



2018/2036(INI)

25.9.2018

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

on minimum standards for minorities in the EU
(2018/2036(INI))

Rapporteur: Andrea Bocskor

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Recalls that the EU has a special duty to protect and guarantee the rights of the more than 50 million people belonging to national or regional minorities who live on its territory and who speak one of the 60 minority and regional languages that are in serious danger of extinction; recalls that the protection of the rights of minorities is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; notes, in this connection, that minority issues are not placed sufficiently high up on the EU agenda and that there is not, at present, a comprehensive EU approach on how to address issues in minority protection policy; supports, therefore, an integrated approach to equality and non-discrimination in order to ensure that Member States deal adequately with the diversity of people in their societies;
2. Stresses that it is the responsibility of the Member States to implement political and legislative measures to safeguard and promote the identity and rights of minorities, including ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic rights;
3. Notes that, in line with the additional protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights, national minorities are to be considered as groups of persons who reside on the territory of a state, maintain longstanding ties with that state, display distinctive ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics, are sufficiently representative, and are motivated by a concern to preserve their common identity; notes, at the same time, that in addition to national minorities there are other minority communities which need to be protected;
4. Welcomes the development of international standards for addressing national and regional minority issues through a number of international legal instruments, such as the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which are the two key treaties of the Council of Europe on the rights of minorities, but also the development of soft law, such as the OSCE's Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities and Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities; calls on the Member States to incorporate these standards and recommendations into their legal systems and to guarantee that persons belonging to a national or regional minority are not discriminated against; calls, moreover, for Member States to ensure that people belonging to other minority communities are sufficiently protected and not subjected to discrimination;
5. Recalls that Article 14 of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities recommends that its states parties endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language, without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language;
6. Calls on the Commission to establish a common EU framework for regional or minority

languages, similar to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, in order to encourage the Member States to develop strategies to improve the participation and representation of minorities in the political, cultural, social and economic life of the societies in which they live;

7. Notes that preventing or hindering minorities from progressively availing themselves of their economic, social, educational and cultural rights has implications for the general well-being of individuals and communities and for the preservation of their identities; points out that any restriction on aspects of their cultural identity that are in line with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, together with economic and social inequalities, may become a cause of conflict and social exclusion;
8. Notes that the social inclusion of minorities has a positive impact on their economic and cultural integration;
9. Recalls that an understanding of what is meant by ‘culture’ is essential in order to define the scope of minority rights in this respect; notes that, in a broad sense, culture amounts to the sum total of the material and non-material activities and achievements of a given community and to that which distinguishes it from others; stresses that cultural rights should include: the right to participate in cultural life; the right to enjoy culture; the right to choose to belong to a group; language rights; and the protection of cultural and scientific heritage;
10. Recalls that Member States have an obligation to guarantee minorities the full enjoyment of their human rights, whether as individuals or as a community; points out that it is also incumbent on the Member States to ensure the preconditions for preserving the cultural assets of minorities and to encourage their participation in the cultural life of the community;
11. Stresses the need for minorities to be duly informed and to give their free consent before any use is made of artistic content relating to their activities in order to safeguard their intellectual property rights;
12. Calls on the Member States, in the wake of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, to enhance and promote their minority cultures, thereby encouraging the dissemination of their history and traditions and ensuring that these communities do not remain isolated;
13. Recalls that mother-tongue education is essential for upholding language rights and strengthening the value of European Citizenship; encourages the Member States, therefore, to ensure that persons belonging to regional, ethnic or linguistic minorities, be they of school age or adults, have adequate opportunities to learn their own language, history and culture and even to receive education in their language at all levels of education in the region in which they live; stresses, however, that people belonging to minorities should also learn the language, history and culture of the majority population, and that pupils – and the general public – belonging to the majority population should be acquainted with the history and culture of minorities and given the opportunity to learn minority languages;

14. Recalls that multilingualism, including the various sign languages, constitutes one of the greatest assets of cultural diversity in Europe; emphasises the role of the EU institutions and the Member States in raising awareness of the issues relating to the protection of minorities, and in lending encouragement and support to the Member States in the promotion of cultural diversity and tolerance, especially through education, cultural cooperation, sport, and cross-border mobility opportunities; recalls that the protection and strengthening of cultural heritage relating to minorities in the Member States – a key component of the cultural identity of communities, groups and individuals – play a crucial role in social cohesion; stresses, in this connection, that the development of any cultural heritage policy should be inclusive, citizen-centred and participatory, and should include consultation and dialogue with the minority communities concerned; urges the Member States and the Commission to exchange information and examples of good practice in this area and to provide the local and regional authorities with adequate financial and other own resources to formulate and implement the strategies they deem best for the protection of minorities; encourages the Member States to ensure that the right to use a minority language is upheld and to protect linguistic diversity within the Union in accordance with the Treaties;
15. Stresses that greater efforts should be made to ensure access to education and training for pupils from national or regional minorities and to support regional educational institutions that provide services in their mother tongue; encourages the Member States to facilitate the development of mother-tongue teaching for pupils and students in areas with national or regional minorities;
16. Urges the Member States to foster access to minority and regional languages by means of funding and support for translation, dubbing and subtitling activities and the compilation of appropriate and non-discriminatory administrative, commercial, economic, social, technical and legal terminologies;
17. Notes that some border areas share a common language that is not an official language of the EU; believes that increased levels of funding for teaching and promoting lesser-used cross-border languages would strengthen cooperation, increase mobility for minorities across borders and enrich the cultural diversity and heritage of those areas;
18. Calls on the Member States to ensure that people from regional or national minorities living in widely dispersed settlements receive suitable education in their language;
19. Is convinced that the mother tongue is a central element of cultural and individual identity and an essential part of minority cultures, which ensures that these cultures can then be duly expressed, disseminated and passed on; considers that Member States should provide opportunities to learn minority languages for all those who are interested; encourages the Member States to ensure that those who speak a regional or minority language as their mother tongue have the opportunity to learn the official language to a sufficient standard;
20. Encourages the Member States to produce textbooks that meet the needs of the speakers of regional or minority languages or – should that prove impossible – to facilitate the use of textbooks from other countries published in those languages, in cooperation with the educational regulation bodies of the countries where regional or minority languages are used;

21. Calls on the Member States to provide funding for teacher training and the development of special curricula (including for lifelong learning), methodologies and textbooks to ensure effective teaching in both minority languages – in those regions with a recognised national or linguistic minority – and official languages, for children with minority-language backgrounds; calls on the Member States, furthermore, to promote stable cross-border relations, including by means of cultural, artistic and educational cooperation, especially in those areas where linguistic minorities are most strongly represented;
22. Deeply regrets the fact that in some Member States pupils belonging to a linguistic minority are not integrated in mainstream educational establishments but are placed in special schools on the grounds that they are not sufficiently proficient in the language of instruction; calls on the Member States to refrain from such segregation and to take adequate measures to enable such pupils to attend classes in normal schools;
23. Calls on the Commission to strengthen the promotion of programmes focused on the exchange of experiences and best practices concerning education in regional and minority languages in Europe; calls for the European Union and the Commission to put greater emphasis on regional and minority languages in the future generation of the Erasmus+, Creative Europe and Europe for Citizens programmes under the new multiannual financial framework (MFF);
24. Highlights the fact that the media plays a central role with regard to cultural and linguistic rights; recalls that the media should reflect the plurality of the population and respect the principle of non-discrimination, and that state regulation of broadcast media should in no way restrict minority rights; calls on the Member States and the Commission to promote the representation of minority languages in public and private media, as well as on online interfaces, social media and language technologies; takes the view, moreover, that the media should report incidents relevant to minorities accurately and in a balanced manner;
25. Deeply regrets the increase in racism, religious fanaticism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism and xenophobia in many EU Member States; expresses concern that persons belonging to minorities still encounter obstacles when it comes to respect for their fundamental rights and continue to be the victims of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes and offences; stresses that the encouragement of intercultural dialogue and inter-ethnic tolerance, pursuant to Article 6 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, is an important public commitment; supports anti-discrimination measures and programmes designed to raise awareness and protect and promote cultural diversity; urges the Member States, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, to ensure that their legal systems protect minority groups from discrimination and to bring specific protection measures into line with applicable international standards;
26. Takes the view that Member States also need to implement measures designed to actively engage minorities in order not only to prevent their isolation, but also to help them become active members of the community;
27. Emphasises that adequate access to, and a corresponding visibility in, public audiovisual media and the right to establish and operate private print and audiovisual media are essential for the protection and promotion of the independent identity of minorities; considers it necessary, for the purposes of enforcing such rights, for minorities to benefit

from a proportionate allocation of financial and other resources from public or quasi-public sources, given that, without subsidies, media content by and for smaller minority communities in particular can scarcely survive in highly competitive markets;

28. Reaffirms that freedom of expression includes the ability of minorities to express themselves and communicate freely with members of their own communities and others in their own language through private- and public-sector broadcast, print and electronic media;
29. Encourages the Member States to promote the use of regional or minority languages at regional level by adopting legal and regulatory standards, as well as by means of appropriate incentives in their media policy;
30. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to provide appropriate funding for the promotion of the identity, language, history and culture of national and regional minorities;
31. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to create the legal and regulatory conditions to ensure the freedom of service, passage and reception of audio-visual content in those regions where minorities live so that they can watch and listen to content in their mother tongue, by, for example, encouraging cross-border licensing for broadcasting;
32. Considers that in order to encourage and facilitate the effective participation of minorities in public life, the use of their languages in municipalities, electoral, administrative, consultative and other public participation processes should be encouraged, where practicable;
33. Invites the Member States to promote and encourage the use of regional or minority languages at local and regional levels and, with this in mind, to actively encourage municipal authorities to ensure that these languages are used in practice;
34. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to ensure that place names and topographical designations are written in their correct form and available in the languages commonly used in a given region, including on signs indicating entry into or exit from urban areas, on all road signs displaying information, and on important instructions and public announcements;
35. Stresses the continuing need for urgent action as regards the social situation of the Roma, which can only be described as desolate, given that in large parts of the EU their position remains precarious, notably in terms of access to the labour and housing markets and to educational and health facilities; calls on the Member States, therefore, to take corrective action in the event of discriminatory practices against members of the Roma community, particularly when public bodies are involved; expresses concern over the fact that multiple forms of discrimination and the segregation of Roma children in education remain a structural and deep-rooted phenomenon in several Member States; recalls that the issue of Roma segregation has been the subject of a number of recommendations from the Commission; calls on the governments, therefore, to follow those recommendations and to implement effective measures accordingly; calls on the Member States to develop a concerted strategy for the integration of non-territorial languages;

36. Considers it necessary to improve the EU's legislative framework in order to provide comprehensive protection for the rights of persons belonging to minorities; calls on the Commission, therefore, to present a legislative proposal or an EU recommendation on the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity, to promote research into education, language learning and models of education in multilingual contexts, and to support programmes focusing on exchanges of experience and best practices relating to regional and minority languages in Europe; calls on the Commission, furthermore, to assign the area of 'multilingualism and language technology' to the portfolio of a Commissioner; considers that the Commissioner responsible should be tasked with promoting linguistic diversity and equality at EU level, given the importance of protecting European minority languages in the digital age;
37. Notes the frequent link between the cultural identity of a minority group and a particular geographical territory; points out that for many minority groups the right to land defines the way and the means by which they live and practise their culture;
38. Draws attention to the positive value of promoting cultural diversity and raising awareness, especially at local and regional level where the possibilities for direct impact are much greater;
39. Notes that education is one of the best means of enabling young people belonging to minorities to learn about their heritage and history and for their culture to be disseminated and recognised by society at large; stresses that education is fundamental to the promotion of minority rights and constitutes a prerequisite for the enjoyment of economic, political, social and cultural rights; points out that education is a vehicle for the empowerment of those belonging to minorities, enabling them to participate meaningfully in the society to which they belong;
40. Believes that educational activities are fundamental for the integration of children and young people belonging to minorities, but also conducive to the integration of their parents and families; urges the Member States to encourage schools to organise extracurricular activities involving parents and children, thereby enhancing the levels of interaction within the entire educational community;
41. Recommends investment in the preparation of staff, especially teaching staff, in educational establishments catering for minorities, so as to provide them with the necessary skills to work with students from different cultural, religious, ethnic or linguistic backgrounds;
42. Encourages the Member State governments to include minority representatives in deliberations on the organisation of their education systems;
43. Recommends, for the next MFF period (2021-2027), that European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) appropriations earmarked for the promotion of social inclusion be used to support educational and cultural projects aimed at integrating ethnic, religious, cultural or linguistic minorities;
44. Recalls that non-discrimination and equality with regard to minorities and other disadvantaged groups are the first principles of the International Labour Organisation (ILO); notes that, in the promotion and application of fundamental rights and principles at

the workplace, the ILO pays special attention to socially or economically disadvantaged groups and that its rules take account of the need to uphold and protect the rights of minorities;

45. Calls on the Member States to regularly collect data and provide statistical information on the integration of minorities into educational establishments, the labour market and civic life;
46. Calls on the Commission to set up mechanisms to monitor the progress of Member States in fulfilling their obligations regarding the protection of minority rights;
47. Calls on the Commission to regularly monitor the implementation, in the Member States, of the Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to provide the Member States with recommendations in this regard, to draw up reports based on country visits, to report back on these to Parliament on a regular basis, and to further develop links with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities;
48. Highlights that the protection of minorities, as part of the world's cultural and linguistic diversity, is essential to stability, democracy and peace in Europe;
49. Welcomes the success of the Minority SafePack Initiative, which was launched under Article 11(4) of the Treaty on European Union and is supported by 1 215 789 European citizens, calling for the adoption of nine legislative acts in order to establish an EU legal framework to protect minority rights;
50. Urges the Commission to present the legislative proposals advocated in the Minority SafePack initiative without undue delay, once the certificate of validity of the signatures sent by the Member States has been received;
51. Recalls that human rights are universal and that no minority should suffer discrimination; emphasises that minority rights are an inalienable part of the principle of the rule of law; notes that there is a higher risk of violation of rights of minorities when the rule of law is not respected;
52. Considers that the Member States should consistently uphold the rights of minorities and periodically assess whether those rights are being respected;
53. Notes that the EU lacks effective tools to monitor respect for minority rights; calls for effective EU-wide monitoring of the situation of autochthonous and linguistic minorities; considers that the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights should carry out enhanced monitoring of discrimination against national minorities in the Member States;
54. Believes that linguistic rights must be respected in communities where there is more than one official language, without limiting the rights of one compared with another, in line with the constitutional order of each Member State;
55. Calls on the Commission to strengthen the promotion of the teaching and use of regional and minority languages, as a potential way of tackling language discrimination in the EU;

56. Calls on the Member States to exchange good practice and to apply tried and tested solutions in addressing the problems faced by minorities throughout the European Union;
57. Urges the Member States to devote proper consideration to minority rights, to ensure the right to use a minority language, and to protect linguistic diversity within the Union.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	24.9.2018
Result of final vote	+: 14 -: 2 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Silvia Costa, Jill Evans, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Petra Kammerevert, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Michaela Šojdrová
Substitutes present for the final vote	Santiago Fisas Ayxelà, Emma McClarkin, Liliana Rodrigues, Francis Zammit Dimech
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Caterina Chinnici

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

14	+
ALDE	María Teresa Giménez Barbat
PPE	Andrea Bocskor, Santiago Fisas Aixelà, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Michaela Šojdrová, Sabine Verheyen, Francis Zammit Dimech, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski,
S&D	Caterina Chinnici, Silvia Costa, Petra Kammerevert, Liliana Rodrigues
VERTS/ALE	Jill Evans, Helga Trüpel

2	-
ECR	Emma McClarkin
ENF	Dominique Bilde

-	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention