

# Strengthening Citizens' Rights with special regard to the European Citizens' Initiative and protection of national minorities

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# Content

- **Documents**

- EU Citizenship Report 2017: Strengthening Citizens' Rights in a Union of Democratic Change (2017/2069(INI))
- LIBE Opinion

- **Key points**

- Protection of national minorities and linguistic diversity
- Reform of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)
- Informing EU citizens

- **Case study** - Minority SafePack Initiative

# National minorities and linguistic diversity

- (2017/2069(INI))
- European Parliament:
  - „**traditional minorities have coexisted** for centuries with majority cultures on the continent of Europe”
  - „underlines the **need for the EU institutions to play a more active role in the protection of minorities**”
  - „**EU should set high standards for the protection of minorities**”
  - encourages all Member States to fully **ratify the Framework Convention** for the Protection of National Minorities and the European **Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** without further delay”
  - „encourages **national governments to find durable solutions and to promote a culture of linguistic diversity** in all Member States and the EU as a whole”
- „maintains that **linguistic diversity and transparency are key tools for bringing citizens closer to the EU**”

# National minorities and linguistic diversity I.

- **Protection of national minorities in the EU**

- Union is founded on the value of respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities

- **Problem**

- No complex and explicit system or mechanism of minority rights protection
- MSs do not want to broaden the Union's scope of action in this field

- Particularities of **autochthonous and linguistic national minorities** need to be protected to preserve European cultural heritage

- **Solution**

- CoE documents include well-described provision, but they can be easily ignored in the framework of international law
- Transpose to EU law – No need to create new legal documents in the EU

# National minorities and linguistic diversity II.

- Newest success
  - *EP resolution on protection and nondiscrimination with regard to minorities in the EU Member States (2017/2937(RSP)), 7 February 2018*
- „The European Parliament, [...]
  - believes that the **EU has a responsibility to protect and promote the rights of minorities**;
  - considers it **necessary to improve the EU's legislative framework** to protect the rights of persons belonging to minorities [...];
  - 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 Member States;”

# ECI reform

- (2017/2069(INI))
- European Parliament
  - „calls on the Commission to include provisions aimed at **revising the conditions for legal admissibility, the registration requirements and the examination procedures for an ECI**”
- LIBE Opinion
  - „there are **significant deficits in the functioning of the ECI** that need to be addressed in order to make it more effective”
  - „expresses concern over the **Commission’s follow up of successful initiatives**”

# ECI reform

- **European Parliament**

- Report on the European Citizens' Initiative – 2014/2257(INI), 07.10.2015
- EP resolution on the European Citizens' Initiative – 2014/2257(INI), 28.10.2015
- Draft Report on Revision of ECI Regulation – 2017/2024(INL), 26.6.2017

- **European Commission**

- Report on the application of ECI Regulation – COM(2015) 145 final, 31.3.2015
- Proposal for an EU Regulation on the European citizens' initiative – COM(2017) 482 final, 13.9.2017

- **Public hearing** – Revision of the ECI Legal Framework

- 21 February 2018
- AFCD-PETI
- Assessing the Commission Proposal

# Informing EU citizens

- (2017/2069(INI))
- European Parliament
  - „highlights the fact that [...] the greatest possible level of transparency and the **direct involvement of all citizens in decision-making processes ultimately reinforce EU citizenship**”
  - „calls on the Member States to better inform EU citizens as to their rights and duties [...]”
  - „supports the Commission’s commitment in the EU Citizenship Report 2017 to **organise an EU-wide information and awareness-raising campaign on EU citizenship rights** in order to help citizens better understand their rights”



# Informing EU citizens

- Raising awareness of citizens as to their EU citizenship rights **means**
  - reinforcing the links between citizens and the European project
  - bringing citizens closer to the EU
  - promoting participation in European elections
  - Increasing European democracy
- **Personal experiences** – MSPI campaign
  - Problems with interpreting the right of ECI
  - No proper communication of EU citizenship rights
  - Problems with legal institution unknown in the national legal system
  - The goal of ECI and EU citizenship is not accomplished
- **Solutions?**

# Case study - MSPI

- „We call upon the EU **to improve the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities and strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity** in the Union”
- **Case T-646/13**
- Signature collection in progress – deadline: 3 April 2018
  - At the moment appr. 650.000 signatures (350.000 online)
- **Lessons learnt from the campaign**
  - Difficulties with the signature collection
    - Although 50 million people are affected, it is difficult to mobilize them
    - Signature collection often needs political structures
  - Difficulties with awareness
    - People generally did not know about their right
  - People are sceptic about EU actions in the field of protection of traditional minorities
- **Improving EU citizenship means improving the European project**

# Thank you for your attention!

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