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des Innern

Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany

pursuant to Article 15 (1)

of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

2017

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A. Preliminary remarks

The Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany in accordance with Article 15 (1) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (the Charter) was prepared by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in cooperation with other federal ministries and the responsible state authorities, and in consultation with the federal associations of the speakers of the languages protected by the Charter.

The federal associations were invited to share their views about the implementation of the Charter in Germany, which do not have to be in line with those of the authorities. Their comments are included in Section F of this report. An implementation conference took place in Berlin in November 2017 to finalize the report.

This report covers the period from December 2012 to November 2017.

General information about the regional and minority languages protected in Germany are included in the First Report of the Federal Republic of Germany in accordance with Article 15 (1) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on pages 3 to 28. The report is available on the website of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (www.bmi.bund.de).

B. Updated geographic and demographic information

The geographic and demography information has not changed in the reporting period.

C. General trends

The first part of the report will address general developments concerning the protection and promotion of regional and minority languages in the Federal Republic of Germany since the previous report which was submitted to the Council of Europe Secretary General on 8 April 2013.

I. Changed framework conditions

The Federation, the Free State of Saxony and the federal state of Brandenburg signed a new funding agreement for the Foundation for the Sorbian People. This third funding agreement covers the period from 2016 to 2020. Depending on the individual budgets, the foundation will receive €18.6 million in annual funding. In the current funding period, contributions will continue to be as follows: 3/6 federal funding (€9.3 million per year), 2/6 by Saxony (€6.2 million per year) and 1/6 by Brandenburg (€3.1 million per year).

Brandenburg has significantly increased its budget for regional and minority languages by €425,000, i.e. from €3,104,770 to €3,529,000 in 2017. The Act on the Sorbs' Rights amended in 2014 is gradually being implemented. In this context, various legal provisions were revised or newly drafted and adopted. On 23 September 2014, the election regulations on the Act on the Sorbs' Rights (*Wahlordnung zum Sorben/Wenden-Gesetz, WO-SWG*) (Gazette of Laws and Ordinances II/14, [no. 69]) entered into force. The revised administrative regulations of the Ministry for Science, Research and Culture for the Act on the Specification of the Rights of the Sorbs in Brandenburg (*Verwaltungsvorschriften zum Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben/Wenden im Land Brandenburg, VV SWG*) (Official Journal/16, [no. 22], S.610) have been effective since 9 June 2016. The Ordinance on the Reimbursement of Additional Expenses of Applying the Act on the Sorbs' Rights (*Verordnung über die Erstattung des Zusatzaufwandes aus der Anwendung des Sorben/Wenden-Gesetzes, SWGKostenv*) (Gazette of Laws and Ordinances II/16, [no. 57]) entered into force on 29 October 2016. The Ordinance on School Education Matters of the Sorbs (Wends) (*Sorben-[Wenden-] Schulverordnung, SWSchulV*) of 31 July 2000 (Gazette of Laws and Ordinances II/00, [no. 16], p. 291) is currently being revised. The decree of the Ministry for Infrastructure and Spatial Planning on bilingual German-Lower Sorbian inscriptions on road signs (Official Journal/14, [no. 29], p. 926) has already been amended in 2014. For example, it includes new rules on the use of equal font sizes for German and Lower Sorbian, the use of bilingual municipality names on motorway signs, the use of bilingual names of municipalities in the traditional settlement area on signposts outside this area, and the possibility to refer to municipalities outside the traditional settlement area in both

languages from within this area. The decree is binding for the authorities concerned and is being implemented, i.e. the rules are generally applied when road signs (signposts, place-name signs) are installed or modified.

In 2014, a Commissioner of the State Government for Sorbian/Wendish Affairs was appointed on the basis of the amended Act on the Sorbs' Rights. The State Secretary at the Ministry for Science, Research and Culture was entrusted with this task. Moreover, in 2015 an additional policy officer and part-time administrative officer were hired. This helped significantly intensify the exchange and cooperation between the state government, municipalities in the Sorbs' traditional settlement areas and representatives of the language group. The Ministry for Science, Research and Culture has also been increasingly using the Lower Sorbian language to communicate with the language group (orally and in writing), the public (publications, messages of welcome, media relations) and other authorities (letterhead, visiting cards). In 2015, the federal state published a flyer on the Sorbs' rights in Brandenburg (*Sorbische/Wendische Rechte im Land Brandenburg - Serbske pšawa w kraju Bramborska*), informing Sorbs/Wends about their minority and language rights. The flyer was revised and updated in 2016. The state government must submit its first report on the situation of the Sorbian people in Brandenburg in 2017, also on the basis of the amended Act on the Sorbs' Rights.

In 2015, the amended provisions for the election of the Council for Sorbian Affairs at the Brandenburg parliament were for the first time applied on the basis of the amended Act on the Sorbs' Rights. Unlike before, the language group's parliamentary advisory body was directly elected by the members of the Sorbian people in Brandenburg by secret postal ballot. The federal state reimbursed the costs incurred from organizing the election.

In 2016/17, amended Section 13a of the Act on the Sorbs' Rights was implemented. The provision specifies that municipalities covered by minority rights are entitled to reimbursement by the federal state of additional costs related to using a minority language, a first in Germany. In order to ease the burden on local and state administrations, a two-tier procedure was used, consisting of an annual general reimbursement of administrative costs and an additional reimbursement of individual costs. The initial payments were made in 2017 retroactively from the entry into force of the amended act of 2014 on the basis of the Ordinance on the Reimbursement of Additional Expenses of Applying the Act on the Sorbs' Rights. Since such a procedure has not been tried before, the provisions may have to be adjusted. Therefore, the procedure will be evaluated after two years.

In summer 2016, the state government adopted the first state plan for strengthening the Lower Sorbian language. Brandenburg now has a set of 50 measures in five areas: developing language-policy strategies, informing about language and language rights,

encouraging the use of the language, using the language in public, and encouraging language learning and research. This state plan adds to existing legal provisions and their implementation. Overall, implementation of 24 of the 50 measures has already started or been completed. Another six measures are being prepared.

In December 2015, the parliament of the **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen** decided to continue the Low German consultative council to the president of the city-state parliament during the current 19th legislative term (doc. 19/178).

In order to strengthen Low German services, in 2016 the Radio Bremen Act (*Radio-Bremen-Gesetz*, RBG), i.e. the primary legal basis for the activities of Radio Bremen, was amended by the Act to Strengthen the Low German Regional Language in the Media (*Gesetz zur Stärkung der Regionalsprache Niederdeutsch im Medienbereich*, doc. 19/247). The revised act expressly defines the promotion of Low German as a task of Radio Bremen (Section 2 (3), fifth sentence, of the Radio Bremen Act). This has created the legal basis for Radio Bremen to take responsibility for appropriately dealing with the regional language also in the future. The amended act also creates a binding obligation to regularly broadcast in Low German (Section 3 (7) of the Radio Bremen Act) so that the scope of related funding is specified as well. In addition, the broadcasting council of Radio Bremen created a seat for a representative of the Bundesrat for Nedderdüütsch (Section 10 (1), p. 1, no. 19 of the Radio Bremen Act). The representative's task will be to advocate the interests of the Low German language when monitoring compliance with the programming guidelines and advising the broadcaster.

In August 2017, the Bremen parliament adopted the Act to Amend Bremen's Roads Act (*Gesetz zur Änderung des Bremischen Landesstraßengesetzes*) stipulating that municipalities must take into account the obligation under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages with regard to the Low German regional language when deciding on names (doc. 19/1116).

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania reports that adopting the state government programme *Meine Heimat – Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* (My Homeland – My modern Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) in 2016 has improved the quality of the protection and promotion of the Low German language. The programme was discussed with representatives of the speakers prior to adoption. In a period of five years, resources will be used to strengthen Low German language teaching in early-childhood education, primary and secondary school education, occupational and university training, teacher training, and cultural training and project funding.

In its budget, **Lower Saxony** provides for €450,000 in annual funding to promote Low German and Sater Frisian in schools.

Moreover, regional associations (*Landschaften* and *Landschaftsverbände*) may obtain regional cultural funding (total volume €2.9 million) for important regional cultural projects, e.g. for the Low German language and the Sater Frisian minority language, below €10,000.

The Act to Amend the Constitution of **Schleswig-Holstein** of 12 November 2014 (Gazette of Laws and Ordinances 2014, p. 344) introduced subsections 5 and 6 in Art. 12 of the state constitution. Subsection 5 specifies that schools of the national Danish minority ensure school education for their members in accordance with the law and that they receive the same state funding as public schools. Taking into account differences between public and grant-aided independent schools, the schools of the Danish minority have been put on an equal footing with public schools. They are now enshrined in the constitution.

Subsection 6 specifies the constitutional goal of protecting and promoting Frisian and Low German language instruction at public schools. This was preceded by the Act of 4 February 2014 amending the Schools Act, including the protection and promotion of the Frisian language, culture and history as an educational goal in Section 4 (5).

Section 6 (1) of the Frisian Act (*Friesisch-Gesetz*, FriesischG) was amended to include, in addition to bilingual place-name signs, also bilingual information signs, tourist information signs, information signs on waters, and signposts. The new subsections 2 and 3 of Section 6 of the Frisian Act govern the coverage by the state of expenses for installing new bilingual signposts in the North Friesland county and include a list of the places in the language area requiring German and Frisian signs. Signposts in North Friesland will be gradually replaced in accordance with the Act. The federal state provided funding for this in 2016 and 2017. The signs will be replaced to gradually achieve full bilingual German and Frisian signposting in North Friesland.

In addition to Section 82 b of the State Administration Act (*Landesverwaltungsgesetz*, LVwG), the amended Section 1 (4) of the Frisian Act now allows for oral and written communication in the Frisian language with authorities and courts in the North Friesland county.

In addition, the amended Frisian Act stipulates in Section 2 (2) that Schleswig-Holstein, the North Friesland county and its local authorities as well as the local authorities of Heligoland should take Frisian language skills into account when recruiting personnel for the public service if this is considered necessary or desirable for performing a specific function. Vacancy notices should reflect this.

II. Language conference, November 2014

At the invitation of the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities and the Minority Council of the four autochthonous minorities and ethnic groups in Germany, a conference on languages protected in Germany under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages took place at the German Parliamentary Association in Berlin on 26 November 2014. Among those invited were, for example, representatives of the national minorities in Germany and the group of Low German speakers, representatives of the Council of Europe, the federal ministries, the federal states and the European Commission, as well as German members of the European Parliament, German members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and academics conducting research on regional and minority languages. The conference took place under the patronage of the president of the German Bundestag.

During the event, the policy paper “CHARTER LANGUAGES IN GERMANY - SHARED RESPONSIBILITY” was presented. This paper emphasizes that the protection of minority languages in Germany and the regional language Low German is a task to be assumed by the entire society. It also states that all those involved in the political implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages are responsible for ensuring this protection. In this policy paper, the federal and state governments and representatives of national minorities in Germany and the group of Low German speakers define joint goals regarding the languages protected in Germany under the Charter.

III. Debate on the charter languages in the German Bundestag, June 2017

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, a debate on the Charter and the languages protected in Germany under the Charter was held in the German Bundestag on 2 June 2017. At the end of the Bundestag debate, the motion with the title “25 years of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages - Joint Mandate” (Bundestag printed document 18/12542 (new)), which had been tabled by the parliamentary groups of CDU/CSU, SPD and BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN, was adopted unanimously. This motion acknowledges numerous measures taken in the past to protect the regional and minority languages recognized in Germany and calls upon the Federal Government to consider or take further measures to protect and promote these languages.

IV. Annual implementation conference

Annual implementation conferences taking place at the Federal Ministry of the Interior accompany the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Language Charter. Participants are the federal ministries dealing with the protection of minorities as well as minority and regional languages, the responsible state authorities, representatives of the umbrella organizations of the minorities and language groups protected by the Convention and Charter and of their research institutions. Over the past years, the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities attended the implementation conferences in person, most recently on 1 December 2016.

The conferences regularly focus on issues related to the implementation of the Language Charter (e.g. “Danish as an administrative language” in 2014). Since 2015, these issues have been addressed during special events taking place after the implementation conferences to make sure that they are dealt with in a comprehensive manner. So far, the issues “Regional and minority languages in the media” (2015), “Language learning and participation in education” (2016) and “Minority languages in the administration” (2017) have been discussed.

V. Institute for the Low German Language, Federal Council for Low German

The Federal Government reports that the four donating federal states of Bremen, Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony terminated the Agreement on the Joint Funding of the Institute for the Low German Language with effect from 31 December 2017, ending their institutional support for the Institute for the Low German Language (Institut für niederdeutsche Sprache; INS). These federal states informed neither the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, who supports projects of the INS, nor the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for implementing the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages at federal level, of its intention to terminate the Agreement. The other four federal states where Low German is spoken were not informed, either.

The Institute for the Low German Language was founded in 1973 by the four donating federal states and the Federal Government on the basis of a broad political consensus. Since then, its activities have made a major contribution to preserving and maintaining the Low German language in the eight federal states where it is spoken. Furthermore, the INS is currently the only supra-regional institution to examine and preserve the Low German language. It is also the service provider with the most extensive infrastructure in the field of Low German language teaching and cultural work. Now that four federal states will stop their institutional support, the existence of the INS is threatened. Since early 2017, it has no longer been possible to ensure academic research as the basis for

preserving the Low German language because, given the uncertainty regarding subsequent funding and the risk of leaving staff, no new projects were initiated over the course of 2017.

The umbrella organization of the group of Low German speakers, the Federal Council for Low German (Bundesrat für Niederdeutsch; BfN), which is responsible for language policy matters, was directly affected by this termination because, through the INS, it used to be co-funded by project funds of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and receive administrative support. On the basis of a motion supported by all parliamentary groups of the German Bundestag, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which has the lead responsibility in this matter, and the office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture agreed on measures which helped remedy this situation rather soon. Following the example of the Secretariat for Minorities, the Federal Council for Low German got its own secretariat which began its work on 1 November 2017 and is based in Hamburg. Thanks to this secretariat, the Federal Council for Low German can perform its tasks independently. Subject to the availability of budgets funds, the Federal Ministry of the Interior will fund the secretariat as from 1 January 2018. The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media will continue to provide the Federal Council with project funds. The office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture supported the Federal Council also in 2017, enabling it to carry out its tasks at all times.

The termination of the Agreement by the four donating federal states was addressed during two meetings attended by policy officers from the federal and state governments and at three meetings of the Consultative Committee on Low German. According to the plans presented at these meetings, a State Centre for Low German (Länderzentrum für Niederdeutsch) is to be established as a non-profit limited liability company. This centre will be based in Bremen and be funded by the four donating federal states. It will open on 1 December 2017. The partnership agreement concluded by the four federal states will be disclosed only after it has been recorded by a notary. The federal states have announced that they will continue to provide the same amount of funding. Once the non-profit limited liability company has been entered in the commercial register, the four federal states will discuss forms of cooperation with the other four federal states where Low German is spoken, namely Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Brandenburg. According to them, cooperation depends on whether these four federal states contribute to funding the State Centre. If necessary, some research activities will be outsourced and carried out by local universities.

The Federal Council for Low German will not be incorporated into the decision-making bodies of the State Centre. As a member of the advisory board, the Federal Council will be free to participate in an advisory capacity. It remains unclear how the research

activities that have been carried out successfully for decades can be transferred to the State Centre for Low German and how their continuity is ensured. It is also unclear whether the specialized library of the INS will continue to exist and how it will be catalogued and structured. Given this situation, it remains to be seen whether the State Centre will be able to carry out academic and analytical activities and strategically targeted basic research and ensure the necessary academic coordination among all federal states where Low German is spoken.

Having successfully cooperated with the four donating federal states for decades in the interest of the Low German language, the Federal Government was disappointed to see that the states did not discuss their plans with it. As a result, these states missed the opportunity to work together with the Federal Government to set up an overarching institution for speakers of the Low German language that meets the needs of all eight federal states and could have been prepared for future challenges.

The Federal Government notes that the State Centre for Low German is part of the plan to put the supra-regional funding for the Low German language on a new basis in the four federal states. However, it considers this only as a first step. It expects the federal states funding the State Centre to make every (political) effort to meet the obligations arising from international ties (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages) and the state constitutions in such a way that the Low German language is strengthened in all eight federal states where it is spoken.

The federal states of **Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, Hamburg and Bremen** will change the way the Low German language is funded and the Language Charter is implemented. Against this backdrop, the four federal states terminated the Agreement on the Joint Funding of the Institute for the Low German Language with effect from 31 December 2017, ending their institutional support for the Institute for the Low German Language. On 10 May 2016 the board of directors of the INS was informed of the federal states' intention to terminate the Agreement. The Agreement was then terminated in writing on 16 December 2016.

At the same time, preparations were underway to set up a new institution involving several federal states. The four federal states promised that they would continue to provide the new institution with the same amount of budget funds. In the first half of 2017, they specified the concept of the State Centre for Low German which will start its work on 1 January 2018 as a non-profit limited liability company. The federal states agreed on a partnership agreement in summer 2017. It will be certified by a notary in November 2017. The post of a director is currently being advertised. The State Centre for Low German will be based in Bremen. Its key tasks include: pushing ahead with the

research and knowledge transfer in all eight federal states, if possible, having signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages for Low German; entering into a structured dialogue with the political decision-makers at federal and state level; acting as an intermediary between professionals and volunteers; and developing good models and best practices for the Low German language and making them available to all those interested. This broad political consensus and cooperation are open to other federal states where Low German is spoken.

The Institute for the Low German Language was founded in 1974 by the four donating federal states on the basis of a broad political consensus. Despite various efforts to put the funding of the Institute on a broader financial basis, it was not possible to encourage other federal states to provide financial assistance.

Although they talked repeatedly to the INS, the four donating federal states had the impression that the institution they had been funding no longer represented their interests. In line with the goals of the Language Charter, Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, Hamburg and Bremen therefore decided to put the funding of the Low German language on a new basis. The Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media were informed in June and October 2016. Furthermore, the matter was discussed comprehensively within the Consultative Committee on Issues concerning the Low German Language Group at the Federal Ministry of the Interior at its meeting on 18 October 2016.

The four countries continue on the path of implementing their obligations arising from the European Language Charter, i.e. protecting Low German as a regional language. Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and North Rhine-Westphalia, where Low German is also spoken, have adopted individual approaches so far. They may become involved in the State Centre for Low German by joining the partnership or by cooperating on certain projects.

The umbrella organization of the group of Low German speakers, the Federal Council for Low German (BfN), which is responsible for language policy matters and, through the INS, used to be co-funded by project funds of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and receive administrative support, considered its existence threatened by the decision of the four donating federal states to stop funding the INS.

In the Bundestag printed document 18/12542, the German Bundestag called on the Federal Government to promote the creation of a secretariat for Low German that supports the Federal Council for Low German in strategical and organizational matters.

It also underlined the need to involve representatives of Low German as a regional language.

VI. Brochure of the Federal Ministry of the Interior

In August 2015 the Federal Ministry of the Interior updated the brochure on national minorities and regional and minority languages, produced for the first time in 2012, and published it on its website to draw the attention of a broad audience to the minorities and their languages, including the regional language of Low German and its speakers. In March 2016, this brochure was also published in English. A printed version is available, too.

VII. Low German in Brandenburg

In 2014, the Association for Low German in the Federal State of Brandenburg (Verein für Niederdeutsch im Land Brandenburg e.V.) was founded as the umbrella organization of this language group, being Brandenburg's first contact point for speakers of Low German. Since 2015, the federal state has provided an annual amount of €50,000 to the Association so that it can implement its projects. Furthermore, individual projects such as the festival for the Low German language in Großderschau in 2015 are also supported. In 2017, the federal state provided €10,000 to a project aimed at producing a CD and an accompanying brochure that help nursing staff working at Brandenburg's care facilities and home care services learn and speak Low German (Platt in der Pflege). Further activities include, for example, the annual Day of the Low German Language in Wittstock and the annual Low German reading festival (Platt-Lesebühne) in Potsdam. The Association has started to create a network consisting of Brandenburg-based associations and language circles. The website www.platt-in-brandenburg.de and a newsletter are particularly effective in this context. The cities of Prenzlau and Wittstock also support the activities of the Association. For instance, a Low German flyer on the state garden show in Prenzlau was published. The same is planned for the state garden show taking place in Wittstock in 2019. Preparations for this show have already begun. Furthermore, the city of Prenzlau funds part of the position of an employee coordinating also school projects.

In 2015, a working group on Low German was established at the Ministry for Science, Research and Culture. It meets at least once a year and is intended to facilitate the regular exchange between the federal state and the group of Low German speakers. The Ministry for Science, Research and Culture and the Ministry for Education, Youth and Sport are permanent members of this working group, while other ministries are involved depending on the issues to be discussed. The Low German language group is

represented by Brandenburg's members in the Federal Council for Low German and other representatives to be appointed by the umbrella organization. The latter group of persons should represent the speakers of the various Low German accents in the federal state, if possible. Also in 2015, the name of the responsible division at the Ministry for Science, Research and Culture was changed to include "matters concerning the Low German language". The goal was to incorporate this issue and increase the visibility of this task. The state government refers to the Low German language and its significance also in its PR work (messages of welcome, media information). Large parts of the public still do not know that Low German is traditionally spoken in Brandenburg, too, and must be informed accordingly.

Represented by the umbrella organization and the two members from Brandenburg in the Federal Council for Low German, the federal state and the group of Low German speakers worked out an agreement on the basis of the state parliament's decision 6/1902-B, "Increasing Multilingualism and Linguistic Diversity in Brandenburg". This agreement was adopted by the state government in August and will be signed at the next meeting of the working group on Low German. In the agreement, the federal state also commits to meeting its obligations under Part III of the Charter.

Regarding the obligation arising from Article 8 (1)(a)(iv), please see the "Niederdeutsch in der Kita" project (Low German in day-care centres) referred to in E.I.4.a.

Regarding the obligations arising from Article 8 (1)(b)(iv), please see the explanations given in E.I.4.a.

As regards secondary education – Article 8 (1)(c)(iv) – no such need has been expressed so far. There is, however, cooperation during project days, e.g. between the Association for Low German and a grammar school in Bernau.

Regarding Article 8 (8)(f)(iii), the authors would like to refer to the gatherings of Low German speakers taking place in Wittstock every two weeks and organized in cooperation with the adult education centre of the Ostprignitz-Ruppin district.

Regarding the obligation under Article 8 (1)(g), the authors would like to mention that, starting with the 2017/18 school year, a new framework curriculum entered into force for grades 1 to 10. In the general Part A, the section "Appreciation of cultural identities/multilingualism" contains the following statement: "Language and culture are integral parts of our identity. The pupils' different languages of origin and cultural backgrounds are appreciated and taken into account at school. Multilingual children and adolescents possess specific skills that are used and promoted. Schools respect these various linguistic skills and cultural identities which are characterized by the pupils' individual experiences and their own background. In the federal state of Brandenburg, this applies in particular to the Sorbs/Wends (In Brandenburg, it is part of the schools'

educational mandate to convey knowledge of the historical background and the identity of the Sorbs/Wends and make pupils understand the Sorbian/Wendish culture. This means that the lessons must include topics that take the Sorbian/Wendish identity, culture and history into account.

This concerns both knowledge of the commonality regarding origin and the different traditions, and community life of the various population groups. The Sorbian/Wendish language is protected and promoted as a minority language in the federal state of Brandenburg) in their traditional settlement area and to pupils with Low German as their mother tongue (Being a regional language, Low German is put under special protection in Brandenburg). Multilingualism is the basis for acquiring other languages and for life-long language learning. Multilingual children and adolescents can communicate more easily in a multicultural environment and in a global context and can use this skill to strengthen their intercultural competences.

In the subject-specific Part C of the framework curriculum for German, the section on subject-specific competence areas contains the following statement: "Language learning takes place increasingly in multilingual contexts. Those learning languages use multilingualism as a resource when reflecting on languages. They examine languages, also regional languages, in their situational context and discover similarities and differences in the structure of these languages. (...) In the process of implementing the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, attention must be paid to the local linguistic diversity to get and develop ideas of cultural identity." Subject area 2.13 "Developing linguistic knowledge and acting with linguistic consciousness" explicitly mentions regional languages.

The courses on regional and minority languages in Germany that have been offered at Potsdam University since the 2007/08 winter semester are still offered and can be selected by all students. Those studying German at Potsdam University to become teachers have the chance to attend, at various intervals, a seminar on Low German as a regional language. In 2017, guidelines for German teachers addressing this issue were published. Older guidelines on the dialects spoken in the Mark Brandenburg, which were developed for grades 7 to 13, are also still available.

Regarding the obligations under Article 9 (2)(a), Article 10 (2)(b) and (3)(c), the federal state is not aware of any cases where documents and applications were rejected because they had been presented or filed in Low German. Responding to a question by the federal state, the umbrella organization of the language group has not expressed a common position on further implementation rules which might be needed in its view. The working group on Low German will continue to discuss this issue.

As regards the media (Article 11 (1)(b)(ii), (c)(iii), (d), (e)(ii) and (f)(ii)), the situation is the same as for the Low Sorbian language. Given the freedom of the media, the federal

state has no chance to directly influence the radio stations. During the reporting period, the Low German language sometimes played a role as a topic in the programming of the public broadcaster Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB). The federal state suggested that the Sorbian/Wendish representative in the broadcasting council of the RBB cooperate with the Low German umbrella organization. Both sides seemed to be open to this suggestion. However, the federal state is currently unaware of any cooperation. Article 11 (2) has been fully implemented. In particular the reception of Low German broadcasts of Norddeutscher Rundfunk and the distribution of Low German print media do not pose any problems.

Since the federal state and the language group defined other priorities, no specific measures were taken with regard to Article 12 (1)(a), (f) and (g).

The federal state is currently examining the possibility of issuing a decree that would make it possible to use the Low German language on place-name signs.

The Low German language is used on certain occasions in the private social and economic life in Brandenburg. The project "Platt in der Pflege" has already been mentioned. Low German is sometimes used in the tourism industry (menus, names of restaurants, house inscriptions).

D. Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers

I. Recommendation 1

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities adopt and implement a structured policy for the promotion and preservation of Lower Sorbian, including measures which ensure that pre-school, primary and secondary education is systematically available in these languages.

Brandenburg reported that since 2015 Sorbian language and bilingual teaching have been scientifically evaluated at the request of the state government by a consortium of the Institute for Sorbian Studies (*Institut für Sorabistik*) at Leipzig University and the JSMoin Softnet AG in Hamburg. In addition to language proficiency assessments, the consortium carried out interviews with participating pupils, parents, teachers and headmasters. The evaluation is a longitudinal study; the second survey took place in 2017. Therefore, we expect to have results only in 2018. Further decisions may be needed on the basis of the evaluation results. Moreover, key legislation is currently being revised (e.g. Ordinance on School Education Matters of the Sorbs/Wends) or drafted (e.g. administrative regulation on bilingual instruction). The Ordinance on Upper Secondary Schools (*Gymnasiale Oberstufen-Verordnung, GOSTV*) was amended and provides for two advanced courses, each with five hours of instruction per week, and basic courses, each with three hours of instruction per week. The Lower Sorbian *Gymnasium* (grammar school) is currently also revising its approach, taking into account the amended GOSTV. Therefore, more details can be provided at a later date.

The right to Sorbian language instruction in nursery schools and schools is ensured. The state authorities are not aware of any cases where an express demand could not be met.

II. Recommendation 2

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities continue existing measures and strengthen their efforts to develop effective North Frisian and Sater Frisian educational offerings.

In **Lower Saxony**, support for the schools of the Saterland continues to be ensured by the state's school authority and by granting remission from teaching duties. Moreover, advanced training measures carried out on behalf of Lower Saxony's Ministry of Culture by the *Niedersächsisches Landesinstitut für schulische Qualitätsentwicklung* (State

Institute for Quality Development at Schools in Lower Saxony) together with Oldenburg University to teach teachers Low German now also include the Sater Frisian minority language.

In addition, Lower Saxony funds cultural projects that strengthen the regional identity and encourage active use of the Sater Frisian minority language.

In 2017, Lower Saxony provided €10.000 in funding for a €33.000 project to digitize (technologically develop) the Sater Frisian dictionary and to put signs on public buildings in the Saterland municipality.

The German department at Oldenburg University employed Mr Jörg Peters, a linguistics professor working on linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics with a focus on Low German. The professor and his staff teach German studies (B.A. and M.A.). Students enrolled in teacher training may attend these courses as well. Young researchers are training in the framework of research projects that also receive third-party funding.

In Lower Saxony, the state-funded *Agentur für Erwachsenen- und Weiterbildung* (Agency for Adult and Continuing Education) coordinates and funds adult education institutions which provide regular and demand-led minority language instruction.

As a result, volunteers attended Sater Frisian courses, for example.

Regarding minority language instruction in adult education, Lower Saxony also refers to its comments in Chapter E. I. 3. a.

Schleswig-Holstein comments as follows: In 2015, the Schleswig-Holstein government adopted a language policy action plan expressing the goal of providing uninterrupted education in regional and minority languages from nursery schools to vocational schools and universities. This goal is particularly important for North Frisian as a less spoken language because it can be decisive for preserving the Frisian language.

In order to learn and thus preserve the languages, it is reasonable and desirable to ensure very early contact with these languages. Currently, Frisian is offered in 17 nursery schools in North Friesland. Language offerings range from thirty minutes a week to the entire school day. The *Nordfrisches Institut* (North Frisian Institute), the scientific institution of the North Frisian language, is funded until the end of 2017. The tasks of the institute include developing teaching and learning materials for Frisian language teachers.

Among other things, child day care should encourage learning, including language promotion. This also includes promoting minority and regional languages in day care. In 2016, the Child Day-Care Centres Act (*Kindertagesstättengesetz, KitaG*) was amended accordingly. Since 2017 specially trained staff have received targeted support to teach

and use regional and minority languages in child day-care centres. Child day-care centres which provide for regional and minority language education in their educational strategies may apply for an additional allowance. Grants have been increased by €500,000 in the 2017 budget and distributed to the counties and cities not belonging to a country depending on the number of children aged 3 to 14 in their care.

At 15 public schools in the North Frisian language area and on the Island of Heligoland (Pinneberg county) Frisian is taught mainly at the primary school and as an optional subject. Frisian is taught also at three schools of the Danish minority (Risum Skole/Risem Schölj, Vesterland-Keitum Dansk Skole/ Westerland-Keitum Danish School and Bredsted Danske Skole/Bredstedt Danish School).

The only *Gymnasium* in Schleswig-Holstein offering Frisian as a regular subject is the Eilun Feer Skuul (EFS) in Wyk on the island of Föhr. In the 2017/18 school year, Frisian can be chosen as a subject at both the lower and upper secondary level.

In 2015, the Frisian study group at the Friedrich Paulsen School in Niebüll was discontinued for lack of demand.

Since the 2016/17 school year St. Peter-Ording's Nordseeschule has a Frisian study group in the framework of its open all-day school approach. The state expert adviser for schools with a Frisian focus provided the following data for the 2016/17 school year: 24 schools in Schleswig-Holstein provide 95 hours of weekly Frisian-language teaching to 834 pupils of all school types.

III. Recommendation 3

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities develop appropriate educational offerings for Low German in Brandenburg, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saxony-Anhalt.

Brandenburg refers to the comments in Chapter E. I. 4. a.

In **North Rhine-Westphalia**, the Münster district government carries out the school project *Niederdeutsch an Grundschulen in Münster und dem Münsterland* (Low German at primary schools in Münster and the Münsterland region) supervised by Prof. Spiekermann, head of the *Centrum für Niederdeutsch* (Low German Centre) at Münster University. In this school project, six primary schools in the Münsterland region tentatively offer optional study groups for Low German. The project will initially run for five years. The practical phase began in the 2014/15 school year, so that it is now in its third year. It aims at offering Low German language instruction for third and fourth

graders at participating schools (here: the *Klei-Platt* variety) that helps them acquire the A2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), including a B2 level in listening comprehension. Based on a bilingual approach in the subjects of German, English, music and social studies (focus on “space and world”, “nature and life”, and “man and community”), the project aims at staying anchored in the pupils’ everyday life. To this end, the *Centrum für Niederdeutsch* (CfN) develops teaching materials that can be downloaded free of charge from the website of Münster University by all interested schools as of the 2017/18 school year. The school project is scientifically supervised by Prof. Spiekermann of the CfN. The CfN was founded at Münster University in 2013. The centre combines the research and teaching activities on Low German of researchers from the various fields represented at Münster University. At the moment, the CfN in particular studies language varieties at the German-Dutch border and attitudes on Low German (in particular on learning the language). The CfN is also a pool for courses which address Low German topics and are offered regularly by the German department at Münster University for B.A. and M.A. students. In addition to Bachelor and Master theses, the German department at Münster University also assists doctoral students doing research on Low German. The doctoral theses address topics such as language use at the Low German theatre, the impact of the German-Dutch border on the historical continuum of dialects, and construction-grammar modelling of the auxiliary verb selection for telic verbs in Low German and the close-to-standard Westphalian and Emsland varieties.

Saxony-Anhalt refers to the general statements in the fifth report of the Federal Republic of Germany (p. 20). The framework conditions for language teaching already at nursery school and primary school level are created by funding the development and production of language learning materials for nursery and primary schools (*Plattdütschbüdel*). On 30 October 2015, the then State Secretary ceremonially handed over the first *Plattdütschbüdel* to the *Plattpreker* working group of the Börde primary school in Hermsdorf. At the request of all nursery and primary schools, the language learning materials continue to be provided free of charge because Saxony-Anhalt promotes Low German language instruction for children. Currently, 27 nursery and primary schools work with the *Plattdütschbüdel*. In the next years, the *Arbeitsstelle Niederdeutsch* (Low German working group) at Magdeburg’s Otto von Guericke University will continue to develop new materials in cooperation with the *Landesheimatbund Sachsen-Anhalt e. V.* (Saxony-Anhalt Land Union for Local and Regional Traditions). At primary and secondary schools, language encounter and sometimes acquisition happens mainly in Low German study groups. We do not have current data for a comparison with the number of study groups in the 2011/12 school year.

IV. Recommendation 4

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities upgrade the teaching of Low German to the status of a regular school subject taught as an integral part of the curriculum in the federal states where Part III of the Charter applies to this language.

Brandenburg reports that it does not plan to introduce Low German as an independent subject. Please see also the comments under E.I.4.a.

Starting in the 2014/15 school year, the **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen** launched a pilot project enabling primary schools to introduce additional compulsory Low German lessons for all pupils or some pupils and develop a systematic strategy. Four primary schools in Bremen and one in Bremerhaven, i.e. 5.7% of all primary schools, are now providing additional Low German lessons. The pilot phase will end with the 2017/18 school year. This pilot phase will then be evaluated, and it will be examined how these lessons can be further developed and consolidated and whether such lessons can also be offered at other schools. Furthermore, subsequent offerings at lower secondary level will be considered, too.

In 2010, the **Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg** introduced Low German at primary schools as a regular subject with a separate curriculum, allocating approved subject hours. The classes, which are geared to language acquisition, are offered in the rural regions of Finkenwerder, Neuenfelde, Cranz, Vier- and Marschlande, which form part of the Low German linguistic landscape.

In 2014, Low German was introduced as a regular subject at primary schools with separate curricula for grades 5 to 11 of the Stadtteilschulen (a new type of combined secondary school introduced in Hamburg as an alternative to grammar school) and for the lower secondary grades of grammar schools. This introduction took place right after the first cohort of pupils finished primary school.

The division responsible for Low German matters at the authority responsible for education developed a textbook for primary schools including guidelines for teachers and an audio CD.

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has an extensive state programme called “Meine Heimat – Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern” (My home – my modern Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) to promote the Low German language and the

knowledge of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. An essential goal of this state programme is to foster the learning of the Low German language. This means that children in day-care centres start learning Low German on the basis of language encounter, while those attending primary schools learn the language within the context of subject-specific and reading instruction.

In 2016, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania filed an application with the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the states to include Low German in the list of state-specific Abitur examination subjects that are mutually recognized. The Standing Conference approved this application on 2 March 2017. Low German is now a recognized (Abitur examination) subject in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Furthermore, this regular language instruction is a serious offer to all those who want to learn Low German at the lower secondary level. In addition, an initiative promoting highly talented pupils guarantees that pupils can continue to learn Low German in upper secondary grades at profile schools and take their Abitur exams in this subject. A comprehensive and modern framework plan was developed for this language instruction. It will be valid from the 2017/18 school year.

Primary schools with an all-day school approach must include Low German lessons in their profile.

According to the state programme “Meine Heimat – Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern”, a competence centre for teaching Low German (Kompetenzzentrum für Niederdeutschdidaktik, KND) is to be established at Greifswald University. The goal of this centre is to support the education of students training to teach Low German as a subsidiary subject and to organize and carry out state-wide in-service advanced training courses on Low German for teachers and persons working at child day-care centres.

In its meeting of 21 September 2017, the state parliament of **Lower Saxony** adopted a motion for a resolution on consolidating and intensifying the support for Low German and Sater Frisian (printed document 17/8757226) which had been tabled by all parliamentary groups. In this motion, the parliamentary groups expressed, for example, the desire to provide the personnel and material resources that are needed as a result of introducing the subject Low German at schools and universities.

First of all, it must be underlined that **North Rhine-Westphalia** has not ratified Part III of the Charter. On the basis of curricula, the training and examination regulations determine which subjects can be offered as compulsory subjects at schools. As regards languages, these subjects are German, the official language, and essential foreign languages. Since Low German is not spoken everywhere and the training and

examination regulations have a state-wide regulatory character, there are no plans to adjust their scope to the different language areas. Given this situation, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia does not intend to introduce Low German as a regular school subject. Regardless of this, the curricula for German and basic science classes offer diverse and sometimes explicit possibilities to address aspects of Low German within the framework of existing subjects in various types of schools and school levels. In addition, an extensive framework for optional subjects enables interested schools to provide Low German language instruction outside compulsory subjects, e.g. by offering study groups. The teaching details are left to the individual schools.

Saxony-Anhalt's state government currently does not plan to introduce Low German as a regular subject. It considers it sufficient to teach the Low German language in study groups or during German lessons (depending on the interest of the teachers).

Since the 2014/15 school year, there have been 27 project schools in **Schleswig-Holstein** (in the 2015/2016 school year, two more schools joined the group of project schools) teaching currently 2,170 pupils in Low German. Teaching materials have been produced for grades 1 and 2. Those for grades 3 and 4 are currently being produced in cooperation with the Europa University in Flensburg. The Institute for Quality Development at Schools in Schleswig Holstein (IQSH) and Flensburg's Europa University evaluated this measure in the 2016/17 school year. Schleswig-Holstein's action plan on language policy also provides for the continuous teaching of Low German.

Furthermore, please see E.I.4.a for comments on the lower secondary level at schools in Schleswig-Holstein.

V. Recommendation 5

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities take measures so that adequate radio and television broadcasting is available in Danish, Low German, Lower Sorbian, North Frisian and Sater Frisian.

In December 2016, the **Brandenburg** parliament passed a motion on regional non-commercial broadcasting in Berlin and Brandenburg (doc. 6/5605-B), asking the Medienanstalt Berlin-Brandenburg (media supervisory authority for Berlin and Brandenburg, mabb) to explore whether a non-commercial Sorbian radio station could

be created. The mabb found that there are no suitable FM frequencies available at the moment to cover the settlement area of the Sorbs/Wends.

The public service broadcaster Rundfunk Brandenburg-Brandenburg (RBB) doubled the broadcasting time of the Lower Sorbian radio programme “Bubak” in 2017. The broadcast for young people is now produced and aired twice a month.

The **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen** adopted legislation such as the 2016 Act to Strengthen the Low German Regional Language in the Media (*Gesetz zur Stärkung der Regionalsprache Niederdeutsch im Medienbereich*) to ensure that appropriate Low German radio and television programmes are available.

For public service broadcasting (Radio Bremen), the Radio Bremen Act expressly defines the promotion of Low German as a task of Radio Bremen (Section 3 (3), fifth sentence).

For private broadcasting, Section 13 (3) of Bremen’s Media Act (*Bremisches Landesmediengesetz*, BremLMG) specifies that Low German language programmes should be broadcast in an appropriate scope and frequency. The selection criteria of Bremen’s supervisory authority for allocating transmission capacities to private broadcasters expressly include the requirement that applicants’ programmes must contribute to the regional and cultural diversity and to meeting the obligations of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen under Article 11 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages with regard to the Low German regional language (Section 30 (3) of the BremLMG).

For the Bürgerrundfunk, a public-access radio service run by Bremen’s media supervisory authority, Section 39 (1) of the BremLMG stipulates that it must promote the production of audio and audiovisual works in the Low German regional language. Public institutions may use the Bürgerrundfunk only under certain conditions, e.g. when the programme supports the preservation of Low German.

The **Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg** refers to its comments on Art. 11 (1)(d) in Chapter E. II. 7. g.

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania reports that NDR 1 radio also regularly broadcasts parts of its programmes in Low German in the entire transmission area.

This includes the weekly news broadcast “Plattüütsche Nachrichten”, one-hour programmes on Saturday (“Klönkist”, Low German radio play) and the three-hour weekly

Sunday morning programme in Low German. In addition, the radio station broadcasts weekly Low German morning prayers.

A special programme of NDR 1 radio is the oldest Low German radio talk show “De Plappermöhl” (without interruption since 1983), with its 400th episode recorded in November 2017. The very successful show recorded monthly in the past, now nine times a year with a live audience in both parts of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania – every time in a different place – is aired once a month. Moreover, once a year NDR 1 radio invites its audience to participate in the writing competition “Vertell doch mal!”, since 2016 including a special category “Vertell doch mal! Ünner 18” for children and youths.

The NDR TV channel in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania also broadcasts parts of its programmes, e.g. “Land und Leute”, in Low German.

Lower Saxony refers to the comments on Art. 11 (1)(c)(ii) in Chapter E. II. 5. f.

North Rhine-Westphalia reports that the WDR occasionally informs about current Low German activities (theatre, language promotion and preservation, e.g. Low German reading competition of the Sparkasse banks) but no longer provides dedicated programmes in Low German.

The State Chancellery and Ministry for Culture of **Saxony-Anhalt** which established a working group on Low German will continue its efforts to integrate the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR) broadcaster in the working group.

Schleswig-Holstein reaffirms its view that given the constitutional principle of government non-intervention in broadcasting, authorities cannot and must not influence programme content and design of public service and private broadcasters. Nevertheless, the state government will seek to keep minority languages represented in public service and private media, as stated in the coalition agreement.

Upon request, the Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein media supervisory authority (MA HSH) reported that the private broadcasters *delta radio* and *Radio BOB! rockt Schleswig-Holstein* only very rarely included programmes in minority or regional languages. According to MA HSH, this is because it is difficult to find staff with the necessary language skills. However, minority and regional languages, in particular Low German, are firmly rooted in the R.SH programme. Frisian is represented occasionally, e.g. in a programme by Carsten Köthe on the island of Sylt.

Minority and regional languages are used especially in local radio programmes. Following authorization/allocation by MA HSH, the first commercial local radio station “Systfunk – Söl’ring Radio” went live in the region of Sylt, Niebüll, Leck and Bredstedt on 1 June 2016. The programme covers the Frisian and sometimes Danish language, e.g. in news, event recommendations and time announcements. In addition, MA HSH authorized non-commercial radio programmes in Neumünster and Flensburg which are not broadcast yet. The non-commercial radio station in Flensburg regularly plans radio features in the Danish language.

Upon request, the Norddeutscher Rundfunk broadcaster reported that as a multi-state body, it covers the Frisian and Danish minority languages and the Low German regional language.

NDR’s central editorial office for Low German at its broadcasting centre in Schleswig-Holstein coordinates large parts of the Low German programmes, in particular state radio programmes. This includes the daily radio commentary “Hör mal ‘n beten to” and the annual storytelling competition “Vertell doch mal!”. The NDR has been broadcasting “Hör mal ‘n beten to” for 60 years; the storytelling competition “Vertell doch mal!” will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2018. Both are award-winning programmes. Every year, eight new Low German radio plays are produced in cooperation with Radio Bremen. Thanks to these new productions and the large amount of previous productions, a Low German radio play can be broadcast every other week throughout the NDR transmission area and on Nordwestradio (from 2 August 2017 once again called Bremen 2).

Both NDR radio and television broadcasting on Frisian, members of the Frisian ethnic group and Frisian culture was more extensive than coverage by any other electronic medium in Schleswig-Holstein. The state programmes encouraged Frisian-language interlocutors to use their native language also during interviews on the microphone. The scope and diversity of the website is also unique.

Denmark and the Danish language are very important, in particular in Schleswig-Holstein. The regional branch in Flensburg covers the cultural and political life across borders in sub-regional slots in state programmes in Schleswig-Holstein as well as throughout northern Germany in NDR radio and television programmes. Correspondents in the Flensburg studio speak Danish and encourage members of the Danish minority to use the language in interviews.

Whole programmes in Danish are broadcast only on special occasions. Nevertheless, the language has its place in everyday reporting.

The following principle applies in the NDR state programmes: Everyone uses the language that is closest to them. For example, the Schleswig-Holstein Magazin and

NDR 1 Welle Nord broadcasting stations reflect the language diversity in Schleswig-Holstein in their programmes.

In addition, the Schleswig-Holstein broadcasting centre prefers hiring trainees who speak a minority or regional language to ensure coverage of these languages also in the future.

VI. Recommendation 6

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities develop additional measures to promote Romani and the culture of which this language is the expression, in cooperation with the speakers.

The **Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media** reports that it will permanently support the cultural activities of the German Sinti and Roma by providing the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma with institutional support. Funds are provided and approved with a view to implementing the additional federal undertakings from the Charter.

On 28 November 2013 the federal state of **Baden-Württemberg** and the Baden-Württemberg regional association of German Sinti and Roma signed a treaty which entered into force on 1 January 2014. The treaty serves as a binding legal basis for the protection, recognition and promotion of Sinti and Roma. The focus of the treaty is also on promoting of the culture and language of the Sinti and Roma. Under the treaty, the Association's Baden-Württemberg section receives €500,000 every year as institutional funding. These funds help the regional association carry out measures and projects to promote the minority language Romani. In 2014, for example, the research unit on history and culture was established as a working group at the Baden-Württemberg regional association of German Sinti and Roma. In this working group, members of the minority document their history. This led, for instance, to a collection of Romani songs, Romani literature and religious literature in Romani. Since 2015, the RomnoKher house in Mannheim has regularly hosted events in Romani. Since April 2016, there has been a standing working group in the Rhine/Neckar region that meets once a week to practise writing and speaking the Romani language. Every year, the Baden-Württemberg regional association organizes Romani language courses for members of the minority.

Baden-Württemberg's Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration has been funding the Roma Büro Freiburg e.V., an association offering projects in the fields of interculturalism

and languages that are tailored to the needs of specific target groups, such as Romani for children. It also provides translation services and Roma music lessons.

The 2016 curricula for schools in Baden-Württemberg address the culture of the Sinti and Roma in the broader sense. In the 2016/17 school year, these curricula were introduced for grades 1/2 and 5/6 at primary schools, secondary schools providing general education and special education and advisory centres offering the same education as regular schools. In each of the following school years, they will be extended to another grade. The issue is addressed in a general way in the guidelines on education for tolerance and acceptance of diversity (Bildung für Toleranz und Akzeptanz von Vielfalt) which are incorporated into the curricula on the basis of a spiral approach.

It is addressed specifically in the joint syllabus for the lower secondary grades and in the curriculum for civics classes at grammar schools (in the area of fundamental rights). The issue of the Sinti and Roma is an integral part of the above-mentioned curricula also when it comes to history classes. It is addressed within the context of the subject area “National Socialism and the Second World War – Destruction of democracy and crimes against humanity”. According to the curriculum, Portuguese lessons at grammar schools address the situation of the Sinti and Roma when dealing with socio-cultural knowledge/issues, focusing on individuals and society.

The Baden-Württemberg regional association of German Sinti and Roma also compiled an extensive list of educational material which will be made available to schools during the 2017/18 school year.

As regards the area of Baden-Württemberg’s Ministry for Science, Research and Art, it must be mentioned that in July 2017 a research centre on antigypsyism opened at Heidelberg University. It addresses fundamental questions on the root causes, forms and consequences of antigypsyism in European societies from medieval times until now. The basis for this research centre is the treaty concluded between the Baden-Württemberg regional association of Sinti and Roma and the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. The research centre is financed with funds from Baden-Württemberg’s Ministry for Science, Research and Art.

In 2017 and 2018, **Lower Saxony** will provide a total of €200,000 to support several cultural projects carried out by member associations of the Lower-Saxony regional association of German Sinti to help children and young persons learn the Romani language. The funds are spent, for example, on guitar lessons, research on the history of Sinti and opportunities for encounters at cultural centres to strengthen identity.

Please see also the comments under E. I. 2. c.

E. The Committee of Experts' evaluations

I. Evaluations with respect to Part II of the Charter

1. Article 7 (1)(b)

In its penultimate evaluation report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to continue to take active measures to compensate the difficulties in the protection and promotion of the Sorbian language caused by lignite mining.

In its last report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide in the next State Report more specific information on this, including information on the efforts to compensate the difficulties in the protection and promotion of the Sorbian language caused by lignite mining. Nos. 29 – 31:

Brandenburg reports that since the 1920s, more than 125 towns and villages in the Lusatian lignite mining region (which is today part of the Free State of Saxony and of the federal state of Brandenburg, respectively), have been razed to make way for opencast lignite mining operations and that more than 25,000 people have been relocated in the process. Relocations interfere with the social structure of the villages/towns concerned and usually have a strong impact on the cultural and - in the case of the Sorbian/Wendish community - also on the linguistic and ethnic fabric since they tend to accelerate linguistic shifts and assimilation processes; at the same time, cultural practises are impacted by changes in the social networks and communication relations. On the other hand, in the run-up to relocation, people often tend to consciously reflect on their identity and concepts such as “homeland” and “culture” which is likely to foster an awareness of and a return to traditions and one’s origins. Many of the settlements affected were located in the Sorbian/Wendish language and/or cultural area. In the state of Brandenburg, the villages Geisendorf/Gižkojce, Haidemühl/Gózdź, Horno/Rogow and Kausche/Chusej have been relocated since the political transformation in 1989. All resettlement sites are now located in the traditional settlement area of the Sorbs/Wends and are thus subject to the statutory obligations relating to the protection and promotion of the Sorbian/Wendish language, culture and identity. According to the plans announced by the mining company in 2017, plans for the development of the opencast mines Jänschwalde-Nord (which includes among others the village of Kerkwitz/Kerkojce), Bagenz-Ost and Spremberg-Ost have been shelved so that further impacts on the traditional Sorbian/Wendish settlement areas in the federal state of Brandenburg are not to be expected. The decision whether to continue the opencast mining operation at Welzow Süd by exploiting segment II is currently pending; this would

affect the town of Welzow/Wjelcej and the village of Proschim/Prožym both of which are located in the traditional settlement area of the Sorbish/Wendish community. The mining company LEAG has announced that it intends to take a decision on this matter by the year 2020.

Given the potential impact of this decision, the Sorbish/Wendish community is involved in the planning process for the development of lignite mining and holds a seat on the Lignite Mining Committee (Braunkohleausschuss). By amending the Act on the Rights of the Sorbs and the Act on Lignite Mining in the *Land* Brandenburg in 2014, the legislator made sure that in case of a municipality being relocated from the traditional Sorbian/Wendish settlement area, the resettlement site should also be located in that area or that the traditional settlement area should be expanded by that resettlement site (Section 3 (3) of the Act on the Rights of the Sorbs). The private mining company - formerly Vattenfall Europe Mining, today LEAG - and the Domowina have concluded an agreement to support projects aimed at fostering the language and culture of the Sorbs/Wends in the municipalities affected by mining operations.

Saxony's state government has been continuously involved in the updating of the lignite mining plan for the open-cast mining operation at Nochten/Wochozy and monitored the procedure with regard to the protection of the Sorbian language, culture and tradition. With regard to lignite mining, Saxony's State Government continues now as before to ensure that the interests of the Sorbian people are taken thoroughly and effectively into account also in view of the applicable European standards (Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages). The update of the lignite mining plan for Nochten/Wochozy takes particular account of the interests of the Sorbs living in the resettlement area. In accordance with the state's obligation to protect the Sorbian community which is enshrined in Article 6 of the Saxon Constitution, the lignite mining plan for Nochten/Wochozy stipulates that structural, socio-cultural and infrastructural village development measures are to be taken with a view to preserving and fostering the Sorbian culture. The cultural centre in Schleife and the culture and local heritage association Njepila-Hof in Rohne/Rowno are examples mentioned in the explanatory memorandum. The updated lignite mining plan also provides for decentralized cultural institutions in the relocated towns and villages and for the possibility to create places of remembrance in the post-mining landscape.

On 30 March 2017, Lausitz Energie Bergbau AG (LEAG), the mining company, announced its new masterplan for the opencast lignite mines in Lusatia. Compared to the last masterplan for the lignite mining operations which was submitted by Vattenfall in 2007, the situation has changed in so far as the village of Mühlrose is the only one to be

relocated under the new plan whereas the villages of Mulchwitz and Rohne which form part of the municipality of Schleife, the territory of Schleife which is located south of the railway line and the village of Klein-Trebendorf will be preserved. This decision directly affects some 1,500 people who had to assume so far that they would lose their home villages in the course of the progressive development of the opencast mines and it also impacts the village development in Schleife and Trebendorf. In view of the urgent need to address the backlog in public infrastructure investments in the municipalities of Trebendorf and Schleife, the Saxon state government has offered ad-hoc support and approved a coordinated action plan including commitments for its implementation. Among other things, the action plan provides for the construction of a replacement building for the Milenka day-care centre in Rohne.

Furthermore, a strategy to manage the structural transformation in Lusatia is currently being developed. This strategy will be updated and implemented on a continuous basis. The structural transformation in Lusatia will take many years. The process of structural transformation which has been ongoing for several years (demography, de-industrialization, discontinuation of administrative/public services and utilities, etc.) in Lusatia (Lower and Upper Lusatia, i. e. the region between Eisenhüttenstadt and Zittau) has accelerated and taken a more concrete shape following the announcement of the masterplan for the lignite mining operations by LEAG. In view of current developments, the intensive exploitation of lignite in Lusatia will be terminated earlier and in a more comprehensive way than recently expected. Against this backdrop, the Federal Government, the *Land* Brandenburg and the Free State of Saxony have decided to address the structural transformation in Lusatia immediately and with increased efforts as of 2018, when a Structural Transformation Commission established by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie - BMWi) will discuss concrete action plans and recommend them for implementation. In the run-up to these discussions, the Free State of Saxony represented by the State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport (Staatsministerium für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Verkehr - SMWA) which has the lead on these matters, participates already actively in the talks between the Federal Government and the state governments and is also involved in a close dialogue with the state of Brandenburg. A declaration by both states concerning the joint implementation of the structural transformation and the requirements to be notified to the Federal Government was approved at a joint cabinet meeting on 13 June 2017. In this context, the academic, research and cultural institutions of the Free State of Saxony have a major contribution to make. There will be points of contact and projects to ensure that the interests of the Sorbian people are taken into account in the structural transformation of Lusatia.

2. Article 7 (1)(c)

a. Upper and Lower Sorbian

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts observed that the federal state of Brandenburg was revising the Act on the Rights of the Sorbs with regard to the Low Sorbian language. It addressed the fact that the Sorbian language area had not been defined yet and asked the German authorities for further information on this matter. (Nos. 32 – 35)

Brandenburg explains that the traditional settlement area is a legal term used to describe the geographical area where certain territorial measures of minority and language promotion are applied. It must not be confused with the historical Sorbian/Wendish settlement area which is much larger.

Section 3 (2) of the Act on the Rights of the Sorbs (SWG) of 1994 defined the traditional settlement area as follows: *“The traditional settlement area of the Sorbs (Wends) in the federal state of Brandenburg shall include all municipalities with a continuous linguistic and cultural tradition that still exists today. This area is to be found in the Spree-Neisse district, in the urban district of Cottbus, in the administrative associations of Märkische Heide, Lieberose and Straupitz in the Dahme-Spreewald district and the administrative associations of Lübbenau, Vetschau, Altdöbern, Großräschen and Am Senftenberger See in the Oberspreewald-Lausitz district.”* This definition posed problems because, as a result of the location criterion, it did not include some municipalities with a long-standing Sorbian/Wendish cultural or linguistic tradition. Furthermore, given the sociolinguistic situation of the Low Sorbian language, linguistic and cultural substance cannot be found everywhere. Many Sorbs/Wends in Lower Lusatia do not speak the language, which means that the minority rights might not apply in some municipalities. The procedure to find out whether municipalities or parts thereof belong to the traditional settlement area also proved problematic in the past as decisions were repeatedly based on political will and not on compliance with legal criteria.

For the above-mentioned reasons, one of the main objectives of the amendment of the SWG in 2014 was to redefine the traditional settlement area. Section 3 (2) of the SWG now defines this area as follows: *“The traditional settlement area shall be made up of the urban district of Cottbus/Chóšebuz and those municipalities and parts of municipalities in the Dahme-Spreewald, Oberspreewald-Lausitz and Spree-Neisse/Sprjewja-Nysa districts with a continuous linguistic and cultural tradition that still exists today. At the time of entry into force of the Act Amending the Regulations on the Rights of the Sorbs in Brandenburg of 11 February 2014 (Gazette of Laws and Ordinances I no. 7), the traditional settlement area shall comprise the municipalities and parts of municipalities*

determined in the annex to this Act.” At the same time, Section 13c (1) now provides a temporary chance to detect changes in this area: *“At the request of a municipality or the Council for Sorbian/Wendish Affairs, the ministry responsible for Sorbian/Wendish matters may, in agreement with the main committee of the state parliament, come to the conclusion that the traditional settlement area has changed. The decision shall be made after the municipality in question, the district concerned, the recognized umbrella organizations of Sorbs/Wends and the Council for Sorbian/Wendish Affairs have been heard. If the responsible ministry comes to the conclusion that the requirements for belonging to the traditional settlement area, as defined in this Act, are not met, it shall be obliged to inform the state parliament. The deadline for submitting requests pursuant to the first sentence shall expire 24 months after the entry into force of this Act.”* The ordinance on the procedure to detect changes in the traditional settlement area of the Sorbs/Wends (Gazette of Laws and Ordinances II no. 68) which entered into force on 20 September 2014 regulates the request procedure. Regarding the promotion of the Low Sorbian language, please note that language is not a strict criterion for affiliation to the traditional settlement area. However, those municipalities that belong to the traditional settlement area must take measure promoting the Low Sorbian language. This provision is intended to produce revitalising effects.

When the amended Act entered into force on 1 June 2014, the traditional settlement area was made up of 28 municipalities or parts of municipalities. By the time the legal deadline ended on 31 May 2016, 37 requests for examining the affiliation of 33 municipalities to the traditional settlement areas had been submitted to the Ministry for Science, Research and Culture. The municipality of Wiesengrund/Łukojce and the cities of Calau/Kalawa and Lübben (Spreewald)/Lubin (Błota) filed a request together with the Council for Sorbian/Wendish Affairs. The city of Welzow/Wjelcej and the Council both filed a request to examine the status of the part of town whose affiliation to the traditional settlement area had not yet been verified. As regards the municipalities of Märkische Heide/Markojska Góla, Neuhausen/Spree / Kopańce/Sprjewja and Schenkendöbern/Derbno, the Council and the municipalities filed joint requests only for certain parts of these municipalities. All other requests were filed by the Council alone. Apart from the first three requests, all other requests were handed in shortly before the deadline expired. Having examined all submitted requests and conducted extensive research, the Ministry for Science, Research and Culture and the main committee of the state parliament came to the conclusion that 18 municipalities fully belonged to the traditional settlement area, while two other municipalities belonged to this area only in parts. They also concluded that other 13 municipalities did not belong to the traditional settlement area as they did not meet the legal criteria. While the decision, be it positive or negative, reflects the will of municipal representations, it is not entirely based on it. Ten municipalities appealed the decision or parts thereof, which means that affiliation to

the traditional settlement area of the Sorbs/Wends could not be fully clarified at the time this report was produced. The responsible court thinks that it will take at least two or three years to process the matter.

Some municipalities such as Calau/Kalawa have already started to implement or prepare individual legal measures (bilingual signs, language courses for interested administrative staff). The federal state supports these activities and provides advice at local level, if desired. Administrations and municipal representations are approached actively and informed about these services. Several information services are currently being developed for those municipalities that are long-time or new “members” of the traditional settlement area. The goal is to implement the existing rules under minority and language law and initiate a knowledge transfer by communicating best practices. The organizers of the contest “Sprachenfreundliche Kommune - serbska rěc jo žywa” (Language-friendly municipality) carried out in 2017/18 hope that this event will have similar effects. This contest is organized by the Council for Sorbian/Wendish Affairs and supported by the federal state.

b. Low German

In its last report the Committee of Experts once again requested the German authorities to provide information on concrete measures that were taken as a result of the annual meetings between representatives of the Federal Government and representatives of the eight federal states where Low German is spoken. (Nos. 36 – 37)

The meetings of policy officers from the federal and state governments which are normally held once a year serve primarily as a forum for the information exchange between the federal states. The Federal Government which is represented by the **Federal Ministry of the Interior** has essentially a coordinating function in this context. At these meetings, the federal states report regularly on the state of play concerning the Low German language in general and in specific spheres of life (e.g. in school, care for the elderly). Concrete measures are not normally resolved at these meetings.

Furthermore, the Committee of Experts requested the German authorities in its last report to provide further information on the contribution made by of Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saxony-Anhalt to the funding of the Institute for Low German. Moreover, it encouraged the German authorities to ensure that the activities of the Institute for Low German will not be hindered because of financial cuts. (Nos. 38 – 40)

In the reporting period, **Brandenburg** took various steps to advance the implementation of the Charter provisions with regard to the regional language of Low German. Since it is first and foremost necessary to set up the relevant infrastructure in Brandenburg and to consolidate the structures for the representation of this language group, Brandenburg did not contribute to the funding of the Institute for Low German in the reporting period. The agreement which is to be concluded in 2017 between the federal state and the language group stipulates, however, that this matter is to be examined by the state government.

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania - represented by the Directorate-General for Culture and Sport of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture - participated in the consultations between the Federal Government and the state governments and a meeting of the Consultative Committee for Issues of the Low German Language Group at the Federal Ministry of the interior. On that occasion, the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania submitted a statement concerning its contribution to the funding of the Institute for Low German (Institut für Niederdeutsche Sprache, INS) in Bremen. Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania referred to the efforts made in the framework of its state programme “Meine Heimat - Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern” (My Homeland - My Modern Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) and ruled out a contribution to the funding of the INS’s ongoing operations. Project-related funding is, however, possible.

North Rhine-Westphalia currently continues its support for the INS.

As a result of the discussion on the relevant role which the education sector has to play when it comes to promoting the Low German language, the state of **Saxony-Anhalt** continued its support for the funding of teaching materials that help children learn the Low German language (“Plattdütschbüdel” - a toolkit containing booklets, CDs, colouring books etc.).

c. Romani

In its last report, the Committee of Experts stated that Rhineland-Palatinate had continued to provide funding to the Association of German Sinti and Roma in Rhineland-Palatinate, and the Sinti Union of Rhineland-Palatinate. Furthermore, the Committee of Experts made the following comments:

“According to the comments made by Roma and Sinti associations, more funding would be necessary. The Sinti radio programme Latscho Dibes is not supported by public funding. The Hildesheim Sinti music festival funding is no longer secured either.” (Nos. 41 - 42)

Rhineland-Palatinate continues its funding support for the Association of German Sinti and Roma in Rhineland-Palatinate. At the request of the project management organisation, the support for the Sinti Union of Rhineland-Palatinate was discontinued at the end of 2014.

The Sinti music festival takes place in Hildesheim, **Lower Saxony**. For the funding of the Sinti music festival, applications for funds for the promotion of regional culture that are made available by the state of Lower Saxony can be filed with the competent agency, the Landschaftsverband Hildesheim. On the basis of the target agreements that they have concluded with the Ministry for Science and Culture of the state of Lower Saxony and in line with their funding criteria the competent regional authorities (Landschaften and Landschaftsverbände) decide on the allocation of funds for the promotion of regional culture to projects for which funding support has been requested. The individual applicants do not have a claim to project funding. There is, however, nothing to suggest that the funding conditions will change any time soon.

In the past few years, the Sinti music festival was sponsored by the regional authority (Landschaftsverband) Hildesheim with funds for the promotion of regional culture that were made available by the state of Lower Saxony: The funding support amounted to €3,500 in 2013, €3,000 in 2014, €9,500 in 2015 and €3,500 in 2017.

The Sinti radio programme Latscho Dibes is broadcast by Radio Tonkuhle in Hildesheim. Radio Tonkuhle is a non-commercial, public-access, local citizens' broadcasting station which makes available open programming slots, thus providing a platform for citizens. Radio Tonkuhle is funded mainly by the Lower Saxony Land Supervisory Authority for Private Broadcasters (Landesmedienanstalt, NLM) from the broadcasting fee revenue which is a form of indirect funding. There is no direct funding provided by the state of Lower Saxony.

3. Article 7 (1)(d)

Brandenburg reports that in the reporting period all regulations governing Sorbian/Wendish interests were published and/or made accessible via the on-line regulation system BRAVORS also in the Lower Sorbian language. This applies with regard to the

Election Regulations on the Act on the Sorbs's Rights (WO-SWG), the Administrative Regulations on the Act on the Specification of the Rights of the Sorbs in Brandenburg (VV SWG), the Ordinance on the Reimbursement of Additional Expenses of Applying the Act on the Sorbs' Rights (SWGKostenv) mentioned under C.1 but also with regard to the survey on the current status of the traditional settlement area of the Sorbs/Wends or the Statutes for the Foundation for the Sorbian People contained in the Official Journal of Brandenburg. The amended version of the Act on the Rights of Sorbs/Wends will be published in two languages once the annex has been updated. The Low Sorbian translation of the State Constitution is publicly accessible via the Landtag.

4. Article 7(1)(f)

a. Low German

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts observed that the German authorities wanted to analyse the language learning possibilities in regular classes offered under Lower Saxony's decree "*Die Region und ihre Sprachen im Unterricht*" (The Region and Its Languages in Education) before taking a decision on introducing Low German as an additional subject. The Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for further information on the results of this analysis. (Nos. 49 – 51)

On the basis of this decree, 71 schools in **Lower Saxony** classified as starter or projects schools are currently granted remission from teaching duties to prepare forms of Low German language instruction in regular classes. Until 2016, 25 schools were honoured as Low German or Sater Frisian schools because regular language acquisition is part of their school programmes. Regarding the introduction of a subject, Lower Germany refers to its comments in D. IV. 4.

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to continue their efforts to provide education in Low German. It also maintains its position that the German authorities should develop a structured policy to protect and promote Low German across all levels of education. (Nos. 52 – 55)

Brandenburg undertook further efforts during the reporting period in order to strengthen Low German in the educational sector. Thanks to the creation of the Association for Low German as umbrella organization in Brandenburg, the federal state now has the first supra-regional project sponsor since 2014. The Association is testing school projects at

primary school level. In Demerthin, there is a study group bringing together schools from different grades. In Putlitz, there is a study group attended jointly by pupils from elementary school and secondary school, while Wittstock-Sewekow has an out-of-school “Kinderschule” (school for children). The Diesterweg primary school in Wittstock considers setting up a study group as part of its full-day offerings. In Prenzlau, initial experiments with bilingual teaching modules in mathematics and basic science classes have been successful. For this purpose, the text book “Plattdütsch foer ju” was developed for grades 3 and 4 in 2017. These projects are supported by volunteers speaking Low German and receive funding from the federal state through the umbrella organization. Since 2016, the Association has organized a competition where pupils present their texts, songs or sketches.

At pre-school level, the Ministry for Education, Youth and Sports started to support a project called “Da biste Platt! Niederdeutsch in der Kita” in 2017 by providing €9,500. This project sends volunteers as reading mentors to child day-care centres. Experience gained by other federal states can be used when it comes to training these mentors because the Association uses such volunteers as multipliers.

The provision of additional funds enabled five primary schools in the **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen** to establish a Low German profile. This also reflects the relevance that this language should have in the field of education. There are specific plans to offer Low German classes also at secondary schools. At the beginning of the upcoming school year, one secondary school will start implementing this plan. Furthermore, there is still the possibility of establishing a Low German study group.

The **Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg** has continuously strengthened technical cooperation in networks to provide educational services and protect and promote the Low German language. This includes the cooperation between the division for Low German issues at the authority responsible for education on the one hand and the state institute for teacher training and school development and authorities and institutions developing curricula for Low German on the other hand. Every two years, the division for Low German issues carries out a Low German forum in cooperation with the state institute and other changing cooperation partners. This forum is targeted at teachers as well as cooperation partners and institutions outside the school sector promoting the Low German language. Within the context of advanced training measures for teachers and cultural education programmes, several forms of permanent cooperation, e.g. with the Ohnsorg Theater, the Low German library, Bücherhallen Hamburg, the Carl-Toepfer foundation and the “Kinder brauchen Musik” foundation (Children need music), have been intensified and further developed.

In **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, the state programme “Meine Heimat – Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern” (My homeland – My modern Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) brings together all efforts to develop forms of Low German language instruction at child day-care centres (age 0-10), primary schools (particularly all-day schools), at lower secondary level (regional schools, comprehensive schools, grammar schools) and upper secondary level (level qualifying for possible Abitur examinations in Low German) and at universities (University of Rostock: chair for Low German; University of Greifswald: competence centre for teaching Low German). There is a modern framework curriculum for Low German classes at lower and upper secondary levels. As regards vocational training, the framework curriculum of 1996 which applies to different grades and types of schools continues to be valid. The promotion of Low German has been incorporated in particular into curricula and training programmes for vocational training for certified child-care teachers and certified staff working at child day-care centres.

Within the framework of the above-mentioned programme, the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania initiated a project to promote the Low German language and the knowledge of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. This project called “Heimatschatzkiste” (Treasure Box) provides all child day-care centres with Low German materials and other materials conveying knowledge of the federal state and promoting a sense of identity. The project is implemented by the association Heimatverband M-V e.V. Delivery of these treasure boxes will probably start in 2019.

In **Lower Saxony**, the University of Oldenburg offers German studies with a focus on Low German and Sater Frisian. Students training to become teachers have the possibility to attend individual courses on Sater Frisian. According to a survey commissioned by Lower Saxony’s Ministry for Science and Culture, some 320 courses on matters related to the Low German language were offered at adult education centres and other institutions providing adult education in 2013. More than 7,200 lessons were provided in this context and about 4,800 participants could be reached.

To illustrate the dimension, it is necessary to mention that every year more than 3 million lessons are funded in the field of adult education. This puts the number of minority language lessons for adults in relation. These figures have remained stable for quite a while now. Especially when it comes to Sater Frisian and Romani, the demand is so low that adult education institutions usually do not make major efforts to increase the number of courses. Very often, it is solely thanks to the teachers and their personal commitment that participants want to learn more and courses are continued. If these teachers quit their jobs, it is foreseeable that the participants will lose their interest. Most of the efforts undertaken by adult education institutions to adequately replace such courses are not

successful. Instead, it is often a coincidence if new teachers approach these institutions and offer to teach Sater Frisian or Romani although such jobs were not advertised.

According to the above-mentioned survey, the number of Low German courses is higher. The main goal is to preserve traditional customs, which is closely connected to language instruction. The volume has remained the same so far and is unlikely to change significantly in the future.

A large number of recommendations and suggestions, such as handing out certificates of participation or qualification, do not play a role here. Those involved in the teaching/learning process are not interested in receiving some kind of document certifying their acquired knowledge or even performance. By participating in the language courses and other activities, they aim to maintain their traditional customs.

Although educational measures in the field of minority languages represent only a small share of the total volume, the federal state of Lower Saxony is well aware of the significance of these courses. When the volume of adult education lessons is assessed, these educational measures are given a greater recognition factor to increase their value.

Lower Saxony also refers to its comments in Chapter E. I. 3. a.

In addition to the efforts mentioned above, the Institute for German Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Paderborn in **North Rhine-Westphalia** regularly provides seminars on the Low German language. The University of Paderborn carries out a whole range of projects and activities exploring the Low German language in the past and the present. In January 2017, the chair of Prof. Doris Tophinke launched a project called InterGramm. Supported by the German Research Foundation, this project analyses legal texts to find out how the grammar of the Middle Low German language has evolved over time. Ms Tophinke is also involved in the cooperation project "Dialektatlas Mittleres Westdeutschland" (Dialect Atlas of Central Western Germany). Since 2016, this project, which is carried out in cooperation with the Universities of Bonn, Münster, Siegen and Paderborn, has examined the Low German and other non-standard varieties spoken in North Rhine-Westphalia and the neighbouring regions of Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate. It is funded by North Rhine-Westphalia's Academy of Sciences and Arts and, being a long-term project, is carried out for a period of 17 years (<http://www.dmw-projekt.de>).

In 2015 and 2016, two doctoral theses focusing on the Low German language were written at Prof. Tophinke's chair at the University of Paderborn. In 2017, both dissertations were awarded the renowned Peter von Polenz Award and the Prize for

Westphalian regional studies of the Landschaftsverband (regional local authority) of Westphalia-Lippe.

In **Saxony-Anhalt**, it is mainly the Landesheimatbund Sachsen-Anhalt e.V. (Saxony-Anhalt Land Union for Local and Regional Traditions) that provides institutional funding to maintain the Low German regional language and the Arbeitsstelle Niederdeutsch (Low German working group) at Magdeburg's Otto-von-Guericke University. For years now, the Low German projects of the Saxony-Anhalt Land Union for Local and Regional Traditions have received 100% funding.

Schleswig-Holstein attaches great importance to Low German language training. Children who acquired knowledge of this language at child day-care centres should have the chance to expand and consolidate this knowledge at school. Furthermore, schools should also give pupils the opportunity to start learning this language from scratch in a systematic manner. Existing curricula and efforts consolidating foreign language instruction as part of the pupils' regular timetable complement this approach.

The model project was successfully evaluated at 29 elementary schools. Starting in the 2017/2018 school year, seven secondary schools (six comprehensive schools and one grammar school) will start teaching Low German in a systematic manner.

Beyond the group of model schools, many schools have taught the Low German language in study groups or as part of their all-day instruction for many years.

b. Sater Frisian

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts noted that there was still no structured teacher training for Sater Frisian. It encouraged the German authorities to arrange such training so that teaching can be provided on a continuing basis. (Nos. 56 – 58)

In this context, **Lower Saxony** refers to its comments in Chapter E. I. 3. a.

c. Romani

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts emphasized the need to promote Romani at school and asked the German authorities to provide information on this issue in the next State Report. (Nos. 59 – 60)

The federal state of **Baden-Württemberg** reports that, in addition to German, the German Sinti and Roma also use Romani as their second mother tongue to communicate with each other. Their children often grow up as bilingual speakers of German and Romani. Given the genocide committed by the National Socialists, many members of the minority take the view that Romani should not be taught to persons outside the minority. Baden-Württemberg's public school and education system therefore does not provide for the teaching of Romani.

The federal state of **Berlin** has not received any requests regarding the Romani language. The population concerned consists of residents and does not wish to have official Romani lessons. It prefers the teaching of modern foreign languages. Since the ethnic minority is well integrated, there is no need for translation and interpretation. At the moment, it is therefore not necessary to set up supervisory bodies or develop framework curricula.

In the **Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg**, three schools providing general education offer Romani lessons. Furthermore, there are measures to promote the school education of Sinti and Roma that are tailored to the needs of specific target groups and are directed at members of the national minority of German Sinti and Roma and to Roma from EU member states and third countries. At the moment, twelve Roma and Sinti are working as educational assistants at general education schools and regional education and counselling centres. Their task is to get in touch with the families of Sinti and Roma, mediate in cases of conflict, support the school attendance of children from these families, and support the children at school. To this end, they also use the Romani language.

Regarding minority language instruction in adult education, **Lower Saxony** refers to its comments in Chapter E. I. 3. a.

The federal state of **Rhineland-Palatinate** reports that the school statistics do not contain data on this. This has to do with the fact that support measures are planned and implemented for a large number of languages in Rhineland-Palatinate. A very time-consuming collection method would have to be applied at the schools to find out which languages are concerned.

Schleswig-Holstein reports that the Schleswig-Holstein regional association of German Sinti and Roma has not changed its opinion on Romani lessons at public schools in the federal state. Romani has a unique status among minority languages. The members of this minority in Schleswig-Holstein do not want persons outside the minority to have general access to their language. As a result, Romani is taught neither at school nor at university. Providing protection under Part III of the Charter by applying specific provisions is therefore still impossible in practice. It is, however, possible to take special support measures for children of Sinti and Roma at schools.

The educational assistance project is intended to build bridges and make it easier for children and young persons belonging to the minority to find their way through the educational system.

The regional associations of the minority of German Sinti and Roma are currently discussing the fact that the Romani language is taught only orally and the issue of codifying the German version of Romani. It is not yet foreseeable which direction this discussion will take within the minority. In the coming years and decades, this development might have the effect that the protection mechanisms of the European Language Charter will cover Romani to the same extent as they cover the other minority languages and the regional language of Low German.

5. Article 7 (3)

The federal state of **Brandenburg** reports that information on Sorbs/Wends was uploaded on the website of the state agency for civic education in 2015. Several publications produced by the state agency contain information on Sorbs/Wends and the Sorbian/Wendish language. These publications include, for example, "Willkommen in Brandenburg. Ein Land stellt sich vor." (Welcome to Brandenburg. Presentation of a federal state. 2016) and "Das Brandenburg. Ein Land in Stichworten." (The Brandenburg book. The federal state in a nutshell. 2015). The Ministry for Science, Research and Culture also significantly increased the amount of information on Sorbs/Wends available on its website in 2015, referring directly to the Language Charter. Brandenburg's state parliament updated its bilingual information flyer "Rat für Angelegenheiten der Sorben/Wenden - Rada za nastupności Serbow" (Council for Sorbian/Wendish Affairs). During the 2014 reporting period, the bilateral (German / Low Sorbian) entrance sign installed at the new parliament building at the initiative of Sorbs/Wends has a huge multiplier effect as it prompts many visitors to enter into a dialogue and seek information about Sorbs/Wends and the Sorbian/Wendish language in Brandenburg.

6. Article 7 (4)

a. Low German

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts outlined the funding situation of the two most important Low German associations in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. It encouraged the local authorities to facilitate the re-emergence of a Low German civil society umbrella association, possibly on the basis of one of the existing institutions. (Nos. 62 – 63)

Since 2010, the federal state of **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** has supported the foundation Stiftung Mecklenburg by bearing staff and material costs. One of the purposes of this foundation is to preserve the Low German language.

In 2015, the association Heimatverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V. was re-established with the support of the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture. Since 2015, the secretariat and the project work of the association have been funded from the budget of the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

b. Romani

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the German authorities to take into consideration, in the promotion of Romani, the needs and wishes expressed by all relevant groups using Romani in Germany. The German authorities continued to cooperate only with the Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma (Central Council of German Sinti and Roma) and not with the Sinti Allianz Deutschland (Sinti Alliance of Germany), the other of the two umbrella organizations of the German Sinti and Roma. (Nos. 64 – 65)

The Sinti Allianz Deutschland is regularly involved through the **Federal Ministry of the Interior**. It is invited to attend the meetings of the Consultative Committee on Issues concerning German Sinti and Roma and the annual implementation conferences. Furthermore, it has the possibility to meet with the representatives of the autochthonous national minorities in the Committee on Internal Affairs of the German Bundestag.

During the reporting period, initial funding from the Federal Ministry of the Interior's budget funds was granted in both 2013 and 2015 to set up the secretariat of the Sinti Allianz.

Lower Saxony does not cooperate with any of the two umbrella organizations, but with operational associations that are also linked to the Sinti Allianz Deutschland.

Regarding this recommendation, the federal state of **Schleswig-Holstein** reports that also during this reporting period no regional association of the Sinti Allianz Deutschland is known in Schleswig-Holstein. The Schleswig-Holstein regional association of German Sinti and Roma which is affiliated to the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and equally represents the interests of all Sinti and Roma in Schleswig-Holstein, distributes state funding to Sinti and Roma with German citizenship living in Schleswig-Holstein.

II. Evaluations with respect to Part III of the Charter

1. Danish in the state of Schleswig-Holstein

a. Article 8 (1)(i)

See the comments in E II 12 b.

b. Article 10 (1)(a)(v)

In its last report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information on the planned amendment of the law which is intended to ensure that texts written in Danish may be presented to the administration. (Nos. 77 – 80)

In June 2016, Section 82b was added to *Schleswig-Holstein's* State Administrative Act (LVwG). According to this provision, applications may be made and documents presented in Danish in the districts of Nordfriesland, Schleswig-Flensburg and Rendsburg-Eckernförde and in the urban district of Flensburg. If the authorities there do not have the necessary knowledge of the Danish language, they will have the documents translated at no charge to the applicant. This applies to all applications within a single administrative file made to an authority based in the districts mentioned and the urban district of Flensburg.

The law requires the state government to evaluate the impacts especially with regard to efficiency and goal achievement no more than four years after the new provision enters into force.

In November 2017, the state parliament began a consultation on expanding the scope of Section 82b LVwG for the Danish language to the urban district of Kiel.

c. Article 11 (1)(b)(ii) and (c)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the authorities to take measures to encourage and/or facilitate the broadcasting of sufficient television programmes in Danish on a regular basis. (Nos. 81 – 84)

The state of *Schleswig-Holstein* refers to the comment on Recommendation 5 of the Committee of Ministers under D, Part V.

d. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E II 12 a.

e. Article 13 (2)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for comprehensive information on the possibility of being admitted to and treated in hospitals using the Danish language. (Nos. 99 – 100)

Only hospitals in the northern part of **Schleswig-Holstein** have a relevant number of staff with Danish language skills. St. Franziskus Hospital in Flensburg was the only hospital known to the state to have provided systematic Danish language training for its nursing staff due to the contract to provide oncology services for southern Denmark. Since this cooperation contract was terminated by the Danish regional government at short notice, the motivation for this programme has fallen significantly.

As the result of the growing shortage of skilled workers in hospitals, more skilled workers are being recruited from abroad, also from outside the EU. For this reason, sufficient German language skills are a priority.

The state government has no influence on the training courses offered by the hospitals. And ensuring in-patient care must always take priority.

2. Upper Sorbian in the Free State of Saxony

a. Article 8 (1)(a)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information on the implementation of the Sorbian Language Plan. (Nos. 103 – 105)

The Free State of Saxony reports that the Sorbian Language Plan sets the goal of active Sorbian–German bilingualism for children from Sorbian-speaking families as well as for those from mixed language and German-speaking homes. The evaluation showed that the 2plus strategy resulted in significant progress in the language development of all school pupils, including those whose first language is Sorbian. The teachers differentiate according to the pupils' language status in order to do justice to the different levels of language skills they start with.

A school coordinator at each of the participating schools supports the systematic introduction and correct implementation of the strategy. Each coordinator is credited with three hours. All school coordinators work in a network led by the Saxon Educational Institute (SBI). The expert advisers for the school subject of Sorbian also actively support implementation of the strategy.

In summer 2016, in order to carry out the constitutional task of protecting the Sorbian language and culture, the state government of Saxony developed a package of measures to recruit teachers for schools in the Sorbian settlement area. This package of measures is being implemented in cooperation with the state ministries for education, science and the arts.

The package of measures is designed

- to encourage young people to train as teachers and work in the Sorbian settlement area, in order to ensure the long-term supply of teachers; and
- to train persons coming from other careers to ensure the short- and medium-term supply of teachers, and to recruit suitable teachers from abroad to work at 2plus schools.

b. Article 8 (1)(b)(iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the authorities to ensure that the practical implementation of the “2 plus” model leads to adequate language proficiency of the Upper Sorbian-speaking pupils. Nos. 106 – 109 and 110 –112)

The *Free State of Saxony* refers to its comments in E II 2 a.

c. Article 8 (1)(d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the German authorities to identify, in cooperation with the speakers, other areas of vocational education where teaching in or of Upper Sorbian could be offered. (Nos. 113 – 116)

The **Free State of Saxony** examined whether there were other areas of vocational education which could be taught in Upper Sorbian.

Greater use of Upper Sorbian could be made especially in the fields of nutrition, hospitality and household services as well as business and administration. In the Free State of Saxony, the possibility of offering training for hotel and restaurant staff in the dual system within the Sorbian settlement area was examined. However, the training courses could not be offered due to the insufficient number of pupils.

Because the number of pupils is too low throughout the state, training for tourism and leisure staff is offered centrally outside the Sorbian settlement area.

In sum, despite intensive efforts it has not been possible to offer vocational training or a significant share thereof in Upper Sorbian because the number of trainees who meet the linguistic requirements is too small for the range and number of vocational courses offered.

However, all options are being utilized to keep up and increase the quality of Sorbian course offerings at the Sorbian technical school for social welfare at the vocational training centre in Bautzen (Sorbischen Fachschule für Sozialwesen, Fachrichtung Sozialpädagogik, im Beruflichen Schulzentrum für Wirtschaft und Technik Bautzen). Since the 2007/2008 school year, pupils at the school whose first language is Sorbian who are studying social pedagogy have received additional specific training according to the WITAJ model. They are prepared for early bilingualism and kindergarten education in the Sorbian language. Most jobs are with WITAJ groups and WITAJ child day-care facilities. The Sorbian curriculum in social pedagogy at the technical school's department of social welfare was revised by the Saxon Educational Institute based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the pedagogical strategy 2plus; it went into effect on 1 August 2015. The curriculum was further adjusted in line with current requirements in the field and went into effect for the 2016/2017 school year. With regard to the Sorbian technical school, the fields of pedagogical work based on Sorbian history and culture and pedagogical work on the basis of the WITAJ strategy were anchored as optional or optional compulsory courses in the course schedule. Training at the Sorbian technical school for social welfare is listed in measure 1.4.1 of the Saxony state government plan to encourage and promote the use of the Sorbian language and is implemented on an ongoing basis.

d. Article 8 (1)(h)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for more information on the development of teacher training following the successful implementation of the Sorbian Language Plan. (Nos. 117 – 120)

Starting in winter semester 2012/2013, the state government of **Saxony** and the University of Leipzig concluded a target agreement valid until 31 December 2016 to train sufficient new teachers at a high level of quality. Capacities for the subjects were defined. In the meantime, the state government of Saxony and the University of Leipzig have concluded a follow-up target agreement valid until 31 December 2020. The agreement provides for places for 16 students to study Upper Sorbian annually. The state ministries for education, science and the arts are working together to support students in this course. The Saxon Act on University Admission was amended effective 1 August 2017. In order to train more teachers with Sorbian language skills, Section 6 (2) of the Act was amended so that proof of advanced Sorbian language skills is to be taken into adequate account with regard not only to persons applying to study Sorbian, but also to those applying to study other subjects.

e. Article 8 (1)(i)

See the comments in E II 12 b.

f. Article 8 (2)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the authorities to make Upper Sorbian education available outside the traditional Upper Sorbian language area, in those places where the number of speakers would justify such offerings, most likely in Dresden and Leipzig. (Nos. 124 – 126)

According to the state government of **Saxony** this requirement has already been met. If there is a need, Upper Sorbian education can be made available in areas outside the Upper Sorbian language area. For example, in July 2013 the city of Dresden worked with the organization Stup dale to establish a child day-care centre with a Sorbian language profile. The Sorbian language was offered to all children at the centre and was presented to them as an enhancement, cultural interaction and appreciation of multilinguality and cultural diversity.

At the start of the 2017/2018 school year, a class to learn Sorbian was to be created at a primary school in Dresden, at the wish of the organization Stup dale. This was intended to ensure that children who attended a day-care centre in Dresden with a Sorbian language profile would be able to continue learning and using Sorbian in primary school.

The project received intensive support from the Saxony state ministry for education and the Saxon Education Agency. However, only one first-year pupil applied for the class during the application period for the 2017/18 school year, so the class could not be offered. After extensive expressions of interest initially, the organization Stup dale has not communicated with the Saxon Education Agency in this matter for about a year.

During the 2016/17 school year, a primary school in Dresden offered all-day instruction in which about 10 primary school-aged children of Sorbian background from various schools in the city worked on the Sorbian culture and language. It has not yet been decided whether this will be continued in the 2017/18 school year.

g. Article 9 (1)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information on the practical implementation of the obligations from Article 9 (1), including information on the use of the Sorbian language in the Görlitz regional court. (Nos. 127 – 131)

The **Free State of Saxony** reported that the Görlitz regional court has two Sorbian-speaking staff and the local courts of the regional court district have six Sorbian-speaking staff. If necessary, Sorbian speakers may use their language in court proceedings with the help of interpreters and translators. The last known case was more than ten years ago. In the local courts of the regional court district, there was only one case at the local court in Hoyerswerda in which a family member insisted on the Sorbian spelling of the name in a proceeding involving an estate; this request was honoured. One judge at this local court speaks Sorbian; when school classes with Sorbian-speaking pupils attend trials at his court, he also conducts the proceedings in Sorbian.

For years, the Saxony state ministry of justice has supported staff of the Saxony justice system who wish to learn Sorbian by paying for Sorbian language courses at the local adult education centre. However, very few staff members take advantage of this offer.

We are not aware of any problems related to the use of the Sorbian language.

h. Article 10 (1)(a)(iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide information on any cases in which state authorities situated outside the Sorbian language area deal directly with citizens in the language area. (Nos. 132 – 134)

The **Free State of Saxony** reports that the state office for road construction and transport (LASuV) with its headquarters in Dresden has a branch office in Bautzen which is responsible for the Upper Sorbian settlement area, among others. The Sorbs living there are affected by the various administrative processes/measures.

According to the annex to Section 3 of the Act on the Sorbs' Rights in the Free State of Saxony (SächsSorbg), the Sorbian settlement area in Saxony includes the municipalities and parts of municipalities in the rural districts of Bautzen and Görlitz. Ensuring public security and order in these rural districts is the responsibility of the police headquarters in Görlitz and its subordinate organizational units. In particular, the police stations in Bautzen, Görlitz, Hoyerswerda and Weisswasser carry out law enforcement tasks. Apart from that, there is no direct contact to speak of with residents of the Sorbian language area.

The following state tax administration authorities located outside the Sorbian language area may interact with residents in the language area:

- the Saxony State Ministry of Finance (SMF) due to its responsibility for administrative and operational supervision of the State Office for Finance (LSF);
- the LSF due to its responsibility for administrative and operational supervision of the tax offices and as state finance authority as referred to in the Fiscal Administration Act;
- the north Dresden tax office due to its special responsibility among other things for fiscal investigations, fines and crimes for the tax offices in Bautzen, Görlitz and Hoyerswerda;
- the south Dresden tax office due to its responsibility for the central information telephone of Saxony's tax offices;
- the Löbau tax office due to its special responsibility as the central land transfer tax office, among others for the tax offices in Bautzen, Görlitz and Hoyerswerda;
- the central Chemnitz tax office due to its special responsibility for the betting and lottery tax for the entire Free State of Saxony; and

- the south Chemnitz tax office due to its special responsibility among other things for the taxation of cross-border temporary employment for the entire Free State of Saxony.

However, no direct contacts between these authorities and residents of the Sorbian language area were identified.

i. Article 10 (3)(b)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts expressed its lack of knowledge as to whether responses with regard to public services provided by administrative authorities or persons acting on their behalf (such as hospitals, public transport) are as a rule formulated in Upper Sorbian at the applicant's request. The Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to determine whether this was the case. (Nos. 138 – 139)

The **Free State of Saxony** reports that there have not been any cases in which applications or requests to police stations in Saxony have been made in Upper Sorbian. For members of the Sorbian people, this is however possible at all police stations in the Free State at all times; such applications and requests are treated with the same effect as applications and requests made in German (Section 9 SächsSorbG).

Nonetheless, the electronic case management system (IVO) of the police of the Free State of Saxony offers no forms in Sorbian.

The local police officers responsible for communities in the Sorbian settlement area act as liaisons between the police, the public and civic institutions. Many of these officers have lived in the region for years, and some are themselves Sorbian. With their knowledge of the Sorbian language, culture and traditions, they represent an invaluable link between the public and the police.

j. Article 10 (4)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information about how the authorities respond to requests from public service employees with knowledge of Upper Sorbian to be appointed in the territory in which the language is used. (Nos. 140 – 141)

The **Free State of Saxony** reports that, in addition to the employees of the state office for road construction and transport at the branch office in Bautzen mentioned in Nos. 140–141, there are three other employees whose first language is Sorbian. It is therefore

ensured that official correspondence or administrative acts can be conducted in this language, if so requested.

Effective 1 January 2018, the state office for road construction and transport will have an employee at the support unit of its branch in Bautzen who speaks fluent Sorbian. This employee, who previously had a temporary position, was the only one to apply for this position. If more candidates had applied, Sorbian language skills would have been one of the selection criteria.

The police headquarters in Görlitz responsible for the Sorbian settlement area in Saxony has never received any applications from its employees to be assigned to the region because of their language skills. Upper Sorbian language skills of police officers are regarded as helpful and important particularly in this settlement area, so that, thanks to their language skills, these officers can apply their skills as local police officers if needed.

k. Article 11 (1)(b)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to further promote the broadcasting of Upper Sorbian programmes also by private radio broadcasters. (Nos. 144 – 145)

None of the private radio stations in **Saxony** broadcast programmes in Upper Sorbian.

In this context, we should like to point out the Saxon training and testing channels (SAEK) organized and funded by the Sächsische Landesanstalt für privaten Rundfunk und neue Medien (Saxony state authority for private broadcasting and new media, SLM). The SAEK project in Bautzen/Budyšin is a sub-project addressing media education. A special feature of this location is cooperation with Sorbian schools, institutions and organizations and the joint operation of relevant media projects. The SAEK project in Bautzen has been led by a native speaker of Sorbian since 2002. Of the annual project efforts, 15% to 20% involve media projects in the Sorbian language or with a Sorbian context; each year, 20 to 30 Sorbian-language audio and video recordings are produced. The SAEK team in Bautzen/Budyšin assists a Sorbian-speaking multimedia editorial team and works with all Sorbian editorial teams in the region around Bautzen (MDR Sorbischer Rundfunk, Sorbische Zeitung, Katólski Posoł, Płomjo, etc.).

I. Article 11 (1)(c)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to promote the broadcasting of Upper Sorbian television programmes on a regular basis. (Nos. 147 – 148)

The **Free State of Saxony** reports that the MDR broadcasting centre for Saxony produces the 30-minute magazine “Wohladko” in Sorbian with German subtitles once a month for MDR television. This television programme is usually aired on the first Saturday of the month and repeated soon after; it can also be viewed on the Internet in the MDR video archive. MDR television also broadcasts the RBB TV programme “Łužyca” in Lower Sorbian.

The MDR radio station for Saxony (Sachsenradio) broadcasts 21.5 hours of Sorbian-language programming each week: Mondays to Fridays from 5 to 8 a.m., Saturdays from 6 to 9 a.m. and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. In addition, the youth programme “Satkula” is broadcast Monday evenings from 8 to 10 p.m. in Sorbian. MDR also broadcasts the radio programmes of RBB Cottbus in Lower Sorbian.

MDR’s telemedia offerings in Sorbian (<http://www.mdr.de/serbski-programm/rozhlos/index.html>) include current news, background reports, children’s programming, serials and weeks devoted to particular topics, photo galleries and segments from “Satkula”.

m. Article 11 (1)(f)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities whether the audiovisual projects mentioned in the 5th State Report were supported by applying the existing general measures for financial assistance for audiovisual productions in Upper Sorbian, to which Article 11 (1)(f)(ii) refers, or whether they were part of a scheme specifically targeting audiovisual productions in minority languages, which is covered by Article 11(1)(d). (Nos. 149 – 151)

The **Free State of Saxony** did not provide any comments.

n. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E II 12 a.

o. Article 13 (2)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the German authorities to take measures to ensure that social care facilities can receive and treat persons in Upper Sorbian. (Nos. 163 – 165)

The **Free State of Saxony** does not keep statistics on whether social care facilities can receive and treat persons in Upper Sorbian. The medical service of the health insurance fund was nonetheless able to give Saxony's state ministry for social affairs and consumer protection the names of the following two institutions:

Malteserstift

St. Adalbert

Kamenzer Straße 32

02997 Wittichenau

Caritasheim St. Ludmila Kath. Sorb. Care home

Zejlerstraße 4

01920 Crostwitz

This list is not exhaustive. The responsible division agrees with the view cited in No. 163 that the Saxony state ministry for social affairs and consumer protection is not the authority responsible. Private social welfare institutions are free to select their own staff and are only required to comply with rules concerning professional aptitude (e.g. Social Code Book XI, Saxony Act on Care and Quality of Accommodation (SächsBeWoG)). It is not possible to require them to hire Sorbian speaking staff.

3. Lower Sorbian in Brandenburg

a. Article 8 (1)(a)(iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to increase Lower Sorbian preschool offerings and to ensure that a sufficient number of adequately trained preschool teachers is available. (Nos. 169 – 171)

The state of **Brandenburg** has no direct responsibility for preschool education. The municipalities and non-governmental providers of preschool education are responsible for human resources planning and programmes offered. The state authorities are not aware of any cases in which an expressed demand for Sorbian/Wendish offerings in child day-care centres could not be met.

In addition to the funds for the Witaj language centre and the providers paid via the Foundation for the Sorbian People, since 2001 the federal state has supported language teaching in child day-care centres through the project for effective teaching of the Lower Sorbian language in day-care centres. From 2001 to 2014, the federal state provided €7,000 in annual funding for the project; since 2015, the federal state has provided €10,000 annually for the project. These additional funds are used to buy products of the Domowina publishing house for work in the Witaj groups, and for the Witaj language centre to develop its own teaching and information materials. With this project, the federal state promotes the teaching of Sorbian/Wendish language and culture; advising and training for teachers by promoting the employment of native speakers and speakers of Sorbian/Wendish in Witaj groups; the purchase of books, games, etc.; and part of personnel costs for practical advising for support, knowledge and skills transfer and advanced training for teachers and volunteers in day-care centres with Sorbian/Wendish groups amounting to €700 per year. The state has offered to fund a Sorbian/Wendish consultation day-care centre for teaching visits and advising of teaching staff in day-care centres with Sorbian/Wendish children/groups, but has not yet found any takers.

With regard to training preschool teachers, it is currently being studied whether the existing training options at the Oberstufenzentrum Cottbus/Chóšebuz can be opened for advanced training for preschool teachers. In addition to more closely coordinating training, practical experience and additional language training for preschool teachers, this could also make the training courses more widely known, which could conceivably lead to higher enrolment and more graduates.

b. Article 8 (1)(b)(iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts stood by its assessment that the obligation in Article 8 (1)(b)(iv) with regard to Lower Sorbian in Brandenburg has been met only partly. (Nos. 172 – 175)

Brandenburg refers to the comments in Chapter D. I.

c. Article 8 (1)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to take immediate measures to increase Lower Sorbian primary and secondary education, in particular to promote bilingual teaching. (Nos. 176 – 179)

During the reporting period, school supervision in **Brandenburg** underwent a structural change. The State Education Office in Wünsdorf was dissolved. As a result, all schools with Sorbian/Wendish curriculum now come under the supervision of the State Education Office in Cottbus/Chóšebuz. All Sorbian/Wendish school supervision issues are now the responsibility of a single official at this State Education Office.

For more information, see the comments in Chapter D. I.

Further, during the reporting period bilingual seminars were offered for the first time at the upper secondary level of the Lower Sorbian Gymnasium (grammar school), for example on the subject of journalism. This new option is intended to offer educational and professional orientation.

d. Article 8 (1)(e)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information about the further development of the planned reform of the institute for Sorbian studies (Institut für Sorabistik) at the University of Leipzig and how Brandenburg promotes Lower Sorbian education at the university level and institutions to study Lower Sorbian at this level. (Nos. 180 – 181)

Brandenburg and the **Free State of Saxony** have revised their 2002 agreement on inter-state cooperation on initial and advanced training for teachers of Sorbian and Sorbian scholars. The four responsible ministers of Brandenburg and the Free State of Saxony signed the new agreement on inter-state cooperation on initial and advanced

training for teachers of Sorbian/Wendish and Sorbian scholars, which entered into force on 9 September 2016. The most significant change is that Brandenburg will fund a half-time position for a research assistant for teaching and research in Lower Sorbian didactics, in addition to the half-time position for a teacher with special tasks for the Lower Sorbian language. This position was filled starting 1 December 2016.

Each year, at the education fair of the Lower Sorbian Gymnasium Brandenburg actively promotes the possibility to study and work as a teacher of Sorbian/Wendish.

Sorbian/Wendish institutions are there to present themselves to school pupils and inform them about possible careers and the necessary qualifications. Brandenburg is usually represented by the State Education Office in Cottbus, the office for the development of Sorbian/Wendish education (Arbeitsstelle für sorbische/wendische Bildungsentwicklung) and, since 2015, also the state ministry for science, research and culture.

e. Article 8 (1)(g)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts noted that it considered the obligation resulting from Article 8 (1)(g) only partly fulfilled with regard to Lower Sorbian. (Nos. 182 – 185)

Brandenburg responds that new curriculum for grades 1 through 10 has been adopted for the 2017/18 school year. In the general Part A, the section “Appreciation of cultural identities/multilingualism” contains the following statement: “Language and culture are integral parts of our identity. The pupils’ different languages of origin and cultural backgrounds are appreciated and taken into account at school. Multilingual children and adolescents possess specific skills that are used and promoted. Schools respect these various linguistic skills and cultural identities which are characterized by the pupils’ individual experiences and their own background. In Brandenburg, this applies in particular to Sorbs/Wends (a particular element of the educational mandate of Brandenburg schools is to impart knowledge of the historical background and the identity of the Sorbs/Wends and understanding of the Sorbian/Wendish culture. This means that the lessons must include topics that take the Sorbian/Wendish identity, culture and history into account. This concerns both knowledge of the commonality regarding origin and the different traditions, and community life of the various population groups. The Sorbian/Wendish language is protected and promoted as a minority language in the federal state of Brandenburg) in their traditional settlement area and to pupils with Low German as their first language (Low German is under special protection as a regional language in the federal state of Brandenburg). Multilingualism is the basis for acquiring other languages and for lifelong language learning. Multilingual children and young

people can communicate more easily in a multicultural environment and in a global context and in this way strengthen their intercultural skills.”

In 2017, the Berlin–Brandenburg Institute for Schools and the Media (Landesinstitut für Schule und Medien Berlin-Brandenburg) published a guide for teachers of the new social studies course (for grades 5/6) to implement the new curriculum, which also refers to ways to integrate Sorbian/Wendish topics. This also applies to a 2017 publication of the University of Potsdam’s institute for German studies for teachers of German.

The university courses for prospective teachers mentioned in the previous state reports continue unchanged and are open to all students.

f. Article 8 (1)(h)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the German authorities to adopt more structured measures with regard to teacher training, in close cooperation with the speakers. (Nos. 186 – 189)

Brandenburg refers to the comments in Chapter E II 3 d. All candidates with a certificate in Sorbian/Wendish were hired as teachers, and all candidates for practical teacher training were accepted to the training institution. Lateral entrants were also hired. Graduates of teacher training courses with a specialization in Sorbian/Wendish are hired by the responsible State Education Office in Cottbus/Chóšebuz regardless of current needs, because future demand is foreseeable. It is currently being examined whether proof of advanced knowledge of the Sorbian language can be taken into account in admissions decisions for the teacher training course at the University of Potsdam. This could also increase the number of Sorbian/Wendish-speaking teachers regardless of whether candidates are certified to teach the subject of Sorbian/Wendish. Similar rules apply in Saxony for prospective students from Brandenburg, for example at the University of Leipzig.

g. Article 8 (1)(i)

See the comments in E II 12 b.

h. Article 9 (1)(a)(ii) and (iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to comment on the following statement:

“Lower Sorbian speakers have informed the Committee of Experts about a statement of the Land government of October 2012, according to which using Lower Sorbian would lengthen the court proceedings. Furthermore, the local court in Cottbus/Chóšebuz allegedly refused to accept documents in Lower Sorbian, asked the interested person for a legal clarification and warned of the possibility to incur the translation expenses. (Nos. 193 – 194)

The Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to take measures facilitating the use of Lower Sorbian in courts in criminal proceedings. (Nos. 195 – 196)

The state government of **Brandenburg** believes that the language rights are guaranteed in the justice system. Section 184, second sentence, of the Judicature Act (GVG) guarantees the right of Sorbs to speak Sorbian in court in their areas of settlement, in accordance with Article 9 (1)(a)(ii) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. According to Section 187 (1), second sentence, GVG, the services of an interpreter or translator for Sorbian speakers who are defendants or joint plaintiffs in criminal proceedings are free of charge in accordance with Article 9 (1)(a) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In court proceedings, evidence is not regarded as inadmissible because it is presented in Sorbian. This is in accordance with Article 9 (1)(a)(iii), (b)(iii), and (c)(iii) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. According to the Charter, evidence must also be translated. However, these rights are hardly used, because very few Sorbs/Wends claim them. The state provides information on the right to use the Sorbian/Wendish language in the flyer *Sorbische/wendische Rechte im Land Brandenburg - Serbske pšawa w kraju Bramborska* (Sorbian/Wendish rights in the federal state of Brandenburg) and explicitly encourages greater use of the Sorbian/Wendish language. The statements quoted above were made at working level during the discussion of amending the Act on the Rights of Sorbs/Wends (SWG) in 2012–2014. They do not represent the state’s position.

Further steps have been taken to ensure that Sorbian/Wendish characters can be used without difficulty in electronic data processing and registers: By early 2018, the back-office IT application AUREG used for the commercial register and the registers of cooperatives, partnerships and associations will be programmed to accept entries using Lower Sorbian characters. The necessary work has been ordered.

i. Article 10 (1)(a)(iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to comment on the following statement:

“The Lower Sorbian speakers, however, informed the Committee of Experts that, according to an October 2012 statement of the Land Government, using Lower Sorbian in administration would be an unreasonable burden in technical and organizational terms. Moreover, the public service employees are not aware of the right to use Lower Sorbian in relations with the administration. In several cases applicants were asked not to use Lower Sorbian or had to inform the authorities of the relevant legal framework. The tax office in Cottbus, for example, refused to accept documents in Lower Sorbian, asked the applicant for legal clarification and warned of the possibility to incur the costs of translation. In addition, it was stated that the correct use of Lower Sorbian in the electronic data processing system is very difficult, due to the lack of special characters.”
(No. 200)

The Committee of Experts again strongly urged the German authorities to ensure in practice the possibility of submitting oral and written applications in Lower Sorbian. (No. 200)

Brandenburg refers to the comments in Chapter E. II. 3. h.

Additional measures to increase awareness and support by public administration are part of the plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language adopted by the state government in 2016. By law, the state must now reimburse the municipalities for additional costs arising from the use of Lower Sorbian, which is expected to result in greater openness by the municipal administrations. The amendment of Section 8 (2) SWG in 2014 now makes clear that administrations can decide on and respond to requests in Lower Sorbian. Sorbian/Wendish is actively used in oral and written form in administrations mainly by the commissioners for Sorbian/Wendish affairs in the urban district of Cottbus/Chóšebuz and the rural district Spree-Neiße/Sprjewja-Nysa and by the state ministry for science, research and culture.

j. Article 10 (2)(b)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to continue their efforts to improve the implementation in practice of obligations resulting from Article 10 (2)(b). (Nos. 201 – 203)

Brandenburg refers to the comments in Chapter E. II. 3. h. and E. II. 3. i.

k. Article 10 (2)(g)

Brandenburg notes that the amendment of the SWG enacted 1 June 2014 also brought about an addition to the local government constitution of the state of Brandenburg. Municipalities in traditional settlement areas now have bilingual German and Lower Sorbian names; the Sorbian/Wendish name is also official and thus can be used on equal terms with the German name. Together with the Sorbian Institute, the Lower Sorbian Language Commission and the Brandenburg office for land surveying and spatial base data, the ministry responsible for Sorbs/Wends is currently revising the list of Sorbian/Wendish place names, in order to implement these gradually in the public administration and private sector.

l. Article 10 (3)(b)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information on the implementation of the obligation based on Article 10 (3)(b) in practice. (Nos. 204 – 206)

Brandenburg refers to the comments in Chapter E. II. 3. h. and E. II. 3. i.

m. Article 10 (4)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide examples of the practical implementation of the obligation based on Article 10 (4)(c). (Nos. 207 – 209)

The state government of **Brandenburg** is not aware of any cases in which requests of this nature were made but not fulfilled. The plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language adopted by the state government in 2016 includes an order to examine the implementation of Sorbian/Wendish language skills in the list of job requirements for job advertisements. The state ministry for science, research and culture used this already in 2014 when advertising a job opening in the division responsible for Sorbian/Wendish affairs.

n. Article 10 (5)

The Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide specific information in the next State Report on legal certainty with regard to the use of names in case of masculine and feminine forms and on the difficulties reported by representatives of the

Sorbian language group with regard to the correct spelling of surnames in Lower Sorbian. (Nos. 210 – 212)

Brandenburg notes that law on names is a federal responsibility. Brandenburg supports the effort to anchor feminine forms of Sorbian/Wendish surnames in German law on names.

Some difficulties with Sorbian/Wendish characters in electronic data processing still exist. Part of the problem is individual users' lack of technical knowledge with regard to computer settings, but some problems are caused by the programming of individual back-office IT applications. The state has already taken additional steps to solve these problems through system updates or new purchases. The state plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language also includes measures to this effect. In this regard, please see the comments in Chapter E. II. 3. h. The next version of the electronic filing system EIDok used by ministries is based on the relevant IT standard. This topic has already been discussed at interministerial meetings of the ministry's information officers.

The **Federal Government** is still of the view that Article 10 (5) of the Charter does not require Germany to permit the transmission of a Sorbian name in the feminine form. Because German law on names does not have strict rules on the use of a name, it is possible to use a common, pen or stage name, or for example the feminine form of a Sorbian name, for general purposes instead of one's legal name.

The correct reproduction of the special spelling of names in the different minority languages for electronic data processing was also discussed at federal level. On 2 June 2017, the German Bundestag unanimously adopted a petition submitted by the CDU/CSU, SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens parliamentary groups with the title *25 Jahre Europäische Charta der Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen – Gemeinsamer Auftrag* (The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 25 years on: A shared task) which calls on the Federal Government among other things to examine whether the special spelling of names in individual Charter languages could be taken into account gradually in databases at federal level. This request was forwarded to all federal ministries.

o. Article 11 (1)(b)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to further promote the broadcasting of Lower Sorbian programmes also by private radio broadcasters. (Nos. 213 – 215)

Brandenburg notes that there is nothing new to report in this matter since the 5th State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany. In this regard, please see the comments in Chapter D. V.

p. Article 11 (1)(c)(ii)

In its latest report the Committee of Experts urged the German authorities to expand the television programming currently offered and to encourage the broadcasting of television programmes in Lower Sorbian by private broadcasters. (Nos. 216 – 218)

Brandenburg notes that there is nothing new to report in this matter since the 5th State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany.

q. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E II. 12. a.

r. Article 13 (1)(d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to encourage and/or facilitate the use of Low German in economic and social activities (Nos. 226 – 228).

Brandenburg refers to the comments in Chapter E. II. 3. h. and E. II. 3. i. In addition, the state plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language adopted by the state government in 2016 includes a number of measures in the areas of transport, cartographical and postal services, tourism and care services. The state tourism strategy revised in 2016 also takes Sorbian/Wendish aspects into account.

4. North Frisian in Schleswig-Holstein

a. Article 8

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide additional information on the further development of the plans to set up two schools offering a special Low Frisian education programme. (No. 231)

Schleswig-Holstein reports that there are currently 22 public schools offering Frisian. At eleven primary schools, pupils start to learn Frisian in a systematic manner in grade 1. The goal is to pool and professionalize Frisian language teaching. Professionalization also includes appropriate teaching materials. The materials used to teach Low German in grades 1 and 2 is therefore currently being translated into Frisian. A team of teachers and experts in the field of teacher training developed a guideline for Frisian language instruction at primary schools.

At the Eilun Feer Skuul in Wyk on the island of Föhr, Frisian instruction has been successfully established at the lower and upper secondary level. At the Friedrich Paulsen School in Niebüll, however, there is a lack of demand although, as provided for in the decree on the Frisian language of 2013, the local population was fully informed of the option to learn Frisian.

b. Article 8 (1)(a)(i) – (iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts again strongly urged the German authorities to make available, systematically and through adequate institutional and financial support, at least a substantial part of pre-school education in North Frisian to those pupils whose families so request. (Nos. 232 – 234)

Schleswig-Holstein reports that from 1993 to 1996, at the initiative of the body set up by the Schleswig-Holstein state parliament for issues related to the Frisian ethnic group (Gremium für Fragen der friesischen Volksgruppe beim Schleswig-Holsteinischen Landtag), nursery schools in Süderende on the island of Föhr and in Risum-Lindholm tested whether the Frisian language could be permanently revived in a nursery-school context. On the basis of the results, Frisian was introduced at additional nursery schools and is now being offered, to varying extents, in 17 nursery schools.

The language programmes are appropriate for the children's age and depend on the available Frisian speakers. Language instruction ranges from thirty minutes a week to the entire school day. Entire school days are possible only if a Frisian-speaking

education specialist works at the institution so that the immersion method (one person – one language) can be applied.

Since 2017 specially trained staff have received targeted support to teach and use regional and minority languages in child day-care centres. Child day-care centres which provide for regional and minority language education in their educational strategies may apply for an additional allowance. Grants have been increased by €500,000 in the 2017 budget and distributed, according to the application, to the rural and urban districts depending on the number of children aged 3 to 14 in their care. Altogether, a total of €386,000 was granted to the districts of Dithmarschen, North Friesland, Ostholstein, Rendsburg-Eckernförde and Schleswig-Flensburg and the urban districts of Flensburg, Kiel and Lübeck. The plan is to continue this funding in 2018 and 2019 by providing €500,000 per year.

c. Article 8 (1)(b)(i) – (iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts again strongly urged the German authorities to make available North Frisian teaching at primary level as an integral part of the curriculum. (Nos. 235 – 237)

Schleswig-Holstein reports that at 15 public schools in the North Frisian language area and on the island of Heligoland (Pinneberg district) Frisian is taught mainly at the primary school and as an optional subject. Frisian language instruction is offered at five schools of the Danish minority and provided at three schools.

The only grammar school in Schleswig-Holstein offering Frisian as a regular subject at the lower and upper secondary level is the Eilun Feer Skuul (EFS) in Wyk on the island of Föhr.

In 2015, the Frisian study group at the Friedrich Paulsen School in Niebüll was discontinued for lack of demand.

Since the 2016/17 school year St. Peter-Ording's Nordseeschule has had a Frisian study group in the framework of its open all-day school approach.

The state expert adviser for schools with a Frisian focus provided the following data for the 2016/17 school year: 24 schools in Schleswig-Holstein provide 95 hours of weekly Frisian language teaching to 834 pupils of all school types.

The St. Nikolai primary school on the island of Sylt provides immersive Frisian instruction in classes dealing with basic science, local geography and history.

d. Article 8 (1)(c)(i) – (iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide extensive information on the implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 8 (1)(c). (Nos. 238 – 240)

The only grammar school in **Schleswig-Holstein** offering Frisian as a regular subject is the Eilun Feer Skuul (EFS) in Wyk on the island of Föhr. In the 2017/18 school year, Frisian can be chosen as a subject at both the lower and upper secondary level.

In 2015, the Frisian study group at the Friedrich Paulsen School in Niebüll was discontinued for lack of demand.

Since the 2016/17 school year St. Peter-Ording's Nordseeschule has had a Frisian study group in the framework of its open all-day school approach.

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts again strongly urged the German authorities to make available North Frisian teaching at secondary level as an integral part of the curriculum. (No. 240)

Schleswig-Holstein reports that, at the lower secondary level, Frisian language instruction depends on the teaching staff that are native speakers or trained in Frisian dialects. Schleswig-Holstein is working to increase the number of such teachers. Frisian language instruction is provided in all locations where such staff is available.

e. Article 8 (1)(h)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the authorities to ensure that appropriate facilities for teacher training are in place to meet the needs for education in North Frisian in a short and long term perspective and to provide incentives aimed at increasing the number of North Frisian teachers at all levels of education. (Nos. 241 – 243)

Schleswig-Holstein reports that the training of North Frisian teachers depends on the demand for grammar school teachers. The only grammar school in Schleswig-Holstein currently offering Frisian language instruction is located in Wyk on the island of Föhr.

In Schleswig-Holstein, it is possible to study North Frisian at the Christian Albrechts University in Kiel and the Europa University in Flensburg. The cooperation of these two

universities with the University of Groningen, the Fryske Academy in Leeuwarden, the Nordfriisk Instituut (NFI), and the Ferring Foundation (Alkersum) guarantees that academic research on the Frisian language is conducted.

At Flensburg's Europa University, students can start studying Frisian as a regular subject in their third semester and as a major in the field of German studies in their fifth semester. The target group is students interested in minority languages and the North Frisian language, culture, history and literature and those students who, upon graduating, want to acquire the qualification to teach North Frisian at public schools. To become Frisian teachers, students complete their Bachelor's degree in education with a focus on Frisian. Afterwards, they have the possibility to obtain an additional qualification (certificate) allowing them to teach Frisian. This qualification is usually acquired during or in addition to a Master's programme. Master students of all subjects training to become primary school teachers have the chance to attend optional compulsory courses on the Frisian language and the Frisian minority.

Practical exercises to improve one's language skills in two North Frisian dialects are regularly offered at all competence levels (i.e. 1, 2 and 3) to take the basic division between North Frisian island dialects and mainland dialects into account. In practice, this means that courses in Fering (island dialect) and Mooring (mainland dialect), the two most widely spoken and most firmly anchored dialects, are provided at universities and in other contexts. Flensburg's Europa University makes every effort to teach also other North Frisian varieties if needed and possible from a logistical point of view (e.g. if qualified teaching staff is available). Frisian linguistics, history and literature are always taught on the basis of an interregional and interdialectal approach.

About 40 to 60 students currently attend the introductory courses in Frisian studies per calendar year in their third or fourth semester, and some five to 15 students attend advanced courses in their fifth and sixth semester. This discrepancy in the number of students has to do with the fact that all those studying German in their third (or fourth) semester are required to attend a course in Low German or Frisian. In the fifth and sixth semester, however, it is optional to attend a Frisian course.

In 2016, the staff of the University of Flensburg's Frisian Seminar was significantly increased: A professorship for Frisian and minority research was appointed and a second half-time position was created. This is partly relativized by the fact the director of the Ferring Foundation (Alkersum) teaching at the Seminar will retire in September 2017. However, the close cooperation with the NFI, which is also reflected in the teaching of six hours per week, persists.

At the University of Kiel, Frisian studies may be taken to fulfil distribution requirements in a two-subject bachelor course (70 ECTS); it may be studied as part of a two-subject master course leading to the Master of Arts degree (45 ECTS) or as an additional

subject in a two-subject bachelor or master teacher training course (24 ECTS). The two-subject bachelor course is intended for students who plan to seek work or continue higher education studies after receiving their Bachelor's degree. The additional subject is intended for students in teacher training courses who would like to learn more about a third subject. Successful completion of study of an additional subject leads to a certificate. The University of Kiel offers Frisian as a required elective for students in the teacher training course for German (Master of Education); students must complete a course to be admitted to examinations.

In addition to providing information flyers, the university organizes information days to present all aspects of Frisian studies. It also informs pupils at the grammar school in Wyk on the island of Föhr, which is the only grammar school offering instruction in Frisian, about the possibility to study Frisian.

While there are enough persons interested in doing a Bachelor's degree in Frisian (7 to twelve new students per year), hardly anyone has enrolled for Frisian studies as an additional subject in the past semesters (one enrolment in the 2015 summer semester and one in the 2016/17 winter semester). Ultimately, however, interest in this additional subject will be limited due to the lack of demand for grammar school teachers in Frisian in Nordfriesland (limited career prospects).

Building on the certificate courses of the Universities of Kiel and Flensburg, teachers in the second training phase may take an additional examination to acquire a teaching qualification for Frisian.

For their practical teacher training, persons who attended a certificate course at university are often sent to schools that offer or want to offer Frisian.

f. Article 8 (1)(i)

Please see the comments under E. II. 12. b. for further information.

g. Article 10 (1)(a)(v)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts urged the German authorities to take necessary measures to ensure that it is possible in practice to validly submit documents in North Frisian. (Nos. 247 – 249)

In June 2016, Section 82b was added to *Schleswig-Holstein's* State Administrative Act (LVwG). According to this Act, applications may be made and petitions, certificates and other documents presented in Frisian in the district of Nordfriesland and on the island of

Heligoland. If the authorities there do not have the necessary knowledge of the Frisian language, they will have the documents translated at no charge to the applicant. This applies to all applications within a single administrative file made to an authority based in the districts mentioned and the urban district of Flensburg.

The law requires the state government to evaluate the impacts especially with regard to efficiency and goal achievement no more than four years after the new provision enters into force.

h. Article 11 (1)(c)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts again strongly urged the German authorities to take measures to encourage and/or facilitate the broadcasting of television programmes in North Frisian on a regular basis. (Nos. 255 – 256)

The state of *Schleswig-Holstein* refers to its comments on Recommendation 5 of the Committee of Ministers.

i. Article 11 (1)(e)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts again strongly urged the German authorities to take measures to encourage and/or facilitate the publication of newspaper articles in North Frisian on a regular basis. (Nos. 257 – 259)

Responding to this recommendation, *Schleswig-Holstein* again refers to the general comments on the freedom of the press in connection with Recommendation 5 of the Committee of Ministers.

j. Article 11 (1)(f)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the authorities to apply existing measures for financial assistance also to audiovisual productions in North Frisian. (Nos. 260 – 262)

Schleswig-Holstein reports that The Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein GmbH does not give North Frisian or any other regional or minority language any preference in the area of funding, production or broadcasting of audio or audiovisual works. Funding is granted exclusively on the basis of quality- and content-related criteria.

k. Article 12 (1)(e)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts urged the German authorities to promote measures to ensure that the bodies responsible for organising or supporting cultural activities have at their disposal staff who have a full command of North Frisian. (Nos. 263 – 265)

Schleswig-Holstein explains that both the Frisian organizations and the bodies responsible for organising and supporting cultural activities have at their disposal staff who have a full command of Frisian.

In June 2016, the amendment of the Act to Promote Frisian in the Public Sphere created the basis for making increased use in the Frisian language area of staff proficient in Frisian. Frisian language skills were made a recruitment criterion for public service staff and in institutions of the Nordfriesland district (Section 2). Furthermore, Section 2 (3) of the Act stipulates that possibilities for language acquisition must be created. Thereby, the Act creates the conditions for a rising demand for Frisian language instruction – to meet recruitment criteria and to provide staff with advance training courses. On the basis of the Frisian Act, language acquisition is incorporated into the training curricula to a greater extent. Furthermore, the rights of the different Frisian language forms (Section 2 (4)) are taken into account and, if possible, public service staff are sent to those areas where their Frisian language form is spoken.

Also in its second report with the title “For a modern, diverse administration in Schleswig-Holstein”, the state government emphasizes the need to promote the diverse linguistic and cultural skills of its employees. Under aspect III (“measures for a culturally fair recruitment procedure), paragraph e (consideration of regional and minority languages) was added to underline the need for employees speaking regional or minority languages. Authorities should therefore encourage their staff to make use of their language skills.

l. Article 12 (3)

Please see the comments under E. II. 12. a.

m. Article 14 (1)(a)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts urged the German authorities to apply existing bilateral and multilateral agreements which bind them with the Netherlands, or if necessary to seek to conclude such agreements, in such a way as to foster contacts

between the users of North Frisian and Frisian in the fields of culture, education, information, vocational training and permanent education. (Nos. 270 – 272)

Schleswig-Holstein reports that a Joint Declaration of Intent on regional cooperation between the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein and the Dutch provinces of Groningen, Fryslân and Drenthe was concluded in the Dutch city of Groningen on 11 November 2016. The three above-mentioned Dutch provinces work together at national and international level in the Samenswerkingsverband Noord-Nederland (SNN). This Joint Declaration of Intent contains the following wording:

“Frisian culture and language

Schleswig-Holstein and the province of Friesland have a common Frisian language history. This unique feature serves as fertile ground for our cooperation. To this end, we intend to promote and safeguard our common Frisian language and culture in our interactions with other regions. This includes cooperation on language, cultural projects and exhibitions. Furthermore, the minority concerns of the Frisian ethnic group should always be considered in this context.

The links to the language communities in North, West and East Friesland date back to the early 20th century and have been closely followed by their respective Frisian councils (Frisian Council, Fryske Rie and Friesenrat) since 1956. To prepare for Leeuwarden as European Capital of Culture, the province of Friesland expressed great interest to step up the existing cooperation and work more closely together with Schleswig-Holstein on language-related and cultural projects and at academic level.

Schleswig-Holstein maintains its contacts to the Dutch province of Fryslân to consolidate cultural exchange. For example, the representation of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein to the Federation co-organized the Frisian Cultural Days which took place at the Museum of European Cultures in Berlin between 24 August and 24 September 2017. Between 25 August 2017 and 2 April 2018, the same museum houses an exhibit on everyday life on islands (InselWesen - InselAlltag/IslandBeing. IslandLife).

At the invitation of the **Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities** and the **Commissioner for Minorities of Schleswig-Holstein's Minister-President**, an evening event took place at the representation of the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein to the Federation on 28 March 2017. This evening was dedicated to cross-border cooperation between Germany and the Netherlands on Frisian matters and Frisian culture in Germany and the Netherlands. Guests included representatives of the Frisian language group from

Germany and representatives of Dutch West Frisians from politics and civil-society organizations.

5. Sater Frisian in Lower Saxony

a. Article 8 (1)(a)(i) – (iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide more detailed information on the implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 8 (1)(a)(i) – (iv). (Nos. 275 – 278)

Because child day-care centres are operated by different organizations (see also the 5th State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany), the federal state of **Lower Saxony** does not collect any data on the use of Sater Frisian in Saterland facilities. As a result, no reliable statements can be made.

b. Article 8 (1)(i)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities whether the report of the supervisory body for the implementation of the Charter with regard to Sater Frisian in the field of education will be published and what the results of the monitoring showed. (Nos. 288 – 290)

See the comments in E II. 12. b.

c. Article 10 (1)(a)(v) and (c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to ensure the implementation of the obligations resulting from Article 10 (1)(a)(v) and (1)(c) in practice. (Nos. 291 – 293)

In **Lower Saxony**, speakers of Sater Frisian can also submit documents in the Sater Frisian language to the Saterland municipality. These are not rejected by the municipality, but rather processed. However, it should be noted that classic Sater Frisian is a spoken rather than a written language. For this reason, even many speakers have great difficulties in writing the language. This is why no forms are available in Sater Frisian.

If necessary and if so desired by the persons concerned, the municipality will also respond to written requests in Sater Frisian, if necessary with the help of a translator, if a response in Sater Frisian does not create an unreasonable burden due to its extent.

d. Article 10 (2)(b)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information on the implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 10 (2)(b) in practice. (Nos. 294 – 296)

In addition to the information sign in the town hall of the municipality of Saterland already mentioned by the Committee of Experts, the municipality's website also encourages the use of Sater Frisian. The website is also in Sater Frisian, and the Sater Frisian content can be easily accessed simply by clicking on a link.

The municipality's registry office also conducts wedding ceremonies in Sater Frisian, as long as both spouses at least understand the language.

e. Article 10 (4)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide information on the practical implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 10 (4)(c) with regard to Sater Frisian. (Nos. 309 – 311)

In **Lower Saxony**, three employees at the town hall of the Saterland municipality speak Sater Frisian. They work in particular in the areas which deal intensively with the public, so that residents can use Sater Frisian when presenting their requests. Signs on the doors of these employees indicate that they speak Sater Frisian: "Hier wäd uk seeltersk balt". Another three employees understand and can speak some Sater Frisian. Further, in August two young men will begin training as prospective civil servants; one of them speaks Sater Frisian, and the other understands and can speak a little Sater Frisian. No Sater Frisian speakers who work for the Saterland municipality have so far explicitly expressed the desire to work in a field dealing with Sater Frisian. However, one person who successfully completed training last year and who understands and can speak a little Sater Frisian works in the central services section, which is also responsible for public information and cultural affairs. Although these areas are not her primary tasks, she regularly assists with them on her own initiative and makes a significant contribution to project development (such as producing an app for the Sater Frisian dictionary). She also played a key role in supervising the relaunch of the Saterland municipality's website (www.saterland.de), which is also available in Sater Frisian. The public administration therefore plans to continue to use the expertise of this person accordingly.

f. Article 11 (1)(c)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide information on television programming in Sater Frisian. (Nos. 315 – 317)

In **Lower Saxony**, the public broadcaster Norddeutsche Rundfunk (NDR) has focused on the minority language Sater Frisian in 23 segments since 1999 in the following programmes: “Hallo Niedersachsen”, “DAS! Abendstudio”, “Die aktuelle Schaubude”, “Nordsee-Report”, “Wunderschöner Norden”, “Unser starker Norden”, “Niedersachsen 18 Uhr”, “Niedersachsen 19.30 Uhr – Das Magazin”, “NDR Themennacht: Friesische Nacht (Folge 3) | Ostfriesland!”, “Plattdüütsch”. For example, in February 2015 the programme “Hallo Niedersachsen” reported on Dr Marron Curtis Fort, who had published a dictionary of Sater Frisian.

The private broadcaster RTL-Nord focused on the topic of Sater Frisian in three segments in 2010 and 2014. The broadcaster Friesische Rundfunk aired one segment on the Sater Frisian language in 2011 and another in 2012.

g. Article 11 (1)(d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to take measures to promote and/or facilitate the production and distribution of audio and audiovisual works in Sater Frisian. (Nos. 318 – 320)

Lower Saxony continues to regard applications for funding audio and audiovisual works in Sater Frisian very positively and encourages producers to be active in this way. This requires media professionals to take the initiative, however.

h. Article 11 (1)(f)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the authorities to apply existing measures for financial assistance also to audiovisual productions in Sater Frisian. (Nos. 321 – 323)

In this context, **Lower Saxony** refers to its comments in Chapter E. II. 5. g.

i. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E II. 12. a.

6. Low German in the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen

a. Article 8

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the authorities to continue its efforts to establish a systematic approach to Low German education. (Nos. 333 – 336)

Low German continues to be part of the curricula for primary and secondary education in the **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen**. Specific details are left to the schools.

Based on the curricular provisions governing German in primary education, Low German is offered as part of German classes and across subject areas. Pupils regularly learn Low German poems and songs in primary education; some primary schools also offer Low German working groups. Parts of basic science classes are also taught in Low German.

In the upper grades (*Oberschule*) and grammar schools (*Gymnasium*), Low German is offered across subject areas (for example, in connection with music). The German curriculum, specifically the teaching of German, seeks to enable pupils to establish a cultural identity. Regional language, colloquial and Standard German phrases are identified, as well as regional variants. Similarities between Low German and English are addressed.

It is up to the individual schools to decide to what extent they wish to teach Low German as part of the overall curriculum.

To help the schools which teach Low German, a textbook for primary schools was developed for the federal states in northern Germany which enables systematic language teaching. This textbook is used in Bremen's primary schools which are building up a Low German profile as the basis for teaching in grades 1 and 2.

b. Article 8 (1)(a)(i) – (iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the German authorities to adopt a systematic approach promoting the substantial use of Low German in preschool education. (Nos. 337 – 340)

In preschool education in the **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen**, the use of Low German is the responsibility of the relevant institution (day-care centre, day-care centre with an emphasis on language development and reading, city library). They use songs, books, stories and rhymes, sometimes with the help of volunteers. The initiative BremerLeseLust supports the use of books and stories in Low German, offering

preschool-aged children initial impressions and understanding of Low German. Demand for books and stories in Low German tends to be low in day-care centres in the city of Bremen; greater interest is found on the outskirts of the city or in parts of Bremerhaven.

c. Article 8 (1)(b)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the German authorities to provide for the systematic teaching of Low German in primary education, with regular school hours allocated to it. (Nos. 341 – 344)

Low German profile schools in the *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* offer pupils the possibility to take part in systematic Low German instruction. (See also explanations in 3(a) and IV, No. 4.)

The profile schools offer additional instruction for all pupils, for individual classes or groups based on the textbook for the federal states in northern Germany. The profile schools develop ways to increase the visibility of Low German not only in the classroom, but also every day at school (Low German word or sentence of the week; “Low German time” for all school classes; presentations in Low German at school celebrations; project presentations in Low German, etc.).

d. Article 8 (1)(c)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the German authorities to provide for the systematic teaching of Low German in secondary education by introducing regular school hours allocated to it. (Nos. 345 – 347)

The *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* reports that, after the pilot phase of Low German profile primary schools ends at the end of the 2017/18 school year, at least two secondary schools are to systematically continue the language instruction. Already during this school year, language instruction will be continued at a grammar school in Bremen.

e. Article 8 (1)(g)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts found that it remained unclear how the teaching of the history and culture expressed in Low German was ensured in practice and stated that it did not consider the obligation resulting from Article 8 (1)(g) to be fulfilled. (Nos. 348 – 351)

Thanks to the new textbook at the profile schools in the **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen**, the history and culture of Low German is regularly studied, as called for. The profile schools and all other primary schools in Bremen can find interesting cultural and historical resources, also to learn more about Low German culture and history, at the School Museum and the Arster Museum in Bremen.

This is also the purpose of teaching Low German across subject areas. For instance, parts of the basic science classes in primary schools and of global or environmental science and history classes in secondary schools are taught in Low German.

f. Article 8 (1)(h)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the authorities to provide basic and further training for teachers of Low German. (Nos. 352 – 355)

Since the 2015/16 school year, **Bremen's** Institute for Schools (Landesinstitut für Schule) has offered further training in Low German, which is mainly used by teachers at the pilot Low German profile schools. This training covers language skills, methodology and didactics.

g. Article 10 (1)(a)(v)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities continue their efforts to ensure that documents may be submitted in Low German with legal validity and asked them for specific information on the practical implementation of this obligation in the next state report. (Nos. 356 – 359)

The **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen** remains of the view that the obligation to ensure that persons who use regional or minority languages can submit documents in these languages with legal validity does not require any special administrative rules because the Charter has the status of federal law in Germany.

Already in April 2011, the Senator for the Interior informed the authorities and all staff within his area of responsibility of the obligations resulting from the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and called on them to inform their supervisors of any information materials or other documents in their areas of responsibility which seemed suitable for providing also in a Low German version.

h. Article 10 (1)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities continue the measures already taken and asked them for specific information on the practical implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 10 (1)(c). (Nos. 360 – 362)

The *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* once again points out that the Charter has the status of federal law in Germany.

Already in April 2011, the Senator for the Interior informed the authorities and all staff within his area of responsibility of the obligations resulting from the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and called on them to be open to citizens presenting their concerns in Low German and speak with them in that language if possible, or to refer them to other colleagues who do. The heads of authorities have been asked to look into designating a Low German contact person for their area of responsibility.

i. Article 10 (2)(a)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities continue their efforts to promote the use of Low German within the local authorities and asked them for specific information on the practical implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 10 (2)(a). (Nos. 363 – 365)

The *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* reports that, in a letter sent in April 2011, the Senator for the Interior explicitly encouraged staff to use Low German in the workplace provided all those involved actually speak Low German and that other staff would not be left out.

Visitors to the website of the Senator for the Interior can choose to be greeted in Low German.

j. Article 10 (2)(b)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities continue the measures already taken and asked them for specific information on the practical implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 10 (2)(b). (Nos. 366 – 368)

The *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* notes that these measures are being continued. For example, visitors to the website of the Senator for the Interior can still choose to be greeted in Low German.

k. Article 10 (2)(c) and (d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for examples of documents published in Low German by the local and regional authorities. (Nos. 369 – 372)

The *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* reports that visitors to the website of the Senator for the Interior can choose to be greeted in Low German as follows:

“Leve Besökers!

Von Harten wellkomen up de Siede von den ‚Senator für Inneres der Freien Hansestadt Bremen‘.

“Up düsse Siede findt Se dat Neeste över den Senator sine Behörde un de annern Ämters un Inrichtungen, de ook noch daarto hören dot.

“De Uppgaavens von dat Binnenressort sün heel wiet anset. Daarto hört unner annern all dat wat to de ‚Innere Sicherheit‘ hören deit (Polizei, Feuerwehr, Verfassungsschutz) dat Ausländerrecht, dat Staatsangehörigkeitsrecht un dat Ordnungsrecht över de wi Se an düsse Steel wat vertellen wüllt.

“Un dat Se de Öwersicht över all de veelen Informationen beholen dot, heft wi uns hier op dat Nootwendigste beschränkt.

“Dorbie heft wi dacht, dat Se dör de Verbindung von de Daten flink und zielseeker up dat too kommt, wat Se eegentlich söken wullt.”

l. Article 11 (1)(c)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the German authorities to take measures to facilitate the broadcasting of television programmes in Low German on a regular basis. (Nos. 373 – 376)

As noted in the 5th State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany, public, private and public-access broadcasters in the *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* air programmes in Low German on a regular basis. The broadcasts are based on the suitably modified provisions of Bremen’s media laws (Act on Radio Bremen and the Bremen Media Act).

The state is prohibited from further influence on programming in line with the freedom of radio and television. It should be noted that all broadcasting (private and public) in Germany is not governed or financed by the state. This means that, for reasons of constitutional law, the state is not allowed to intervene in programming or provide funding for individual formats.

m. Article 11 (1)(d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for specific information on support for the production of audio and audiovisual works in Low German. (Nos. 377 – 379)

The **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen** reports that, since the amendment of the Act on Radio Bremen and the Bremen Media Act, promoting minority languages has been an explicit, legally mandated task of broadcasters. The Free Hanseatic City of Bremen makes this task, and thus the broadcasting of programming in Low German, easier to carry out as far as it is allowed by law. Specifically, this means that it ensures the necessary legal and financial framework conditions as well as the independence of broadcasting in Bremen.

Additional, direct support of individual productions is not possible because broadcasting is not governed or financed by the state.

n. Article 11 (1)(e)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information about the amount and regular appearance of Low German articles in the local press and about the measures taken to encourage their publication. (Nos. 380 – 382)

In the **Free Hanseatic City of Bremen**, the daily *Weser-Kurier* and its local editions *Bremer Nachrichten* and *Verdener Nachrichten* as well as its Sunday edition *Kurier am Sonntag* are the market leaders among print media. The *Weser-Kurier* regularly publishes the column “De Plattdütsche Eck” on weekends. The *Nordsee-Zeitung* is the local daily in the port city of Bremerhaven. The *Nordsee-Zeitung* prints a daily column of news in Low German. It also regularly publishes a column by Käptn Cord.

To reach the younger generation, both the *Weser-Kurier* and the *Nordsee-Zeitung* also offer digital subscriptions. Other digital offerings include the website of the public

broadcaster Radio Bremen, which publishes Low German news, features and interviews every day.

o. Article 11 (1)(g)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities support the training of journalists and other media staff who use Low German. (Nos. 383 – 385)

The ***Free Hanseatic City of Bremen*** reports that the public broadcasters also provide basic and further training for journalists and other media staff as part of their production. Because the production of news and features in Low German is part of Radio Bremen's legally mandated tasks, it can be assumed that the necessary skills are taught in this framework. The state government is not allowed to exert targeted influence on staff training because broadcasting is not governed by the state.

p. Article 12 (1)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities continue to promote access in Low German to work produced in other languages. (Nos. 386 – 388)

The ***Free Hanseatic City of Bremen*** reports that many Low German theatres regularly produce works not originally written in Low German. Doing so requires translating the texts, most of which are in High German. Bremen provides ongoing project funding to support the training programme of Bremen's Amateurtheater registered association, to which about a dozen Low German theatres belong. The association's training programme includes writing texts for the theatre.

The series "Poetry Slam op platt" also receives funding. In this series, contestants present original texts in Low German which they write within a short, set period of time; if they run into linguistic obstacles, the organizers help with translation. The slam is held every two years.

At the documentation centre of the Wilhelm and Helen Kaisen foundation in Bremen, audio guides are available in both High and Low German to tell visitors more about the life of Bremen's former mayor and his wife. On 1 June 2017, for the 70th anniversary of the founding of the state of Bremen after World War II, a sing-along festival was held under the patronage of the president of Bremen's parliament (*Bürgerschaft*) for which 11

songs were composed. The song texts recounting the history of Bremen were partly in High German and partly in Low German.

q. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E II. 12. a.

r. Article 13 (2)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the authorities to take structured measures to make more systematic the possibility to be received and treated in Low German in social care facilities. (Nos. 399 – 402)

The *Free Hanseatic City of Bremen* reports that some of those who are now of the generation living in care homes spoke Low German at home. Those who provide services in care facilities are required to take into account the languages spoken by their residents. How they do so is up to them. In some care homes, Low German is used daily. Residents of the Luisental care home run by the Bremen care home foundation like to chat in Low German (“snacken op platt”).

Already during training, efforts are made to ensure that Low German is more widely used in caring for the elderly: Schools providing training to care for the elderly have recognized the importance of learning Low German. Interestingly, this is much more the case in Bremerhaven than in Bremen. The schools have responded by regularly offering instruction in Low German, especially at the two schools in Bremerhaven; some schools in Bremen do as well, with 24 credit hours as part of the 80 credit hours of German instruction. But Low German is not a mandatory component of training to care for the elderly; the schools offer optional training in Low German. The curriculum implements federal law, so the Bremen senator for social affairs, youth, women, integration and sport is not free to determine its content.

The representation for senior citizens has published a flyer to inform older Bremen residents about the representation and its work. The flyer is available in Turkish, Russian, English and Low German.

7. Low German in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg

a. Article 8 (1)(a)(iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities strengthen the use of Low German in preschool education. (Nos. 405 – 407)

The *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* reports on the Hamburg educational recommendations for the education and training of children at day-care centres, which refer to Low German as a repository of traditions and history in the context of education in the field of communication, language, written culture and media. The recommendations also encourage the use of stories and songs in Low German to bring children into contact with this cultural asset.

b. Article 8 (1)(d)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the German authorities to provide, in consultation with the speakers, for the teaching of Low German in technical and vocational education, by allocating regular school hours to it. (Nos. 415 – 417)

The *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* reports that elements from the Low German culture and language are used or referred to in individual vocational schools. Because the primary task of vocational schools is to impart occupational skills and strengthen skills in the subjects of mathematics, language and communication (German) and technical English, there are no plans to anchor Low German in the curriculum on a large scale.

c. Article 8 (1)(i)

Please see the comments under E. II. 12. b. for further information.

d. Article 10 (1)(a)(v)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts repeated that the German authorities must take proactive measures to encourage speakers of Low German to take advantage of the possibility to submit documents in Low German. (Nos. 424 – 427)

In the interest of containing the flood of rules and regulations, the *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* decided against implementing the voluntary undertakings under

Article 10 by creating formal rules or directives. Due to Hamburg's particular city-state constitution, the administration is clearly organized and easy to survey, and Senate decisions take immediate effect for the entire administration. With this in mind, Hamburg's finance ministry considers it unnecessary to enforce and/or publicize the voluntary undertakings under Article 10 on a wider scale than is already provided by the practice of informally disseminating this information. The finance ministry is therefore still of the view that it is not necessary to enact special regulations or take special measures, because the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages applies directly as law. As a result, the municipal offices would respond appropriately in the individual case to any requests for communication in Low German.

e. Article 10 (1)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts reiterated that the German authorities should not merely "permit" written texts in Low German, but should take certain measures for the practical implementation of the obligation. (Nos. 428 – 430)

The *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* refers to the comments in Chapter E. II 7. d.

f. Article 10 (2)(a)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to promote the use of Low German within the regional and local authorities. (Nos. 431 – 433)

The *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* refers to the comments in Chapter E. II 7. d.

g. Article 11 (1)(d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts urged the German authorities to take measures to encourage and/or facilitate the production and distribution of audio and audiovisual works in Low German. (Nos. 442 – 444)

The *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* reports that the public broadcaster Norddeutsche Rundfunk (NDR) makes great efforts on behalf of the Low German language, culture and literature in Hamburg, Lower Saxony, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein. In addition to its broad and varied programming, it

has also demonstrated wide-ranging social engagement on behalf of Low German, for example by participating in various bodies and serving on various boards dedicated to Low German.

NDR offers an extensive and diverse range of television programmes in Low German. It has steadily expanded its Low German programming over the years.

The regional evening programmes from the four states that make up the NDR transmission area provide up-to-date coverage of Low German issues. Features and news are also produced and broadcast in Low German. Content ranges from state and local politics to culture and education as well as science, research and society.

NDR also broadcasts regularly scheduled programmes in Low German, such as “Plattdüütsch mit Ludger Abeln”, with the latest news on politics, the economy, sport and culture; “Die Welt op Platt”, with reports on how ethnic Germans abroad maintain their traditions; and “Neues aus Büttenwarder op Platt”, a regional cult comedy with well-known actors in the main roles.

NDR also offers a special Low German web presence where all audio and video broadcasts with Low German content can be accessed.

The commercial television station Hamburg 1 responded to an enquiry that it occasionally includes elements of the Low German language in its programme. However, the station has no statistics on the extent of such broadcasts.

In this context, it is necessary to refer to the constitutional principle of government non-intervention in broadcasting, according to which television and radio broadcasters have a great deal of autonomy. In this way, the possibility of government influence on broadcasters’ programming decisions is ruled out. The aims of the Charter cannot be “government mandated” in this area, but only pursued jointly in practice.

h. Article 11 (1)(g)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the German authorities to take structured measures to support the training of journalists and other media staff who use Low German. (Nos. 448 – 450)

The *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* reports that the University of Hamburg offers classes on Low German language and literature in the subject areas of German language and literature (bachelor degree programme), Germanic linguistics (master degree programme) and German (bachelor and master in teaching). The department of language, literature and media is responsible for these classes. The Institute for Journalism and Communications does not offer any courses explicitly focused on the

Low German language. However, students may choose electives in other subject areas including classes in or about Low German.

Students may also take Low German language courses at the interdisciplinary language centre. The University of Hamburg currently has no course offerings to promote Low German which are exclusively intended for journalists.

NDR offers journalism training in the form of an internship programme for radio, television and online content. The internships include three assignments at an NDR regional studio, so that interns come into contact with the Low German language wherever it is covered. In this way, interns have been assigned in the past to regional studios which deal with Low German content, issues and programmes. However, NDR does not offer specific or obligatory training in Low German.

NDR's central editorial office for Low German at its broadcasting centre in Schleswig-Holstein has an exchange programme with the University of Hamburg, and in winter semester 2012/13 a journalist from the central editorial office taught a course at the university on aspects of Low German radio features ("Vom 'Theater im Dunkeln' zum Podcast – Aspekte des Niederdeutschen Hörspiels").

The NDR programme continues to broadcast programmes and segments in Low German and continues to update them in order to make Low German interesting also for new target audiences. With the same goal of bringing the largest possible audience into contact with Low German, NDR intentionally includes Low German in other fixed formats in its programming. Its cultural events, such as the "Poetry Slam op Platt" and the storytelling contest "Vertell doch mal" are specifically directed at younger people. For example, in 2017 the storytelling contest included a section for persons under 18. In 2017, the NDR state programme and Radio Bremen reached an agreement to continue the Low German radio play programme "Niederdeutsches Hörspiel" which ensures the future of this format.

NDR's website provides special added value: All content related to Low German and the Low German language from NDR radio and television can be found at www.ndr.de/plattdeutsch or in the online archive and is available long-term at users' convenience.

Funding applications for audiovisual works under the applicable film funding guidelines of Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein GmbH (FFHSH) may be submitted in Low German and will be handled using the same procedure and evaluated using the same criteria as other applications.

i. Article 12 (1)(f)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for more specific information on contact between authorities and Low German speakers to discuss cultural activities and institutions. (Nos. 455 – 457)

The ***Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg*** reports that the Ohnsorg-Theater, which receives €2.2 million in funding each season, ensures active and ongoing promotion of the Low German language. Each season, the theatre offers seven Low German productions on its main stage (folk and popular theatre, contemporary drama and classic plays) as well as frequent productions intended to attract younger audiences and those less familiar with theatre or Low German (such as film adaptations). Two to four new productions geared to young audiences are staged in the Ohnsorg Studio. Each season, there are about 450 performances for adult audiences and about 50 for children and young people. The theatre also offers various projects for young people and adults to participate in. And the Ohnsorg-Theater offers a range of theatre education programmes and works with educational and cultural institutions in the city. After leading the theatre for two decades, director-general Christian Seeler retired at the end of the 2016/17 season and was awarded the Senator-Biermann-Ratjen medal for his services. For the 2017/18 season, Michael Lang will take over as director-general; he has already announced his intention to keep intensively promoting Low German, also with new measures.

The cabaret theatre Die Wendeltreppe puts on Low German evenings, mostly involving music. The theatre Hamburger Engelsaal, which receives €56,000 in annual funding from the authorities, occasionally performs Low German plays. And some amateur theatres stage plays in Low German and also work with young people.

Quickborn is the only magazine for Low German language and literature; it has covered the entire northern German language area for more than a hundred years; the 107th volume appeared in 2017. The magazine is read beyond the borders of northern Germany and receives annual funding of €4,000 from the city of Hamburg.

The Bevensen-Tagung is an important annual conference for Low German where scholars, authors and representatives of Low German associations and media meet to plan joint projects. First organized in 1948, the conference plays a significant part in promoting and developing Low German and receives financial support from the city of Hamburg. The city of Hamburg also provides annual funding for the *Niederdeutsche Jahrbuch* (Low German Annual) published by the Verein für niederdeutsche Sprachforschung (Association for Low German Language Research). For many years,

the annual has made a significant contribution to research into Low German and reflects the wide variety of topics within Low German language research).

In 2017, Dr Schanett Riller, head of the Bergedorfer Museumslandschaft, three museums in historical buildings, was contacted to discuss possibilities for promoting Low German discussion groups and publications. Talks on possible funding projects are currently under way. Communication with representatives of the Low German scene includes regular meetings with Hamburg's Plattdeutsch-Rat (Low German council) and with representatives of the University of Hamburg's department for Low German language and literature to discuss cultural and scholarly projects related to Low German.

j. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E II. 12. a.

k. Article 13 (2)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts again strongly urged the authorities to take structured measures to make more systematic the possibility to be received and treated in Low German in social care facilities. (Nos. 465 – 468)

The *Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg* reports that, in the area of social institutions for persons with a disability, the following applies:

- This area is governed by federal law (Social Code Books XII and IX); these institutions are to be accessible to all.
- With regard to reception “in Low German” (i.e., using the Low German language), no problems have been reported, so no special “structured measures” are needed. Should the intention be to ensure that staff in the various institutions can speak Low German, that should be done in the context of schooling or vocational training.

The same applies to treatment in Low German, although institutions for persons with a disability do not provide treatment; treatment is provided only in health-care facilities.

8. Low German in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

a. Article 8 (1)(a)(i) – (iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities continue their efforts to promote the Low German language in pre-school education and asked them for specific practical information on how Low German is taught in pre-schools. (Nos. 471 – 474)

In **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, the state project *Niederdeutsch in der frühkindlichen Bildung* on Low German in early-childhood education – carried out by the foundation Stiftung Mecklenburg which published materials (“Lürlürlütt”) to promote Low German language acquisition in child day-care centres (0-10 year olds) at the end of the project in 2012 – was followed by the “Meine Heimat – Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern” state programme. Within the framework of the above-mentioned programme, the federal state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania initiated a project to promote Low German and the knowledge of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. This project called *Heimatschatzkiste* (local treasure box) provides all child day-care centres with Low German and other materials conveying knowledge of the region and promoting a sense of identity. The project is implemented by the association *Heimatverband M-V e.V.* Delivery of these treasure boxes will probably start in 2019. The promotion of Low German has been incorporated in particular in curricula and training programmes for vocational training for certified teachers and staff working at child day-care centres. Moreover, the *Kompetenzzentrum für Niederdeutschdidaktik* (competence centre for teaching Low German) was established at Greifswald University to provide staff at child day-care centres with on-the-job training (language courses and practical training in teaching methods). The project coordination office of *Heimatschatzkiste* is also responsible for carrying out advanced training courses to support staff in working with the materials and help them get used to teaching Low German as well.

b. Article 8 (1)(b)(iii) and (c)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts urged the German authorities to ensure that Low German is systematically taught as an integral part of the curriculum at primary and secondary schools in the territories where Low German is used (Nos. 475 – 477).

In **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, Low German is part of the overall curricula for German; they focus on language varieties, language history, and regional and Low

German literature. At primary schools, Low German is also part of the overall curriculum for basic science classes.

In addition, Low German is an integral part of the strategy for primary schools that are run as all-day schools.

At the lower secondary level, the new Low German curriculum for the lower and upper secondary levels (2017) provides for Low German language classes. According to this curriculum, Low German should be provided at the regional school in grades 7 to 10 as an optional compulsory subject. It is planned to introduce Low German as a special profile subject at the six grammar schools (*Gymnasium*) with a Low German profile (from grade 8, or grade 9 at the latest, up to the *Abitur* after the upper secondary level).

In addition, in 2019 the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture will publish a Low German text book as the third volume of the series *Das flache Land* (flat land). Copies of the previous volumes of the series have been distributed to public and free regional schools, comprehensive schools, grammar schools, evening grammar schools and occupational schools. 14,000 copies of the second volume were delivered to 231 schools. The text book series is intended for pupils from the seventh grade upwards. The books have been created on the basis of scientific principles and are well designed.

c. Article 8 (1)(d)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to ensure together with Low German speakers that Low German is taught as an integral part of the curriculum in technical and vocational training. (Nos. 478 – 488)

The **Federal Ministry of Education and Research** reported that vocational school curriculums fall within the responsibility of the federal states. Including Low German language skills in federal vocational training statutes and vocational training curricula for on-the-job training would not be possible because requirements in such regulations would have to apply equally across Germany. Low German language skills, by definition, cannot be part of a national job profile.

Given the comprehensive vocational training curricula, e.g. for jobs in health care, the responsible authorities in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** believe that this is not feasible.

d. Article 8 (1)(e)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked for information on further developments related to the obligation arising from Article 8 (1)(e)(ii). (Nos. 481 – 484)

The new competence centre for teaching Low German at Greifswald University in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** strengthens basic and advanced training in Low German. The target agreement with Greifswald University reflects this as follows:

“Greifswald University undertakes to permanently offer Low German as a subsidiary subject in teacher training and to continue recognizing the relevant courses as part of the regular teacher training in the subject of German.”

“At least ten hours of instruction must be dedicated to on-the-job training of child day-care centre staff and teachers for Low German/preservation of local traditions in Greifswald, Rostock, Schwerin and Neubrandenburg. They are free of charge and also open free of charge to students in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, as capacities permit. In addition to their obligation to provide ten hours of instruction, the persons holding the courses may also teach and research for Greifswald University, unless the federal state needs them for other tasks.”

e. Article 8 (1)(h)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for specific information on advanced teacher training, referring to the obligation under Art. 8 (1)(h). (Nos. 485 – 487)

From 2006 to 2009 teachers were trained for the subject of Low German in an on-the-job course of the education ministry’s Institute for Quality Development (Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung, IQ M-V) in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** who are now working in the schools. In addition, Greifswald University made teacher students focusing on Low German fit for teaching Low German at school.

From 2009 to 2012, the IQ M-V carried out another language course for teachers and child day-care centre staff to qualify more teachers.

In 2016-17 another language course of the IQ M-V started and was completed by teachers and child day-care centre staff in October 2017.

The course will be continued by the competence centre for teaching Low German (*Kompetenzzentrum für Niederdeutschdidaktik*, KND) at Greifswald University, and upon

completion teachers will receive a certificate for teaching Low German as a subsidiary subject.

The competence centre will be established at Greifswald University in the framework of the state programme “Meine Heimat – Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern”. The goal of this centre is to support the education of students training to teach Low German as a subsidiary subject and to organize and carry out state-wide on-the-job advanced training courses on Low German for teachers and persons working at child day-care centres.

Moreover, when hiring teachers, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania will prefer candidates who – provided all other qualifications are equal – are able to teach Low German.

f. Article 8 (1)(i)

See the comments in E. II. 12. b.

g. Article 10 (4)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for specific information concerning compliance with requests of public service employees for appointment in the territory where Low German is used. (Nos. 497 – 499)

The responsible ministry in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** is not aware of any public service employees requesting such appointment.

h. Article 11 (1)(c)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to further promote the broadcasting of Low German programmes also by private broadcasters. (Nos. 500 – 502)

The media supervisory authority in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** carried out a survey among all private broadcasters and open channels, showing that the following Low German programmes were broadcast in the reporting period:

Still only few private local TV stations have programmes on Low German topics, and they are not broadcast regularly. These include:

MV1 (Rostock), Opernale opera festival: *Zauberflöte trifft Plattdeutsch* - Magic Flute meets Low German (length: 4:20 minutes, 12 September.2016, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOlzb-9DpSs>)

Stammtischgespräch EXTRA Platt pub talk (length: 1:15 minutes, 22 September 2012, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O06lfGZb6lY>)

tv.rostock: The news sometimes report on Low German topics (Low German competitions, promotion of the Low German language, etc.).

Wismar TV: The TV station has no regular programme in Low German. However, it regularly produces reports about the work of the amateur theatre group *Niederdeutsche Bühne* (Low German stage) in Wismar, though mostly in standard German.

One positive development can be reported for private radio stations: The non-commercial private local radio station in Rostock (RADIO LOHRO) plans a regular Low German programme. The pilot aired on 12 August 2017 during the Hanse Sail festival. From October 2017, the monthly programme will be broadcast under the title "Wat up Platt". The Low German programme will cover news, local topics and event recommendations in Rostock as well as Low German rap and rock music.

In 2017, the open channels of the Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania media supervisory authority broadcast Low German programmes more or less regularly. These included:

Studio Malchin:

- the programme "Werners Schriewstuw" (regularly once a week), one hour
- the programme "Up Platt" (regularly once a week), 30 minutes

NB-Radiotreff 88.0 (Neubrandenburg):

- the programme "Hannes Läuschen" (self-writte Low German stories), five to ten times a year plus one rerun (at the time of drafting this report in 2017: twice), about 45 minutes
- several programmes where Low German occasionally appears together with other topics (work and life, the Esperanto trend, *Seniorenradio* (radio for the elderly)):

radio 98eins (Greifswald):

- the programme "Hallo Nachbar!" (hello neighbour) – Low German is addressed several times a year (at the time of drafting this report in 2017: twice) – and its reruns, 30 minutes
- Low German poems will be recited during the 15th Greifswald Cultural Night, which will be recorded and later broadcast

Rostocker Offener Kanal Fernsehen (rok-tv):

- a programme on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the folklore group “Nuurwind”, produced by the active editorial team “Wir von hier” (16 February 2017 – Maria-Luise Hubert)
- reruns of older programmes of the no longer active editorial teams “Plattdütsch läwt” and “Klön snack im alten Hafenhaus”, e.g. by
- Heike Tarhan / 3 August 2015 / 20th anniversary of the *Plattdutschverein* (Low German association)
- Maria-Luise Hubert / 10 December 2015 / 19th *Rostocker Plattdütsch Dag* (Rostock Day of Low German)
- Jochen Pfeiffer / 21 November 2013 / *Klön snack in Rostock – Plattdütsch ist Programm* (Low German is on the agenda)
- Maria-Luise Hubert / 14 January 2016 / reading of Low German authors
- Maria-Luise Hubert / 25 February 2016 / Nuurwind folklore group
- Maria-Luise Hubert / 7 April 2016 / Nuurdwind folklore group sings in Groß Klein, part 1
- Maria-Luise Hubert / 14 April 2016 / Nuurdwind folklore group sings in Groß Klein, part 2
- Marie-Luise Hubert / 21 January 2016 / authors reading second part Low German

i. Article 11 (1)(f)(ii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities expand existing financial assistance to include Low German audiovisual productions. (Nos. 503 – 506)

In the framework of its “Meine Heimat – Mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern” programme, **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** provides for special funding for Low German audiovisual works that according to an expert jury are particularly innovative projects.

This is in addition to the regular cultural film funding for Low German projects in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. In the reporting period, the film “Utbüxen kann keeneen” (directed by Gisela Tuchtenhagen and Margot Neubert-Maric) received €15,000 in cultural film funding. The film was completed in 2015 and has already been

screened in many places: http://www.filmbuero-mv.de/de/filmfoerderung/geofoerderte_produktionen/kff_gp_u/utbuexen_kann_keeneen1

Summary of the film: “*Wenn du Plattdütsch snakken kannst, bekommst du gliexs een ganz anderett Tovertruen to de Minschen.*” (If you can speak Low German, you will instantly have a whole new confidence in people.) This Low German documentary portrays customs and traditions surrounding death and the deceased, old crafts, the changes in mourning culture, the North German landscape, and above all, the people, their lives and their language. They visited carpenters, coffin makers, undertakers, gravediggers, pallbearers, funeral bidders, midwives and corpse washers: people for whom death is a part of everyday life but will always remain something very special. Dealing with death has shaped them in their village and family communities since childhood. Low German is the mother tongue they use to express themselves in a precise, concise and unelaborate way.

j. Article 12 (1)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts called on the German authorities to proactively promote making works in other languages also available in Low German. (Nos. 507 – 509)

In **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, translating works into Low German is eligible for funding. However, no one applied for such funding in the reporting period.

k. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E. II. 12. a.

l. Article 13 (2)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the authorities to take structured measures to make more systematic the possibility for the persons concerned to be received and treated in Low German in social care facilities. (Nos. 515 – 518)

The Ministry of Economics, Labour and Health and the Ministry for Social Affairs, Integration and Equality in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** cannot add anything going beyond the statements made with regard to Art. 8 (1)(d)(iii).

9. Low German in Lower Saxony

a. Article 8 (1)(a)(i) – (iv)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts strongly urged the German authorities to support and/or encourage the provision of at least a substantial part of preschool education in Low German at least for those children whose families so request. (Nos. 521 – 524)

Lower Saxony refers to its statements in the 5th State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany.

b. Article 8 (1)(i)

The Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information as to whether the report of the supervisory body (consisting of representatives of the authorities, regional associations and the Niedersächsischer Heimatbund), which checks the implementation of the Charter in the field of education, will be published, and what the results of the monitoring showed. (Nos. 531 – 533).

Please see the comments under E. II. 12. b.

c. Article 10 (2)(c) and (d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the authorities to promote the publication by local and regional authorities of their documents also in Low German. (Nos. 548 – 550)

The federal state of **Lower Saxony** notes that the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has the status of federal law and thus applies also to the municipalities in Lower Saxony and the other federal states as well. These are bound by the provisions of the Charter when carrying out their tasks. They are not hindered from publishing official documents also in Low German.

10. Low German in Schleswig-Holstein

a. Article 8 (1)(h)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts expressed interest in further information about the training of teachers at the University of Flensburg. (Nos. 578 – 581)

The federal state of **Schleswig-Holstein** reports that the Department of Low German Language and Literature at the European University of Flensburg (EUF) is an independent unit firmly anchored within the Institute of Language, Literature and Media as part of the Department of German Studies. The Department of Low German Language and Literature focuses on the linguistic and literary issues of Low German philology, of Low German language acquisition and the teaching of regional language skills, as well as the themes and methods of teaching Low German at schools and other institutions in the context of Low German didactics. Instruction covers the grammar of the different varieties of Low German in Schleswig-Holstein and practical language exercises as well as the linguistic and literary history of the entire Low German language area.

At the EUF, German studies students seeking a bachelor's degree in educational sciences must choose between an introduction to Low German or Frisian in their third or fourth semester. In their third year, bachelor students of German studies may choose a certified concentration in Low German as a speciality. The teaching certificate for the primary or secondary level, the subject specialization certificate and the optional additional certificate in Low German offer the possibility to focus on Low German for different courses of study and occupational goals.

Students increase their knowledge of Low German in three specialized modules for the specialization certificate (*Vertiefungszertifikat*), and in four specialized modules for the additional certificate (*Zusatzzertifikat*); as a result, students must take six Low German classes for the specialization certificate and four for the additional certificate. In addition to a regular bachelor's degree in educational sciences in the Department of German Studies, the university also awards a Low German certificate to those who successfully complete the modules. Classes for Low German specializations are also open to other German studies students for other study modules and are thus multiply integrated. Students may write their bachelors theses on Low German topics.

Low German offerings were increased as part of the restructuring of the Flensburg teacher training courses between 2013 and 2015. In addition to the more extensive certificate structures for the bachelor's degree, an optional master's certificate in Low German is now available to all master's students in German studies: Students completing a bachelor's certificate can now take two modules to increase their

knowledge of Low German. The subject area of Low German, consisting of three modules, was also established as an optional compulsory subject for master's students training to teach at primary schools which addresses fundamental content. The Low German concentrations focus on language and literature studies as well as language acquisition and teaching. Certain modules in the programme for master's students training to teach at secondary schools offer topics related to Low German. Students may write their masters theses on Low German topics.

Students are regularly informed during classes and office hours and at information events and advanced training seminars about possibilities to study Low German. The Department of Low German Language and Literature has two instructors, and additional lecturers are hired as needed. The EUF offered nine classes on Low German in winter semester 2016/17 and in summer semester 2017; the same number is planned for autumn semester 2017/2018.

During the 2015/2016 academic year, a total of 295 students attended classes on Low German. Thirty-four bachelors and 11 master's students were pursuing specialization certificates (in some cases examinations are still under way); 20 students wrote bachelors theses and ten students wrote masters theses. During the 2016/2017 academic year, a total of 413 students attended classes on Low German. Thirty-five bachelors and 13 masters students were pursuing specialization certificates (examinations still under way); 13 students are writing bachelors theses and six are writing masters students (as of July 2017).

Thus the Low German courses at the EUF ensure that primary and secondary school teachers for Low German are being trained as part of regular teacher training courses.

In June 2012, June 2015 and June 2017, the University of Flensburg was awarded the Emmi för Platt-düütsch in Sleswig-Holsteen in recognition of the bachelor's theses of students specializing in Low German.

In 2014, the department participated in establishing the centre for small and regional languages (KURS) at the EUF and is actively involved in research in this field.

For the long term, the possibility of establishing a separate subject area for Low German at the EUF is being examined to enable students outside the Department of German Studies to study Low German as well. In particular, the examination focuses on whether students of English, Danish and other philologies can be included in the existing additional certificate for Low German.

b. Article 8 (1)(i)

Please see the comments under E. II. 12. b.

c. Article 8 (2)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked for more information in the next State Report about plans for preschool, primary and secondary education in environments where Low German is no longer spoken. (Nos. 585 – 587)

The federal state of **Schleswig-Holstein** notes that the amendment of the Children's Day-Care Centres Act in 2016 to promote regional and minority languages also applies to Low German. (See Schleswig-Holstein's comment on Recommendation 2)

Further, the state indirectly supports Low German in nursery schools by funding the centres for Low German (ZfN) in Mölln for the Holstein region and in Leck for the Schleswig region. In both centres, it was necessary to find successors for the current directors. The position of the head of the centre in Leck will be filled by 1 February 2018. Until then, the current director will continue under a temporary contract. This ensures that the work of the Low German centre for the Schleswig region and the cooperation between the two centres will continue without interruption.

The centre for Low German in the region of Holstein moved from Ratzeburg to Mölln during the reporting period. The move was suggested by the president of the Schleswig-Holstein state parliament with the aim of creating synergies between the centre and the foundation of the Duchy of Lauenburg (Stiftung Herzogtum Lauenburg) and its academy of sciences and culture. The centre therefore moved from its premises in Ratzeburg to the Stadthauptmannshof in Mölln.

The centres are responsible for offering advanced training courses and developing teaching materials in line with the goals of the action plan on language policy. The centre for Low German in Leck focuses on advanced training for preschool teachers, volunteers and primary school teachers. In 2015, the certificate course in teaching Low German to young children ("Plattdüütsch för de Lütten") was again offered; roughly 100 participants have completed the course.

The ADS-Grenzfriedensbund e.V. (a border organization) offers Low German in 14 nursery schools as part of the language teaching concept "multilingualism in nursery schools". In Schleswig-Holstein, Low German is offered in 18 day-care centres.

Low German continues to be widely used throughout Schleswig-Holstein as a regional language. As a result, the 29 project primary schools and the seven level 1 secondary schools (starting in the coming school year) which offer classes in Low German are distributed throughout the state, including both rural and urban areas.

In addition to the project schools, which are required to offer Low German, a number of schools provide offerings for pupils who have not yet come into contact with the regional language.

d. Article 12 (1)(b) and (c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that the German authorities support translation, dubbing, post-synchronization and subtitling of additional works, in addition to theatre plays, into and from Low German. (Nos. 613 – 616)

The federal state of **Schleswig-Holstein** continues to provide institutional funding for the Niederdeutscher Bühnenbund Schleswig-Holstein e.V. and the Landesverband der Amateurtheater Schleswig-Holstein e.V., thereby supporting their work as umbrella organizations. They provide services and advising for their member theatres and help them in planning their performance schedules. This involves not only staging existing works for the theatre, but also commissioning new Low German translations of dramatic works in High German and putting these on the stage.

e. Article 12 (3)

See the comments in E II. 12. a.

f. Article 13 (1)(d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide more information on the measures taken to encourage and/or facilitate the use of Low German in economic and social activities. (Nos. 621 – 623)

The federal state of **Schleswig-Holstein** refers to the 4th State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany.

g. Article 13 (2)(c)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts urged the authorities to include in the next State Report information about measures intended to ensure that speakers of Low German can be received and treated in Low German in social care facilities. (Nos. 624 – 627)

The state government of **Schleswig-Holstein** continues to do everything within its power and in cooperation with the relevant associations and institutions to strengthen the use of Low German. In addition, please see Nos. 613 – 615 of the 4th State Report of the Federal Republic of Germany.

11. Romani in Hesse

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts argued that the preferences of Romani speakers in implementing the provisions of the Charter must be taken into account. It therefore asked the authorities to develop two separate strategies for Romani, together with the speakers: one for the German Sinti and another for the German Roma. The Committee of Experts also asked the German authorities to report on each of these strategies in the next state report. (Nos. 630 – -632)

First of all, the Federal Minister of the Interior points out that the Romani language spoken by the German Sinti and Roma is protected under part III of the Charter only in Hesse. Nevertheless, the needs and preferences of Romani speakers in implementing the provisions of the Language Charter are the basis for efforts at federal and state level. The difficulties addressed by the Committee of Experts in its latest report regarding the government's approach toward the Romani language and its varieties in Germany exist for both the German Sinti and the German Roma.

Hesse has actively participated in the implementation of the European Charter. Article 4 of the framework agreement signed in 2014 and the planned state treaty with the regional association of German Sinti and Roma in Hesse expressly provide for the promotion of the Romani minority language. This poses various challenges: For example, the Romani language must be handled with care: for historical reasons, it is not supposed to be taught to a wider public. Moreover, official surveys show that there is currently no need to develop two separate strategies for Romani. The reasons are explained in the comments under d – Art. 9 (1)(b)(iii) and (c)(iii) – and e – Art. 10 (2).

Apart from that, we would like to point out that the Hesse government has been cooperating well with the regional association of German Sinti and Roma in Hesse for decades and has supported the association since 1980. In both the aforementioned framework agreement and the planned state treaty, the Hesse government and regional association of German Sinti and Roma were aware of the fact that the represented national minority is a heterogeneous group.

a. Article 8 (1)(a) – (c):

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to continue their efforts to provide education in Romani at schools in Hesse. (Nos. 634 – 635)

Providing Romani classes at schools in **Hesse** is rather unlikely and a long-term process at best, given the ongoing debate within the German Sinti and Roma community on the teaching of the Romani language.

The *Schaworalle* association in Frankfurt (Main) continues to be a place for children of the national minority to communicate in Romani (called "*kleine Schule*" or little school). However, the number of children is very low. In addition, the *kleine Schule* considers itself an interim stage or alternative to the regular school (called "*große Schule*" or big school). It feels responsible for all children who do not or no longer attend school because of cultural conflicts, insufficient language skills, unstable residence, frequent relocation or because of the Roma's distrust of school as an institution. One goal is to support children when they enrol in regular school.

At *Schaworalle*, teachers of the State Education Office in Frankfurt provide regular instruction. Ludwig Börne school and Comenius school are currently cooperating with the association. The headmaster of Ludwig Börne school is also the head of the exam committee for the pupils' final examinations. The files are kept by the schools, and the pupils receive school reports with the header of the respective school. The reports include a note that the pupils were taught in the framework of the *Schaworalle* project, i.e. these children are pupils at both *Schaworalle* and the cooperating schools. However, the classes are held on the premises of *Schaworalle*.

The framework agreement signed by the Hesse government and the regional association of German Sinti and Roma and the planned state treaty emphasize the importance that Hesse attaches to preserving and protecting the language of the Sinti and Roma. The federal state undertook to expand in particular educational offerings for Sinti and Roma. The association of Sinti and Roma in Hesse, too, declared that it will take further measures to promote Romani.

b. Article 8 (1)(f)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to promote Romani classes in adult education. (Nos. 638 – 640)

Attempts to offer Romani classes at adult education centres in **Hesse** have so far not been successful. Therefore, teaching Romani in adult education continues to be difficult in practice.

c. Article 8 (1)(h)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts recommended that, as a first step, the German authorities should explore possibilities to train Romani speakers to become pre-school teachers. (Nos. 641 – 643)

In **Hesse**, there are currently about 4,200 nursery schools (*Kindertagesstätte*, Kita). 61.2% of these nursery schools receive special state funding (*Schwerpunktkita-Pauschale*) because the share of children of immigrant origin or socially disadvantaged children is over 22%. Hesse does not hold detailed data on the native languages of the children of immigrant origin in these nursery schools. Therefore, targeted assignment of Romani speakers is not possible in practice.

With its education plan, Hesse has created the theoretical basis for all children aged 0-10 to be supported equally and to the best possible extent according to their individual needs. Diversity is considered a basic educational principle guiding the teachers' actions. Diversity pervades all areas of child development such as social and cultural experiences, intellectual and linguistic abilities, the motivation to learn and perform, and emotional development. The strategy's aim is that the resources and competences of children can be identified and promoted consciously and without prejudice. Therefore, all children in nursery schools in Hesse, including children with special needs (e.g. children of immigrant origin, children with a disability and children with special talents) are raised, educated and cared for together. Education and care should follow the aforementioned inclusive and holistic approach. Appreciating the child and its family also applies to their native language. Multilingualism is expressly welcome as an educational principle.

The nursery school of the *Schaworalle* association in Frankfurt deserves special mention since it is intended exclusively for Roma children. The native language spoken by the children and staff is Romani. This is indispensable also to settle conflicts and talk about problems because some children do not have sufficient German language skills but mainly because the language is part of the cultural identity. At *Schaworalle*, Roma and non-Roma work together on equal terms. This is essential for the overall strategy. Romani-speaking staff are role models, create trust and self-confidence, convey a sense of safety and offer children the possibility to express their experiences in their native language.

In 2016, the nursery school applied for the federal language and integration programme with a recommendation of the Hessian government. However, it withdrew its application.

Please note that it is not possible to fulfil the request of the Committee of Experts to train Romani speakers to become pre-school teachers. The Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the *Länder* in the Federal Republic of Germany

requires teachers at the *Realschule*, *Hauptschule* and *Gymnasium* to have studied at least two subjects and at the primary school even three subjects. Currently, Romani is not offered as course of study for teacher training.

d. Article 9 (1)(b)(iii) and (c)(iii)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities to provide more detailed information on the practical implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 9 (1)(b)(iii) and (c)(iii). (Nos. 649 – 651)

The President of *Hesse's* Higher Administrative Court and the President of the Frankfurt am Main Higher Regional Court were asked to provide information about the practical implementation of the obligation under Article 9 (1)(b)(iii) and (1)(c)(iii). Specifically, they were asked whether they know of examples from court practice; whether Romani of the Sinti and Roma was used in civil or administrative proceedings, documents and evidence; and whether translators and interpreters were consulted for this language although the persons concerned do not consider their Romani a common language but a tribal language that must not be used for external communication. The presidents were also asked whether they distinguish between the Romani varieties of the German Sinti and the German Roma.

They reported that they were not aware of any cases in court practice where the Romani minority language was used – neither for evidence nor related to the services of translators and interpreters.

e. Article 10 (2)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for information on the implementation of the obligation resulting from Article 10 (2) regarding the activities of local and regional authorities. (Nos. 652 – 654)

Hesse does not have data on practical implementation by local authorities as requested by the Committee of Experts. Regardless of the question of how to carry out such a survey, its success would depend on the circumstances mentioned in no. 630 of the Committee of Experts' report on the application of the Charter in Germany. In no. 630, the Committee of Experts states that it had already noticed during previous monitoring cycles that implementing the obligations chosen by Hesse runs into certain difficulties. Partly, these difficulties were due to the fact that some speakers do not wish for Romani to be used outside their community and that in line with the wishes of some speakers,

the language varieties spoken by German Sinti and Roma are not codified. Given these difficulties, it is questionable whether – once gathered – information about practical implementation would reflect the actual success of implementation.

f. Article 11 (1)(d)

In its latest report, the Committee of Experts asked the German authorities for examples of audio and audiovisual works produced by the regional association of Sinti and Roma and funded from the state budget. (Nos. 665 – 666)

The regional association of German Sinti and Roma in Hesse has produced various news programmes over the last years and published them on its website at www.sinti-roma-hessen.de. With the planned state treaty between **Hesse** and the regional association of German Sinti and Roma, funding for the work of the regional association will be significantly increased. The regional association plans to continue its work related to the Romani language and later expand it to include other areas.

12. Assessments concerning federal authorities or all federal states

a. Cultural policy abroad, Article 12 (3)

In its latest report the Committee of Experts encouraged the German authorities to take measures with a view to making appropriate provision in their cultural policy abroad for the regional or minority languages and the culture associated with them.

The **Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media** points out that Deutsche Welle (DW) is Germany's international broadcasting station and thus also an important ambassador for Germany's culture abroad. It promotes values and positions which Germany being a nation steeped in European culture and a liberal, constitutional state governed by the rule of law stands for: Human rights, freedom and democratic development.

In its programme, Deutsche Welle also regularly deals with regional and minority languages. It does not only publish programmes about the regional and minority languages Danish, Sorbian, North Frisian, Sater Frisian, Romani and Low German on TV, on-line and in the social media, but also covers special events such as the Sorbian Easter celebrations. Also, Deutsche Welle regularly features programmes dealing with the situation of the Sinti and Roma. These programmes focus not so much on the minority language of Romany in Germany but on general cultural phenomena such as discriminatory tendencies in Europe as a whole.

Deutsche Welle does not only offer a programme of great diversity but also moderated the conference "Charter Languages in Germany" ("Charta-Sprachen in Deutschland") which was held in the Bundestag in 2014.

Regular coverage by Deutsche Welle is a particularly effective way of broaching the issue of regional and minority languages spoken in Germany and the culture that is associated with them, reaching a broad range of target groups at home and abroad. There are also individual projects addressing this topic.

The Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, ifa) sponsored stays of foreign scholarship holders with the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) in Berlin and the European Center for Minority Issues in Flensburg providing them with insights in the work of these institutions that is aimed at promoting and linking minorities across Europe and in the languages and cultures of the minorities living in Germany. The **Federal Foreign Office** sponsored the 2017 Cottbus film festival - a renowned festival for films from Eastern Europe which included a section dedicated to Sorbian films. Nevertheless, the German authorities uphold their view that the imple-

mentation of Article 12 (3) of the Language Charter does not necessarily have to involve the Federal Foreign Office and its cultural relations and education policy abroad.

Brandenburg takes the Sorbian/Wendish culture into account in the context of specific projects. In the framework of a cooperation arranged by the partnership coordinator of the Land of Brandenburg for the region of Centru/Romania, Brandenburg participated in the 2017 Proetnica festival in Sighișoara where it provided information on the Sorbian/Wendish community in Brandenburg, minorities in Germany and the minority policy of the state of Brandenburg.

b. Effective monitoring mechanism in the field of education, Article 8 (1)(i)

In its latest report the Committee of Experts noted that the current reporting mechanism referred to by the German authorities did not fulfil the requirements resulting from the obligation in Article 8 (1)(i) and reiterated the need for an effective monitoring mechanism in the field of education for all regional or minority languages covered under Part III of the Charter.

The **Federal Government** points out that the implementation of measures in the field of education is a responsibility of the federal states. There are significant differences between the federal states both with regard to the situation of national minorities and the protected regional and minority languages and with regard to the (school) models and education standards. For this reason a nation-wide uniform education monitoring mechanism appears to be hardly feasible. Nevertheless, education issues are generally a central topic on the agenda of all bodies dealing with minority policy at the federal level.

The appointment in 2014 of a State Commissioner for Matters related to the Sorbs/Wends in **Brandenburg** whose task it is among other things to ensure a proper coordination between the state ministries when it comes to matters that are related to the Sorbian/Wendish community, has helped to intensify the communication between the ministry responsible for education and the ministry responsible for implementing legal provisions on minority rights. This has enabled the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to give more room to minority rights perspectives in its considerations. As for the rest there have been no structural changes to the monitoring system compared to the previous reporting period.

A Consultative Council for the Preservation of Regional Traditions and the Low German Language was newly established by the Minister for Education, Science and Culture in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** in 2017 and has been constituted accordingly. This Consultative Council serves as an advisory body and information forum for the Minister.

It is subject to public control by the Landtag where it is on the agenda of the Landtag Committees or the subject of minor interpellations. These options were made use of in the period under review. The relevant records of the Landtag proceedings are public.

Lower Saxony publishes the annual reports of the supervisory body on the website of the Lower Saxony School Authority (Landesschulbehörde Niedersachsen) (<https://www.landesschulbehoerde-niedersachsen.de/bu/schulen/unterricht-faecher/schulformuebergreifende-beratung/region-im-unterricht/berichte-1>). The homepage of the Lower Saxony State Ministry for Culture (Kultusministerium Niedersachsen) contains among other things a link to the reports. They are based on the report of the Lower Saxony School Authority (Landesschulbehörde Niedersachsen) which documents the outcome of implementing measures etc. (https://www.mk.niedersachsen.de/startseite/schule/schuelerinnen_und_schueler_elterner/plattdeutsch_und_saterfriesisch_schule/plattdeutsch-und-saterfriesisch-in-der-schule-150271.html).

The “Working Group for Low German at the State Chancellery and Ministry for Culture” in **Saxony-Anhalt** meets at least once a year, thus ensuring a discourse between the stakeholders in addition to the monitoring mechanism provided for under the Charter process, with a strong focus on measures in the field of education.

Schleswig-Holstein reports that a coordination office for regional and minority languages has been established at the Institute for Quality Development at Schools in Schleswig-Holstein (Institut für Qualitätssicherung an Schulen Schleswig-Holstein, IQSH). One of the objectives pursued by Schleswig-Holstein is to improve the networking among the active stakeholders in all areas that are related to regional and minority languages. For this purpose, this central unit was set up to coordinate all activities in the framework of Schleswig-Holstein’s action plan on language policy. In concrete terms, the goal is to ensure the flow of information and to monitor the implementation of state-wide standards.

The IQSH coordination office currently has the task to develop an appropriate monitoring procedure. A first major project of the coordinating office consists in evaluating the model project of the Low German model schools which was implemented in cooperation

with the Europa University in Flensburg, Department for Low German Language and Literature.

It is not necessary to establish a specific/dedicated supervisory body to comply with the monitoring requirement regarding Frisian language tuition at general-education secondary schools. This requirement is already met by the contributions to the Schleswig-Holstein minority report that are submitted on a regular basis.

III. Executive Summary

The competent authorities at the federal and state level have taken up the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers and of the Committee of Experts as regards the Fifth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany in accordance with Article 15 (1) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The federal authorities, in cooperation with the states and the representatives of the language groups, took further efforts in the period under review in order to fulfil the undertakings under the Charter. These efforts will be continued in the future.

F. Comments by the associations



Comments by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, its associations and the Documentation Centre for the Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The education department of the Documentation Centre, commissioned with the preservation and promotion of the German Romani language, has in recent years pushed ahead with the internal discussion about the future of minority languages. This work focused on strengthening appreciation of the language within the minority group and on possibilities to use the language in many areas outside of day-to-day use.

Literature and poetry in German Romani was the topic of an essay published by Universität Regensburg in 2011 and written by Department Head Reinhold Lagrene who died suddenly in November 2016. Having worked as a writer himself for many years, he had committed himself to highlighting the wealth and diversity that the Romani language has to offer. Using translations of classical German poetry, he wanted to open a door on the linguistic energy of Romani for German Sinti and Roma.

The Central Council and the Documentation Centre together with Mr Lagrene's family will select a number of works already translated by him and make these available to the minority group in book form. For the associations, this anthology will serve as a basis for working with the minority group on matters of language policy and education.

The comments by the associations on the implementation of the Charter have already been drawn up at the request of the respective federal states and passed on to them.

D. VI. Recommendation 6 of the Committee of Ministers, notice by Baden-Württemberg

The state of Baden-Württemberg responded to the Committee of Minister's recommendation that the culture inherent in the Romani language be promoted by also referring to the fact that the draft curricula for primary schools address the subject of Sinti and Roma.

Unfortunately, this does not appear to apply to the core curricula for history at upper secondary schools. The Documentation Centre would like to point out that there are government initiatives in Baden-Württemberg, as well in North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria, which aim to better position the subject of Sinti and Roma in the past and today as

part of advanced teacher training and to prepare suitable materials for this purpose. Plans have been submitted to the education department of the Documentation Centre and existing concepts have been publicized.

A more recent study, conducted in cooperation with the University of Education in Freiburg (Scherr/Sachs, *Bildungsbiographien von Sinti und Roma*, (Educational biographies of Sinti and Roma) Beltz 2017), shows that in general school lessons frequently omit the history of the minority group, especially the Nazi genocide of Sinti and Roma, and that teachers are also often insensitive to stereotypes and terms, such as “gypsy”. “*Nellys Abenteuer*” (Nelly’s Adventure) is perhaps one example of a failed educational project in this respect. The film’s attempt to pinpoint stereotypes in order to devalue them fails and has the opposite effect. The Central Council drew up several comments on this and commissioned an educational report. These documents are available on the Council’s website.

If this change took place, this would strengthen how Sinti and Roma in Germany see themselves and hence increase the value attached to using their own Romani language.

E. I. 2. c. Romani

Rhineland-Palatinate’s Association of German Sinti and Roma submitted its comments:

Comments by the Association of German Sinti and Roma in Rhineland-Palatinate for the Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

The state association, which represents the interests of some 10,000 Sinti and Roma living in Rhineland-Palatinate, concluded a framework agreement with the regional government in 2005, enshrining the protection of minorities in legislation that guarantees the protection and promotion of the culture of Sinti and Roma.

The state of Rhineland-Palatinate promotes educational and cultural work through its financial support for the association’s secretariat. The association acts as a point of contact for schools and other educational establishments (state institutions for professional teacher training, universities, further training for employees of church or social institutions) on all matters concerning the Sinti and Roma minority groups; it also organizes seminars and specialist conferences for education multipliers that address the persecution of Sinti and Roma by the National Socialist regime and the history and culture of the minority group. Teachers are consulted and units covering Sinti and Roma issues are taught at schools. The prejudices held by the majority population with regard to the minority group of Sinti and Roma form an intrinsic part of Europe’s cultural values, making equal treatment impossible.

For this reason, the association needs to carry out educational work in schools, with teachers, within teacher training and with general public relations multipliers.

Romani language training within the minority group in line with the requirements of the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages along with information and the encounter with the majority population are essential elements when it comes to fostering mutual respect between the minority and the majority. This is something that must be supported in light of the National Socialist persecution of the minority group. During the period under review, the association was only able to provide one training offer to promote the Romani language in 2014. To continue this educational work within and between the cultures, additional funds are still needed in order to hire a full-time Sinti/Roma official. To this end, negotiations were conducted with the government of Rhineland-Palatinate, which confirmed its intention to meet the obligations arising from the framework agreement; however, it refused to fund the full-time position due to budget restraints, and suggested the identification of alternatives, such as model projects in cooperation with further education institutions. However, a full-time position is urgently needed to perform this educational work which involves essential start-up and motivational work that cannot be shouldered in project work.

E. I. 4. c. Romani

One response by the federal states to the demand by the Committee of Experts that Romani be taught in class was that, for historical reasons, there was no desire to share the language outside the minority group. In previous comments on the periodical reports the Central Council and the Documentation Centre provided information on this matter. In talks with the Committee of Experts, however, reference was made to the closed group in dealing with the language and this also includes lessons in Romani. These lessons are mostly provided on a voluntary basis which prevents an ongoing supply of lessons.

The Central Council received the following notice from a member association:

Notice from the chair of the *Arbeitskreis der Sinti und Rom Ingolstadt e.V.* (Sinti and Roma task force in Ingolstadt), Ms Ilona Roché:

The work of the task force includes language lessons in Romani. Over a period of six months, Ms Roché voluntarily taught young people and adults from the minority group at the city's community centre and frequently at private premises. Since many Sinti and Roma families in the greater Ingolstadt area have only a very basic command of the language, if at all, there was considerable interest in the events. Ms Roché, however, provided this service in addition to her own professional duties and unfortunately does not have the time needed to continue this work. (End of quote)

The Central Council would like to point out that the case in Ingolstadt is not an isolated one. Staff at other member associations, such as the *Verein Deutscher Sinti e.V.* (association of German Sinti) in Minden in North Rhine-Westphalia, are also working voluntarily to teach the minority language.

In the interest of preserving the language, supporting measures for local initiatives should be urgently considered at federal state level.

E. II. 11. Romani in Hesse

Contrary to the vote by the Committee of Experts to distinguish between German Sinti and German Roma and to develop two strategies for Romani, the Central Council points out that such a division is not in the interest of the majority of Sinti and Roma. There are no facts that justify dividing speakers of the language on the basis of the different variations of German Romani that most certainly exist. The language can be roughly distinguished along the lines of the different regions where German Sinti and Roma are settled, i.e. in a Prussian, Bavarian, Württemberg, Palatinate and Saxon dialect (R. Lagrene, *Das deutsche Romanes: Geschichte einer nicht kodifizierten Sprache* (German Romani: History of a Non-codified Language) in: *Neben Deutsch* (Besides German), published by Christel Stolz, Bochum 2009, p. 87). Another aspect that supports a non-divisive strategy is that in linguistic terms German Sinti and Roma have no difficulties in communicating.



Comments by Domowina – Bund Lausitzer Sorben e.V. on the Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany in accordance with Article 15 (1) of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages

A. General remarks

I. Agreement to fund the Foundation for the Sorbian People

The third agreement on the joint funding of the Foundation for the Sorbian People was signed in 2016. Contrary to the demand by the minority group, the agreement did not contain annual compensation for inflation to cover rising material and personnel costs. In the medium term, this will result in a budget deficit for the Foundation for the Sorbian People and hence for all Sorbian institutions and projects. This is a matter that must be taken into account when a new agreement is drawn up beginning 2020.

II. Structural development in Lusatia

Due to economic and structural change in Lusatia, new committees on structural development were formed in addition to the existing federal state planning committees. We therefore demand that the representatives of the Sorbian people be included in the above-mentioned committees. At the same time, we call on the Federal Government and the states to consider Lusatia in their decisions on structural policy.

III. Election notices

Under both the Brandenburg Electoral Code (*Brandenburgische Landeswahlverordnung* (BbgLWahV)) and the Saxony Electoral Code (*Sächsische Landeswahlordnung* (LWO)) election documents for federal state and municipal elections in the Sorbian settlement area can be drafted in Sorbian. This rule does not apply to federal and European elections. We request that the Committee of Ministers adopt recommendations for the corresponding decision-making levels and therefore initiate, for instance, an amendment to the Federal Electoral Code (*Bundeswahlordnung*).

B. Comments on current aspects and proposals regarding individual goals in conjunction with Part II and III of the Charter

Article 8 (1)(a)(iv)

Brandenburg

Due to the general shortage of preschool teachers, a new problem is arising, especially in nursery schools that have both German and Lower Sorbian language groups. Since the group which is taught in the minority language is often smaller in size than the German-language group, some schools already see themselves forced to reduce bilingual classes in order to ensure that they can guarantee the statutory teacher-to-child ratio.

It can also be seen that the preschool teacher training offered at the *Oberstufenzentrum* is not being taken up to the extent hoped for. One of the reasons stated is that this is an additional workload and that there are few incentives for it. In light of the enormous demand for preschool teachers, many believe that they are sure to find a position even without language training in Sorbian. "Sorbian" language training now needs to be integrated firmly and permanently into the training process.

Article 8 (1)(b)(iv) and (1)(c)(iv)

Brandenburg

We assume that the registration of lost teaching time is distorted. The reason for this is that, due to absenteeism or staff shortages, language lessons are held in the classroom rather than in the specific language groups. The result is that there is no record of lost teaching time, but the minority language group does not receive the specified number of lessons in the minority language.

The instruction offered at secondary schools referred to in the last Report is still in place, however, it must be noted that the voluntary classes offered at both secondary schools and the *Oberstufenzentrum* are not practical because they involve additional work within what is already an extensive curriculum. Experience shows that only a few pupils attend "Sorbian" lessons in classes 7 and 8 and none at all after that. Especially at schools like these, it is essential that Lower Sorbian be offered as a standard subject because this is the only way that knowledge in Sorbian/Wendish can be expanded and sustainably promoted. At the time of this comment, the Sorbian/Wendish school regulations (*Sorben-/Wenden-Schulverordnung* (SWSchulV)) were being revised. The Sorbian committees stated that the demands of the Sorbian side were not taken into account.

Saxony

With a view to the “2plus” education concept, reference was made to two issues: On the one hand, it must be noted that the language groups defined under this concept cannot be compared in terms of their performance across several school sites, and this leads to a significant lowering in learning success at local level. According to statements by some teachers, the lack of exchange between the educational institutions is also encouraging this development.

Furthermore, reference was made to the demand by minority group representatives to introduce continuous quality audits and monitoring for the “2plus” concept so that current developments can be recognised at an early point in time. We ask that the Committee of Ministers issue a recommendation.

Article 8 (1)(d)(iv)Saxony

Domowina is not aware of any activities where German authorities are actively identifying areas where the Sorbian language is used in vocational training. In the current draft dated 16 November 2017, the Free State of Saxony reports on two examinations conducted for two occupations. We believe that further training in Sorbian, especially in the social services/services sector (including the relevant terminology), is both necessary and possible at the vocational schools in the Sorbian/Wendish settlement areas of Saxony and Brandenburg.

Article 8 (1)(g)

The question here is whether the teaching of the history and culture reflected in the regional or minority language is an integral part of the respective teacher training subjects or whether this is carried out as part of professional development for teaching staff. Generally speaking, it should be admonished that the topic of a national minority is only a rudimentary part of school curricula and teacher training courses and this should be expanded.

Article 8 (1)(h)Brandenburg and Saxony

The considerable demand for Sorbian-speaking teachers for all types of schools is undisputed. The University of Leipzig is the only place where teachers are trained to teach Sorbian. This means that the subject combinations offered there are the only ones possible. The University of Leipzig does not offer music, for instance, as a subject for teacher training. Students training to be teachers who wish to combine Sorbian and music are forced to go to

a different university. If this other university has a restricted admission policy (e.g. entrance exam), this can prolong the study period with far-reaching consequences (e.g. with regard to grants and funding) and lead to disadvantages through no fault of the individual. There are no exceptions for such (individual) cases that result from the given structure.

Furthermore, we also refer to the drastic rise in the shortage of preschool teachers and teachers in Brandenburg and Saxony. We ask the Committee of Ministers to recommend that the federal states introduce additional measures to promote trainees in order to cover the demand for young staff. Even now, it is already no longer possible to fully cover the conceptual approaches in the classroom. “Team teaching”, for instance, is no longer applied as needed as part of the “2plus” concept. Additional measures to win over young people should also be employed outside the established universities in order to attract a broader group of potential students. This could be achieved by setting up additional non-university third-level education services or by creating complementary instruction, for instance, through a Saxony language school along the lines of the School for the Sorbian Language and Culture.

Article 9 (1)

Saxony

Regarding the statements by the Free State of Saxony, we would also like to refer to printed document 6/2344 of the state parliament. According to this document, between 2010 and 2014 the labour courts recorded two cases where interpreters were used for Sorbian.

As a reminder, we refer to the demand by the minority council of the four recognised autochthonous national minorities that the scope of Section 184 of the Judicature Act (*Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz*) be expanded to include other minorities and not just the Sorbs.

Article 10 (1)(a)(iv)

Brandenburg and Saxony

In order to promote the use of the minority language, the respective applicable and customary legislation must also be available in Sorbian. In both Brandenburg and Saxony, not all of the applicable laws have been drafted in the minority language and are not always equally available. We are referring in particular to the partially missing, equal and barrier-free publication on the legislator’s digital platform. The digital publication of Brandenburg’s state ordinance on the reimbursement of additional expenses resulting from the application of the Sorbian/Wendish Act (*Verordnung über die Erstattung des Zusatzaufwandes aus der*

Anwendung des Sorben/Wenden-Gesetzes (SWGKostenv)) must be seen to be exemplary here.

We ask that the Committee of Ministers recommend that both states introduce efforts to also draft all current and future legal norms in Sorbian and to make them available in an equivalent and barrier-free form. This would contribute towards language development, equivalent language use and towards preserving the language.

With a view to the federal institutions responsible for the settlement area, or the institutions responsible on the basis of the federal laws, respectively, it must be noted that the contents of Article 10 (1)(a)(iv) and (v) (and others) are not applied and that the request by the Language Charter is being ignored to a certain degree. Germany's Federal Pension Insurance (*Deutsche Rentenversicherung*), for instance, which has the Social Code (SGB) Sixth Book (VI) – Statutory Pension Insurance (*Sozialgesetzbuch (SGB) Sechstes Buch (VI) – Gesetzliche Rentenversicherung*) as its legal basis, does not accept oral or written applications in the minority language. We ask that the Committee of Ministers issue a recommendation to move the legislator to amend the law.

Article 10 (1)(b) and (1)(c)

Although the Federal Republic of Germany does not apply the points above, they are in fact sometimes applied (see also Article 10 (1)(a)(iv) and (v)). It should be considered whether the application of these points could help to promote the support and recognition of the minority language and would be more likely to reflect the actual circumstances. At the same time, we would like to point out that the application of these points could also lead to certainty and options regarding activities with a view to Article 10 (2)(a) below.

Article 10 (2)(a)

Saxony

Municipalities in the settlement area of Saxony have stated that it is very difficult to implement or to permanently maintain use of the Sorbian language at administrations and public authorities. This is due not only to the lack of special terminology in Sorbian that makes it impossible to name certain facts in the language but also to the shortage of staff with sufficient linguistic skills. The applicable remuneration standards therefore need to be adapted and better language skills rewarded while specific opportunities must also be created to provide training for staff at all administrative levels. At present, both of these are leading to additional burdens on staff and budgets which are borne by the municipalities and the minority language and which therefore must be seen to be discriminatory.

Article 10 (2)(c), (2)(d), (2)(e) and (2)(f)

We cite the same consideration here as for Article 10 (1)(b) and (1)(c).

Article 10 (2) and (3)(b)

For the rural districts, the urban district of Cottbus and the municipalities of the settlement area, we recommend examining how speakers of the minority language can receive information in an equivalent manner and without additional effort, and who can provide information or accept oral or written applications in the respective minority language at the administrative offices.

Article 10 (2)(g)

One problem is the bilingual signposts on roads which are either missing or incorrect. Although state legislation defines complete bilingualism (see Section 11 of the Sorbian/Wendish Act (*Sorben/Wenden-Gesetz* (SWG)) and Section 10 of the Act on the Sorbs' Rights in the Free State of Saxony (*Gesetz über die Sorben im Freistaat Sachsen* (SächsSorbg)), this is not implemented as laid down in legislation. It should be expected that road signs throughout the settlement area are bilingual. The actual bilingual signposting, however, is often limited to bilingual road signs that merely list destinations in the settlement area itself. The problem with this is that most of the road signs in the settlement area that show destinations outside the settlement area are monolingual. We request that the Committee of Ministers recommend that the rule laid down in the Language Charter be implemented thoroughly.

We also point out that in parts of the settlement area bilingualism is handled differently. Based on the constitution of the state of Brandenburg and the constitution of the Free State of Saxony, it can be assumed that the Sorbian language can be used with the same rights as the majority language. The language shown on road signs and on public buildings in the settlement area differs in size at times. We see this as discrimination of the minority language and as unequal treatment. One positive development that deserves mention is the decree passed by Brandenburg on bilingual road signs in German/Lower-Sorbian. We request that the Committee of Ministers recommend that the minority language be used in the same way as the majority language and that suitable rules be introduced to prevent discrimination, especially in road traffic.

Another question that needs to be addressed is the signposting on federal roads, federal motorways and federal buildings in the settlement area. Even though the Federal

Government enables on the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany bilingual signposts to destinations in neighbouring countries, it rejects the use of Sorbian place names and direction signs on motorways. We request that the Committee of Ministers issue a recommendation that the Federal Government should enable bilingual signposting on motorways in the settlement area.

Article 10 (5)

It is important for the Sorbian/Wendish people to be able to use suffixes specific to gender or, if applicable, a person, for the surnames of girls and women. The interpretation of the law by the local court and regional court in Cottbus, one that is shared by the Federal Government and the states, is that this is currently not possible under German law, and in particular under the Minorities Name Alteration Act (*Minderheiten-Namensänderungsgesetz* (MindNamÄndG)), not even by way of interpretation despite numerous other options under German name law.

In this regard, we also refer to Bundestag document 18/12542 and the task formulated therein by the Bundestag requesting that the Federal Government examine whether the Minorities Name Alteration Act can be amended so that female Sorbs can use the specific female form of their surname as is customary in the Sorbian language (as a name determined by the law relating to civil status rather than a common name or pseudonym). We ask the Committee of Ministers to issue a recommendation to introduce an amendment procedure for the Minorities Name Alteration Act in order to meet the demand by female Sorbs/Wends to use the female form in their surname.

Article 11 (1)(b)(ii)

Brandenburg

We are not aware of any offerings in private broadcasting.

Saxony

With a view to the legal definition of Section 1a of the Act on Private Broadcasting in Saxony (*Sächsisches Privatrundfunkgesetz* (SächsPRG)) and pursuant to Article 11 (1)(b)(ii) of the Language Charter, the Saxon training and trial channel (*Sächsischer Ausbildungs- und Erprobungskanal*) cannot be fully viewed as a radio station. This is more a service by the broadcasting company to promote media skills.

We request that the Committee of Ministers recommend that the minority be recognised in the amendment to the Interstate Broadcasting Treaty and therefore initiate that the minority group be given a regular seat on the Broadcasting Council of MDR.

Brandenburg and Saxony

When it comes to issuing broadcasting licences to private broadcasters, it would be possible to generate awareness for the goals of the Language Charter or to link the issuing of licences with these goals.

The current broadcasting time of public service media does not meet with expectations and is not capable of meeting the needs of all age and interest groups. In order to achieve an equal media service, the daily broadcasting time should be increased to 24 hours. We request that the Committee of Ministers recommend that the broadcasting time be extended.

Article 11 (1)(c)(ii)

In previous reports by the Committee of Experts, the German authorities were encouraged to promote the regular broadcasting of Upper Sorbian television programmes. Based on the point above regarding Article 11 (1)(b)(ii), we ask that the Committee of Ministers recommend an expansion of the broadcasting time.

Article 11 (1)(f)(ii)

From the point of view of Domowina, it is not clear who is responsible for granting sufficient funding. Furthermore there are no rules regarding the type and number of measures for financial assistance for audiovisual media in the Sorbian language. In view of the importance of these media for language teaching and use, especially among the younger generation, this constitutes discrimination of the minority language. Neither public service media nor private media can compensate for this in any way in terms of quantity. Especially with a view to efforts related to digital language offerings, reference is made to the significance of these supporting offerings. We request that the Committee of Ministers recommend that the audiovisual/digital media in minority languages be promoted (e.g. promotion of the Sorbian language in digital media).

Article 13 (1)(c) and (1)(d)

We are not aware of any measures.

Article 13 (2)(c)

See comments under Article 8 (1)(d)(iv). If the proposals are observed and implemented this would considerably improve the preconditions for meeting this goal. Legal requirements for privately-run facilities regarding the professional qualifications of the staff they hire could aim

to establish as a requirement for social facilities in the settlement area that command of the Sorbian language be a priority qualification when selecting applicants. Public sector funding could also be linked to such requirements (see the ordinance on day care centres in the Sorbian settlement area (*Verordnung über Kindertageseinrichtungen im sorbischen Siedlungsgebiet* (SächsSorbKitaVO)).

Saxony

Regarding the comments by the Free State of Saxony, we would like to add the following: Apart from the two facilities mentioned, Upper Sorbian can be used while being admitted and treated at the following facilities:

DRK-Pflegeheim Königswartha
Hauptstraße 16, 02699 Königswartha

Caritasheim St. Georg
Bernhardweg 2, 01917 Kamenz

Malteserstift St. Monika
Christian-Weißmantel-Straße 27, 01917 Kamenz

Malteser Krankenhaus St. Johannes
Nebelschützer Str. 40, 01917 Kamenz

Oberlausitz-Kliniken gGmbH
Krankenhaus Bautzen
Am Stadtwall 3
02625 Bautzen

Oberlausitz-Kliniken gGmbH
Krankenhaus Bischofswerda
Kamenzer Straße 55
01877 Bischofswerda

Lausitzer Seenland Klinikum GmbH
Maria-Grollmuß-Straße 10
02977 Hoyerswerda

24 November 2017

Bundesrat für Nedderdüütsch (BfN)

www.bundesrat-nd.de

Federal Council for Low German

Comments by the Low German language group

1. General remarks on the current conditions for protecting Low German

The Low German language group emphasizes the need to continue talks between the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Committee of Ministers and the Federal Council for Low German (BfN), which represents the interests of the Low German language group, in order to work together to protect and promote the regional language Low German. In the five years between the Fifth Report of the Federal Government (2013) and the present Sixth Report, the conditions to fulfil the undertakings under the Charter have changed dramatically in the eight states that have placed Low German under the protection of the Charter. Therefore, the following comments and the dialogue between the BfN, the state representatives and the Ministry of the Interior during the implementation conference are vital for the promotion of the Low German language.

The conditions for fulfilling the undertakings of the Charter with regard to Low German have changed in such a manner that institutional funding by the **Institut für niederdeutsche Sprache e. V. (INS e. V.)** by the four donor states of Bremen, Hamburg, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein will end on 31 December 2017. The BfN sees this termination of the funding agreement as a threat to the continued cross-regional promotion of Low German. The language group sees the announcement in May 2016 to discontinue funding for the INS as a violation of the agreement from 1979 in which Article 6 (2) states: *“In the event of termination by one party to the agreement, all of the parties, including the terminating party, are obliged to immediately negotiate on the further funding of the Institut für niederdeutsche Sprache e.V.”*. This has not taken place to date, thus ignoring the fact that funding by the states is the only way to warrant that the INS can perform its tasks.

The four states have yet to plausibly show that the planned “State Centre for Low German” should and can take on even just part of the tasks performed by the INS which are so vital for Low German.

Answers have yet to be found to central questions such as: What will happen to the INS’s important Low German library and media library that must be expanded, updated and managed by qualified people? Who will manage the INS’s Lex 2.0 online dictionary that edits the vocabulary for modern Low German in the future? Who will manage the “talking map” of Low German geographical names in the future? The networking of the language groups and

the announced "... structured dialogue with political decision-makers in the states ...", which is to be performed by the state centre, have long since been provided through the BfN and the heritage associations and can be strengthened and further-developed through the newly set up Low German Secretariat. It is not possible for the language groups and government bodies to cooperate through a government agency "... that directly influences the business..." and whose supervisory board includes representatives of the ministries of finance. Instead, this cooperation is already taking place in the spirit of the Charter on a state basis in the Councils for Low German and the parliamentary advisory councils and, at national level, by the BfN.

Termination of the funding agreement of the Institut für niederdeutsche Sprache by the four Part III states (Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg and Bremen) is a serious intervention into the efforts to preserve and promote the regional language Low German. The reasons stated, i.e. that this institute was no longer needed due to demographic change, the changing media society and different regional requirements, are not plausible and are completely unfounded considering the work that has been carried out over decades and the huge demand that exists. As intended by the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, the INS has over the past two decades, in particular, promoted Low German at cross-regional level and in a scientific and internationally recognized manner. The sudden termination of funding for this umbrella institute that works for all eight states violates Article 7 and a number of provisions in Part III of the Charter in the federal states affected. This affects an institute that for want of an alternative has since 2002 ventured to find a balance between language-related work and the work related to organizing language policy. This approach, which has very successfully served the needs of Low German speakers and which can, for instance, be seen in the skilled compilation of several current topic brochures for the BfN, is now to be destroyed. For many years, the INS has served as the secretariat of the BfN and the work carried out there has been appreciated by all those involved. If working for regional and minority languages is considered to be a task for society as a whole, it is impossible to understand why certain federal states regarded as hostile a policy by Low German speakers that was put forward in a confident and skilled manner.

The termination could damage and even destroy the interstate, closely knit networking of speakers, language groups and their associations. For people with an interest in Low German, the INS acts not just as a low-threshold first point of call for all kinds of information, but also as a competent contact and an initiator of scientific research into Low German. For years, the INS has been successfully advising individuals as multipliers, citizens' organizations and government bodies with on language learning, and especially regarding possibilities for training and advanced education. Up to now, the INS has also been used regularly and frequently by Federal Government bodies and all eight of the federal states concerned. The announcement in May 2016 that funding was to be stopped has already

extensively damaged and even destroyed some of the joint structures. A system of personal advice, homepage information, lectures and publications that is unique in the Low German speaking territory is now in danger of collapsing. The expertise that has been built up over more than 40 years would no longer be available and the Low German speaking community would lose an essential part of its cultural memory. In recent years, the INS has met the requirements of a modern society and developed a host of network-based tools for research into the regional language and its culture, including a news dictionary, a literature database for children and youths, a media database as well as a Low German map. The INS has also provided input for many areas, especially in education (development of curricula and teaching materials, etc.) and culture (further training for young playwrights, writing projects for authors, etc.). The representative survey on the status and use of Low German conducted in 2016 in cooperation with the Institute for the German Language supplied important basic data on the current status of the regional language and shows the fields where political action is needed.

The structure planned by the four federal states involved for a “State Centre for Low German” must be re-established from scratch on all levels. This structure appears questionable, not just from a legal but also from a functional perspective, and is evidence of efforts to directly influence the activities of the language group.

The Low German language group expressly welcomes the establishment of a **Low German Secretariat** to support the work on civil society and language policy conducted by the BfN. During the debate on the “25 years of the European Language Charter” held at a meeting of the German Bundestag on 2 June 2017, the way was paved for the BfN to a Low German Secretariat, equivalent to the Minorities Secretariat already in place in Berlin. The Low German Secretariat, which is state-independent thanks to Federal Government funding, will commence its activities on 1 November 2017 in Hamburg, in the core language area of Low German, and will provide conceptual and organizational support.

In the period under review, developments differed in the **eight federal states** which have placed Low German under the protection of the Language Charter irrespective of whether these states are Part II or Part III states. A number of examples will be given below to demonstrate this.

Contrary to its prior announcement, **Bremen** did not adopt the Hamburg model to set up classroom offerings for Low German and is a long way from systematic offerings of Low German as a school subject. The five initiative schools of a development project are each working according to their own concepts and only one of these concepts at the very most can be seen to be an experiment that comes close to a classroom offering. The frameworks and legal bases that could support such a process and that would be needed for a school subject have not been drawn up in Bremen. Cooperation between the Charter states in this field of

action is merely bilateral, at a personal level and fails, for instance, to make use of the structure provided by the Consultative Committee on Issues concerning the Low German Language Group at the Federal Ministry of the Interior. There is no evidence that the brochures on Low German published by the BfN are being used in a systematic and coordinated manner in preschools and schools. The “Plattolio” teaching material platform that can be used across different regions

and the teacher network established there are organized by the private sector. In Bremen (and the surrounding Lower Saxony area), the “Plattdütsche Kring e.V.” has not acted as an umbrella association within the meaning of the Charter for at least ten years. After the Kring was dissolved in 2016, nothing was undertaken in the sense of the Charter, neither by Bremen’s policymakers nor its administration. In 2012, the “Runne Disch Plattdütsch for Bremen un Bremerhaben” was set up and its members include the association boards, as well as Low German activists from schools, adult education centres, universities, the church, *speeldeels* and civic associations. Urged by this group (which has no interest in association status), Bremen’s parliament established the advisory council for Low German at the office of the Citizenship President. Structured dialogue is held here between the legislature, the executive and the language group. That being said, however, this structure is extremely fragile since the representatives of the parliamentary groups, especially the government coalition, attend hardly any of the meetings of the advisory council.

North Rhine-Westphalia still lacks comprehensive and structured education in Low German as was already noted in the fifth periodical report under No. 54 of the Committee of Experts’ evaluation in respect of Part II of the Charter. Since 2014, a project “*Plattddeutsch in der Grundschule*” (Low German at primary school) has been underway at six schools in Münsterland which was applied for as a school pilot project. However, as a simple “project”, it is not part of the core curriculum and is merely an additional two hours of lessons a week. That is why a better structure must be set up here. Reference is made here to recommendation 3 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe which calls for the development of an adequate educational offering for Low German also in North Rhine-Westphalia. However, there are still hardly any signs of efforts to promote and preserve Low German. Government bodies do not take any initiative of their own accord. This means that the federal state fails to live up to the claim that was formulated in “Part III. Summary” of the fifth periodical report. “The federal authorities, in cooperation with the states and the representatives of the language groups, took further efforts in the period under review in order to fulfil the undertakings under the Charter. These efforts will be continued in the future.” This was not the case in North Rhine-Westphalia, neither before nor after the fifth periodical report. Most of the initiatives were taken by the representatives of the language group (Fachstelle Niederdeutsch of the Westfälischer Heimatbund) and the BfN representatives in Westphalia who submitted their requests for talking points to the responsible “Low German Coordination Office” at the North Rhine-Westphalia state

chancellery. The application to establish a Low German Council at North Rhine-Westphalia's parliament was rejected by the responsible committee on 9 February 2017. The BfN is still convinced that in the spirit of the Language Charter such a council is urgently needed.

The main tasks of this council should be related to information, advice and implementation and should additionally include decision-making tasks, at least the preparation of decisions related to the federal state's language policy. It is important that this kind of council not only include voluntary and full-time staff, associations and institutions involved in preserving Low German, but also representatives from politics. Unlike other federal states in northern Germany, North Rhine-Westphalia has yet to implement this.

One topic that needs to be discussed is the continuation and perhaps expansion of the project on Low German at primary schools in Münsterland. The focus here is on sustainability and continuation at upper secondary schools.

Other topics requiring attention in North Rhine-Westphalia are town signs with the place name additionally in Low German as well as the issue of Low German on the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (WDR) broadcasting station.

In **Schleswig-Holstein**, the previous state government specified in its "*Handlungsplan Sprachenpolitik*" (Language policy action plan) Low German as a permanent subject from preschool education right through to *Abitur* (university entrance certificate) – and also in adult education – a move that is expressly welcomed by the BfN. At the start of the 2014/2015 school year, 27 primary schools in Schleswig-Holstein offered two hours of classes in Low German each week, from grade one up to grade four. These additional lessons are financed by the state of Schleswig-Holstein. Two more schools joined in the 2015/2016 school year. This means that these lessons are now offered in all districts of the state. Initially, 44 schools had applied to take part, highlighting the importance of the regional language Low German in Schleswig-Holstein. A textbook for grades one to two entitled "Paul un Emma snackt plattdütsch" was developed through voluntary work in cooperation with the SHHB, the Low German centres, the INS and the federal state advisor of the language group. This book has been successfully used since 2015 and not just at the model schools. A guide with other work materials is also being compiled via the IQSH learning network. Work is currently underway on a next textbook for grades three and four which is funded by the federal state and Europa-Universität Flensburg.

The results of the first evaluation of the model schools in 2016/2017 were positive. Seven secondary schools are introducing Low German lessons in the 2017/2018 school year. The language representatives welcome these positive developments even though there is still a lot to be done before Low German becomes a regular school subject.

Brandenburg has added Low German to the minority language Sorbian, at least in education where the language is now explicitly included at suitable points (developing language awareness, varieties, etc.) in the development and discussion phase of the overall curriculum which is now in effect. Even if this is not mandatory for the ongoing teaching of

Low German, teachers now at least have the opportunity to include Low German as a topic in class and to address it from different perspectives. In future, however, more binding rules are needed if in addition to developing knowledge of the situation and the importance of Low German, it is to be possible to learn the language in the regions where Low German is still spoken. The BfN hence notes that despite the basic precondition that has been created, there is still a huge need for action on the part of government where education is concerned. That being said, the language representatives are pleased to note that the “regrettable lack of political will on the part of the authorities to assume responsibility for implementing the Charter,” noted by the Committee of Experts in 2014 has been addressed by the “Basic agreement between the federal state and the Low German language group”. The Verein für Niederdeutsch im Land Brandenburg e. V., an association established in 2014 with the declared aim of preserving and disseminating the Low German language in the federal state, serves as a reliable partner for the state government when it comes to shaping the main areas of language policy. The BfN calls on Brandenburg’s government to make use of this service.

The language group is of the opinion that in **Lower Saxony** the undertaking in education under the Charter was not entirely fulfilled in the period under review. Although the decree *Die Region und ihre Sprachen im Unterricht* (The Region and its Languages in the Classroom) that expired at the end of 2016 was extended in its current form for another two years, the positive effects achieved with the decree still need to be stabilized further. One point of criticism is that this decree failed to achieve any systematic transitions that would allow pupils who began learning the language in primary school to continue this in secondary school. Schools that teach Low German as a subject are conceived as pilot schools so that continuity is not possible. Each of the projects ends after three years. The language group does not consider the committee set up to accompany the decree on the region and its languages in the classroom to be the supervisory committee referred to in the Charter because its speakers have no clear rights of co-determination and the focus is solely on education.

There is still no general committee as contemplated in the Language Charter. However, the BfN does welcome in this context the inter-ministerial/nonpartisan working group to promote Low German that was set up in November 2015. This group is made up of representatives from the parties in the state parliament, the state chancellery, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry for Scientific and Cultural Affairs, the working groups of the regional associations, the Niedersächsischer Heimatbund and the Low German and Sater Frisian expert group. The meetings take place at the invitation of the Niedersächsischer Heimatbund (NHB). The working group submitted a motion for a resolution to specifically promote the Low German and Sater Frisian languages in Lower Saxony which was adopted by the parliament in October 2017. This motion foresees the ongoing development of structures that are to allow

Low German as a study subject at a university in Lower Saxony and as a subject in schools in the federal state. After the main Low German structures in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** were destroyed in 2012, the language group now welcomes the developments that have been taking place since 2014. The Heimatverband Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania was set up in 2015 so that this federal state once again has an institution to promote Low German. In September 2014, the Low German Council was newly formed and began its work at the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture. As part of the work by this committee, the new federal state programme *Meine Heimat – mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* (My home – my modern Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) was developed, a move which language representatives see as a positive sign from the federal state government, as too is the appointment of the new state commissioner for Low German. The Low German Council was newly appointed in March 2017 with additional members and broader topics and now works as an advisory council for the Minister of Education on matters related to preserving local history and Low German. Seasoned stakeholders, such as the *Bund Niederdeutscher Autoren*, an association of Low German authors, and the *Bibelzentrum Barth*, a bible centre in Barth, were not appointed to the advisory council.

2. On the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers

Recommendation 3

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities provide an adequate educational offer for Low German in **Brandenburg, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saxony-Anhalt**. In these three federal states where Part II applies to Low German, this recommendation was not implemented despite some good first steps in Brandenburg. The federal state government in Saxony-Anhalt, for instance, currently has no plans to introduce Low German as a regular school subject, but instead is of the opinion that Low German is addressed sufficiently by the working groups or in German classes at school (according to teacher interest) so that there are no binding measures for schools.

Recommendation 4

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities upgrade the teaching of Low German to the status of a regular school subject being taught as an integral part of the curriculum in the states **in which Part III of the Charter** is applied to this language. The BfN is of the opinion that this recommendation must be implemented in order to secure the survival of the regional language Low German. In **Schleswig-Holstein**, the *Schleswig-Holsteinische Heimatbund* (SHHB) is working extensively on the topic “*Niederdeutsch in der schulischen Bildung*” (Low German in school education). SHHB is cooperating closely with the centres, the federal state commissioner and the Scheersberg learning centre with a diverse theatre programme. The *Plattdüütsch Stiftung Sleswig-Holsteen*, a foundation

managed by the SHHB, supports schools with materials and fulfils a large part of the obligations of school providers to find suitable material for Low German classes. Many teachers are making use of the teacher training offered through the IQSH where training with new media is being added to traditional concepts.

The work of the federal state advisor has now been supplemented by a language coordination office at the IQSH which focuses on the minority languages as well as Low German and on networking.

New management has been appointed for the two Low German centres: in Leck for the Schleswig district and in Mölln (formerly Ratzeburg) for the Holstein district. It took a long time to fill these positions, so that interruptions in the work were unavoidable. At the new facilities for the Low German Centre in Mölln, it is currently not possible to use the library. The qualification courses for preschool staff and for teachers in Leck continue to be very successful. These courses are not funded by the federal state but by the EU (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development). Adult education courses are weighted differently in the federal state and courses are certainly not available everywhere.

There is still a lot of demand for Low German courses. **Bremen** repeatedly states that Low German is integrated across different subjects in its curricula for German, history, basic science and music. The language group repeatedly counters this argument by stating that this form of contact with the language, which is marginal, random and without obligation, is no substitute for fulfilling the requirement of the Charter to offer Low German as a school subject. In **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, the language group believes that the federal state's new programme *Meine Heimat – mein modernes Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* (My home – my modern Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) is a sign of targeted work underway in education to implement the Language Charter. The commitment by the federal state government to the Low German "home language" as a voluntary regular school subject in secondary schools deserves particular mention here.

Recommendation 5

The Committee of Ministers recommended that the German authorities take measures so that adequate radio and television broadcasting are available in Danish, Low German, Lower Sorbian, North Frisian, Romani, and Sater Frisian.

Amendments to the Media Act and the Broadcasting Act in **Bremen** have resulted in the language group being represented (appointment by the BfN) in the Media and Broadcasting Council. The outcome of dialogue conducted by the director of the public service television and radio broadcaster Radio Bremen with representatives of the language group was that suggestions and information were provided within the tight legal framework that have perceivably helped to strengthen the Low German service offered by the broadcaster. In **Lower Saxony**, there is still no targeted development of Low German content in audio and visual media or in print media, or on any relevant websites, except for the area of

Döntjes/Vertellsel, i.e. stories. Coverage of news and sports is missing altogether. In **Schleswig-Holstein**, the language group has for many years criticized the lack of news services in Low German along with the almost non-existent scheduled broadcasting times. On the whole, however, a slight improvement has been noted in radio broadcasting. The language groups of the minority languages and Low German are represented on the ZDF Television Council and on the Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein Broadcasting Council. The BfN welcomes the structural involvement of the language group as can be seen in Schleswig-Holstein and Bremen and calls on the other federal states to follow their example.

3. On selected areas of the Language Charter

3.1. Education

In the BfN publication “Plattdüütsch ... lehrst jümmers wat dorto” from 2016, the language group emphasizes that the concept of life-long learning is an important aspect of the Language Charter. The right to learn the Low German language throughout life calls for measures by the federal states to train both teachers and volunteers. In addition to offers for preschools and schools, specific offers for vocational training, third-level education and adult education are also needed. Even if Low German has gained a much higher social standing in recent years, the language group still sees a general need for action especially with a view to related education services. According to the language group, **Hamburg**, for instance, does not have the institutions required to continuously teach Low German to students, student teachers and working teachers at the university, or even at the *Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung* (State institute for teacher training and school development). The measures offered by the federal state are intermittent one-day events. There are no continuous, sustainable training measures. None of the universities in **Lower Saxony** offer Low German as an independent subject. The University of Oldenburg does in fact have a university chair in Germanic linguistics: Linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics/Low German, a language learning course and a module as part of teacher training for German studies, however, it does not offer Low German as a separate field of study. Teacher training in the subject of Low German is also not possible. The language group is hence of the opinion that the Charter undertaking has not been fulfilled up to now. At universities in other federal states, e.g. in Potsdam and Magdeburg, Low German modules or seminars are offered as part of German studies and teacher training. In 2017, a competence centre for teaching Low German was opened at the University of Greifswald. In **Schleswig-Holstein**, the teaching offerings at the universities in Kiel and Flensburg must be seen as positive developments. Interest among teacher training students has risen once again and can also be satisfied.

3.2. Administrative authorities and public service providers

It is generally possible to use Low German when dealing with the administration and public authorities or for drawing up documents. In addition to the Charter, **Bremen** and **Schleswig-Holstein**, for instance, have also laid this down in administration provisions. The language group has promised to step in should problems or a need for translation arise. In **Lower Saxony**, the submission of a document (notarized purchase agreement) in Low German was rejected by a local court and by a public authority. The federal state has still not undertaken any measures to enable the use of Low German in written procedures at or before administrative authorities. All attempts are categorically rejected with the same statement: “..... German is the official language”. A wedding ceremony which is allegedly possible is always a declaration in High German framed by the oral comments of the registrar in Low German. It is still not possible to marry in Low German. Documents are still not published in Low German.

3.3. Media

In addition to the comments in No. 2 above, the BfN emphasizes the importance of using Low German on the Internet. With a view to the scattered speaker community, who no longer communicate in Low German in the family, neighbourhood or their social biotopes, but more through media, it is important now that this community be preserved and its vitality fostered through a dedicated institution. In the spirit of the Charter, the government must provide the framework conditions for this.

There are still very few TV programmes in Low German broadcast by private TV broadcasters so that funding is needed.

3.4. Economic and social life

As a result of demographic developments, “Low German in nursing care” has become an important topic of the language policy work by the BfN. If nursing care staff at hospitals and homes for the elderly have at least a basic command of the language, this makes it easier in so many ways to interact with people who grew up with Low German as their native language. In several federal states, such as **Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein and Brandenburg**, language training is offered, at times with the support of the federal states. The Language Charter demands that also in areas of society, such as care, demand be generated, leadership, ideas and incentives be provided and encouraged, and conducive initiatives be introduced.

Where training for the above areas is a government task, it is easy to create the preconditions in order to integrate Low German into practical use. In the care sector, the BfN believes that Low German together with other, mostly regionally relevant original, native and local languages other than High German should account for a share in the qualification that is in keeping with the times for the respective professions.

4. Concluding remarks

As a word of warning, the BfN would like to point out that many initiatives in the federal states committed to protecting and promoting Low German are organized by the private sector or by volunteers. Take, for instance, the “Hamburger Plattdütsch Pries”, a prize awarded every two years to nurseries, preschools and schools at all levels. The association “Plattdütsch in Hamborg” and the association “Plattdütschroot för Hamborg” are solely responsible for deciding who to honour with this prize. The language groups see a general rise in society’s appreciation of Low German, a fact reflected by the language conference in 2014 and the Bundestag debate on the Charter languages in 2017. That being said, however, the BfN does see a greater need for action in some federal states, such as North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Lower Saxony. Despite good starting conditions, work is still needed here in order to meet the obligations undertaken under the Charter. From the point of view of the language group, education continues to be the main field of action for protecting Low German. The language representatives call on the federal states to continue working together on strategies for a comprehensive curriculum for Low German. We strongly hope that the meetings of federal and state officials on Low German will continue.



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Comments by the Frisian Council

- 1) How important is the Charter considered to be for the preservation and ongoing development of the minority language North Frisian?**

First of all, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages provides the legal framework for the protection and promotion of the Frisian language.

The majority of efforts and projects aiming to foster and promote the North Frisian language are based on this legal instrument. The Charter is primarily a political instrument and serves as a support for many projects. In principle, the Charter provides an important argument in the exchange with the majority population.

Ultimately, however, it is the people on the ground who play a decisive role in preserving and developing the Frisian language. They are ultimately the people who put into practice the aspects of the Charter.

- 2) What specific progress do you consider to be a result of the Charter that took effect on 1 January 1999?**

The Schleswig-Holstein state parliament is currently discussing a draft bill in order to implement the constitutional task of strengthening the autochthonous minorities. This is currently underway and will soon be supplemented by a hearing. If this act takes effect, this would mark another step towards fulfilling the obligations signed by Germany in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages as well as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. These efforts are also being supported by the language policy plan of action by the state government in Kiel. The draft bill aims to make it easier to use Frisian at public authorities.

Furthermore, special language skills, such as Frisian, are to be given greater weighting in applications for public sector jobs. Moreover, Frisian is to become even more visible thanks to bilingual signposts in the district of Nordfriesland. What's more, the aims for nursery schools in the draft are to be expanded to also include minority languages. This will make it possible to financially support the institutions in question much the same way as is carried out for foreign language classes.

3) Which of the obligations from Part II of the Charter undertaken by Schleswig-Holstein have not yet been fully implemented?

There is still certainly need for improvement when it comes to education and the media. Some development has at least been seen with regard to Frisian at schools. Other adjustments are certainly worthwhile in terms of training for teachers and educators. The same applies to the federal state's hiring policy which hires Frisian speaking teachers irrespective of the Frisian language area. This is certainly regrettable.

No development has yet been seen with regard to the media. With the exception of private media, this area has been stagnating for years and the consultations are becoming increasingly bogged down. It is remarkable to note here that private media focus more on Frisian than public institutions do.

4) What do you expect over the next five years?

Based on the frequently mentioned recommendations of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts, we are listing the following problems which must be solved if the Frisian language and culture are to survive:

- teaching Frisian as an integral part of the curriculum at all schools in Nordfriesland,
- greater coverage in public service broadcasting,
- creating financial frameworks to ensure nursery school education,
- changing project funding into demand-based institutional funding for the work by the Frisian associations,
- long-term funding for the Frisian Council headquarters,
- long-term funding of the Nordfriisk Instituut.

It will certainly not be possible over the next five years to fully solve all the problems listed above, however, these problems do have to be tackled. We do expect that the installation of bilingual road signs will provide a visible signal that will improve the visibility of the Frisian

language and its appreciation. In the coming years, we firmly expect to see more visible Frisian place names which in this case will also refer to the home of the Frisians.

In order to secure the Frisian language and culture in the long term, the Federal Government will certainly have to step up its commitment.

Bräist/Bredstedt, 20 September 2017

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Saterland, 17.11.2017

Comments by the Seelter Buund (Saterland Frisians) on the Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages

The Seelter Buund welcomes the resolution adopted by the state parliament of Lower Saxony in its 139th session on 31 September 2017. In this resolution, the members of parliament demand the development of an independent language policy concept for Lower Saxony. This resolution was unanimously adopted by all the parties and applies to Sater Frisian and Low German.

The session minutes include sections in Low German and Sater Frisian.

The Saterland Frisians welcome the minority policy pursued by the Federal Republic of Germany and by Lower Saxony. This applies, for instance, to the establishment of committees for the different language groups as well as measures to support all autochthonous language groups. We see this development as a pioneering step.

With a view to the support provided by the Federal Government and the state, the Saterland Frisians are grateful that the projects for the Sater Frisian language were processed so quickly and with retroactive effect by the Federal Government and the state despite personnel difficulties in Saterland.

Saterland still has special requests primarily regarding work at nursery schools and schools. These demands are directed first and foremost to the Ministry of Culture in Lower Saxony. Among them are, in particular:

- Participation in bilingual lessons is voluntary and decided by parents. This means that in some years there are too few pupils for bilingual lessons to take place due to the ministerial order on the size of classes.

We expect more flexible rules from the education offices here.

- The Seelter Buund also considers training for preschool and school teachers who teach Sater Frisian to be important. In our opinion, this should be carried out in cooperation with higher education institutions, universities and teacher training institutions. The state of Lower Saxony should renew the decree *Die Region und ihre Sprachen im Unterricht* (the region and its languages in the classroom) with a focus on the number of school hours and the number of pupils. Normal lessons at schools require a binding legal basis that must be achievable for the minority languages (numbers, group size, teacher hours).
- Since Sater Frisian is not only taught at schools, we would welcome a Sater Frisian commissioner who could develop and apply for projects independently even outside of school activities. It is important that this work should not be carried out on a voluntary basis.

We will discuss these demands in detail with the competent bodies in the state of Lower Saxony.

The Seelter Buund would be pleased to welcome the report experts to Saterland. We believe that the special nature of our language and challenges involved in preserving it can be best assessed on site.

Yours sincerely

Karl-Peter Schramm



13 November 2017
Danish Secretary General/JAC

Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages

Here: Comments by the Danish minority

The Danish minority group, represented by the cultural organisation Sydslesvigsk Forening (SSF), SSW and Dansk Skoleforening for Sydslesvig (the Danish Schools Association for South Schleswig), expresses its thanks for the opportunity to comment on the Sixth Report of the Federal Republic of Germany on the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

The Danish minority is pleased that after the change in government in May of this year the new state government made up of CDU, FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen announced that it would continue to pursue the current minority policy of the federal state.

Positive development

It must be noted that in recent years the minority policy of the Federal Government and the state of Schleswig-Holstein has generally developed well. Schleswig-Holstein's previous coalition government (2012 to 2017), made up of SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and SSW, corrected the minority policy of the previous CDU/FDP government.

This means that German Sinti and Roma were granted the same rights of protection and promotion as those already granted to the Danish and Frisian minorities since 1990. In addition, on 1 January 2013, the same cost-per-pupil rates were reintroduced for Danish schools, revoking the discriminating reduction to 85%. This systemic equality expresses a political compromise that was laid down in the School Act in January 2014 and enshrined in the state constitution of Schleswig-Holstein in December 2014. Moreover, the reduction of cultural funding adopted in 2010 was also revoked in the 2013 budget.

It is encouraging and progressive that the former Schleswig-Holstein government was committed to promoting minority languages in the federal state. In 2016, for instance, a language policy agenda was adopted to strengthen Danish lessons in German public schools, for instance, and to give more room to the Danish language in the public space. It should also be recognised that the state parliament adopted an amendment to municipal regulations, so that communities and municipal associations can also contribute to the protection and promotion of national minority groups.

Federal State Administration Act (*Landesverwaltungsgesetz (LVwg)*) – against the intention

Schleswig-Holstein's minority policy has been improved by a number of legislative initiatives which included an amendment of the Federal State Administration Act (section 82b) in 2016 with which the Schleswig-Holstein state parliament made it possible for minorities living in the state to submit applications, petitions, records, deeds or other documents in their own language.

For the Danish language, this is possible in the districts of Nordfriesland, Schleswig-Flensburg and in the urban district of Flensburg as well as in the district of Rendsburg-Eckernförde.

The experience of Dansk Skoleforening for Sydslesvig e.V. has been that the supervisory body for the nursery school sector of the city of Flensburg rejects this claiming that the supervisory body of the city of Flensburg has its seat in the urban district of Kiel and is therefore outside the specified area. As a result of this, the supervisory body not only demands comprehensive translations of the documents needed for the approval process, but is also slowing down the introduction of new nursery schools or the expansion of existing ones.

Article 2 of the act, which states: *"If a public authority does not have its own language skills as contemplated in paragraph 1, it will have a translation made. No costs will be charged for the additional expense."*, also becomes void with this reasoning so that the Danish Schools Association itself has to pay translation costs.

This clearly violates the intention of the act which, in this case, is reduced to absurdity when by chance the public authority's seat rather than the location of the institution is relevant for the scope of section 82b of the Federal State Administration Act (LVwG). Change is urgently needed here.

In addition to an amendment to the Federal State Administration Act, the minority council of the four recognised autochthonous minorities and the Federal Government Commissioner for Matters Related to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities agreed to examine the possibility of equality for minority languages in legal proceedings (Judicature Act (*Gerichtsverfassungsgesetz*)).

Education

The draft act to amend the Continuing Education Act (*Weiterbildungsgesetz*) in Schleswig-Holstein plans to strengthen the teaching of regional and minority languages as well as knowledge about the cultures of the minorities living in Schleswig-Holstein.

We would like to especially highlight the need for pupils and teachers in Germany to be better informed about minorities. Therefore, the curricula of all the German states should be required to include knowledge about minorities especially in the primarily relevant subjects (e.g. history, economics/politics, geography, languages).

In this context, we acknowledge that Schleswig-Holstein has underpinned Frisian and Low German as a “particularly important task area” in its new curricula. As a Danish minority, however, we regret that Danish does not appear to be considered to be just as equal and important.

Furthermore, the way in which the proposals for the new curricula in history and economics/politics include minorities is hardly suitable for imparting knowledge and information about these minorities.

The reform of funding for private schools in 2014 would have led to a considerable reduction in funding for the schools of the Danish minority. Since this was not the political intention, a three-year transitional arrangement was introduced which meant that funding continued to increase, narrowing the gap between private and public schools. The aim of system equality with public schools was not achieved initially so that it was decided to extend the transitional arrangement until 2019 (section 150 of the School Act (*SchulG*)).

Dansk Skoleforening for Sydslesvig e.V. expressly welcomes this move and sees this as a sign of the political will to achieve equality for minority schools. We associate this with the hope that the new state government will continue to pursue this policy.

Media

There is still a need for Danish-language productions for and about the Danish minority. With the exception of daily Danish radio news on the private channel RSH von Flensburg Avis,

there are still no suitable radio or TV programmes in Danish. The activities of the private regional broadcaster Syltfunk – Söl'ring Radio – could have achieved headway by broadcasting not just Frisian but also Danish programmes. This radio broadcaster was unfortunately unable to achieve this goal.

The Danish minority, however, generally believes that the public broadcaster NDR has an obligation to include the minority language of Danish in its programme.

SSF is expecting its own representation on the Broadcasting Council of NDR in order to have the opportunity to represent the interests of the Danish minority. This includes, among other things, that more Danish-language programmes be broadcast by public media. One positive aspect, however, is that since 2016 the minorities have been given the opportunity to represent themselves on the ZDF Television Council.

The greater objective is the continued promotion of the Danish language and we would like to encourage funding for outreach work by the minority groups, for instance, also for Flensburg Avis, the daily newspaper of the Danish minority.

G. Concluding remarks

The responsible federal and state authorities will examine the language groups' critical comments and report on further progress in the next periodical report.