PRESS RELEASE

ARLeF writes to Ursula Von der Leyen. "The European Commission should protect minority languages"

ARLeF, the Regional Agency for the Friulian language, backs up an initiative launched by the Regional Council of Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Italy), based on a proposal from Councillor Diego Bernardis, to support the "Minority SafePack". The same view is shared by the NPLD - the european network of linguistic minorities.

The European Commission rejected the requests made by the Minority SafePack Initiative, signed by over one million EU citizens who spoke out to give better protection to minority languages. Such decision dissatisfied many. As a result, it led the European Parliament to take action (on 17 October, with 524 votes in favour, it had adopted a resolution on this European Citizens' Initiative). Also the Regional Council of Friuli-Venezia Giulia expressed its unfavourable opinion of the Commission's rejection with a motion presented by Councillor Diego Bernardis today, which was signed by members of both the majority and the opposition.

"This response from the Commission is quite unfortunate. It is a missed opportunity - said Eros Cisilino, President of ARLeF. The protection of minority languages takes place on several levels, from the local to the European one. The approval of the Minority SafePack, promoted by FUEN, could further encourage such action. Instead, now there are over a million citizens who expressed their voices through a direct democracy instrument and were left unheard. In addition, even the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which provides for the obligation to respect and promote the rights of minorities, was left unapplied.
In line with the motion presented by Councillor Diego Bernardis in the Regional Council today, we will play our part by sending an official communication to President Ursula Von der Leyen to express our concerns. This position of the European Union is harmful to the democratic life of Europe and the trust minority communities have in the institutions. We hope that the Commission will amend its questionable choice and give linguistic minorities the attention they deserve."

Several regional assemblies in Europe have spoken out against the Commission's position. The concerns are shared by NPLD - the European Network of Linguistic Minorities, which includes the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region represented by the Director of ARLeF, William Cisilino (also NPLD VicePresident). NPLD has defended minority language rights by calling on the Commission to reconsider its position and meet the expectations of the citizens who belong to minority language communities.

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