

Motion

Protection of the rights of youth from minoritised national and linguistic groups in Europe in the context of rising extremism

signed by: Youth of European Nationalities (YEN)

co-signed by: European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS), National Youth Council of Catalonia (CNJC), World Esperanto Youth Organisation (TEJO)

Preamble

The protection of human rights, including the rights of people belonging to minorities, is one of the core values of the European Union. Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity is also recognised in Article 22 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.¹ International agreements, such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1995)² and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,³ further underline the responsibility of states to protect minorities and support their participation.

The European Youth Forum recalls that **minority rights are human rights**, and that protecting minorities is a key measure of how healthy a democracy and open society really are. As Albert Camus said: "Democracy is not the law of the majority, but the protection of the minority."

Today, these values and rights are increasingly being called into question in practice. Europe is witnessing alarming and worrying setbacks in democracy and the rule of law, accompanied by the rise of extreme and far-right policies that use anti-democratic, xenophobic rhetoric to incite hostility against minorities. The Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe warns that the resurgence of nationalist movements is further restricting opportunities for minorities to participate.⁴ The European Parliament has also emphasised that the erosion of the rule of law often goes hand-in-hand with the endangerment of the rights of minority groups.⁵

Problem statement

Young people belonging to national, marginalised and linguistic minorities face a double burden: They share the general concerns of their generation, but also experience specific disadvantages such as discrimination, lack of political representation, and

limited access to education in their own language and culture.

1. Visibility and Protection

Minorities are often pushed out of public consciousness - through the absence of bilingual signage, to a lack of minority languages in administrations and media, or neglect of their history. A climate of growing intolerance reinforces this invisibility: extreme and far-right actors fuel hate speech and everyday discrimination, often without sufficient condemnation by the political mainstream. Minority youth regularly report hostility, negative stereotypes, and even hate crimes. This situation cannot give a peaceful relation between minoritised groups and the majorities.

Attacks on remembrance culture are especially alarming. In July 2025, for example, police stormed an anti-fascist youth camp at the Peršmanhof Museum in Carinthia (Austria) - a memorial site commemorating a Nazi massacre of a Carinthian Slovene family. The heavy-handed operation was widely criticised as criminalising engaged young people and as re-traumatising for the minorities and all those affected, in addition to being an affront to the dignity of the memorial.⁶ Similar incidents - such as the desecration of Roma memorials or antisemitic attacks on synagogues - show that remembrance culture, minority media, and youth initiatives need stronger protection. Visibility in public spaces and active safeguards against hate and violence must go hand-in-hand.

2. Education and culture

Educational justice and cultural participation are core rights of minority youth - yet in many countries they are structurally underfunded. Schools often provide only monolingual education in the majority language, while minority language teaching is absent or relegated to optional side courses. Qualified teachers, up-to-date teaching materials, and bilingual models

1 <https://fra.europa.eu/en/eu-charter/article/22-cultural-religious-and-linguistic-diversity>

2 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/at-a-glance>

3 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/about-the-charter>

4 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/backsliding-on-minority-rights-weakens-democracy>

5 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ENG/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52023IP0094>

6 The Peršman Raid: A Reconstruction. With dogs, helicopter, and heavy gear against an anti-fascist summer camp. <https://noviglas.online/2025/07/27/die-persman-razzia-mit-hunden-und-heli-gegen-antifa-sommercamp/>

are scarce. Entire languages are nearly invisible in the school system - such as Aromanian in Europe, Alsatian in France, Low German in the Netherlands or Romani in all of Europe.

The consequences are severe: in France, the number of Breton speakers has dropped by about 50% and of Gallo by 31% in just 6 years (2018-2024) - a dramatic decline, showing how quickly languages can disappear when not supported enough in education.⁷ Political decisions can accelerate this process: in Poland in 2021, the guaranteed rights of the German minority were curtailed by reducing funding for German-language minority education and cutting weekly classes from three to just one hour - a measure applied exclusively to this group and not to any of the other 13 recognised minorities. This case illustrates clear discrimination, but it also exemplifies the politicisation of minority education, turning language teaching into a tool of foreign policy and leaving young people of the German minority as “hostages” of Polish–German political disputes.⁸

These cases illustrate a broader pattern: education and culture require reliable public funding. Without sustainable state support for minority schools, cultural centres, youth organisations, and memorial sites, initiatives are left to rely on short-term projects or volunteer work. Minorities without a “kin-state” are especially disadvantaged. Underfunding of education and culture ultimately denies young minorities their identity - and with every lost school hour, every closed cultural space, and every missing translation, a piece of European diversity disappears and the fundamental human rights are not respected

At the same time, we recognise that resources and contexts differ across Europe. Realistic and inclusive solutions must balance linguistic rights with social cohesion, ensuring that access to mother-tongue education does not lead to segregation, but instead fosters intercultural understanding and equality.

3. Political Participation and Representation

Equal political participation remains out of reach for many minority youth. High electoral thresholds, separate minority lists or other factors effectively exclude them from elections. Even where minority councils exist, young people are often sidelined: in many national youth councils it is hard for minority groups to be adequately represented while traditional minority bodies are dominated by older elites.

Extremists undermine existing protections - for instance, by cutting back the role of minority commissioners or challenging legally guaranteed rights. In 2024, in Germany, a far-right party tried to abolish the position of the Sorbs Commissioner, reducing minority policy to nothing more than a “budgetary issue.”⁹ As a result, many minority youth feel politically disconnected and discouraged from civic engagement. What is needed are innovative yet realistic solutions tailored to the specific conditions and circumstances of each country and minority. Best-practice examples, such as diversity quotas, lower electoral thresholds for minority parties, minority veto mechanisms, and minority youth councils, should be shared, studied, adapted, and implemented. Furthermore, strengthening direct and decentralised democracy at the local level is important to ensure that the voices of minorities are heard and effectively represented at both the national and European levels.

Objective

In light of these challenges, the European Youth Forum, through this motion, pursues the overarching goal of strengthening democratic structures in Europe and decisively protecting the rights of young people from national, and linguistic minorities. A vibrant democracy acknowledges its pluralistic identity and excludes no one on the basis of origin, language, or culture. It is essential to counteract the fragmentation of society, because when divides

7 Results of the 2024 survey on the use and transmission of Breton and Gallo. [https://www.brezhoweb.bzh/index.php?page=fiche&produit=4629&val\[langue\]=2#_doc](https://www.brezhoweb.bzh/index.php?page=fiche&produit=4629&val[langue]=2#_doc)

8 The issue of teaching German as a national minority language against the background of national and ethnic minority rights during the rule of the Law and Justice Party in Poland, 2015–2023. <https://journals.umcs.pl/k/article/download/16582/12125>

9 Sharp criticism of the AfD's actions – minority policy must not be reduced to a question of money. <https://www.domowina.de/pressebereich/blog/scharfe-kritik-am-vorgehen-der-afd-2453>

arise between different cultural, minoritised and linguistic groups, democracy as a whole is weakened.

We therefore call for the values of equality, diversity and inclusion to be actively defended in European youth policy and beyond. Young people from minoritised groups must be enabled to participate in all areas of social, cultural, and political life free from fear of exclusion. Intercultural understanding and solidarity between minorities and majorities must be purposefully fostered to dismantle prejudice and strengthen a shared European coexistence.

Only through comprehensive protection of minority rights - whether in schools, workplaces, media, or public spaces - can Europe's democracy remain sustainable, just, and peaceful.

Call to action

1. Political participation

Guarantee minority youth's equal participation in decision-making through representation mechanisms adapted to each country's context. Youth councils must ensure diversity, and both minority and majority organisations should open structures for genuine inclusion.

2. Anti-discrimination and security

Enforce consistent prosecution of hate speech and violence. Train police on minority rights and far-right extremism. End unlawful interventions like the Peršmanhof raid and focus resources on protecting vulnerable communities. Expand prevention and youth work against extremism.

3. Education and language on rights

Ensure free education in minority mother tongues at all possible levels, and in consideration of adequate resources. Fund bilingual schools, minority teacher training, and updated materials. Promote minority languages as assets, not obstacles.

4. Cultural visibility and remembrance

Expand bilingual signage, minority-language media, and cultural funding. Support museums and memorials commemorating minority histories. Counter nationalist distortions with factual awareness campaigns affirming Europe's diverse heritage.

5. Legal recognition and protection

Implement the Framework Convention and Language Charter in all states. Recognise unacknowledged minorities. Establish an EU monitoring report on minority youth to track rights and ensure accountability.



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