

70 YEARS AFTER KNEPPELFREED, THERE IS NOTHING TO CELEBRATE FOR FRISIAN

On 16 November of this year, Pier21 performed the play Kneppelfreed (Baton Friday) on the occasion of kneppelfreed's 70th anniversary, in co-production with De Harmonie in the Palace of Justice in Ljouwert (Dutch : Leeuwarden). The performance took the form of a special court case in which the Frisian language and the Frisian identity were on trial. More than 20 interpreters from the Order of Registered Interpreters and Translators were also present during the performance.

On paper, a lot has changed for the Frisian language and identity since 1951, when journalist Fedde Schurer had to answer in the Palace of Justice for an editorial in which he protested against the ban on speaking Frisian in court. At the time motorcyclist police used water cannons and batons to fight the protesters.

This was the beginning of the emancipation of Frisian. Meanwhile, the Frisian language is protected by laws such as the Charter of Regional Languages and the Strasbourg Framework Convention, as well as the Frisian Language Use Act and, of course, by the anti-discrimination provisions such as Article 1 of the Constitution and Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Language rights are extremely important in the European Union, because they are also a guarantee of European integration.

Especially after the ethnic failure of Yugoslavia, language rights were an important condition for European integration. This is problematic without respect for language rights, because the uniquely diverse nature and inclusive identity of the European Union will be destroyed if the language and identity of autonomous minorities are not protected.

During the play Kneppelfreed, the audience was gently attended to the fact that there is a contradiction if you, as a judge in your gown, are going to protest in Poland, while fundamental rights are also being violated in your own country. I myself witnessed criticism of these fundamental rights at a meeting of the Council of Europe on 5 October in Budapest, where, in addition to Gaguzians from Moldova, ethnic Romanians from Ukraine and ethnic Hungarians from Transylvania, ethnic Frisians also expressed their concerns about insufficient respect for their language rights.



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This is precisely where the problem lies. The practice of Frisian language rights is sadly contradicting with all provisions on paper. For example, due to the policy of the Ministry of Security and Justice, the fees of interpreters and translators are so bad that Frisian interpreters are no longer available to guarantee these language rights. In addition, on 15 November, the FNP declared ministers Grapperhaus and Dekker in default for failing to bring into force in time the new Article 14 of the Frisian Language Use Act, which has entered into force since 1 January 2014.

A new report by the Council of Europe on compliance with Frisian language rights is also expected to be negative. This is especially alarming, since the position of Frisian is already worrying. Although it is the second national language, there is not a word of Frisian in the Dutch passport, a flagrant violation of Article 1 of the Constitution. After all, the words Kingdom of the Netherlands are in Estonian in the passport, a language that is spoken by less than 0.2% of the population in the European Union.

Police cars and police uniforms are also monolingual in Friesland, there are not even Frisian-language signs on the façade of the court. The court also does not use bilingual stamps. Actually, 70 years after Kneppelfreed, there is little to celebrate for Frisian

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