

UN Forum on Minority Issues (Europe) 2019

European Regional Forum on Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM 6 – 7 MAY 2019



From 6th till 7th May 2019 European Regional Forum on Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities took place in Brussels. It was one of three regional forums with the main aim to provide regional insights for the development of a set of guidelines or a technical handbook focusing on education in, and teaching of, minority languages.

The Youth of European Nationalities was represented by **Florian Leduc** (Convenor of the Working Group Minority Rights and Politics) and **Stefan Pitz** (member of the Working Group Minority Rights and Politics). Below you can read how Florian Leduc and Stefan Pitz represented the Youth of European Nationalities during this event.

Panel: Human rights and minority language education

Florian Leduc, Convenor of the Working Group Minority Rights and Politics, offered the recommendations of the YEN in this panel about the study of existing blockages for the integration of linguistic rights into the legislation of EU members dealing with education.

YEN's recommendations in short:

- ❖ Member States must urgently integrate aspects on linguistic and cultural minorities in their educational curriculum;
- ❖ States Members and international organizations must reinforce their support to youth organizations from minorities and help them to sensitize their communities to linguistic and minority rights;
- ❖ States Members must implement the Minority Safe-pack Initiative.

YEN's Statement, presented by Florian Leduc:

(Panel: Human rights and minority language education)

Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) is a dynamic and active network of 43 youth member organizations in a multicultural and multilingual Europe, representing and fighting for the interests and rights of ethnic and autochthonous minorities. YEN plans and runs seminars and trainings using non-formal education methodologies to fight discrimination, hate speech and racism, as well as to develop strategies to promote minority rights. The positions found in these strategies are then transported via public relations and lobbying on different levels to influence policy makers on the needs and rights of minorities. YEN is member of the European Youth Forum and has consultative status at the ECOSOC of the United Nations.

Considering our work and expertise on this topic, we would like to express the following recommendations to the European Regional Forum on Education, Language, and the Human Rights of Minorities that takes place from May 6th to 7th, 2019 in European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium.

Human Rights and minority language education

We as Youth of European Nationalities, a European umbrella organisation of 43 members representing national ethnic autochthonous minorities, have observed that many of our young members (16-30 years) face an educational system that does not include their minority in the school curriculum nor do they have the chance to learn their minority language in school.

First, school curriculums are often formed on a national state level and reflects a national identity that excludes the cultural diversity present in the state. History books reflects a centralised, national notion of the state, fails to recognise the presence of minorities, and therefore erases diversity and fails to develop an inclusive society.

Moreover, with the ideal of 'one state, one language' as baseline for education, teachers teach in the national language only. Multilingual children can only show and develop their knowledge of one language and are deemed to be less intelligent than monolingual pupils, as there is a lack of knowledge on the multilingual brain. Therefore, multilingual students are not only denied the opportunity to fully develop their multilingualism, they are also placed in lower education levels because of their multilingualism.

Third, education in minority languages is either forbidden at school or lacking (e)quality. Minorities that are not recognised at state level, face the exclusion of their language at school. However, even when minorities are recognised, education of the minority language is poorly executed in many nation states as it: is not provided by every school; is given fewer hours than other subjects; is taught by unqualified teachers; relies on poor materials; and/or has no sustainable financial support.

Young people are making a stand for equality and an inclusive society and demand a more inclusive educational curriculum and better education in their minority languages. This is also advocated by the *Minority Safepack Initiative*, for which 1.128.385 EU citizens cooperated and supported minority rights by signing it, calling for an inclusive society with better and constructive minority rights, and also vouching for education in minority languages.

Therefore, we as YEN:

- ❖ **highlight:** the importance of education in minority languages as a human right;
- ❖ **stress:** for nation states to recognise the importance of education in minority languages for an inclusive society with equal treatment and opportunities for their citizens;
- ❖ **appeal:** for nation states to include knowledge on minorities in the state school curriculum as a base for an inclusive society;
- ❖ **underline:** that multilingualism is an enrichment for students and should be recognised, supported and developed fully at schools;
- ❖ **call for:** the recognition of minorities and their rights to education;
- ❖ **urge:** a constructive, sustainable implementation of education in minority languages engrained in the national laws and execution thereof;
- ❖ **appeal:** for the EU member states to support and implement the Minority Safepack Initiative and realise the concrete recommendations for minority rights, including the education

Panel: Effective practices in teaching of and education in minority languages

During this Panel Stefan Pitz described YEN's Working Group Minority Rights and Politics and assured that YEN is ready to take action to raise awareness on linguistic rights and to help in advocating and working for their implementation.

Stefan Pitz's intervention:

Hello, my name is Stefan Pitz, I'm Belgian from the German-speaking Community. I'm part of a group of a dozen young people from the organisation YEN (Youth of European Nationalities) who are voluntarily invested in a working group dedicated to politics and minority rights. We are actually establishing a list of institutions and university or research organisations that are working on questions related to the minorities. The aim is to engage collaborations with these institutions in order to permit the expression of the aspirations of the youth from minorities. We wish to highlight the fact, that every new generation comes with an own vision about the future that should be heard, including the preservation of our language diversity. We want to know how we can contribute to the improvement of the minority languages or minorised languages and how we can help the organisations or institutions that work around this question. It would be a pleasure for us to hear your points of view and your advice and we are ready to engage every collaboration in this issue. Thanks for your attention!