

Motions

Motion number	1
Name of the person introducing the Motion to the GA	Anke Spoorendonk and Ruth Candussi
Member party	SSW and SP
Title [of the Motion]	EFA supports the FUEN proposals on the future of Europe regarding the rights of minorities in the EU
<p>The General Assembly of the European Free Alliance (EFA) supports the proposals of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) on the rights of minorities presented at the Conference on the Future of Europe.</p> <p>The suggestions are:</p> <p>1. An EU policy framework to support persons belonging to autochthonous national and linguistic minorities</p> <p>Today, the European Union is one of the most important international guarantors of the rule of law and fundamental rights. The protection of minorities is anchored in its founding treaties and the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity is recognised. Defending the rights of minorities around the world is also one of the priorities of its foreign policy action. However, the Union still lacks a coherent policy to protect the fundamental rights of its autochthonous national and linguistic minorities and the cultural heritage of which they are living custodians. The EU should therefore create a policy framework in favour of those belonging to its autochthonous national and linguistic minorities, either within the current provisions of the Treaties or by including specific new provisions on the occasion of a treaty amendment following the Conference on the Future of Europe.</p> <p>2. Include monitoring of the situation of the autochthonous national and linguistic minorities in the rule of law monitoring mechanism in the EU</p> <p>The European Union has a wide range of tools to promote and defend its fundamental values, including the Rule of Law Mechanism, a tool set up to support Member States in upholding and protecting the rule of law. Although Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union states that the Union is based on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, the European Union does not monitor compliance with these rights in the Member States. The European Union should therefore fully integrate the monitoring of the situation of its autochthonous national and linguistic minorities into its rule of law monitoring mechanism.</p>	

3. Protect autochthonous national and linguistic minorities by making the Copenhagen criteria a permanent obligation for all member states

The Copenhagen Criteria, adopted by the European Council in June 1993, set out the basic criteria that any candidate country must meet to join the European Union, which include the protection of minority rights. Although the importance of this criterion for the accession process must be recognised in the case of the autochthonous national and linguistic minorities, a deterioration can be observed today. The reason for this is the EU's lack of real credibility, because unlike other political criteria, such as those for democracy and the rule of law, for which there is an EU monitoring system, the criteria for respect for and protection of minorities are not checked for existing Member States. The EU should therefore urgently end the practice of double standards in this area, by explicitly including in the Treaties that compliance with all Copenhagen criteria is a permanent obligation for all Member States, which will be continuously monitored.

4. Creation of a common framework of EU minimum standards for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities

Although the protection of minorities is enshrined in the founding treaties of the EU and the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity is recognised, the Union still lacks a coherent policy to protect the fundamental rights of its autochthonous national and linguistic minorities. The European Commission should therefore develop a common framework of EU minimum standards for the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities, firmly embedded in a legal framework that ensures democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights across the EU. The European Commission would thus also meet the repeated demands of the European Parliament regarding this topic.

5. Protection of endangered regional and minority languages through the establishment of a European Center for Linguistic Diversity

According to UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Endangered Languages, 186 languages from EU member states are endangered or critically endangered, and three other languages are listed as extinct. Although the protection of its linguistic and cultural diversity is listed as an obligation in its treaties, the European Union has no strategy, action plan, policy or adequate sources of funding to protect regional or minority languages that are on the wane or at serious risk. The European Union should set up a European Centre for Linguistic Diversity with the technical capacity to make recommendations to the Member States and the EU institutions and create specific sources of funding for regional or minority languages. This would be in line with what the European Parliament and the EU have already called for through a successful European Citizens' Initiative.

6. Promoting cultural diversity and minority rights through unrestricted cross-border access to audiovisual content for EU citizens

Unhindered cross-border access to audiovisual media content is in the interest of EU citizens. The current situation in this area fundamentally and seriously violates the fundamental principles of the EU. Unjustified geographical content restrictions [geo-blocking] should therefore be banned in the EU. This is particularly important for citizens belonging to national or linguistic minorities who speak a language that is also used in neighbouring countries. These minorities are often too small to develop their own comprehensive media services, so access to media in neighbouring countries that speak the same language is of vital interest to them.

7. Protecting minorities through legislation, promoting existing best practice models and discouraging attempts to limit their rights

Although the European Union is founded, inter alia, on the value of respect for the fundamental rights of minorities, it still lacks a coherent policy to protect its autochthonous national and linguistic minorities and their cultural heritage. In areas where the Treaties so allow, the European Commission should therefore legislate for the protection of national and linguistic minorities, or incorporate them into existing legislation. In other areas, it should use the Open Method of Coordination as much as possible to make recommendations to Member States or to promote the exchange of best practices in the area of protecting the rights of autochthonous national and linguistic minorities and supporting their contribution to Europe's cultural diversity. It should also defend these minorities against all national attempts to restrict their rights and freedoms, including the teaching of their language, self-expression in their language and its official use in public life.

8. Protection of the autochthonous national and linguistic minorities through increased cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe

According to the "informal division of competences" reflected in the shaping of the European post-war architecture of international organisations, the Council of Europe became the organisation dealing with human and minority rights, while the European Community/European Union is the one engaged in economic integration. Thus, the main instruments in the area of the rights of national and linguistic minorities in Europe were developed under the competence of the Council of Europe: the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. However, given the eventual transformation of the EU into an 'ever closer' political union, this situation must evolve towards the EU taking over the tasks of the Council of Europe within its borders and bringing them into the framework of EU rule of law monitoring. Good cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe on standards and rights has the potential to deepen and anchor these rights in the EU and its Member States, and to broaden their scope.

Reasoning:

As part of the implementation of the MinoritySafePack initiative, FUEN has organised two conferences on the "Future of Europe" in the first half of 2022 with local and international partners participating.

Europe is changing, the European Union is preparing to review its priorities and it is in the vital interest of the minorities to participate in the series of dialogues on the future of Europe, to make proposals and help shape the future of Europe. FUEN used the consultation series "Conference on the Future of Europe" initiated by the institutions of the European Union to clearly formulate the goals and expectations of the autochthonous minorities in Europe.

EFA, as the representative of many parties of national minorities in Europe, should officially support these demands and promote them to the EU bodies.