



MINORITY SAFEPAK INITIATIVE

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

JOINT DECLARATION

NOW MORE THAN EVER

MINORITIES AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY ARE NOT ONLY A VALUE, BUT ALSO A RESPONSIBILITY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

At their joint session of 25-26 September 2013 held at the European Parliament in Brussels on the occasion of the European Day of Languages, the Presidium of FUEN and the European Dialogue Forum;

supported by several Members of the European Parliament, as well as chairmen of organisations representing the European national, ethnic groups and language minorities, decision makers, leaders of minority and language diversity NGOs, during an open debate; adopt the following joint declaration:

We express our disappointment and disapproval with the decision by the European Commission to reject our European Citizens' Initiative, the "Minority SafePack Initiative".

The Minority SafePack Initiative was prepared over a period of two years, with the support of renowned EU experts, lawyers, prominent politicians and representatives of many minorities in Europe, before it was submitted to the European Commission. The aim of the initiative is to secure the rights of the autochthonous ethnic and national minorities and to stop their imminent assimilation which endangers European cultural and linguistic diversity. A coalition from Brittany to Upper Silesia, from Schleswig-Holstein to South Tyrol, and from Transylvania to Carinthia, Austria and Western Thrace, Greece - just to mention some of the regions - was forged. But two months after submitting the request the Commission overruled the proposal, motivating that minority protection "falls manifestly outside the framework of the European Union's powers". In our opinion the Commission took a political decision.

The decision fails to comply with the EU principle of the "respect for minorities" which is one of the "values it is founded upon" according to Article 2 of the Lisbon Treaty. In this context the citizens'

initiative itself, as an instrument of political participation for the citizens of Europe, is also becoming a complete absurdity.

Therefore,

1. We are active European citizens, who want to engage in dialogue, achieve a fair balance of interests and build bridges between people. Together, not in conflict with each other. European minorities and regional and minority languages are added value and shall not be considered as a threat or a hindrance.
2. We will not give up our attempts aiming the adoption of a legislative framework that would protect and strengthen minorities, as well as linguistic and cultural diversity within the EU.
3. We call on the European Commission to motivate in detail their decision in which they rejected our citizens' initiative.
4. We reiterate that the citizens' initiative and the commitment of FUEN and its representatives are foremost aimed at engaging in a dialogue with the Member States and the European institutions.
5. Together with the committee who has submitted the proposal, we will inform in writing the Heads of State and Government of the EU Member States, the President of the European Commission, the President of the European Council and the President of the European Parliament, as well as the chairs of the political groups in the Parliament about the refusal of the registration and request their opinion on the role of the minorities and linguistic and cultural diversity.
6. We call on all decision makers on regional, national and European level to speak up against the decision and to support us.
7. We thank all the representatives of minorities, politicians, scholars, and private persons who have engaged in our cause. After a detailed legal analysis of the answer from the European Commission, and provided that an action at court is the next legal step of our initiative, we call on the committee who submitted the proposal to seek judicial remedies against the decision.
8. Together we want to capitalise on the overwhelming solidarity throughout Europe that we achieved and that we have experienced since the decision of the European Commission. In the upcoming months we consider the option of engaging in a European petition campaign and show that "we are not alone". With a view to the upcoming elections for the European Parliament, we have to speak with a united voice, based on solidarity, and to exert our

In the European Union we are with 40 million people and in the Europe of the Council of Europe we are with 100 million people. Our voices have to be listened to.

Brussels, 26 September 2013