, concerning the event planned for the European Day of Languages on 26 September. In the second half of the meeting, a non-European topic was discussed exceptionally. Mr. Stéphane Bergeron, Member of the House of Commons of Canada from Bloc Québécois gave an overview of the economic, social and political situation in Québec, the French speaking and autonomous province of Canada.

14 September

In the first part of the meeting, at the proposal of MEP Niclas Herbst, the details of a legal dispute between the Schleswig-Holstein Association for Homeland, Culture and Nature Conservation on Amrum - Öömrang Ferian and the EU Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) were presented. Several non-Frisian parties had applied for EU trademark protection requesting that descriptive terms originating from Frisian be registered. The Frisian

minority fears that this can lead to a sell-out of the Frisian language for commercial purposes. In the second part of the meeting, on the proposal of MEP Loránt Vincze and MEP Iuliu Winkler, the activities of the Mikó Imre Minority Rights Legal Services Assistance were presented. The association was founded with the purpose of monitoring, signaling and combatting discrimination of all sorts against the Hungarian minority in Romania.



19 October

The world of internet has a major impact on the use of minority languages. Further to the proposal of MEP Carles Puigdemont i Casamajó, the Members of the Intergroup were informed how Catalan and Basque language content results were ranked lower in major web search engines such as Google. The speakers represented Fundació.cat, the Alliance for the Digital Presence of Catalan as well as PUNTUEUS Foundation, developer of the Observatory of the Basque Language on the Internet.



23 November

The first topic on the November agenda was the presentation of the book 'Ladins of the Dolomites', which was proposed by MEP Herbert Dorfmann. The author of the book, Professor Paul Videsott, explained how this small nation (32 000 people today, one of the tiniest minorities in Europe) living in the Dolomitic Alps in Northern Italy managed to preserve its language and culture. The second topic focused on the Turkish community in Western Thrace as well as the Turks of Rhodes-Kos presented by the Federation of Western Thrace Turks in Europe (ABTTF).



14 December

During the last meeting of 2023 a roundtable discussion was organised entitled Minorities' Political Participation at national and EU level. Guest speakers included the FUEN European Dialogue Forum and Members of the National Assembly of France.



2024

8 February

During the last ordinary meeting of the Minority Intergroup, the first topic on the agenda were presentations about the Friulian language initiatives in Italy, at the proposal of MEP Elena Lizzi. Arlef, Regional Agency for the Friulian language, highlighted the challenges and opportunities to enhance Friulian language. Furthermore, the work of the Friulian radio, 'the voice of people since 1980' and the birth of the newspaper in Friulian were presented. The second topic on the agenda focused on two Alsatian associations: the A.B.C.M Zweisprachigkeit association, a pioneer of bilingualism in schools in Alsace, which represents a network of 13 primary schools, and the FILAL (international fund for



the Alsatian language), which works in the field of very early childhood during the out-of-school-time. Exceptionally, a third topic was discussed on language diversity of streaming platforms in the EU and language technologies, with a special focus on

regional and minority languages. In connection to this topic, a study on language diversity of streaming platforms in the EU, commissioned by MEP Diana Riba i Giner was presented. In addition, the Elhuyar foundation gave an introduction about its work, which has the objective of bringing science and Basque language together, active in several areas such as science dissemination, language technologies, lexicography, translation and language management.

29 February

During the mandate-closing event, the Co-Chairs of the Minority Intergroup presented the Minority Intergroup 2019-24 Activity Report, while expressing gratitude to Members and partner organizations for dedicated cooperation and support over the years.





MinorityIntergroup

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