



MINORITY SAFEPACK INITIATIVE

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. ONE MILLION
SIGNATURES FOR DIVERSITY IN EUROPE

Föderalistische Union Europäischer Volksgruppen · Schiffbrücke 41 · D-24939 Flensburg

Her Excellency Alenka Bratušek
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Gregorčičeva 20, 25
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Flensburg, 15 October 2013

Your Support for our European Citizens' Initiative – Minority SafePack Initiative

Your Excellency

In the European Union there are more than 40 million people who speak a regional or minority language and who are members of a national, regional or linguistic minority community. Within the member states of the Council of Europe there are more than 300 autochthonous minorities, with a total number of 100 million persons belonging to them. These communities are vulnerable, often affected by discrimination; and most of them report a decrease in the number of persons belonging to such groups.

We would like to inform you that a citizens' committee submitted a European Citizens' Initiative this summer, the *Minority SafePack Initiative*. It aims at strengthening the protection of minorities in the European Union, by proposing some substantial improvements in different policies, such as languages and culture, regional policy, equality, participation and media. The initiative is backed by minority organisations from 14 EU Member States, from the largest ethnic communities to the smallest language groups. The *Minority SafePack Initiative* was recently rejected by the European Commission stating that "the proposed initiative falls manifestly outside the framework of the Commission's powers to submit a proposal for a legal act."

As representatives of national minority communities we completely reject this view. In the history of Europe, minorities have often been a source for distrust, hate and war. The confrontations on the Balkans and the unsolved conflicts which still exist in Europe are a cautionary tale. The overwhelming majority of the minorities in Europe, however, are not looking for conflict with their home states, less even with the European Union. They want to engage in dialogue, achieve a fair balance of interests and build bridges between people - *together* - not in conflict with each other. European minorities and the regional and minority languages shall rather be considered as added value than as a threat or a hindrance. They desire to preserve their identity: their culture, their language, and traditions. They want to be considered as partners of their states and the European Union with and because of their diversity. They will not give up their attempts, aiming at the adoption of a legislative framework that will protect and strengthen minorities, as well as linguistic and cultural diversity within the EU.

The signatories of this letter and the committee that submitted the Citizens' Initiative are supported by the members of the largest umbrella organisation of the autochthonous minorities and the regional and minority languages in Europe - the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), founded in 1949.

Unfortunately we have noticed that nationalism and populism are on the rise in times of crisis and that hate-speech against "the others" - who are very often the autochthonous minorities of Europe - is growing. Also scepticism and aversion of "those who are governing us" is alarming. We would like to work together with the European states and the European Union in creating a Europe of the citizens and provide assistance with this task. We want to live in a Europe of the regions, which is strong because of its diversity in terms of identity, cultures and languages.

At present the motto of the European Union: "*In varietate concordia - United in diversity*", the founding value "rights of people belonging to minorities" (Article 2 TEU), as well as the "respect for cultural and linguistic diversity" (Article 3 TEU) seem to be without substance - much to the disappointment of many persons belonging to minorities and a lot of speakers of regional and minority languages in Europe.

We regard this letter as an offer to engage in a dialogue. We would like to contribute to the future of Europe – and neither be in opposition with the Member States nor with the European Commission. A serious dialogue always requires two sides – we offer our support.

We kindly ask you to plead for cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and to stand up for securing the rights of the autochthonous national minorities. Your voice carries weight, and it would be an important signal. We would be pleased if you were so kind to promote our offer to engage in a dialogue with the EU institutions and the Member States. We rely on your support.

Yours sincerely



Hans Heinrich Hansen
Representative of the
Minority SafePack Initiative
President of the
Federal Union of European Nationalities



Hunor Kelemen
Substitute Representative of the
Minority SafePack Initiative
President of the
Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania

Members of the Citizens' Committee

Prime Minister Luis Durnwalder, Italy, South Tyrol
Prime Minister Karl-Heinz Lambertz, Belgium
Minister Anke Spoorendonk, Germany, Schleswig Holstein
Minister Jannewietske de Vries, The Netherlands, Friesland
UN High Representative Valentin Inzko, Austria

Enclosure

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