

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 2 July 2024

MIN-LANG (2024) 13

EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

**Evaluation by the Committee of Experts
of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action
contained in the Committee of Experts' seventh evaluation report on the**

GERMANY

Introduction

1. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter referred to as “the Charter”) is a treaty of the Council of Europe putting obligations on its states parties to protect and promote the country’s traditional regional or minority languages in all fields of public life: education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges. The Charter was ratified by Germany on 16 September 1998, entered into force on 1 January 1999 and applies to the following languages: Danish, Upper Sorbian, Lower Sorbian, North Frisian, Sater Frisian, Low German and Romani.

2. The Committee of Experts monitors the implementation of the Charter. Each state party shall present a periodical report on the implementation of the Charter every five years. On the basis of the periodical report, the Committee of Experts adopts an evaluation report in which it makes “**recommendations for immediate action**” and “further recommendations” on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in the state concerned. Based on this evaluation report, the Committee of Ministers adopts its recommendations to the state party.

3. Two and a half years after the due date of its periodical report, the state party shall present information on the implementation of every recommendation for immediate action¹ that the Committee of Experts has made in its evaluation report. The Committee of Experts then adopts an evaluation of the implementation of these recommendations. The “further recommendations” by the Committee of Experts are examined after reception of the next periodical report and the on-the-spot visit to the state party. Five-yearly periodical reports shall contain comprehensive information about the implementation of all Charter undertakings and all recommendations by the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers.

4. Germany submitted the **information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action** contained in the Committee of Experts’ seventh evaluation report² on 14 December 2023. This **evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action** is based on the information received from the German authorities, as well as from representatives of the regional or minority language speakers, which were included in Germany’s information document or submitted pursuant to Article 16.2 of the Charter. As far as the compliance of Germany with all its undertakings under the Charter is concerned, the Committee of Experts refers to its seventh evaluation report. The Committee of Experts will examine the implementation of all of the undertakings concerning all of the regional or minority languages in the next evaluation report.

5. In the information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action, the German authorities have, on their own initiative, also reported on general developments concerning regional or minority languages and on steps taken in response to other issues raised by the Committee of Experts in its seventh evaluation report. The Committee of Experts welcomes this information, which shows several important developments and has used it in its evaluation, where appropriate. In addition, the German authorities have included comments from bodies and associations representing the regional or minority language speakers in a distinct chapter of the information document submitted. The Committee of Experts considers this good practice as regards including the views of the regional or minority language speakers in the Information on the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action. It would also like to thank the representatives of the regional or minority languages speakers for their comprehensive and valuable contribution.

6. This evaluation was adopted by the Committee of Experts on 20 June 2024.

¹ In accordance with Committee of Ministers Decisions “Strengthening the monitoring mechanism of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” ([CM/Del/Dec\(2018\)1330/10.4e](#)), para. 1.a.

² Seventh evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, [MIN-LANG \(2022\) 7](#).

Examination of the implementation by Germany of the recommendations for immediate action

I. General issues

7. Several legal and policy measures have been taken by the federal authorities and by the *Länder* to further the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages.

8. In July 2022 the Constitution of the *Land* of Brandenburg was amended to specifically include a reference to the protection and promotion by the *Land* of the cultivation of Low German (Article 34.4 Art and Culture). A law protecting Low German is in preparation. The second Plan to strengthen Lower Sorbian was adopted by the government in June 2022. It contains 36 measures, which also make reference to the Charter's provisions. In February 2023 the government adopted the Multilingualism Strategy: assessment and strategic development of linguistic diversity in the education system in *Land* of Brandenburg (hereafter, Multilingualism Strategy), which contains recommendations for Low German and Lower Sorbian and makes reference to the Charter. In September 2023, in a process to extend the application of the Charter, the parliament of Brandenburg agreed to the adoption of new commitments for Lower Sorbian and for Low German.³

9. In the framework of the support for structural change in the coal-mining region of Lusatia, federal funding has been used since 2022 for projects promoting Upper and Lower Sorbian and Sorbian culture.⁴ Under the Coal Region Investment Act, the Foundation for the Sorbian People will continue to receive federal funding for the implementation of measures to preserve Upper and Lower Sorbian, the Sorbian culture and tradition (up to €19 million by the end of 2031 in Brandenburg and up to €42.5 million by the end of 2038 in the Free State of Saxony).

10. In the Free State of Saxony the educational “2plus” model has been evaluated since the 2022/2023 school year and this includes an assessment of the Upper Sorbian language skills of 8th grade pupils in accordance with the CEFR.⁵ The pilot phase has been finalised. Starting with the 2023/2024 school year the language skills assessment will be conducted every year.

11. The post of Commissioner for Sater Frisian⁶, established at the *Oldenburgische Landschaft*, a regional public authority and funded by the *Land* of Lower Saxony with €30 000 per year since 2020, became a full-time position in November 2022, thanks to additional funding from the federal budget (through the Federal Ministry of the Interior). The appointment has been made permanent since. The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Lower Saxony continued to provide co-financing, in equal amounts (€ 50 000 each), in 2023.

12. Finally, in order to mark the 25th anniversary of the Charter a debate about and in some of the regional or minority languages in Germany was held in the Federal Parliament, on 2 March 2023. The initiative came from the Low German working group, an unofficial group of Low German speaking members of the Federal Parliament established in 2022. The Committee of Experts welcomes this initiative.

Education

13. The information provided by the authorities does not always include the pre-school level. In some cases, the authorities state that data on the use of regional or minority languages is not collected. The Committee of Experts underlines the importance of early childhood education for developing language

³ These measures were already announced or envisaged, see 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, paras. 7, 54, 62.

⁴ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 9.

⁵ This measure was already announced, see 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para.48.

⁶ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 61.

competence; the pre-school level belongs to a continued offer of regional or minority language education and should be addressed when measures to strengthen such education are taken.

14. As far as teaching the regional or minority languages is concerned, which is organised in various formats and for different numbers of hours, the Committee of Experts reiterates that regional or minority languages should be taught at least three hours per week, in particular if the language is not a well-established language with a strong speaker community. Regional or minority languages should also be taught as an integral part of the curriculum. At pre-school level, according to the Charter provisions, at least a substantial part of education should be provided in the regional or minority language; this implies that it has to be used for at least half of the activities that the children carry out at kindergarten.⁷ Measures to increase the time for which regional or minority languages are used and the number of hours are also part of strengthening regional or minority language education.

Media

15. In the information document, the authorities refer to the independence of the media from the state in several places and therefore point out their limited possibility to influence the provisions of supporting regional or minority languages. The Committee of Experts maintains its view that promoting minority language broadcasting through financial incentives or licensing requirements would not infringe the independence of the media.⁸

16. In this context, the Committee of Experts regrets that *Platradio*, a new Low German radio and media service funded by Schleswig-Holstein, had to stop broadcasting after several months due to legal issues raised by the Media Council of the Media Authority Hamburg/Schleswig-Holstein.⁹ The Schleswig - Holstein authorities informed the Committee of Experts that they are currently looking for legal solutions and an organisation to implement the project in order to establish a Low German media platform and daily radio broadcast in Low German. The financial means are foreseen in the 2024 *Land* budget and €420 000 are available for 2024-2026. The Committee of Experts is looking forward to receiving information about the legal solutions to be found, which could then also serve as a model for the promotion of the other minority languages.

17. The Committee of Experts reiterates the importance of media in the promotion of regional or minority languages. However, for media to have an impact in this respect, broadcasts in regional or minority languages have to be of a sufficient duration and frequency.¹⁰

North Frisian and the trademark and patent law

18. In the seventh monitoring cycle, the issue of the registration of “Öömrang” as a trademark and the view of the German Patent and Trademark Office (DPMA) had been brought to the attention of the Committee of Experts, which invited the competent authorities to examine the legal situation, in light of Article 7.2 of the Charter, and provide information in the next monitoring cycle. The German authorities have provided already at this stage clarifications and information on the measures taken. The Committee of Experts will address this issue, bearing in mind the extensive efforts made by German federal and *Land* authorities and the concerns of the speakers.

19. In June 2021, the Frisian cultural association on the island of Amrum, “Öömrang Ferian”, brought to the attention of the Minorities Commissioner of Schleswig-Holstein a legal dispute between the association and the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) about the registration for EU trademark

⁷ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 14.

⁸ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 37.

⁹ The Media Council reportedly considered that the constitutional principle of the independence of media from the state was breached, as the state is not allowed to exert influence on content or funding. The Media Council declared itself in favour of promoting regional or minority languages in broadcasting, but this should be done in a “long-term and independent manner”. See media reports at https://www.ndr.de/kultur/norddeutsche_sprache/plattdeutsch/Fehlende-Staatsferne-Medienrat-stoppt-Platradio-platradio142.html; <https://www.heimatbund.de/aktuelles/platradio-bleibt-ein-erfolg.html>; <https://www.radioszene.de/182273/platradio.html>

¹⁰ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 58.

protection by various applicants of descriptive terms and/or phrases in North Frisian. Two specific cases were raised: the registration of “Öömrang”, an adjective simply meaning “people or things from the Island of Amrum”, by an US wine and spirits company and of the phrase “Rüm hart, klaar Kiming” (Broad heart, clear horizon), a traditional seafaring expression commonly used in particular in the North Frisian Island, by a souvenir seller on the island of Sylt. As a result, no one else, including North Frisian speakers, can use the terms for marketing goods produced locally in North Frisia.

20. The authorities of the *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein contacted the DPMA, the EUIPO, and the European Commission. They drew the attention to the case and argued for changes in favour of minority languages in the regulations pertaining to trade marks, which use criteria linked to population size, as well as for the inclusion of language as ground of discrimination in the relevant EU directive. It should be noted that, in respect of trade mark law, both the EUIPO and the European Commission replied and provided guidance on possible options for the North Frisian speakers. Further steps are under discussion, according to the information received from the German authorities. The Federal Government Commissioner for Matters relating to Ethnic German Resettlers and National Minorities also contacted EUIPO and the Federal Ministry of Justice, under whose authority DPMA functions, with respect to this case and asked for changes to the current practice in order to allow for the effective protection of the regional or minority languages.

21. In answering the request of the Committee of Experts to examine the situation, the Federal Ministry of Justice refers to the criterion of a significant share of the relevant population, which should recognise a term in order for it to be refused registration as a trade mark; this is decided on a case-by-case basis. DPMA decisions can be challenged, and a trade mark declared invalid. In relation to the German Constitution, which prohibits unequal treatment based on language, the prevailing doctrine is, according to information received, that this “does not include rules which, despite being applied in the context of a stigmatised characteristic, do not discriminate between persons but apply uniformly to all individuals subject to the law”.¹¹

22. The Committee of Experts welcomes that measures are taken by the authorities to address this issue. It shares the view that the application of trade mark and patent law does not take into account the particular conditions and needs of regional or minority languages and in practice might lead to a situation where the protection of regional or minority languages depends on whether they are known or understood by the majority population. It is looking forward to further information concerning the steps taken (see para. 20 above).

II. Recommendations for immediate action

1. Danish in the *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein

Recommendation for immediate action

Take further steps to develop the offer of radio and television programmes in Danish in particular with respect to the duration and frequency.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

23. The authorities refer to the 2021 agreement between the *Länder* Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony and Schleswig - Holstein concerning the public broadcaster *Norddeutscher Rundfunk* (*Staatsvertrag über den Norddeutschen Rundfunk/NDR-Staatsvertrag*, hereafter NDR agreement), which foresees in its Article 5.2 that “Northern Germany and the diversity of its regions, its culture as well as its regional or minority languages” are to be “regularly and appropriately” taken into account in the programming. They also indicate that, due to the independence of the media from the state, they cannot influence the programming in any other way, including as far as the frequency and duration are

¹¹ See the information document submitted by Germany, p. 22.

concerned. The authorities strive to take into account the interests of regional or minority language speakers when amending the relevant agreements between *Länder* under the media law.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

24. The Committee of Experts notes that no further steps have been taken to implement this recommendation. It recalls that, in its seventh evaluation report, it had already welcomed the NDR agreement and the subsequent announcements by NDR concerning its new offer, while underlining that the programmes “should be of a sufficient duration and frequency” in order to have an impact on the promotion of a language.¹² This was also the case for Danish. Looking at the entire presence of Danish in the media, on radio and television, whether public, private or *Offener Kanal* (“open channel”, a citizen-led public access broadcaster), the Committee of Experts had concluded that it was insufficient.¹³ In light of the information available, the Committee of Experts considers that further measures are needed from the authorities to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation for immediate action

Provide a clear legal basis for the use of Danish in civil and administrative court proceedings, in accordance with the undertakings ratified.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

25. The authorities state that there is already a clear legal basis for the use of Danish in civil and administrative court proceedings, taking also into account the ratification of the Charter. They reiterate that “to the extent that documents and evidence drafted in Danish are presented in a form that rules out any misunderstandings or errors in translation”, the undertakings ratified (9.1. b iii, 9.1.ciii) would be fulfilled. They explain that, under the current legislation, “any person with insufficient German language skills” is entitled to an interpreter. This applies also to those who only speak a regional or minority language and extends to records or documents. More specifically, the authorities indicate that pursuant to Article 142 (3) Civil Procedure Code (which states that courts may order the translation of documents drawn up in a “foreign language” by a certified translator), it is allowed to produce documents in Danish in civil proceedings. Courts may also decide to work with the document in a foreign language or order the relevant party to provide a translation from a certified translator. In case of evidence provided by witnesses or experts, the authorities indicate that pursuant to Article 185 of the Act on the Organisation of Courts (which requires an interpreter to be called in if the proceedings are attended by persons who do not speak German), if a Danish-speaking witness is appointed, the court must provide an interpreter. This applies also to hearings of experts. Moreover, a hearing may be conducted in Danish (literally in a “foreign language”, which the authorities indicate it also applies to any regional or minority language), if all participants have sufficient command in that language. As far as administrative proceedings are concerned, the provisions of the Act on the Organisation of Courts and of the Civil Procedure Code apply.

26. In their statement, the representatives of the Danish speakers indicate that the request to extend the provisions of Article 184 (2) of the Act on the Organisation of Courts, which guarantees “the right of the Sorbs to speak Sorbian before court in the home districts of the Sorbian population”¹⁴ to other regional or minority languages is being processed slowly by the Federal Ministry of Justice.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

27. The Committee of Experts notes that no further steps have been taken to implement this recommendation. It recalls that in the seventh evaluation report it had acknowledged that the German authorities interpret the existing provisions of the national legislation in the sense of the Charter

¹² See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 34.

¹³ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 47.

¹⁴ This measure was already announced, see 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 22.

undertakings. At the same time, it noted that the reference to “foreign language” is not sufficient, from the Charter’s perspective, to cover regional or minority languages.¹⁵ The current information provided by the German authorities confirms that the national legal provisions use the term “foreign language”, which the authorities interpret as also applying to regional or minority languages and, in this case, to Danish.

28. In addition, the Committee of Experts notes that the German authorities explain that persons who *do not speak German well enough* or speak *only* a regional or minority language are entitled to an interpreter. Article 185 of the Act on the Organisation of Courts, which is applicable to witnesses and experts, also refers to interpretation being provided for “persons who do not speak German”. The Committee of Experts underlines that the use of regional or minority languages in courts, in accordance with the undertakings ratified, should be possible irrespective of the person’s knowledge of the official language.

29. In light of this, the Committee of Experts considers that measures are needed in order to implement this recommendation and provide a clear legal basis for the use of Danish in civil and administrative court proceedings.

2. Upper Sorbian in the Free State of Saxony

Recommendation for immediate action

Ensure that a sufficient number of teachers is available for Upper Sorbian education at all levels.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

30. According to the information provided by the authorities, the University of Leipzig continues to provide teacher training. The authorities continue to implement a package of measures adopted in 2016, comprising recruitment of prospective students to the teacher training programme, adaptation of entry requirements, recruitment from abroad, in-service language training of teachers, recruitment and training of Sorbian-speaking graduates without formal teaching qualifications for Sorbian (*Seiteneinsteiger*).

31. The representatives of the Upper and Lower Sorbian speakers commend the measures put in place by the Free State of Saxony and the *Land* of Brandenburg but note that they have not been sufficient to reverse the negative trend. There is still a shortage of teachers, and this is a threat to Upper and Lower Sorbian in the education system. In their view, both Saxony and Brandenburg need to develop a concept and action plan, in co-operation with the representatives of the speakers. In practice, further incentives are needed to encourage participation of teachers and childcare staff in language courses. They may include allowing participation in such courses during working hours or in return for a reduction in working hours, support throughout the career for teachers to improve their language skills, different bonuses for teachers who are qualified in Upper or Lower Sorbian, teach bilingually or in Upper or Lower Sorbian, as well as for institutions with qualified language staff. In addition, access of graduates without formal teaching qualifications for Sorbian or of teachers from abroad should be simplified. According to the representatives of the speakers, it is also necessary to collect data about the Upper or Lower Sorbian language skills or interest to learn Upper or Lower Sorbian for all students joining university in Saxony and Brandenburg, especially those preparing for a teaching career, and to inform them about the language courses. A guiding principle would be a long-term planning and help for teachers and childcare staff to learn Sorbian as part of on-the-job training in their daily working routine. Further co-operation is needed between authorities, including across *Länder*, and institutions. More co-ordination is needed between the ministry in charge of education and the university as regards enrolment requirements in case of university training for graduates without formal teaching qualification for Sorbian. More information should be available during training and during the career on the language training options. Additional language training should be encouraged and rewarded. In addition, schools should co-operate more closely including in terms of staff.

¹⁵ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 21.

32. As regards in particular the Free State of Saxony, the representatives of the speakers commend the Sorbian language school at the *Land* Office for Schools and Education in Bautzen for offering free language courses to teachers as well as childcare staff, although incentives are needed to encourage participation in the language courses. A resolution adopted by the Sorbian School Association and the Federal Board of *Domowina* states that Sorbian schools need a special status, in particular as regards the staff ratio and class sizes, that a Sorbian department is needed at the *Land* Office for Schools and Education and in the Ministry of Culture and that Sorbian teachers and other staff in the Free State of Saxony should be combined in a pool of teaching staff.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

33. The Committee of Experts notes that none of the measures described by the authorities appear to be new additions and no additional steps have been taken to implement this recommendation. It recalls that in its previous evaluation reports it has already taken note of the measures put in place by the Free State of Saxony and, despite these measures, the insufficient number of teachers continued to raise serious concerns.¹⁶ The Committee of Experts is of the view that further measures taking also into account the needs and wishes of the speakers are needed to implement this recommendation and ensure that a sufficient number of teachers is available for Upper Sorbian education at all levels.

Recommendation for immediate action

Increase the offer of television programmes in Upper Sorbian, in particular in terms of frequency and duration.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

34. According to the information provided by the authorities, *Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk* (MDR) continues to produce and broadcast *Wuhlado*, a 30-minute monthly programme in Upper Sorbian. A programme for children, *Unser Sandmännchen*, broadcast every Sunday, offers the possibility to choose between Upper Sorbian and German. Both programmes are also available for live streaming and in MDR online media library.

35. In their statements, the representatives of the Sorbian speakers underline that the current offer is insufficient and point to the importance of using a wide range of media. Digital news offers, dubbed versions of films and TV series, a dedicated video platform and music platform, as well as an increased presence of Sorbian language, themes and music in the programme of public broadcasters are necessary in their view. Moreover, they express concerns about the plans to reduce costs and cut posts at MDR starting with 2025, which they fear will have an impact on the Upper Sorbian language programme.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

36. The Committee of Experts notes that no steps have been taken to implement this recommendation.

37. Furthermore, it shares the concerns of the speakers with respect to the planned financial cuts and its possible effects on the Upper Sorbian language programme. The authorities should take into account that minority languages are in a weaker position and risk being disproportionately affected by such measures. Moreover, the effects of such cuts might go against the present recommendation. On the whole, the Committee of Experts underlines that steps are needed to implement the recommendation and increase the offer of television programmes in Upper Sorbian.

¹⁶ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 48.

3. Lower Sorbian in the *Land* of Brandenburg

Recommendation for immediate action

Extend and strengthen the offer of Lower Sorbian in pre-school, primary and secondary education, including by providing for it as an integral part of the curriculum more consistently.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

38. The authorities report that in the 2023/2024 school year 18 daycare centres have been offering Lower Sorbian under different models. The *Land* programme for promoting Lower Sorbian educational offers in daycare centres continues to provide them with financial support. This programme aims at strengthening and extending the language learning opportunities and supporting other educational processes in Lower Sorbian from daycare to primary schools and after school facilities. According to the authorities, as a result of this programme, additional institutions participate in language preservation. As far as schools are concerned, 16 primary schools and five secondary schools offer Lower Sorbian as a subject or bilingual teaching of some subjects. The offer depends on demand and availability of teachers and the number of hours differs case by case.

39. In addition, a pilot project aimed at revitalising Lower Sorbian and developing innovative forms of language teaching is among those for which the Foundation for the Sorbian People will receive federal funding in the context of the measures to support structural change in the coal-mining region of Lusatia.

40. In their statement the representatives of the Lower Sorbian speakers highlight the need to secure and strengthen the Lower Sorbian offer. Teaching Lower Sorbian as an optional subject outside the core school hours (being the fifth, sixth or seventh lesson of the day) translates into exhaustion and lack of motivation for pupils, as well as for their teachers. They underline that Lower Sorbian should be put on an equal footing with other languages in the curriculum. In addition, they raise the problem of teachers in WITAJ schools (offering bilingual education) which are required to stand in for missing teachers in other subjects, thus leading to the cancelation of Lower Sorbian or bilingual lessons.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

41. The Committee of Experts notes that measures are in place to implement this recommendation and welcomes that an increasing number of pre-school institutions offer Lower Sorbian.¹⁷ However, it is not clear how much Lower Sorbian is used and whether at least a substantial part of pre-school education is provided in Lower Sorbian. As far as the schools are concerned, compared to the seventh evaluation report, it appears that the number of primary schools has decreased, while at secondary level one additional school has a Lower Sorbian offer.¹⁸ The extent of the offer, for example in terms of hours, is again unclear. The information provided by the speakers shows that further measures should be taken to strengthen Lower Sorbian. The Committee of Experts underlines that further steps are needed to implement this recommendation. It is looking forward to receiving information on how the Multilingualism Strategy and the second Plan of Measures for Strengthening Lower Sorbian have contributed to strengthening Lower Sorbian in education.

¹⁷ See also [Pressemitteilungen | Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport \(MBJS\) \(brandenburg.de\)](https://www.brandenburg.de/Pressemitteilungen-Ministerium-fuer-Bildung-Jugend-und-Sport-MBJS), [Pressemitteilungen | Ministerium für Bildung, Jugend und Sport \(MBJS\) \(brandenburg.de\)](https://www.brandenburg.de/Pressemitteilungen-Ministerium-fuer-Bildung-Jugend-und-Sport-MBJS); four new institutions from the 2022/2023 school year to the 2023/2024 school year.

¹⁸ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts with respect to Germany, MIN-LANG (2022) 7, para. 51.

Recommendation for immediate action

Ensure that a sufficient number of teachers is available for Lower Sorbian education at all levels.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

42. The authorities state that further training is provided to existing staff (e.g. intensive language course) as well as to other interested staff. In addition, the recruitment of new teachers is promoted through scholarships and targeted campaigns and students are encouraged to work in schools in the Lower Sorbian area. The district of Spree-Neiße/Wokreys Sprjevja-Nysa continues to provide a scholarship to students in teacher training specialising in Lower Sorbian.¹⁹ The authorities continue to assess the feasibility of a Lower Sorbian offer in the Potsdam teacher training programmes or, as a new option, in the framework of the new degree study for primary school teachers at the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg. A new intake of students of a master's degree in Lower Sorbian, which is aimed at teachers and graduates from other careers who do not yet have a teaching qualification for Lower Sorbian or bilingual teaching, restarted in the 2022/2023 academic year, with nine participants.

43. In their statements, the representatives of the Sorbian speakers commend the measures put in place but note that they have not been sufficient to reverse the negative trend and propose further measures (see paragraph 31 above, which applies to both Free State of Saxony and Brandenburg).

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

44. The Committee of Experts welcomes the new intake of the master's degree and notes that the authorities are looking into new teacher training options as steps to implement the recommendation but have not yet reached concrete results. The Committee of Experts is of the view that further measures, taking into account also the needs and wishes of the speakers, are needed to implement this recommendation and ensure that a sufficient number of teachers is available for Lower Sorbian education at all levels.

4. North Frisian in the *Land of Schleswig-Holstein*

Recommendation for immediate action

Strengthen the offer of North Frisian in education, including by providing a sufficient number of teachers and the required teaching materials.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

45. In March 2023 the Frisian Foundation (*Friisk Stifting*) received funding from Schleswig-Holstein budget to establish an "educational institution" for teacher training, development of teaching materials and extension of North Frisian language education. Approximately € 1 million have been made available for the coming years for this project, which will be implemented by a new department set up at the North Frisian Institute, the *Nordfriisk liirskap*.

46. Apart from this new initiative, teaching materials continued to be developed and published from 2022-2024, with support from the authorities. They address mainly pre-school and primary school and comprise workbooks, exercise books and flash cards; some are accompanied by audio files or are intended to accompany a series of episodes of a children's programme, which were dubbed into North Frisian. Further teaching materials for all school grades are planned to be developed over the next years by *Nordfriisk liirskap*.

¹⁹ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 51.

47. A new decree on “Frisian at schools in the district of Nordfriesland and Heligoland” entered into force on 1 August 2023, to remain in force for three years. The decree lowers the minimum number of pupils necessary for setting up teaching of North Frisian from 12 to six.²⁰

48. The authorities also indicate that the number of pupils learning North Frisian increased in the 2022/2023 school year compared to the previous year. The *Eilun Feer Skul* (Wyk, Island Föhr) remains the only secondary school teaching North Frisian as a regular subject and 8 pupils have chosen it for the final examination in 2022/2023.

49. North Frisian as a subsidiary subject is to be introduced at the Europa – Universität Flensburg in the autumn semester of the 2024/2025 academic year.

50. In their statements, the representatives of North Frisian speakers’ associations and of institutions involved in promotion the language welcome the efforts of the authorities. However, they underline that North Frisian should become a regular school subject, included in the morning classes and continuity from primary to secondary education should be ensured. Additional staff hours need to be made available for this to be possible. As far as teacher training is concerned, the representatives of the speakers consider necessary a guarantee of employment for prospective North Frisian language teachers in teaching the language, as well as financial incentives. In the medium term, North Frisian should be extended to schools throughout the North Frisian speaking area. Another proposal is to set minimum criteria for the schools with a North Frisian profile (“model school”) award, such as offering North Frisian as part of the regular curriculum, providing continuity from primary to at least three years of secondary education and an increased regional focus in teaching history and geography.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

51. The Committee of Experts welcomes the measures taken to implement this recommendation. It looks forward to receiving information on the work and results achieved through the newly set up *Nordfriisk liirskap*.

52. At the same time, the Committee of Experts notes that 12 schools were offering North Frisian in the 2021/2022 school year, eleven in 2022/2023 and ten in 2023/2024.²¹ According to the data provided by the authorities for 2022/2023 the type and range of provision continue to vary between schools, from study groups to language lessons and bilingual teaching in some subjects; in some cases North Frisian is taught for less time per week than the minimum requirements under the Charter. The same data shows that where teachers retire or are on parental leave, they are not replaced, and teaching is discontinued. Some teachers are also seconded, with the same effect of discontinuing teaching of Frisian.

53. In addition to the measures taken, which need time to show results, the Committee of Experts recalls that further steps are needed with a view to ensuring continuity from pre-school to secondary education, increasing the teaching time dedicated to North Frisian and teaching it as an integral part of the curriculum.²²

Recommendation for immediate action

²⁰ See [schleswig-holstein.de](https://www.schleswig-holstein.de) - Ministerium für Allgemeine und Berufliche Bildung, Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur - Für mehr Sprachenvielfalt;

²¹ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 55, [friesisch-in-der-schule - IQSH Fachportal \(lernnetz.de\)](https://www.friesisch-in-der-schule.de) [schleswig-holstein.de](https://www.schleswig-holstein.de) - Schule und Unterricht - Friesisch an der Schule, [friesisch-in-der-schule - IQSH Fachportal \(lernnetz.de\)](https://www.friesisch-in-der-schule.de)

²² See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 55.

Take further steps to increase the offer of programmes in North Frisian in broadcasting media, with a sufficient frequency and duration.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

54. The German authorities refer to the 2021 NDR agreement and to the independence of the media from the state (see above paragraph 23). They also mention the existence of the *Friiskfunk* radio programme.

55. In their statements, the representatives of the Frisian associations and institutions consider the current offer insufficient. NDR does not broadcast any television programmes in North Frisian and only a three-minute weekly radio broadcast. The funding for the *Offener Kanal*, a citizen-led public access radio broadcaster, is not sufficient to meet the needs of North Frisian in terms of media and to compete with professional channels. Overall, too many initiatives are one-off or based on volunteers and free lancers. There is a wish for an extensive, professional and regular broadcast in North Frisian. The argument of the media independence preventing further development of the media offer in North Frisian is also rejected. The representatives of the speakers recall, however, that broadcasters argue that regular programmes in North Frisian would cause that those who do not speak the language to switch-off the programme.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

56. The Committee of Experts notes that no additional steps have been taken to implement this recommendation. It recalls that, in its seventh evaluation report, it had already welcomed the NDR agreement and the subsequent announcements by NDR concerning its new offer, while underlining that the programmes “should be of a sufficient duration and frequency” in order to have an impact on the promotion of a language. As regards North Frisian in the media, the Committee of Experts concluded that its presence was very limited.²³ In light of the information available, the Committee of Experts considers that steps should be taken to implement this recommendation.

5. Sater Frisian in the *Land* of Lower Saxony

Recommendation for immediate action

Encourage the provision of at least a substantial part of pre-school education in Sater Frisian and strengthen the educational offer for Sater Frisian at all appropriate levels.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

57. The authorities state that measures to support teachers and schools, such as advice, remission from teaching duties in order to prepare language teaching, continue. In addition, since the 2022/2023 school year, a four-volume series of textbooks for Sater Frisian has been made available to schools. The ministry in charge of education provided funding for their preparation and publication. Furthermore, Sater Frisian has been included in the further training courses for Low German teachers organised by the Lower Saxony Institute for Quality Development at Schools (NLQ) together with the university of Oldenburg. An improved training programme is planned.

58. The authorities also inform that, in the framework of a joint initiative of Lower Saxony and of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media, funding was provided to the municipality of Saterland for the development of an online grammar resource by the Commissioner for Sater Frisian (2021 and 2022) and for training people interested in Sater Frisian to support teachers and staff in daycare centres and schools (2022 and 2023). The courses were provided by the *Seelter Buund*, the Sater Frisian speakers organisation.

²³ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 57.

59. According to the information received from the authorities, currently six schools offer Sater Frisian.

60. In their statement, the representatives of the speakers underline the lack of trained educators for pre-school level and, therefore, the need to attract new volunteers who use Sater Frisian with children in daycare centres, as well as to continue to organise language courses, as done until the end of 2023 (see paragraph 58 above). For this purpose, funds need to be secured on the long term and in an unbureaucratic manner. The *Seeltersk Kontoor* and university of Oldenburg are preparing training courses on teaching Sater Frisian for staff of daycare centres and school. The Sater Frisian speakers also see the possibility of a daycare centre using only Sater Frisian, run by a municipality, a district or the *Land*. They also consider helpful an exchange of good practices in terms of pre-school education with other German *Länder* or other countries.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

61. The Committee of Experts welcomes the measures taken to implement this recommendation, aimed at providing teaching materials and training staff. It regrets that no information is provided about the pre-school level, nor on the extent to which Sater Frisian is used in schools. The Committee of Experts recalls that the offer of Sater Frisian should be strengthened in terms of hours and extended to other schools and levels of education²⁴ and is of the view that further measures are needed to implement this recommendation, in co-operation with the speakers.

Recommendation for immediate action

Take further steps to increase the offer of programmes in Sater Frisian in broadcasting media, with a sufficient frequency and duration.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

62. The authorities refer to the independence of media, as well as to the NDR agreement and the March 2022 Lower Saxony Media Act²⁵, which foresees that the regional or minority languages used in the licence area of broadcaster should be adequately represented in the programming. The radio programme *Middegees* continues to be broadcast every two weeks on Sunday on *Ems-Vechte-Welle* in Sater Frisian (and Low German).

63. According to the statement of the Sater Frisian speakers, NDR does not offer Sater Frisian programmes. The radio programme *Middegees* is produced by volunteers, which are increasingly hard to find. Financial support to be able to pay them an allowance would increase the attractiveness of such work. They also highlight that a social media presence would help reaching younger audiences.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

64. The Committee of Experts notes that no further steps have been taken to implement this recommendation. As far as NDR is concerned, it recalls that in its seventh evaluation report it regretted that NDR did not plan any offer for Sater Frisian.²⁶ The Committee of Experts underlines that steps should be taken to implement this recommendation and increase the offer of programmes in Sater Frisian in broadcasting media, with a sufficient frequency and duration.

²⁴ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 59.

²⁵ Article 14.2: „Die im Zulassungsgebiet des Programms gebräuchlichen Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen sollen im Programm angemessen zur Geltung kommen.“

²⁶ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 34.

6. Low German in the *Land* of Brandenburg

Recommendation for immediate action

Strengthen efforts to develop an adequate educational offer for Low German.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

65. The German authorities refer to legal and policy steps taken, including the Multilingualism Strategy, which contains recommendations for Low German in education. In addition, support continues to be provided by the *Land* and municipalities to voluntary learning of Low German in schools and outside school. The education offices in the areas where Low German is spoken provide further teacher training, depending on needs and resources. An online language course for pre-school staff has been developed in co-operation with specialists from Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in 2023. Contact has been established with the Competence Centre for Teaching Low German (KND) at the University of Greifswald (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania).

66. Currently, Low German is offered every other week at two kindergartens. There is no teaching of Low German as a subject in the 2023/2024 school year. There is an offer of Low German in seven primary schools, one school for children with learning difficulties and one grammar school, where it is used in teaching two subjects – religion and arts - and as an extracurricular activity.

67. In their statement the representatives of the Low German speakers point to the lack of perspectives for a Low German curriculum (teaching Low German as a subject) and to the lack of teachers. They see an urgent need for coordinated steps to develop a teaching concept based on the Multilingualism Strategy. All Low German related activities, whether at daycare, school or adult education, are carried out on a voluntary basis.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

68. The Committee of Experts welcomes that the authorities have taken steps towards implementing this recommendation. However, such efforts still need to be intensified in order to achieve concrete results and an adequate offer for Low German in education in practice. It is looking forward to receiving information on how the Multilingualism Strategy has contributed to developing an adequate educational offer for Low German.

7. Low German in the *Land* of North Rhine-Westphalia

Recommendation for immediate action

Continue efforts to develop an adequate educational offer for Low German.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

69. The authorities state that while Low German is not a regular school subject, there are possibilities to address aspects of Low German within other subjects or to offer Low German outside the compulsory subjects, for example in voluntary study groups. The project “Low German at schools in Münster and Münsterland region” ended. This project resulted in schools offering Low German in voluntary study groups at primary level and the 5th and 6th grades of secondary schools. Teaching materials developed as part of the project for these levels are available on internet, free of charge. Five primary and secondary schools continue to offer Low German voluntary study groups at different grades, for one or two hours per week.

70. The representatives of the Low German speakers raise in their statement the issue of lack of teacher training. They also point to an initiative for the pre-school level: a brochure for daycare centres was

developed in the district of Lippe (*Platt in'n Kinnergoorn*) with funding from the *Land* and made available for free to daycare centres.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

71. The Committee of Experts regrets that the project dedicated to Low German at school has ended and no further initiatives are in place. It notes that ten schools used to be partners in the project ²⁷, while only five continue to offer Low German. Offering Low German in voluntary study groups, for one or two hours per week, is not sufficient in the context of the Charter. Continued and more structured efforts are still needed to implement the recommendation and develop an adequate offer of Low German in education.

8. Low German in the *Land* of Saxony-Anhalt

Recommendation for immediate action

Take resolute action to develop an adequate educational offer for Low German.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

72. According to the authorities, the general framework in respect of the Low German has remained the same. In addition, a pilot project to restore extra-curricular activities in Low German in primary schools began in September 2023 and will run until 2026. The project is developed by the *Landesheimatbund Sachsen-Anhalt* and will bring together Low German speaking volunteers with teachers, who will offer study groups for Low German at selected schools. Five schools are currently participating, with approximately 90 children learning Low German for one hour per week in voluntary study groups. The project does not concern the pre-school and secondary levels.

73. In their statement, the Low German speakers consider the project as a first step towards strengthening the educational offer for Low German and appreciate the support by the state chancellery (office of the prime minister of the *Land*), but feel that greater commitment is needed from the Ministry of Education. They also underline the lack of continuity to secondary education. Another issue of concern is the sharp decrease in the number of Low German speaking teachers, although the attitude towards the language remains positive among teachers. Measures needed are, in their view, the continued provision of teaching materials, especially at daycare centres and primary schools, as well as language courses for adults, especially for teachers and using online methods, which is a priority in the project. There is also urgent need for support from the education authorities (through raising awareness, recognition of qualifications, study leave).

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

74. The Committee of Experts welcomes the new project as a step in implementing the recommendation. It shares the view of the Low German speakers that continuity from pre-school to secondary education is necessary, as well as the provision of teaching materials and an adequate number of teachers. One hour of Low German is not sufficient for an adequate offer of Low German in the context of the Charter. The Committee of Experts is of the view that further steps are needed to implement the recommendation.

²⁷ [Wi kürt Platt – Niederdeutsch an Schulen in Nordrhein-Westfalen | Bildungsportal NRW \(schulministerium.nrw\)](https://www.schulministerium.nrw.de/aktuelles/wi-kuert-platt-niederdeutsch-an-schulen-in-nordrhein-westfalen)

9. Low German in the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen

Recommendation for immediate action

Take measures to provide at least for a substantial part of education in Low German at preschool level, and provide for the teaching of Low German in primary and secondary education as a separate subject and as an integral part of the curriculum.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

75. The authorities inform of that guidelines for teaching Low German at child-care centres and primary schools will be introduced as of 2024/2025. These are intended to provide a basis for fostering early language acquisition at pre-school level, which would then continue in primary school. As far as primary school level is concerned, the “Education Plan for Primary Schools – Home Language (*Herkunftssprachen*)” will be extended to Low German and will serve as a binding curriculum for teaching it. This education plan is the basis for teaching the “home language” and aims for pupils to attain A1 level at the end of the fourth grade. There are no similar plans at the moment for secondary education, where Low German is anchored in the education plan for German, which is also being revised at the moment.

76. Currently, four primary schools in Bremen continue offer Low German in different forms (e.g. compulsory one hour lesson for all classes, voluntary lessons in the afternoon). Other primary and secondary schools also provide study groups, of an average of two lessons per week in various grades. Low German is also offered at a grammar school.

77. The Low German speakers also refer in their statement to the four “profile schools” in Bremen²⁸ which offer Low German in different forms (e.g. one hour per week for each class in one school, voluntary lessons in two schools, lessons as part of the weekly schedule in another school). They also report that a school in Bremerhaven no longer has a Low German profile.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

78. The Committee of Experts notes that, while some measures are under preparation, they might not be sufficient to implement this recommendation. It recalls, in view of the preparation of the guidelines at pre-school level, that at least a substantial part of education should be provided in Low German. Concerning the “Education Plan for Primary School – Home Language”, which is to be revised and extended for Low German, it underlines that it should provide for the teaching of Low German as a separate subject and an integral part of the curriculum, for at least three hours per week. No information was provided whether Low German would be taught in all years of primary school.

Recommendation for immediate action

Facilitate the offer of television programmes in Low German on a regular basis.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

79. According to the information provided by the authorities, the Radio Bremen public television service does not produce its own television programme, but a regional one in co-operation with NDR. In this framework, for example, the programme in Low German *De Noorden op Platt* is broadcast. Similarly to the NDR agreement, the law amending the Radio Bremen Act of 13 March 2024 provides that Low German must be adequately and regularly²⁹ represented on radio, television as well as the overall digital offer. The

²⁸ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 67.

²⁹ Article 3.7: “Angebote in niederdeutscher Sprache müssen in angemessenem Umfang und Regelmäßigkeit im Programm und im Gesamtangebot vertreten sein”

authorities also report that the offer of the private broadcasters has remained stable over years and that community produced media, such as lectures or theatre play are also broadcast.

80. According to the statement of the representatives of the Low German speakers, no regular television programmes are available in Low German.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

81. The Committee of Experts welcomes the provisions of the amended Radio Bremen Act, which continue to make reference to Low German, as a step contributing to the implementation of the recommendation.³⁰ As regards the above-mentioned NDR television programme, the Committee of Experts refers to the seventh evaluation report, where it welcomed it and encouraged its further development in terms of frequency and duration, beyond 30 minutes per month. As far other television programmes are concerned, in the absence of concrete information on the duration and frequency, it is not possible to assess if they are regular. The Committee of Experts notes that according to the speakers, there are no regular television programmes in Low German. In light of this, it is of the view that further steps are needed to implement the recommendation and facilitate the offer of television programmes in Low German on a regular basis.

10. Low German in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg

Recommendation for immediate action

Take concrete steps to promote Low German in education, at pre-school, primary and secondary level, including by ensuring adequate teacher training.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

82. The German authorities state that Low German is taught as part of the German lessons and as a separate subject. New curricula for German for primary and secondary schools are compulsory since the 2023/2024 school year; in this framework, reference to Low German language, literature and culture is part of the core curriculum for teaching the school subject *German*. As far as Low German as a separate subject is concerned, new curricula for primary schools are compulsory as of 2023/2024, while those for lower secondary level are being prepared and will be compulsory as of the 2024/2025 school year. Standard German will also be used during the Low German lessons, but Low German needs to prevail, a measure which the authorities acknowledge lowers the level for Low German but find necessary in light of the diverse school population; it would also increase the number of learners. Lower secondary pupils are expected to reach a B1 level, which is the same as for all languages taught in Hamburg. In the long term, teaching at upper secondary level will be possible. In the 2023/2024 school year, ten schools teach Low German as a subject for one or two hours per week.³¹

83. As far as teaching materials are concerned, the workbook and teacher's guide of the primary level textbook are out of print, but the teacher's guide remains available digitally. A decision on whether to reprint it, revise it or switch to the textbook used in Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony is still to be made. A lower secondary level textbook is available. An assessment is being made about what additional materials adapted to the new curricula are needed.

84. A roundtable bringing together teachers and other institutions to exchange views on the current situation and new developments has been revived. Other meetings in different formats (authorities, institutions involved in the promotion of Low German or between *Länder*), which discuss teacher training among other topics, have been organized or are planned. As far as teacher training is concerned, the

³⁰ A similar provision was included in the previous version of the Radio Media Act.

³¹ Two schools from the 1st to the 4th grade, three in the 3rd and 4th grades, two in the 5th and 6th grades, one from the 5th to the 9th grade, one from the 5th to the 10th grade and one from the 5th to the 12th grade.

Hamburg authorities acknowledge the existing challenges. In addition to the already existing focus on Low German for students of German and the training offered by the Hamburg Institute for Teacher Training and the *Länder* Centre for Low German, discussions have been held with the University of Hamburg, with a view to systematically develop teacher qualifications. Exchanges have also taken place between *Länder*.

85. The Low German speakers find the situation of Low German at all school levels unsatisfactory. They indicate that although a focus on Low German is compulsory for all types of schools, the time dedicated to it is inconsistent. They are also not aware of new teacher training schemes.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

86. The Committee of Experts welcomes the continued work of the authorities concerning Low German in education and towards implementing this recommendation. It notes, however, that teaching Low German for one or two hours per week, in several grades, is not sufficient. The fact that currently primary school teaching materials are missing is also problematic. No information has been provided for the pre-school level. The Committee of Experts agrees that increasing the number of speakers is an important aim and it has always emphasised that regional or minority language education should be accessible to anyone interested, irrespective of their linguistic or ethnic background. This contributes to language maintenance and revitalisation, as well as understanding and social cohesion of the local community. However, the authorities ought to be mindful of maintaining a sufficient level of language learning in the context of the Charter. The Committee of Experts underlines that steps are further needed to implement the recommendation.

Recommendation for immediate action

Encourage the publication of newspaper articles, including online, in Low German on a regular basis.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

87. According to the authorities, the Hamburg authority for media and culture continues to promote the *Quickborn* magazine, which is published in Low German four times per year; an online edition is also available.

88. In their statements, the Low German speakers indicate that hardly any newspaper articles are published in Low German.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

89. The Committee of Experts notes that no steps have been taken to implement this recommendation. The publication of the *Quickborn* magazine, although commendable, is not sufficient in the context of an undertaking referring to the publication of newspaper articles on a regular basis. As far as this is concerned, newspapers articles have to be published at least weekly.³²

11. Low German in the *Land* of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania

Recommendation for immediate action

Continue measures strengthening Low German in education at all levels, including by ensuring adequate teacher training.

³² See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 67.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

90. The authorities refer to the general framework and the various options to integrate Low German in education, which have not changed since the evaluation report. As regards the situation in practice in the 2022/2023 school year, Low German was taught in 28 primary schools for one hour per week in the framework of the all-day programme, as a special subject and as substitute subject. At secondary level, 20 schools were teaching Low German in different formats. At regional schools (a type of lower secondary school) it was taught for one hour as a compulsory elective subject and as a substitute subject. At grammar schools, it was taught for one hour as a compulsory elective subject, as a special subject and as a substitute subject; in four which have a dedicated Low German profile ("profile schools"), it was compulsory subject for two to four hours per week, depending on the grade. There are no data about the pre-school level.

91. The authorities further report that basic and further teacher training continues to be provided by KND at the University of Greifswald. For example, 21 participants are currently registered for the certificate course (seven at beginners' level and 14 at advance level). Further training courses are also organised by the Institute for Quality Development in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (IQMV) and supported by the KND. 24 training courses are offered in the current school year, while 34 were offered in the 2022/2023 school year. A chair for Low German language and literature and Low German as part of German studies continue to be in place at the University of Rostock. Here a Low German language course has started again in the 2023/2024 winter semester.³³

92. In addition, a Low German version of a known comic series has been produced and published in September 2022, with funding from the IQMV.³⁴ Its aim is to teach Low German and regional history and culture. A teacher's guide is currently being revised and extended.³⁵

93. According to the statement of the representatives of the Low German speakers, language learning is insufficient, both for pupils and in teacher training. A continuous offer beyond the four "profile schools" is necessary, in order to also give students from sparsely populated and poorly connected rural areas the opportunity to learn Low German.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

94. The Committee of Experts notes that the authorities have taken some measures to implement this recommendation as regards teacher training or developing teaching materials. However, compared to the seventh evaluation report, the number of "profile schools" has decreased.³⁶ The Committee of Experts considers that further measures are needed to implement the recommendation with the aim at strengthening Low German in education, taking into account the needs and wishes of the speakers.

Recommendation for immediate action

Take practical measures encouraging the use of Low German in administration, in accordance with the undertakings ratified.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

95. The authorities report on the possibility of displaying place names in Low German on road signs at the entrance to a municipality, which is intended to implement the constitutional obligation to protect and promote Low German. They further refer to the commitment of the current government to promote Low German. There are no further plans at the moment for using Low German in administration.

³³ [Universität Rostock bietet wieder Niederdeutsch-Sprachkurs an - Universität Rostock \(uni-rostock.de\)](https://www.uni-rostock.de)

³⁴ See also [Neue Abrafax-Sammelbänder erscheinen \(bildung-mv.de\)](https://www.bildung-mv.de)

³⁵ ["Kein Hüsung" - Institut für Deutsche Philologie - Universität Greifswald \(uni-greifswald.de\)](https://www.uni-greifswald.de)

³⁶ See 7th evaluation report, para . 51 and 7th periodical report, p.284, where five "profile schools" are mentioned.

96. The representatives of the Low German speakers indicate in their statement that Low German is barely used by the authorities and that awareness about the undertakings ratified under the Charter is lacking among many employees of the administration. They are not aware of any measures to promote the use of Low German in this field.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

97. The Committee of Experts regrets that no steps have been taken to implement this recommendation. The possibility of displaying place names in Low German on road signs had been noted in its seventh evaluation report. However, the undertakings ratified, and the current recommendation, refer to using Low German in relations with and by the authorities at different levels. The Committee of Experts invites the authorities to take measures to implement this recommendation.

12. Low German in the *Land* of Lower Saxony

Recommendation for immediate action

Further strengthen the educational offer for Low German at all appropriate levels.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

98. The authorities inform that measures to support teachers and schools, such as advice, remission from teaching duties to prepare language instruction, continue. Additional teaching materials were developed and made available online. In June 2023, a new edition of the textbook for lower secondary level was published. Further training provided by the NLQ and the university of Oldenburg has been extended and improved training is planned. The university of Oldenburg established a Bachelor for Low German in the winter semester 2023/2024 and studies leading to a Master of Education (for different types of schools) are planned for 2026/2027. The university's Institute of German Studies also organised in autumn 2022 the first "Summer Academy for Low German – Language – Literature – Teaching", attended by students from universities across Germany. A compulsory qualification course is provided for Low German advisers of the regional offices for schools and education.

99. In the current school year, in seven schools Low German is a regular part of the curriculum and is assessed. In addition, another 153 schools teach Low German on a weekly basis. In another 150 schools Low German features in teaching on a more irregular basis. The project "Low German in Lower Secondary Education", with 16 participating schools³⁷ prepares the introduction of regular Low German teaching at secondary schools.

100. In their statement, the representatives of the Low German speakers expressed their appreciation for the developments at university level, as well as for the future introduction of Low German as an optional subject at secondary schools.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

101. The Committee of Experts commends the authorities for the measures taken to implement this recommendation. It regrets however that no information has been made available for the pre-school level. It would appreciate further details on the provision of Low German at school level. The Committee of Experts invites the authorities to continue the measures taken, in order to strengthen the educational offer for German at all appropriate levels.

³⁷ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 73.

13. Low German in the *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein

Recommendation for immediate action

Further strengthen the offer of Low German in education at primary and secondary levels, including by ensuring adequate teacher training.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

102. The authorities report that the number of schools having a dedicated Low German profile (“model schools”) has increased over the years, the numbers reaching 38 primary schools and 12 lower secondary schools in the 2023/2024 school year. Two different certificate courses are provided by the Institute for Quality Development at Schools Schleswig-Holstein (IQSH) every year, with 10-15 people obtaining a certificate for each course. All trainee teachers in preparatory service for German take a module in Low German, delivered by the IQSH. It is planned that Low German will be offered as a subsidiary subject at the Europa University in Flensburg from the autumn semester 2024.

103. In their statement, the representatives of the Low German speakers, while welcoming the increase in number of “model schools”, are concerned about the lack of continuity between primary and secondary levels, due to the low number of secondary schools where Low German is available. Consequently, most pupils no longer have access to Low German lessons after primary school. Furthermore, they highlight the need to assess teaching at the “model schools”, as some do not have a continuous offer. It is also necessary to identify which schools offer Low German outside the “model schools”. As far as teacher training is concerned, they underline that students do not always have the opportunity to work as teachers at “model schools” after training, which should be ensured.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

104. The Committee of Experts welcomes the steps taken and the increase in numbers of “model schools” compared to the evaluation report. It shares the view of the Low German speakers with respect to the need to ensure continuity. It recalls that Low German should be taught for at least three hours per week in the context of the Charter. The Committee of Experts underlines that steps are further needed to implement the recommendation.

14. Romani

Recommendation for immediate action

Identify, in co-operation with the speakers, ways of strengthening the educational offer for Romani.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

105. The information provided by the authorities from different *Länder* refer to existing projects, but also to the wish of most Romani speakers to maintain the language only within the community, to the absence of requests for Romani teaching or to the wish not to have language teaching provided by the authorities. The *Land* of Hesse, where Romani is covered also by Part III, also indicates that Romani lessons in schools are unlikely or would be a lengthy process, due to the debate within the community about the public use of Romani.

106. In addition, the language school in Baden-Württemberg³⁸, run by the *Land* association of German Sinti and Roma and funded through the agreement with the *Land*, plans to offer training for language teachers. One project also aims at developing a curriculum for Romani as an identity language.

³⁸ See 7th evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Germany, MIN-LANG (2022)7, para. 83.

107. In April 2022 the *Land* of Saarland concluded a framework agreement with the Saarland Association of the German Sinti and Roma, which contains also references to the protection of Romani, as a language under the Charter and an expression of cultural wealth and sets out the possibility for the association to receive funding *inter alia* for language or history-related projects. Rhineland-Palatinate decided in February 2023 to begin negotiations with the *Land* Association of the German Sinti and Roma in order to develop the existing 2005 framework agreement into a state treaty (*Länderstaatsvertrag*). Issues concerning the protection and promotion of Romani will be addressed. After ten years of interruption, funding for projects promoting the Romani language and culture have been again made available in Rhineland-Palatinate in 2023.

108. The statements from different associations highlight the importance of the recognition of Romani language under the Charter and of protecting and promoting it, including by measures concerning its teaching and learning. This should be done only within the community, by supporting projects of the associations, or, according to other views, by teaching it in schools, “for and by the minority”, upon request of the representatives of the minority, bearing in mind an attested change of attitude among the younger generation. One group of the minority wishes to see an independent institute for adult education to provide courses, train staff and develop teaching materials. Online Romani lessons and other activities for children using Romani within the community are being carried out by some associations. Others are engaged with developing a curriculum and teaching materials. It is reported that the state offers insufficient support in integrating these issues into the mainstream educational system.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

109. The Committee of Experts welcomes the continued or new initiatives dedicated to Romani in different *Länder*. It notes the interest of the Romani speakers in different projects protecting and promoting the language, although it is aware that they largely continue to express the wish to maintain the language only within the community. The Committee of Experts is of the view the authorities should continue to explore, in co-operation with the representatives of the speakers, ways to strengthen Romani teaching and learning, step by step and in accordance with their needs and wishes. It notes that there are many valuable initiatives of associations, which could be further supported and strengthened.

Recommendation for immediate action

Support initiatives using Romani in the media, in co-operation with the speakers.

Implementation measures taken by the German authorities

110. The German authorities refer to the independence of the media. They also indicate that the NDR agreement also applies to Romani. In addition, the new agreement concerning the public broadcaster *Rundfunk Berlin Brandenburg* (RBB), which is not yet in force, provides that RBB should better reflect social diversity in its programming, which would according to the authorities also cover Romani. Some *Länder* refer to lack of requests for programmes in Romani. In Lower Saxony, a radio programme in Romani, *Latscho Dibes*, is broadcast every four weeks on two radio stations. The *Land* of Hesse, where Romani is covered also by Part III, reiterates that it has informed the public broadcaster *Hessischer Rundfunk* (HR) about the obligations to promote Romani in the media and initiated dialogue between HR and the *Land* association representing the Romani speakers, but there has been no request for programmes in Romani.

111. In their statements, the associations representing the Romani speakers support the promotion of Romani in the media. According to them, any programmes or productions in Romani should be only implemented on the initiative of or in co-operation with the representatives of the Romani speakers.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

112. The Committee of Experts notes that there is an interest among the Romani speakers for media in their language. It also takes note that public broadcasting agreements also cover Romani. It is of the view that the authorities should engage more to explore, in co-operation with the speakers, ways to use Romani in the media, including in public broadcasting.

Communication to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, while acknowledging the efforts of the German authorities to comply with their undertakings under the Charter, has in its seventh evaluation report (MIN-LANG (2022)7) made “recommendations for immediate action” and “further recommendations” on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in Germany.

In accordance with the Committee of Ministers Decisions of 28 November 2018 (CM/Del/Dec(2018)1330/10.4e), Germany had to present information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action, which contain the priority measures that should be taken by the state party. Germany presented this information on 14 December 2023. In the present evaluation, the Committee of Experts has examined the implementation of these recommendations.

In accordance with its Rules of Procedure, the Committee of Experts invites the Committee of Ministers to:

1. take note of the evaluation made by the Committee of Experts of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action by Germany and invite the German authorities to disseminate it to the competent national authorities and relevant stakeholders;
2. reiterate its Recommendation CM/RecChL(2022)5 and invite the German authorities to present their next periodical report by 1 July 2026 in the required format.