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EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

**Fifth periodical report
presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe
in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter**

THE NETHERLANDS

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

2012-2014

Fifth periodic report in respect of measures taken by the Netherlands in relation to the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Introduction

During the period 2012-14, the Netherlands has taken the steps necessary for the further strengthening of policy in respect of languages in the Netherlands that come under the protection of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This report examines the most significant developments during this period as seen in relation to the recommendations made in 2012 by the Committee of Ministers and the Committee of Experts. In order to outline a representative overview of this, we should first look back briefly at the ratification and entry into force of the European Charter in the Netherlands.

During the process of accepting the Charter, the Netherlands took on the commitment to apply the provisions in Part II of the Charter to the following regional or non-territorial languages: Limburgish, Low Saxon, Yiddish and the Romani languages. The provisions in the Charter came into force in the Kingdom of the Netherlands on 1 March 1998. Within the Kingdom, the European Charter applies only to the Netherlands.

With regard to the Frisian language in the province of Fryslân – and in compliance with Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Charter – the Netherlands has also pledged to apply at least thirty-five paragraphs or letters selected from the provisions in Part III of the Charter, including at least three selected from both Article 8 (Education) and Article 12 (Cultural Activities and Facilities) and, in each instance, at least one provision from Article 9 (Judicial Authorities), Article 10 (Administrative Authorities and Public Services Departments), Article 11 (Media) and Article 13 (Economic and Social Life).

In accepting the Charter, the Netherlands has committed itself to the implementation of forty-eight provisions in line with the menu system cited in the above paragraph. In respect of the Frisian language and culture, Cabinet policy was instrumental when selecting the provisions to be accepted.

The following paragraphs provide an overview of the measures adopted by the Netherlands to promote the use of the Frisian language in public life in conformity with the obligations entered into pursuant to Article 2.2 of the Charter, with the order of entries following that in the European Charter. Further, attention will also focus on the regional languages of Low Saxon and Limburgish and on the non-territorial languages of Yiddish and Romani.

Finally, some appendices have been enclosed with this report. The last appendix provides an overview of the organisations and associations in the Netherlands that have as their objective the protection and promotion of the Frisian language.

The Frisian language

Important steps were taken in the period 2012-14 in respect of protecting the Frisian language. Firstly, two important laws entered into force: the Use of Frisian Act (as of 1 January 2014 in respect of judicial and legal matters) and the Frisian Language (Attainment Targets) Act (as of 1 August 2014 in respect of determining educational objectives for the Frisian language). Secondly, a Frisian Language Body was set up on 1 January 2014. This body oversees the status and use of Frisian in the province of Fryslân. The body has a primarily advisory and reporting function, but also serves to place matters on the agenda. The Frisian Language Body replaces the Advisory Body for Matters Pertaining to Frisian Language Policy (COF), which was brought into being in 1998 pursuant to Article 7.4 of the European Charter as an advisory body for the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations in respect of the Frisian language. Thirdly, the Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture 2013-18 was brought into being. This administrative agreement was signed in March 2013, committing both central government and the province of Fryslân to agreements in various areas entered into by the Netherlands under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The framework within which the protection and promotion of the Frisian language has been placed is being further reinforced by making the endorsed provisions in the European Charter operational.

Education (Article 8)

Introduction

The command of language is a precondition for being able to participate and function fully in society. This applies as much to a command of the spoken language as it does to a command of the language in its written form. Learning to understand and speak their mother tongue comes more or less 'naturally' to children; however, the same is not true of reading and writing in that language. Given that competition with other languages is becoming increasingly fierce in terms of both spoken and written use of the Frisian language, learning to read and write Frisian is essential for its continued existence. In this context, what is referred to as the continuous learning path, from preschool age through to higher education, is very important for Frisian.

Therefore, the quality of education in general, and of Frisian-language education in particular, is a Cabinet priority, and the Cabinet is making additional annual investment in Frisian-language education within the context of the Material Preservation of Frisian (MIF, see Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture 2013-18).

One important area under attention relates to concerns about the lack of qualified teachers of Frisian. The Education Inspectorate has observed that some 40% of teachers in primary and secondary education do not possess an appropriate qualification or competence in relation to teaching the subject of Frisian language and culture. Central government and the province share these concerns.

To that end, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has agreed with the province that Fryslân will be making efforts in the immediate future to reinforce the support base for Frisian among schools and teachers. Within that context, the province of Fryslân has acquired additional powers in recent years in relation to Frisian-language education. One important reason for this is that the province is considered to be in a unique position to safeguard the quality of Frisian, which can make a positive contribution to the quality of the educational subject of Frisian. One example in that context is the decentralisation of attainment targets for Frisian, these now being under the auspices of the province of Fryslân.

Central government, the province and the educational sector will continue to work in close alliance to improve Frisian education. Education is a pre-eminent example of a

subject on which the new Frisian Language Body can report. It is also a subject handled comprehensively in the Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture 2013-18.

Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture 2013-18

Specific agreements have been made in the administrative agreement in terms of Frisian-language education. The most important points are singled out below (the Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture 2013-18 (BFTC) has been enclosed as an appendix to this report).

Frisian in primary education

In 2013, 50% of schools in Fryslân were pursuing an active Frisian language policy. The province has set itself the objective before 2018 of expanding in absolute terms the number of schools by 20. A range of high-quality, Frisian-language education material is to be made available, both in physical and digital form, for systematic use by a large proportion of the schools. Schools will remain free to choose an alternative. The budget in respect of the Material Preservation of Frisian (MIF) has increased structurally by € 90,000.00 following the entry into force of the Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture. These resources will be employed for groups 1 and 2, whereas prior to 2013 it was only groups 3 to 8 inclusive which benefited from this budget. This measure has ensured that the existing amount per pupil is guaranteed. The powers to set the attainment targets for Frisian and the options for (partial) exemptions were amended in 2014 through the entry into force of the Frisian Language (Attainment Targets) Act (see explanatory note below).¹

Frisian in secondary education

The multilingual secondary education project will continue unabated and, by the end of this administrative agreement, will see an increase to at least ten regarding the number of locations in the province of Fryslân to offer a multilingual stream in secondary education at which Dutch, Frisian and English function as instruction languages. A range of high-quality, Frisian-language education material is to be made available, both in physical and digital form, for systematic use by a large proportion of the secondary education schools. However, schools are at liberty to choose an alternative.

Since the academic year 2013-14, an annual budget of € 65,000.00 has been made available by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science for the subject of Frisian at Frisian secondary education schools, this being pursuant to the administrative agreement. This amount is based on a fixed amount per pupil, multiplied by the total number of pupils in the first year of secondary school in the province of Fryslân.

Continuous learning paths

As already underlined in the introduction to the Education section, a continuous learning path is of great importance to the preservation of Frisian. Work on achieving this is in full progress. In 2014, there were 170 Frisian-language or bilingual playgroups and crèches. Moreover, there were 70 trilingual (Dutch + Frisian + English) primary schools. A trilingual stream was created at the NHL and Stenden colleges of higher education for optimum preparation when teaching at trilingual primary schools. Furthermore, in secondary education, where this development was implemented a little later, there are now five multilingual schools.

It should be noted in this regard that a continuous aim of both the province and the education partners concerned is to be in tune with educational developments nationally. For multiple reasons, this is making Frisian-language education of interest to parents and pupils.

¹ The aim of this legislation is in part to amend the Primary Education Act, Secondary Education Act and Resource Centres Act in connection with education in the Frisian language (Frisian Language (Attainment Targets) Act).

Frisian in higher education

The University of Groningen has initiated a new university BA course called 'Minorities & Multilingualism' in which the Frisian language and culture have been emphatically included. This course is being supported financially for six years by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to the tune of € 120,000 per annum, with the province of Fryslân also contributing towards this at the same time. This is safeguarding the study and teaching of the Frisian language and culture at bachelor degree level. The new initiative has resulted in more enrolments over the past two years than was the case for the former university course of 'Frisian'. A master's degree has been created in addition to this within the context of the University Campus Fryslân (UCF, Leeuwarden). This BA course, "Minorities & Multilingualism: into the Frisian laboratory", ties in with the Masters in multilingualism at the UCF. The first batch of students to take this master's degree has now completed the programme. It can be noted further that a lectureship in 'Multilingualism in Education and Teaching' has been created in a joint venture by the NHL and Stenden colleges of higher education, and this was operational during the time of the report.

Bill on Frisian Language Attainment Targets

For some time, the debate on the teaching of Frisian has centred on decentralising policy for the Frisian language from central government to the province of Fryslân. This debate emerged from the Ladders Committee report which argued the case for such decentralisation. The Hoekstra steering committee was subsequently assigned to ascertain how policy for Frisian could be decentralised to Fryslân. The steering committee's inquiry concerning the Frisian language focused entirely on the educational attainment targets and concluded that decentralisation was legally possible. The Cabinet supported in theory the principle whereby a province should be given control over a policy pertaining to Frisian when Frisian functions as an official language in that province alongside Dutch.

The aforementioned inquiries and reports resulted in a bill, the intent of which was to decentralise attainment targets for the Frisian language. This legislation, which entered into force in August 2014, provides that the Provincial Council of Fryslân will set the attainment targets for Frisian, subject to conditions. Experts are placed in charge – persons who can oversee the sector at close quarters and assess whether a more customised approach is possible in respect of each school. It is by this means that the quality of Frisian-language education is to be improved. This legislation's entry into force also made partial exemptions possible, instead of the sole previous option of total exemption. A partial exemption from providing Frisian-language tuition gives greater freedom for differentiation among exemptions and can thus ensure that education in the Frisian language better reflects a school's circumstances and pupil profiles.

Implementation of this bill was taken up, with the province of Fryslân taking follow-up steps at present in contact with the education sector.

Judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services departments (Chapters 9 and 10 of the European Charter).

During the period 2012-14, the Netherlands has continued unabated with policy efforts aimed at Frisian in administrative and judicial matters. The outcomes required from that process have been achieved within the period up to 2014 in terms of the promotion of the Frisian language in administrative and judicial matters. The Use of Frisian Act which came into effect on 1 January 2014 provides that Frisian and Dutch are the official languages in the province of Fryslân (Section 2). The legislation prescribes the cases and ways in which Frisian citizens are entitled to use their own language in the courtroom and when in contact with administrative bodies, whether this be Frisian or Dutch. In addition to the provisions about taking the oath and the foundation of a Frisian Language Body, The Use of Frisian Act also contains pre-existing provisions concerning the use of Frisian in administrative and judicial matters which have been harmonised and accentuated. The Act also includes the duty of care that both central government and the province of Fryslân have in respect of the Frisian language and culture (Section 2a).

Alongside the agreements between central government and the province of Fryslân, agreements have also been put in place between central government, the province of Fryslân and Frisian municipalities. This occurs, for example, in cases that involve administrative upscaling. The division of municipalities in the province of Fryslân was amended as of 1 January 2014 by means of municipal mergers and border readjustments. To safeguard against linguistic rights taking a turn for the worse following these changes, an Administrative Agreement on Frisian Language Policy was concluded on 4 November 2013 between central government, the province of Fryslân and the relevant municipalities. This agreement was compiled in Frisian as well as in Dutch, and both versions have been published.

The conclusion of such administrative agreements is standard policy in relation to the merger of municipalities in the province of Fryslân. This was also implemented in the administrative upscaling that produced the municipality of Súdwest-Fryslân. The content of the administrative agreements is agreed following negotiations between the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), the province and the municipalities concerned. The content of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages are among the considerations taken into account, serving as points of departure for such administrative agreements.

In addition to administrative upscaling, there have also been discussions in the Netherlands in recent years concerning provincial upscaling. The Cabinet has always expressed the view that it has no ambitions for provincial upscaling as far as it concerns the position of the province of Fryslân. If initiatives were to arise from the bottom up to bring about a provincial merger in which the province of Fryslân was involved, a sufficient social base of support for this would have to be in evidence. It goes without saying that an administrative merger would always have to reflect the protected status of Frisians, their language and culture under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Frisian in judicial and legal matters

The Use of Frisian Act determines the cases and ways in which the Frisian language may be used in judicial and legal matters. Previously, this was regulated by the Act on the Use of the Frisian Language in Judicial and Legal Matters. Through the entry into force of the Judicial Map (Revision) Act on 1 January 2013, the number of districts and courts in the Netherlands has been reduced from nineteen to (initially) ten and, because of the division of the East Netherlands district on 1 April 2013, now to eleven courts. The number of jurisdiction areas and courts of appeal has been reduced from five to four. Thus the review of the judicial map is leading to increases of scale in legal matters. Since 1

January 2013, there has been both a Court of the North Netherlands as well as an Arnhem-Leeuwarden jurisdiction area, of which Fryslân is a part.

The Cabinet is aware of the vulnerability of the use of the Frisian language in judicial and legal matters. Therefore, central government will ensure that the existing legal position of Frisian-speaking litigants is guaranteed and not diminished in the review of the judicial map. If necessary, interpreters will be engaged to allow the use of Frisian in court. It has been agreed in the Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture that central government will monitor the use of Frisian in court cases in the province of Fryslân. Both the Court of the North Netherlands and the Arnhem-Leeuwarden Court of Appeal indicate that use is being made of Frisian in court cases in the respective courts. The court of appeal has developed a form which sets out the use of the Frisian language in court. Since 2014, one form has been registered. In addition, the court of appeal has also employed a translation agency or interpreter.

Frisian in administrative matters

The Use of Frisian Act determines that citizens may use Frisian when in contact with administrative bodies with offices in Fryslân of that use Fryslân as their area of operation. This right applies to both written and verbal communication. Pursuant to this legislation, administrative bodies in the province of Fryslân that do not come under central government are obliged to draft a regulation and policy plan in respect of the use of Frisian. Central government, the province and municipalities are working together to meet these obligations. In the case of plans for municipal mergers, the province and central government will endeavour to notify the municipalities concerned of the need to adopt an adequate municipal language policy.

In the case of administrative mergers, central government and the province of Fryslân will make agreements in consultation with the parties concerned with regard to protecting the position of the Frisian language in the new municipality that is to be created. In the case of municipal mergers, these agreements will be made with the municipalities concerned and the Provincial Executive of Fryslân. The province will encourage the implementation of a language policy among administrative bodies not under central government and without registered offices in the province of Fryslân (but whose field of operation extends to the province of Fryslân or part thereof) and among judicial bodies which have the province of Fryslân as their territory.

With regard to the use of Frisian when in contact with the police incident room, it has been determined that this can be performed in Frisian as much as is possible. Central government and the Safety Region (Fryslân) make it possible for citizens to use the Frisian language as much as is possible in their contact with the regional fire service, ambulance service or police.

Media (Article 11 of the European Charter)

In addition to existing traditional media (the press, radio and television), the presence of the 'new' media (internet, video-on-demand, social media, etc.) became even more conspicuous during the period 2012-14 than it had been previously. Central government and the province are working to ensure that Frisian is also given a suitable and strong position in the new media. The province of Fryslân aims to make the position enjoyed by Frisian in all forms of new media (the internet and electronic mail) at least equal to that enjoyed by Frisian in traditional media (particularly radio and television) in Fryslân.

Omrop Fryslân

Of the more traditional types of media, the position enjoyed by Omrop Fryslân is a unique one. Omrop Fryslân broadcasts radio twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It broadcasts informative and cultural programmes during the daytime, and music programmes during the evening and at night. Regional television broadcasts just over one hour of original material per weekday. There are 27 hours of Frisian programming broadcast via NOS on the national channels each year: 21 hours of broadcasting time for Frisian-language documentaries (FryslânDoc) and six hours of broadcasting time each year for schools television and secondary education.

NOS offers Frisian-language school television programmes for primary education (10 hours per annum) via the internet. These programmes are provided by the national television department of Omrop Fryslân and are also broadcast via the regional channel.

Central government and the province are pursuing a policy actively to maintain and promote the Frisian language and culture, including through the use of media. In accordance with the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, central government will be making sufficient resources available for full and multifaceted Frisian programming on radio, television and the internet. Production of such Frisian-language programming has been placed with Omrop Fryslân. Omrop Fryslân enjoys a special position with regard to safeguarding the Frisian language as a second national language in the Netherlands. This pertains in particular to the special role of the regional broadcaster in the province of Fryslân in terms of the preservation, promotion and living use of Frisian. Central government has committed itself in the Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture to reflect this committee's recommendations concerning the necessity regarding Frisian-language media *and* specific policy of making such programming possible.²

Cutbacks to the budget for regional broadcasting have been announced in the Coalition Agreement. Cutbacks to the total budget for regional broadcasting – including Omrop Fryslân – will be €17 million as of 1 January 2017. There have been several debates in the House of Representatives on this subject and on the position of Omrop Fryslân.

In 2014, the Council for Culture produced an advisory report concerning the future of public media network.³ The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is elaborating further plans that will be taking into account the special position of Omrop Fryslân as has also been reconfirmed by the Committee to Safeguard the Frisian Language in the Media. Thus the position of and the role that will be played by Omrop Fryslân, this being the provision of Frisian-language programming, is not up for discussion in this process, and it is clear that none of these developments will have any consequences for Omrop Fryslân. Furthermore, the concessionary period for Omrop Fryslân, which terminated at the end of 2013, has now been renewed for five years. This ensures that Omrop Fryslân will remain

² Advisory Report by the Temporary Committee to Safeguard the Frisian Language in the Media). See: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32827-47.html>

³ <http://www.cultuur.nl/upload/documents/adviezen/De-tijd-staat-open-28-maart.pdf>

the designated regional media institution for the province of Fryslân in that period and that it will receive a commensurate budget.

At the provincial level, the province of Fryslân has set up a Frisian Media Fund to promote innovations in both the media and investigative journalism in Fryslân. Annually, € 100,000 will be at the disposal of Frisian-language media up to and including 2015.

During the period 2012-15, there was little change to the current regional broadcasters and, specifically, little change to Omrop Fryslân. Looking ahead to the period of 2016 and beyond, the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science sent on 7 September 2015 a policy letter to the House of Representatives, outlining future plans for regional public broadcasting.⁴ This also considered the special position of the Frisian language. The province of Fryslân is to be involved in its further elaboration. This letter followed on from the plan for the regional broadcasters published in April 2015 and called 'The New Public Regional Media Company: committed and dependable'.⁵ The Council for Culture issued recommendations concerning this plan.

Owing to the stage of planning, the post-2015 follow-up cannot be prejudged as yet, but the policy intentions are as follows. The new Regional Public Broadcaster (RPO) that is to be founded as of 1 January 2016 will be responsible in the case of all broadcasting organisations for national policy and the administrative duties of the current regional broadcasters (e.g. personnel, finance and technology). Regional editorial staffs will retain autonomy over content according to region and will retain their own responsibility for regional media diversity. This also applies to Omrop Fryslân. The next report will report in greater detail on the content of this Cabinet's plans.⁶

⁴<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/kamerstukken/2015/09/07/kamerbrief-met-reactie-op-plan-het-nieuwe-publieke-regionale-mediabedrijf/kamerbrief-met-reactie-op-plan-het-nieuwe-publieke-regionale-mediabedrijf.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/vergaderstukken/2015/04/01/het-nieuwe-publieke-regionale-mediabedrijf-betrokken-en-betrouwbaar>

⁶ See: <http://www.cultuur.nl/adviezen/media/advies-over-rapport-roos/item3454>

Cultural activities and facilities (Article 12 of the European Charter)

Art and culture are alive and flourishing in the province of Fryslân. To a significant extent, the Frisian language is the working language for cultural activities. Frisian cultural infrastructure includes a number of basic facilities, namely: the Tryater theatre company, Tresoar, Keunstwurk, Afûk and the Fryske Akademy. Alongside these basic facilities, there are more than 300 amateur dramatic associations (including 46 associations for young persons' drama), 29 Iepenloftspullen (open-air theatres), 289 music associations and 530 choirs.

Music schools and creativity centres also play an important role in strengthening and keeping alive Frisian language and culture. Furthermore, there are various publishing houses that publish Frisian language books. This broad infrastructure is facilitated by knowledge institutions supported by the province. The involvement of central government in supporting Frisian-language cultural activities and facilities is laid down in Article 12 of the European Charter (12.1, 12.2 and 12.3). Changes to the funding of the cultural institutions in question will be discussed bilaterally at the earliest possible stage between central government and the province of Fryslân.

A milestone for the city of Leeuwarden and for the Frisian language and culture is the choice of Leeuwarden as European Capital of Culture in 2018. This is a golden opportunity to showcase the Frisian language and culture on the world stage. Seen from that perspective, Leeuwarden's selection as European Capital of Culture in 2018 is good news indeed. The province of Fryslân is aiming to rise to the challenge.

Theatre: Tryater

Tryater is a professional theatre company that employs the Frisian language and for which it has been possible to remain operational thanks to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science. The company produces Frisian-language theatre for adults and young people. The Tryater Theatre Company forms part of the national basic infrastructure. Tryater will be evaluated with due regard for the terms of reference in the Government Memorandum on Culture Policy. Assessment by the government shall be carried out by the Council for Culture.

Financial support for Tryater will be provided in line with applicable standards, provided that the following exception is made; in respect of the geographic distribution of performances, it can suffice only to put on performances in the province of Fryslân. Performances will be put on outside the province on an occasional basis.

The province of Fryslân will ensure the conditions are created to make possible an actual geographic distribution of performances by subsidising performances which would otherwise not be possible without additional support owing to the limited capacity of the auditorium or the location of the performance venue.

Academia: Fryske Akademy

Stichting Fryske Akademy in Leeuwarden is an institution for academic research in relation to the Frisian language and culture. It has been made possible for this foundation to continue its work thanks to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the province of Fryslân. The Fryske Akademy is affiliated to the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and forms part of the institutions and research organisation of the KNAW. The Fryske Akademy and the KNAW determine the nature of their connection themselves in mutual consultation, thus allowing the continued independence and unity of the Fryske Akademy. The Fryske Akademy retains its foundation status and can make use of KNAW facilities.

In 1990 (as a result of the extramural operation) and in 1994 (as a result of premises reform) the Minister of Education, Culture and Science transferred to the KNAW the

financial resources for the Fryske Akademy, including the resources for premises.. The following applies in that respect:

The national resources transferred to the KNAW have been earmarked and are intended for research by the Fryske Akademy in respect of academic subjects and for the institution's premises;

the KNAW will evaluate the quality of research performed by the Fryske Akademy; this also includes the effectiveness of the programmes, partly in relation to activities in this academic field elsewhere.

Literature: Tresoar, FLMD, It Fryske Boek and the Dutch Foundation for Literature

The Frysk Letterkundich Museum en Dokumintaasjesintrum (FLMD) became part of Tresoar in 2002. The FLMD foundation is a participant in the Letterhoeke joint scheme, and is represented in the Tresoar general administrative body.

The province promotes the production, distribution and reading of Frisian-language books. The Stichting It Fryske Boek (IFB) was subsidised to carry out this task. Within the context of better interpreting and broadening this promotion of literature, the intention was announced that these tasks were to be transferred from It Fryske Boek to Tresoar.

Digitisation is a tool used to make literature more accessible and to increase its distribution. One of the goals of Tresoar's activities is to make a major part of the Frisian literary corpus digitally available and accessible. The Dutch Foundation for Literature is also focusing its activities on Frisian-language literature. To that end, Frisian writers also have access to grants from the Dutch Foundation for Literature aimed at authors and translators. Further to this, the specific market and marketing conditions in which these writers are operating is also taken into account.

Stichting Keunstwurk and Afûk

The knowledge centre for Frisian art and culture focuses on amateur art activities, cultural education and the professional arts, and is involved in the visual arts, design, theatre, dance, music and multidisciplinary projects. This is the Stichting Keunstwurk in Leeuwarden.

Afûk is an institution that promotes language, being involved in the transfer, development and promotion of the Frisian language in respect of all (social) domains in this administrative agreement. A support desk, Stipepunt 2.0, has also been set up at Afûk where administrative bodies and other organisations can go with queries about the use of Frisian, drafting policy plans with regard to the Frisian language, courses and training programmes, etc.

Afûk plays an important role in promoting Frisian in everyday life. Above all, this organisation makes efforts to connect organisations and individuals within the Frisian-language sphere, this being in close contact with the province of Fryslân.

Economic and social life (Article 13 of the European Charter)

Following on from the provisions to which the Netherlands has subscribed in the European Charter under Article 13, the Netherlands has placed a number of objectives in the Administrative Agreement on the Frisian Language and Culture (BFTC) in relation to economic and social life.

Further to this, it should be borne in mind that there is little in the way of legislation and regulation in respect of language use, language behaviour and language codes. This does not alter the fact that use of the Frisian language in the economic and social sector can be promoted in a facilitating sense. Where possible, it is also important to remove any legal impediments to Frisian and thereby promote the use of Frisian in economic and social life.

For years, alongside the Frisian Language Body, a support centre for the use of Frisian has existed de facto in the form of the Afûk foundation. The advisory duties of this support centre have been expanded to meet the provisions in the Use of Frisian Act, with a focus also being placed on other social domains as mentioned in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

One domain where language plays a major role is that of the health and welfare sector. It is essential for vulnerable and care-dependent people to be able to express themselves in their mother tongue. In the BFTC, the province of Fryslân has set itself the goal of implementing an integral language policy within the health and welfare sector in the province of Fryslân by the end of 2015. The project "Frysk yn 'e Soarch" (Frisian in (Health)care) is important in that context; this project is being continued in the period up to and including 2018.

Efforts are also being made with the Frisian business community, in partnership with the umbrella organisations and representatives from the business community, on improving the position of Frisian in the socio-economic domain. Central government and the province of Fryslân will be involving the Frisian Language Body with further policy development over the next few years.

Cross-border exchanges (Article 14 of the European Charter)

Frisians enjoy a special position in Fryslân as a cultural and linguistic minority. Together with the province of Fryslân, central government is also committed to publicising abroad Fryslân's special position in the Netherlands in accordance with Articles 14a and 14b of the European Charter. Within that context, it is good news indeed that Leeuwarden has been selected to be European Capital of Culture in 2018. This is a golden opportunity to showcase the Frisian language and culture throughout the world. The province of Fryslân is aiming to rise to the challenge.

Building and maintaining networks of people or organisations that devote themselves to minority or regional languages is of obvious importance, given that much can be learned from other languages and the people dedicated to them (sharing best practices). Regions in the European Union with a regional or minority language are being given the opportunity to establish contact with one another. Relations with the Frisian language areas of Germany have long been of importance to Fryslân, including from a linguistic perspective. Additionally, a focus is also being placed on relations with other linguistic minorities in Europe.

In the Netherlands, it is the province of Fryslân which is maximising its efforts in that regard. The province is a member of the European Network for the Promotion of Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) and makes optimum use of this network to organise international contacts that have regions with a minority regional language (in countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain) within the context of various substantive themes.

The province helps to maintain the Mercator European Knowledge Centre for Multilingualism and Language Learning and endeavours to expand the knowledge which Mercator has gained in the area of multilingual education to other fields covered by the European Charter, such as cultural activities and economic and social life. The NPLD network can also be used for that purpose. The province is promoting – also in a financial sense – the creation of international (multilateral) exchange projects for young people from minority language regions.

Regional languages: Limburgish and Low Saxon

In previous reporting cycles, the responsibilities of central government or of decentralised authorities, as the case may be, in promoting regional languages. It is clear that central government, as a party to the Charter, bears ultimate responsibility for compliance with the Charter, even when it concerns those languages that come under the protection of Part II of the Charter. The Netherlands has decided in practice to place responsibility for the protection and promotion of regional languages with the decentralised authorities. This has the advantage of a tailor-made approach being applied as a policy principle, taking local circumstances into account.

In addition, this approach goes hand-in-hand with the initial fact that recognition of Low Saxon and Limburgish under Part II of the Charter came about at the express request of the provinces concerned. As a result of such recognition, they anticipated that provincial policy in respect of their own regional language would acquire greater prestige and would be more appreciated among their own population. Thus in this case it was not a question of delegating central policy but rather one of autonomous policy from the provinces concerned.

Low Saxon

The way in which policy takes shape in respect of Low Saxon varies from province to province and depends strongly on regional or even local influences. In the Cabinet's opinion, the difference in approach between the provinces can be explained to a significant degree by the authorities concerned wishing their policy to reflect as far as possible whatever is occurring on the ground locally, and in that respect Gelderland differs from Overijssel and Drenthe. This is a finding that has also been discussed in previous reports.

A Low Saxon Consultative Body has been set up to protect and promote Low Saxon, and this is located at the University of Groningen (RUG). It had been envisaged that this body would operate for at least four years – from 2010 to 2014 inclusive – after which an evaluation would be performed. In practice, the Low Saxon Consultative Body has had a more modest role over the past few years than originally anticipated. This was not so much because the focus on Low Saxon had diminished, but rather was as a result of its envisaged duties already being performed to a great extent quite adequately by other organisations, such as SONT.

In addition, the provinces in the Low Saxon language area, together with the municipalities of Ooststellingwerf and Weststellingwerf, have submitted a request to the government to protect Low Saxon henceforth under Part III of the Charter. In the opinion of the provinces and municipalities concerned, their policy in respect of Low Saxon already complies at present with at least 37 of the provisions in Part III of the Charter.

Owing to the ultimate responsibility of central government and, in particular, of the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK), it was justifiable for central government to ascertain carefully the extent to which the policy of the authorities concerned was indeed at the minimum level required by Part III. This study showed that the conditions could not be met regarding the application of Part III to the Low Saxon language.

This does not alter the fact that constructive dialogue is being conducted with some regularity by managers and civil servants in central government or, as the case may be, by representatives of the authorities in the region where Low Saxon is spoken. The regional language organisation SONT is emphatically a dialogue partner in this regard. These discussions will be continued in 2015. Naturally enough, the fifth monitoring cycle is a substantive point of reference in this context and contributes significantly towards the dialogue.

Limburgish

Since 2006, the province of Limburg has been conducting an active provincial regional language policy which, since 2007, has been an integrated component of the province's cultural policy. The policy objective is actively to protect, promote and encourage the continued use of Limburgish as a living language pursuant to the obligations that arise from the recognition of Limburgish under Part II of the European Charter.

Implementation of the regional language policy has been placed with Huis voor de Kunsten Limburg, Veldeke Limburg and the Raod veur 't Limburgs. A regional language official is located at the Huis voor de Kunsten Limburg, whose duties are to develop activities with a focus on regional language education, raising awareness of Limburgish and keeping it alive. In 2011, a special professor of Linguistic Culture was appointed for four years at the University of Maastricht. Among the professor's duties is to research multilingualism in Limburg and the ways in which that language is spoken, sung and/or written in Limburg. In addition, the province is making resources available for a number of annual activities in relation to the protection and preservation of the regional language.

Over the past few years, the province of Limburg's language policy has contributed towards a considerable increase in appreciation for Limburgish among Limburg's population. 75% of Limburgers speak Limburgish regularly and a high value is placed on the native language in Limburg, including among young people.

Non-territorial languages: Yiddish and the Sinti and Roma languages

In the case of Roma and Sinti, central government has taken the conscious decision to transfer a number of duties and powers to local authorities, in part because the Roma and Sinti communities in the Netherlands are extremely limited in size and are spread out throughout the kingdom. Direct contact between central government and Roma organisations does exist, but there is no question of structured dialogue or a specific target group policy.

In December 2013, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, also on behalf of the Minister of Security and Justice and the Minister and State Secretary of Education, Culture and Science, sent to the House of Representatives the Cabinet response to the "Monitor Inclusion: Baseline" concerning the integration and emancipation of Roma and Sinti.⁷ Several matters were raised as far as the Sinti and Roma languages were concerned. One of these is that too great a gulf exists between the social environments of certain groups of Roma and non-Roma and also between views held concerning, for example, school attendance. Nevertheless, there are some rays of light and positive developments; the majority of Roma and Sinti children attend and finish primary school, and the numbers attending secondary school is increasing. In addition, more and more Roma and Sinti teenagers are enrolling and completing courses at Regional Training Centres (ROCs) and in higher education.

The Cabinet considers the so-called "Roma Municipalities" (Amsterdam South East, Capelle aan den IJssel, Ede, Enschede, Lelystad, Nieuwegein, Oldenzaal, 's-Hertogenbosch, Utrecht, Nuenen and Veldhoven) to be important partners in improving the position of Roma and Sinti in the Netherlands. For 2013, the Cabinet made available the sum of € 60,000 to the National Platform for Roma Municipalities, in part to foster an exchange of knowledge between these municipalities through the exchange of 'best practices' in relation to enforcement and integration.

Broadly speaking, central government efforts aim to improve the social position of Roma and Sinti. However, language is an inseparable part of this. Monitoring will be implemented every two years in order to keep abreast of developments. Apart from this monitoring, regular consultations are also being held with the National Information and Support Centre for Specific Target Groups (LISD) concerning the educational arrears policy. The LISD has been set up so that knowledge, information and expertise on the subject of education can be made accessible to the specific target groups – such as the Roma and Sinti – and developed further. It has not emerged from this that a need exists for education in Romani.

⁷ <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/12/02/kamerbrief-kabinetsreactie-monitor-inclusie-roma.html>