

PROMOTING AND MONITORING LOW GERMAN: EDUCATION POLICIES AND IDEOLOGIES  
OF LANGUAGE IN THE NORTHERN GERMAN BUNDESLÄNDER

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THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The passage of the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), an international treaty of the Council of Europe, in the 1990s represented a revolutionary step in the protection and promotion of endangered regional or minority languages in Europe. Its aim, which is to strengthen the status of lesser spoken languages as part of Europe's cultural heritage, is also emblematic of the European Union project's motto: "unity in diversity." In shifting focus from mere tolerance to active promotion of linguistic diversity via coordinated policy and planning actions with the ratifying state parties, the ECRLM (henceforth, Charter) is a truly unique legal instrument that has greatly contributed to the enhancement of the status of formerly contested regional language varieties and their regional revival. One of the languages that has benefitted from the Charter's active protection is Low German—the heritage language of northern Germany and parts of the northeastern areas of the Netherlands.

This thesis analyzes the Charter's success in fostering this language in the field of education and how the policies meant to accomplish this goal have shed light on ideas about the language. Germany's State Periodical Reports and the Committee of Experts' evaluation reports for Germany, both mandated by the Charter, will serve as primary sources analyzed through the lens of a framework proposed by François Grin that evaluates efficacy of language policies in creating self-sustaining languages. The thesis finds that while many of the education policies adopted by the northern German states in support of Low German have been successful, there is

still more work to be done, especially in primary and secondary schools, to ensure the vitality of the idiom. Furthermore, the thesis further hypothesizes that the ways in which these policies have been implemented show that Low German is being developed according to separate regional and cultural standards, i.e., as a unique, regionally and culturally distinct variety of German.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTON.....	1
CHAPTER 2: THE CHARTER AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY.....	12
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	25
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY.....	28
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS.....	31
CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS.....	55
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION.....	76
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	82

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 2000, the European Union adopted the motto “united in diversity.”<sup>1</sup> While contemporary Europe, characterized by open borders and supranational institutions, seems to be institutionally slanted towards unity (if it weathers current events). This thesis will investigate Europe’s commitment towards maintaining its diversity. At the heart of maintaining any type of cultural diversity is the support of linguistic diversity.<sup>2</sup> One reason is the importance of languages as vessels and transmitters of culture. In order help protect Europe’s linguistic and cultural diversity, the Council of Europe proposed to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. It is true, the Council of Europe is not the European Union, but as the Council of Europe itself states, the two organizations are distinct but complementary. They both contain many of the same members, with the more member-state heavy Council of Europe playing the role of the stepping-stone for European Union membership, and both seek to be normative actors spreading the same values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Furthermore, the two organizations often work together, with the European Union usually consulting Council of Europe standards and agreements when passing legislation and using

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<sup>1</sup> European Union, “EUROPA – The EU motto,” accessed December 29, 2016, [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/motto\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/motto_en).

<sup>2</sup> Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale, eds, *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001), 5

Council of Europe monitoring data when dealing with neighborhood countries' track records on various issues.<sup>3</sup>

While the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is not among the Council of Europe agreements officially adopted by the European Parliament, it still plays an inspirational role in the European Union. As the European Parliament says on their site regarding the EU's language policy, "the EU . . . works with Member States to protect minorities, based on the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages."<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the European Parliament passed a resolution in 2013 that urged that member states should double down on their commitments regarding the protection and promotion of minority languages and cultures.<sup>5</sup> In EU law in general, the Charter is one of the instruments designated as a substantial standard, which means that members of the European Union should observe its implementation.<sup>6</sup> But what exactly are the commitments that state-parties have pledged themselves to? What is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and where did it come from?

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and how its stipulations have been carried out represents the heart of European efforts in the revitalization of at-risk languages. Language revitalization has become an important

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<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe, "The Council of Europe and the European Union," *European Union*, accessed December 29, 2016, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/european-union>.

<sup>4</sup> European Parliament, "Language policy," *European Parliament*, accessed December 29, 2016, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU\\_5.13.6.html](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_5.13.6.html).

<sup>5</sup> European Parliament, "Language policy."

<sup>6</sup> *Minority Language Protection in Europe: Into a New Decade* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2010), 194.

and urgent subject in the past decades because of a growing appreciation of the importance of linguistic and cultural diversity and the mounting threats against that very diversity. It has definitely become a topic in Europe as area related to cultural diversity in general. In 1992, linguist Michael Krauss projected that of an estimated number of 6,000 languages spoken in the world at that time, 90% would be extinct by 2100 if no action was taken to reverse this trend.<sup>7</sup> That very same year, however, action was indeed starting to be taken with the Council of Europe opening up the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages for signature.

The Charter opened as the fruit of a long debate regarding what issues governments should be concerned with. It was at this time, in the early 90s, that discourses of extinction like that of Krauss met with the growing trends of the rejection of the rational modernist paradigm in statecraft that marginalized issues of ethnicity and culture in the 1950s and 60s and the growing movement in Europe to create of Europe of nations and not nation-states.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the climate surrounding the creation of the Charter was not primarily concerned with rationalist and normative arguments involving general rights and legal issues related to the governance of nation-states. Rather, it was one that prized the abundance of minority languages as having an *a priori* cultural worth as an integral part of Europe's history and heritage on a supra-national level and the promotion of the rights of minority identities and ethnic groups on a sub-national level. As François

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Krauss, "The World's Languages in Crisis," *Language* 68.1 (1992): 5,7, accessed November 27, 2016, [https://sustainableunh.unh.edu/sites/sustainableunh.unh.edu/files/images/Krauss \(1992\).pdf](https://sustainableunh.unh.edu/sites/sustainableunh.unh.edu/files/images/Krauss%20(1992).pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Colin H. Williams, ed., *Linguistic Minorities, Society and Territory* (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 1991), 1-2.

Grin writes in *Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*: "The Charter can be interpreted as a text motivated by a welfare-based ideology according to which diversity is worth preserving and developing because it constitutes a contribution to the general quality of life."<sup>9</sup>

The Council of Europe opened up the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages for signature by its member states in Strasbourg on 5 November 1992. Written in order to promote Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity, the Charter commits its ratifying members to take concrete action to protect and encourage the use of at-risk minority languages that have a long history within the ratifying state's territory and are not dialects of the state language.<sup>10</sup> To date, the charter has been ratified by twenty-five states (Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom) and has been signed by eight more (Azerbaijan, France, Iceland, Italy, Malta, Moldova, Russia, and Macedonia).<sup>11</sup> The subject of the present study is one of these ratifying states, Germany, and one of the languages it has agreed to

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<sup>9</sup> Grin, François, *Language Policy Evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 194.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Europe, "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages," *About the Charter*, accessed November 28, 2016, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/aboutcharter/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/aboutcharter/default_en.asp).

<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe, "Chart of Signatures and Ratifications of Treaty 148." *Treaty Office*, last modified November 28, 2016, [https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/148/signatures?p\\_auth=wLz6BqOJ](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/148/signatures?p_auth=wLz6BqOJ).



develop—Low German, which though an important part of northern German identity, declined in importance throughout the twentieth century.

Low German, known in German as *Niederdeutsch* or more colloquially as *Plattdeutsch*, is a language related to German located in the north of Germany. Low German was widespread in the Middle Ages, when it was the language of trade for the Hanseatic League—a union of city-states that traded along the Baltic coast.<sup>12</sup> The Hanseatic League, communicating primarily through the Low German language, constituted a coherent if not uniform cultural area during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>13</sup> However, despite its uncontested importance for Baltic trade and north German culture over these centuries, Low German was never the state or national language of any north German state.<sup>14</sup> Over time, these Baltic trade routes lost their global importance and in the history of the standardization of German more southerly German dialects became preferred. This trend only increased when Martin Luther published the first German-language Bible in 1534 in High German.<sup>15</sup> Low German's importance continued to decrease in the 16th and 17th centuries, as the German of Luther's Bible became the educated standard throughout the German-speaking lands, progressively replacing Low German with the hitherto

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<sup>12</sup> Young Germany, "German Dialects: The Sound of Plattdeutsch," last modified October 1, 2013, <http://www.young-germany.de/topic/work/language-communication/german-dialects-the-sound-of-plattdeutsch>.

<sup>13</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter*, Council of Europe, last modified November 20, 2000, 9, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/GermanyPR1\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/GermanyPR1_en.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Lanhanke, *Sprache, Literatur Raum: Festgabe für Willy Diercks* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> "German Dialects."

unknown High German as the written standard among the educated elite. Low German remained the primary spoken language in the region until the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the middle class also adopted High German.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the use of Low German became primarily associated with the uneducated.<sup>17</sup> Low German was relegated even further to the fringes of cultural life in northern German society during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by industrialization, urbanization, the bureaucratization of community life, and the democratization of education. Lack of systematic planning for the use of Low German, thus, led to its decline.<sup>18</sup>

Today, there are approximately 700,000 speakers of Plattdeutsch in the northern German states of Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Lower Saxony.<sup>19</sup> As many as 10 million people of approximately 16 million inhabitants across these northern states can at least understand the language.<sup>20</sup> Prior to the 1990s Low German began to get some of its domains back in areas such as in state government, the church and modern media thanks mostly to private initiatives, but increasingly with the help of the *Land* (state) governments. The recognition of the language as a regional language in Germany by the European Union after the passage of the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages has also done much to offer security and legitimization to Low German.<sup>21</sup> Today,

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<sup>16</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 9.

<sup>17</sup> "German Dialects."

<sup>18</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 9-10.

<sup>19</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 9-10.

<sup>20</sup> Ethnologue, "Saxon, Low," accessed March 27, 2015, <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/nds>.

<sup>21</sup> Finetext, "The changing fortunes of Low German: from dialect to literary language. What next?," accessed March 19, 2017, <http://www.finetext.de/en/the-changing-fortunes-of-low-german-from-dialect-to-literary-language/>.

knowledge of Low German is still generally higher on the coasts than inland.<sup>22</sup> Among those with some ability in Low German, it is often the older generations and those who live in more rural locations who have more knowledge of the language.<sup>23</sup> If Low German is to survive and remain healthy, it has to overcome this demographic challenge.

Overcoming this challenge is one of the purposes of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. As outlined in its preamble, the European Charter states that the right to use a regional or minority language in both private and public settings is an inalienable right according to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Additionally, the Charter presents the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages as an important component in the construction of a Europe bound by the values of democracy and cultural diversity. It specifies that this protection and promotion should be pursued up to the point before the teaching of the official language of the state-party is affected, since this is the language that students will need to get on in wider society.<sup>24</sup> In the Low German case, this protection is mainly given through the efforts of the country's 16 constituent states.

As suggested by its name, the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) is a federal system with a central government at the top but with

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<sup>22</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> "Das Plattdeutsche," Schleswig-Holstein, accessed March 27, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Council of Europe, "European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages," *Full list*, accessed November 28, 2016, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680695175>.

strong states (*Bundesländer* or *Länder*) with many powers below it. Because of this federal structure, signing up for and carrying out the obligations of the Charter are primarily the responsibility of the *Länder*. While the *Länder* were the parties primarily for the Charter, its effects are binding on a federal level due to the fact that it became a federal law when the Federal Act ratifying the Charter entered into force on January 1, 1999.<sup>25</sup> On the federal level, responsibility for carrying out the obligations of the Charter falls on the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The *Länder* generally give their responsibility to their State Chancellery or a ministry such as the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Education.<sup>26</sup> There are also privately founded clubs, some of which receive government funding, that deal with regional and community language needs. Chief among these for Low German users is the *Institut für niederdeutsche Sprache* [Institute for the Low German Language] in Bremen.<sup>27</sup>

One of the principal sources that will be used in this study and the official way of tracking the progress of each Bundesland are the reports and recommendations periodically submitted by the German government to the Council of Europe as part of the monitoring process connected to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Article 15 (1) of the Charter requires each state-party to present its first report “within a year following the entry into force of the Charter with respect to the Party concerned, the other reports at three-yearly

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<sup>25</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 4,

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

intervals after the first report.”<sup>28</sup> These reports are meant to inform the Committee of Experts about the progress of the implementation of the Charter by the Contracting Party (Germany) so that it can prepare a report for the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as outlined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 16 of the Charter.<sup>29</sup> Upon examining the Party’s report, the Committee of Experts asks for clarification on any point. If necessary, it meets with relevant authorities and organizations to evaluate the situation on-the-ground, examines the information provided by legally established organizations with an interest in the state of the relevant language, and provides recommendations to the state-party in an evaluation addressed to the Committee of Ministers based on the collected information. The Committee of Ministers in turn evaluates the Committee of Experts’ recommendations and publishes a report of recommendations to the state-party if they feel that more needs to be done to bring their policies and practices in line with the adopted obligations from the Charter. A roundtable may then be held with a member of the Committee of Experts and relevant state-party actors so that concrete steps to bring implementation in line with Committee recommendations can be discussed.<sup>30</sup>

The present study will investigate the policies dedicated to the revitalization of Low German by comparing the timelines and details of the implementation of

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<sup>28</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>29</sup> Council of Europe, “European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Outline for Periodical Reports to be Submitted by Contracting Parties,” accessed January 9, 2017, 2,

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/StatesParties/OutlineInitial\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/StatesParties/OutlineInitial_en.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Council of Europe, “Monitoring the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,” accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/monitoring>.

planning measures. Specifically, it will compare the educational policies adopted from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by each Bundesland, how these policies have been applied, and how successful they have been thus far. Additionally, it will analyze how these results shed light on perceptions of Low German and how such perceptions might have affected some of the numerical results. Doing this will give an idea of what needs to be done to further help this language on both a policy and attitudinal level, which will be helpful to a Germany and a Europe that values diversity as a good unto itself.

To the best of my knowledge, there has not yet been a study like the one outlined above. Special attention will be given to the role of the European Union where relevant. Based on the data provided by the periodical reports and the extent of initiatives at each educational level, it seems that the northern Bundesländer, which are the ones promoting Low German, are developing Low German as a language with purely regional domains.

The analysis of the success of the Bundesländer in promoting Low German education will rely on an applied linguistics framework that goes back to Joshua Fishman's work on language endangerment and revitalization. In 1991, Fishman introduced the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale, known as GIDS for short. This scale, while also tracking the vitality of a language, was meant to make it easier for planners to 'reverse language shift' (RLS) by pinpointing the changes that would have to occur for a language to reach a more stable and vital stage in its daily use. GIDS classifies living languages as belonging to one of eight stages. On this scale, stage one is the most stable and stage eight is the least. The stage of a language

depends on who speaks it and in what situations. For example, a language at stage eight is mainly spoken by old people who live in isolated areas. On the other hand, a language that is currently at stage one is used extensively in all domains, i.e. in higher education, business, government, and media.<sup>31</sup>

Even more important to this paper is François Grin's framework of the general conditions that need to be fostered by a successful language policy that will help the language in question climb the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale. For Grin, these conditions are capacity to use the language, opportunity to use the language, and desire to use the language.<sup>32</sup> The analysis section of this paper will use this framework as a way of judging the success and methods of the educational policies being adopted in support of Low German revitalization.

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<sup>31</sup> Education Sector, *UNESCO'S Language Vitality and Endangerment Methodological Guideline: Review of Application and Feedback since 2003: Background Paper*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, accessed April 12, 2017, 7, [http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/unesco\\_language\\_vitality\\_and\\_endangerment\\_methodological\\_guideline.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/unesco_language_vitality_and_endangerment_methodological_guideline.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Grin, 194

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CHARTER AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

This chapter will be primarily concerned with the Charter's connection to educational policy more broadly and general minority language education theory in particular, but it is important to first mention some more general information about the Charter and its rationale to understand better what it is trying achieve with each policy measure and why. The Charter fits within a certain legal-philosophical paradigm in the discourse surrounding minority language revitalization and maintenance that can be termed the 'language-in-society' paradigm, for which the Charter is the prime example.<sup>33</sup> Within this paradigm, it is believed that guaranteeing negative rights (rights that protect from the interference of others) is not enough to promote minority languages effectively; positive rights (the right to a particular good or service) must also be granted. That is to say, states must not only refrain from adopting policies that are threatening to minority languages, they must also actively promote them and provide education and other services to their speakers if the language is to survive. These extra services are justified under what is called "the principle of substantive equality". This principle is formulated based on the idea that "a differential treatment for people facing different circumstances is justified."<sup>34</sup> To put it differently, in order to enjoy the same conditions as the majority, the minority could receive particular protection tailored to its unique

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<sup>33</sup> Grin, 82-83.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 82.



conditions and need. Such measures do not represent additional ‘favor’ to one segment of the population, but rather stem from the practical necessity to guarantee equal or ‘substantive’ protection to everyone.

The Charter, however, goes beyond mere positive rights.<sup>35</sup> Just requiring states to provide opportunities does not do enough, as such a measure would merely exempt states from assuming their true responsibility for the fate of the languages they have pledged themselves to; merely providing opportunity still puts a lot of the onus on individuals for the success of the language. True linguistic justice, where non-state languages have a true chance of not being completely trampled on by the state language, can only be achieved if the state selects active measures that successfully engage actual and potential speakers of the language. As is it is phrased in Article 7 of the Charter, “the need for resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them.”<sup>36</sup> However, revitalization policies are rarely successfully implemented simply from a top-down mandate. Actors, that is, individuals, must be the central consideration when designing minority language policy.<sup>37</sup> In this sense, the Charter is on the forefront of legal instruments because instead of just good intentions, it emphasizes the principle of effectiveness above all else.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to negative and positive rights, it is also important to discuss the dichotomy of individual and group rights, since the level on which rights are imagined can affect how they are substantively carried out. On a whole, a special

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<sup>35</sup> Grin, 84.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 85-86.

promotion of collective or group rights is not necessary to achieve linguistic justice.<sup>39</sup> One can just as easily arrive at the same place by starting at the idea that is the very premise of Western civilization: individual rights. At the same time, some individual rights can only be understood as having meaning in a social context. These can be placed in a special group of group-differentiated or community rights. Some examples of these are self-government rights, polyethnic rights, and special-representation rights. While these all have a social or communal aspect, they all ultimately serve the individual. That is to say, they all are meant to make sure that individuals of a minority group have the same rights as individuals making up the majority group, as per the principle of substantive equality. In the words of the German philosopher and sociologist: "A correctly understood theory of [citizenship] requires a politics of recognition that protects the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed."<sup>40</sup> This includes the freedom to choose or not to choose these community characteristics. All that is important is that the range of choice, including the option to continue to speak one's heritage language, is preserved for members of a minority just as much as for a member of the majority.<sup>41</sup> Protecting this choice means that minorities' hereditary identities are not devalued by society and that they may choose these identities in a substantive way. This emphasis on individual rights can be seen in the ECRML where the word 'group(s)' can be found seven times but the word 'users' can be found nineteen times, which

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 83.

<sup>40</sup> Grin, 84.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 84.

are understood as individuals.<sup>42</sup> Whether positive and negative or group and individual rights, the Charter is a document that takes all of these assumptions of rights seriously. Thus the ratification of the Charter means a readiness to seriously pursue the maintenance and promotion of all the languages that a state-party has pledged itself to.

As a part of promoting all of these rights effectively, Articles 8 to 14 Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages give state-parties a choice of sixty-eight concrete undertakings in seven areas of public life. These include education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges. State-parties have to undertake to develop at least thirty-five of the available six-eight concrete undertakings in a variety of these areas.<sup>43</sup> It is very important that state-parties that are serious about revitalization of a language develop protections in a variety of areas because of the concept of social domains of language use. Simply said, the greater the diversity of situations ('domains') in which a language is used, such as at home or when corresponding with the government, the more robust and vital the language will be. While a language might exist vibrantly in the home life of a population or at the market, being used in additional domains, especially in ones of prestige and power, helps assure that the language is not eventually replaced in these more fundamental home domains by a more powerful language.

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<sup>42</sup> "European Charter."

<sup>43</sup> *About the Charter.*

The optimal situation, of course, is that a language is used in all daily activities, though in many situations this ideal situation is unattainable, especially in competition with state languages, which is definitely the case for Low German.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, ensuring the vitality of a language is more a more complex issue than just promoting its diverse domains of use. According to François Grin, and as mentioned in the introduction, there are three conditions that need to exist to ensure the long-term vitality of a minority language, or any language. The first one is that there are people who actually have the capacity to use the language. Next, is that there exist sufficient opportunities to use it. Finally, there must be a desire among people to acquire the language and use it.<sup>45</sup> As mentioned in the introduction, this paper will focus on the policies developed for Article 8, the article dedicated to the domain of education, for Low German in the northern German states. Any language policy that wishes for the successful revitalization of a language must incorporate an education policy that will act as a bedrock for ensuring that François Grin's three conditions for a healthy minority language of capacity, opportunity, and desire exist in the relevant communities. How Germany's Bundesländer are faring in achieving the creation of this bedrock will be analyzed in the analysis section of this paper, Chapter 6.

The Charter gives a number of options to state-parties on every educational level. The levels addressed by the Charter are pre-school education, primary education, secondary education, technical and vocational education, university and

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<sup>44</sup> Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, *Saving Languages: An Introduction to Language Revitalization* (New York: Cambridge, 2006), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Grin, 194.

higher education, and adult and continuing education. There are also subparagraphs that state-parties can adopt regarding the teaching of the history and the culture reflected by the chosen language, the training of teachers to carry out the other parts of the article on education, and the setting up of a supervisory body that can monitor the progress of minority language teaching. At every level, state-parties, meaning in this case the individual Länder, can choose between many options to develop education on that level. For pre-school through secondary education, there are four choices available. The choices start at making education available at the level in question entirely in the language to be developed, i.e. through total immersion for everyone, then to having a substantial amount of that educational level being taught in the minority language, next to just having part of the school-day taught in that language, and finally having education available in the minority language only for families who request it and only when there are a sufficient number of requesting families.<sup>46</sup> Which policies are being developed by the northern German states of Bremen, Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony, and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as well as the importance of the differences between these choices at the various educational levels will be discussed below.

### **ADOPTED SUBPARAGRAPHS**

For pre-school education, the Länder have adopted subparagraph (1) (a) (iv). Subparagraph (1) (a) (iv) has been adopted by five states: Bremen, Hamburg, Lower

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<sup>46</sup> "European Charter."

Saxony, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>47</sup> The subparagraph reads: “if the public authorities have no direct competence in the field of pre-school education, to favour and/or encourage the application of the measures referred to under i to iii above.”<sup>48</sup>

The subparagraph for elementary education adopted by the states is (1) (b) (iii). This particular subparagraph has been adopted by four states: Bremen, Hamburg Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>49</sup> It reads: “to provide, within primary education, for the teaching of the relevant regional or minority languages as an integral part of the curriculum.”<sup>50</sup>

(1) (c) (iii) is the subparagraph concerning the promotion of Low German in secondary education adopted by the Länder. This subparagraph has also been adopted by four states: Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>51</sup> The subparagraph reads: “to provide, within secondary education, for the teaching of the relevant regional or minority languages as an integral part of the curriculum.”<sup>52</sup>

The subparagraph adopted to promote Low German in vocational and technical schools is (1) (d) (iii). It has been adopted by two states: Hamburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.<sup>53</sup> This subparagraph reads: “to provide, within

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<sup>47</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 164-67.

<sup>48</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>49</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 167-69.

<sup>50</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>51</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 171-75.

<sup>52</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>53</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 176.

technical and vocational education, for the teaching of the relevant regional or minority languages as an integral part of the curriculum.”<sup>54</sup>

In support of higher education, a number of Bundesländer have adopted subparagraph (1) (e) (ii). The subparagraph concerning the highest level of educational attainment has been adopted by five states: Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>55</sup> This subparagraph reads: “if, by reason of the role of the State in relation to higher education institutions, sub-paragraphs i and ii cannot be applied, to encourage and/or allow the provision of university or other forms of higher education in regional or minority languages or of facilities for the study of these languages as university or higher education subjects.”<sup>56</sup>

Moving further out in domains of use in education, subparagraph (1) (f) (i) is adopted to provide Low German instruction in adult and continuing educational institutions. This subparagraph has only been adopted by the state of Bremen.<sup>57</sup> The subparagraph reads: “to arrange for the provision of adult and continuing education courses which are taught mainly or wholly in the regional or minority languages.”<sup>58</sup>

The subparagraph (1) (f) (ii) of Article 8 is another directive adopted to provide Low German instruction in adult and continuing education institutions. This

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<sup>54</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>55</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 176-81.

<sup>56</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>57</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 181.

<sup>58</sup> “European Charter.”

particular subparagraph has been adopted by the state of Hamburg.<sup>59</sup> It states, succinctly: “to offer such languages as subjects of adult and continuing education.”<sup>60</sup>

A third subparagraph adopted to promote Low German in adult and continuing education institutions is (1) (f) (iii). This third version of paragraph (1) (f) has been adopted by two states: Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>61</sup>

Subparagraph (iii) reads: “if the public authorities have no direct competence in the field of adult education, to favour and/or encourage the offering of such languages as subjects of adult and continuing education.”<sup>62</sup>

A number of states have adopted subparagraph (1) (g) as well, which is the subparagraph that signals a commitment to teaching the history and culture associated with the minority language to be developed. This subparagraph has been adopted by all five states promoting Low German: Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>63</sup> This subparagraph reads: “to make arrangements to ensure the teaching of the history and the culture which is reflected by the regional or minority language.”<sup>64</sup>

As a logical choice, almost all of the relevant Länder have adopted the subparagraph - (1) (h) - requiring that the appropriate training be provided to teachers so that the rest of the adopted commitments can be fulfilled. The subparagraph has been adopted by four states: Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-

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<sup>59</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 181.

<sup>60</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>61</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 182.

<sup>62</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>63</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 182-87.

<sup>64</sup> “European Charter.”



Vorpommern, and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>65</sup> The subparagraph reads, “to provide the basic and further training of the teachers required to implement those of paragraphs (a) to (g) accepted by the Party.”<sup>66</sup> Subparagraph (1) (i) was adopted by almost all the relevant states to set up the appropriate monitoring institutions. The subparagraph has been adopted by four states: Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>67</sup> The subparagraph reads: “to set up a supervisory body or bodies responsible for monitoring the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages and for drawing up periodic reports of their findings which will be made public.”<sup>68</sup>

One Land has adopted paragraph 2, which provides for education in non-traditional territories, if sufficient numbers of speakers exist. The paragraph has been adopted by Schleswig-Holstein, which has areas where other languages, such as Danish or Frisian, are the traditional language of the population.<sup>69</sup> The paragraph reads: “With regard to education and in respect of territories other than those in which the regional or minority languages are traditionally used, the Parties undertake, if the number of users of a regional or minority language justifies it, to allow, encourage or provide teaching in or of the regional or minority language at all the appropriate stages of education.”<sup>70</sup> But now that we have gone over the possible

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<sup>65</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 187-89.

<sup>66</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>67</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 189-91.

<sup>68</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>69</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 191-92.

<sup>70</sup> “European Charter.”

protections for each level of education, what is the importance of each of these levels?

### **EDUCATIONAL LEVELS**

Pre-school education fulfills a variety of roles and the language it is held in can have a variety of consequences. It can often be the first site where children are socialized outside of the home. There they learn how to behave at school. The language of the pre-school that students go to is often the same as the subsequent primary school they attend, thus pre-schooling in a minority language is only available where primary school in the same language is also available. It is also often the first place children can be immersed in a minority or regional language if the parents primarily speak the state language. If this is the case, attending a pre-school in a minority language serves to assimilate the child in the minority or regional group. Because of the foundational importance on students' identity and linguistic competence, the language used at this level is a site of potential controversy between regional or minority and state goals.<sup>71</sup> At this level, the northern German states have adopted the fourth provision for German so that pre-school is available in the language where enough families request it.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the importance of pre-school, it is at the level of primary education that is most important for minority language exposure. This is because primary education stands at the liminal position between home and state languages in its special combination of formal learning and informal socialization (e.g. at recess).

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<sup>71</sup> Glyn Williams, *Sustaining Language Diversity in Europe: Evidence from the Euromosaic Project* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 77-80.

<sup>72</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*.

This emphasis on socialization means that information regarding languages spoken at the community level helps students get around their community. In addition to focus on local community life, it is important that students get as much grounding in the relevant minority language as possible at this stage, since secondary schools later on are often more oriented toward the workforce, and thus the state language, and generally make less provisions for minority language teaching. However, in many cases cost effectiveness means that even at this level instruction in the state language dominates. This trend is unfortunate because any effective and significant use of a regional language by students later in their daily life in society is predicated on exclusive or almost exclusive instruction in that language at the primary level.<sup>73</sup> The northern German Länder have adopted the third provision, where only some of the day is dedicated to or taught in Low German.<sup>74</sup>

It is at the secondary level of education that instruction in minority languages generally decreases throughout Europe. As mentioned above, this is typically the case because, unlike in primary school where the focus is on societal integration and more attention can be paid to integration in a specific regional or minority community, secondary schools are oriented toward their students' eventual success in the work force, where the state language and perhaps a foreign language such as English is more important than a minority language. This trend does not necessarily hold though when the minority language is the language of a neighboring state. Additionally, since secondary education is associated with the labor-market, significant inclusion of a regional or minority language at this level shows

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<sup>73</sup> Williams, 81-82.

<sup>74</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*.

commitment to give that language a public role and not just a local and cultural one.<sup>75</sup> As in primary school, the northern German states have adopted provision three for Low German.<sup>76</sup> How exactly this is carried out by each Land, as well as how the provisions adopted for every other level are executed, will be discussed further in depth in chapter 5.

Universities generally provide even less instruction in minority languages in preference for the state and foreign languages. At least some instruction does exist though in the pedagogy of minority languages in relevant universities so students with education majors can fulfill more stringent requirements in their careers at the primary or secondary levels. The more instruction in a variety of subjects a university has in a given minority language, the more it lends significance and prestige to the language and the more it increases the possibility for economic activity to be carried out in it. The latter is also true of minority language inclusion in vocational and continuing/adult education programs.<sup>77</sup> In northern Germany, Low German has been made a subject in a number of universities. Additionally, a number of adult education centers teaching Low German as a subject have also arisen. However, the language plays a limited role in such vocational programs, which is a first clue that Low German is not particularly being planned to fill the need to be used in various domains of economic activity.<sup>78</sup> The importance of each educational level described above will be brought back and analyzed in further detail in Chapter 6.

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<sup>75</sup> Williams, 83-84.

<sup>76</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*.

<sup>77</sup> Williams, 86-87.

<sup>78</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the years there have been a number of studies on a variety of subjects related to this current project. These subjects include general studies on minority languages and language planning, minority languages in Europe, and different facets of the Low German experience.

Many general studies start off with a discussion of the revitalization movement and the reasons why protecting endangered languages is important. Oftentimes, a discussion of how languages become endangered is added here. It is important that they do this, because knowing the forces that endanger languages helps make it clearer where to direct revitalization efforts to reverse those forces. These studies go on to describe the different policy options available to language planners and how to implement them. Case studies are also often used to demonstrate how the concepts discussed earlier have been applied in practice. Unfortunately, many of these books are mostly focused on the revitalization of indigenous languages in North America and the third world, which are situated in a different legal environment than Low German. This is especially the case since many of these languages are being taken back from near extinction and are coupled with problems relating to the low social status of the heritage users of these languages. This is very different from the Low German situation where millions of users still exist and are undifferentiated socially from Germans in general, though the basic

theory in these books are still applicable, since Low German is still an endangered language that competes with a state language and because learning a language in such a situation has similarities with other such situations all over the world.<sup>79</sup>

While the above studies shed light on the general situation and development of revitalization theory, there also are studies that analyze minority language protection in the European context, especially post-ECRM, which shed light on the more particular context of Europe. These studies provide an insight into the European legal framework and discourse surrounding the minority language rights and practices in general.<sup>80</sup> Another type of study in this category is commentaries on the ECRML and legal challenges and perspectives that have followed from its implementation, which help provide general insight on the Charter as a legal instrument and what that means in general for the “on the ground” efforts across the continent.<sup>81</sup>

Then there are the studies that particularly have to do with Low German. One particularly helpful subcategory of these will be studies on the “typical Low German speaker” that, taken together, include statistics from a number of periods and have

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<sup>79</sup> Leanne Hinton and Ken Hale, eds., *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001).; Lenore A. Grenoble and Lindsay J. Whaley, *Saving Languages: An introduction to language revitalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).; Willem Fase, Koen Jaspaert, Sjaak Kroon, eds., *Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1992).

<sup>80</sup> Glyn Williams, *Sustaining Language Diversity in Europe: Evidence from the Euromosaic Project* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).; Gabrielle Hogan-Brun and Stefan Wolff, eds., *Minority Languages in Europe: Frameworks, Status, Prospects* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>81</sup> *Minority Language Protection in Europe: Into a New Decade*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2010.; Jean-Marie Woehrling, *The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: A critical commentary* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2005).

many sub-categories that paint a detailed picture of who speaks Low German.<sup>82</sup> There are also two studies that talk about, among other things, Low German in schools before the ratification of the Charter.<sup>83</sup> Perhaps the most similar study to the present one is *10 Jahre Europäische Sprachencharta in Niedersachsen*, which only covers more aspects of the progress of the Charter than the current study, but does so only in Lower Saxony.<sup>84</sup> Considering the above studies, it seems that what this current study accomplishes, analyzing the success and ramifications of education policies adopted to support the revitalization of Low German across the whole region of northern Germany, has never been undertaken before.

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<sup>82</sup> Frerk Möller, *Der Typisierte Platt sprecher* (Göttingen: Verlag Schuster Leer, 1996).; Frerk Möller, *Plattdeutsch im 21. Jahrhundert: Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: Verlag Schuster Leer, 2008).; Dieter Stellmacher, *Wer Spricht Platt?: Zur Lage des Niederdeutschen heute* (Bremen: Verlag Schuster Leer, 1987).

<sup>83</sup> *Niederdeutsch: Fünf Vorträge zur Einführung* (Bremen: Verlag Schuster Leer, 1986).; *Niederdeutsch morgen: Perspektiven in Europa* (Bremen: Verlag Schuster Leer, 1991).

<sup>84</sup> Jörg Peters and Gabriele Diekmann-Dröge, *10 Jahre Europäische Sprachencharta in Niedersachsen* (Oldenburg: Isensee Verlag, 2010).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study compares the number and outcome of the educational policies pursued by the five north German states that signed up for at least thirty-five paragraphs or subparagraphs (informally undertakings or measures) of the Charter. Each relates to a significant on-going effort to protect and promote the language across the various articles of the Charter in what can be considered the heartland of Low German. The analysis will be carried out in the following steps.

Chapter 5 will address which measures each of the states have signed up to support and what they have done so far to meet those obligations. This question will primarily be answered by the State Periodical Reports that German officials are obligated to fill out every three years and which are a compilation of what each state is doing to fulfill its chosen undertakings. This information will be assembled by first looking at information from the First Periodical Report to determine which Länder are undertaking which measures and what they are doing to fulfill them. Next, the latest Periodical Report, the one from 2013, will be looked at to see if any changes had been made. If any major changes had been made, the ones in-between will be used to provide more information from when the change was first instituted.

Chapter 6 will first analyze how successful the states' efforts have been in fulfilling the Charter's obligations and if any major differences exist between the number of obligations that the Länder have signed up for and how successful they



have been. It is expected that the Länder will be, in general, similar in the number and success of the obligations that they signed up for. The official measurement of success will be pulled from the Committee of Experts' evaluation reports, which, using the State Periodical Reports and other methods such as spot-checks, monitors the implementation of each measure that each Land has signed up to support. Most of this information will come from the latest report, but others will be checked if any measure does not appear in the latest one, since the time of fulfillment or change of a measure is not usually commented on by the Committee of Experts.

Next, a framework for analyzing the efficacy of language policies outside of the stipulations of the Charter will be introduced. This section will again primarily use the information from the Committee of Experts' evaluation reports, though this time put under a different lens. This lens will be Grin's conditions of capacity, opportunity, and desire needed for a self-sufficient language that a successful language policy will foster and that was first mentioned in the introductory chapter. This information will be supplemented with information from other studies and sources, which describe the situation "on the ground". Of primary importance will be statistical information regarding language use collected before and after the implementation of the Charter from the 1980s to 2008. Other studies from these years about the general situation of the language and sociological trends will be asserted to bolster arguments primarily derived from the State Periodical Reports and the Committee of Experts' evaluation reports. This information will be summarized in Chapter 7 along with an analysis of its significance to answering the

question of what these policies and their implementation say about the ideology surrounding the use of Low German.

## CHAPTER 5

### RESULTS

The Charter mandates in Article 2 that each state-party adopt at least one paragraph or sub-paragraph for every article except Article 8 (education) and Article 12 (culture), for each of which every state-party must adopt at least three paragraphs or sub-paragraphs.<sup>85</sup> Table 1 below gives an overview of the kinds of planning measures for each of these important and inter-related articles that have been adopted by the five principal Länder promoting Low German. However, in what follows, I will focus on acquisition planning, i.e. education. This is because of education's primary role is ensuring that a language is systematically passed down to the next generation, thus ensuring its vitality.

So far, twelve different subparagraphs of Article 8 have been adopted by the various north German states in support of Low German. The following chapter will introduce the subparagraphs that each Land has chosen to adopt and in what forms they have been carried out thus far. An analysis of the following information will be the included in Chapter 6.

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<sup>85</sup> "European Charter."

Table 1. Summary of planning measures adopted by five autonomous states protecting Low German following the provisions of the ECRLM in education.

	Bremen	Hamburg	Lower Saxony	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Schleswig-Holstein	Total per type
<b>Article 8 - Education</b>						
pre-school	x	x	x	x	x	5
primary	x	x		x	x	4
secondary	x	x		x	x	4
vocational		x		x		2
higher	x	x	x	x	x	5
adult continuing	x	x	x		x	4
Total per state	5	6	3	5	5	

Table 2. Summary of planning measures adopted by five autonomous states protecting Low German following the provisions of the ECRLM in culture.

	Bremen	Hamburg	Lower Saxony	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Schleswig-Holstein	Total per type
<b>Article 12 - Culture</b>						
inside minority territories	x	x	x	x	x	5
outside minority territories				x		1
abroad	x	x	x	x		4
Total per state	2	2	2	3	1	

## BREMEN

Bremen accepted Article 8 (1) (a) (iv) from the very beginning. In order to fulfill the requirements of the provision, they offered advisory services to day care

services that wanted to offer preschool Low German teaching.<sup>86</sup> As of 2013, Bremen promotes Low German in the preschools, where children mainly exposed to the language through the learning of songs and rhymes. The state reports that there is not any more demand than this.<sup>87</sup>

Bremen has opted for (b) (iii). In 2000, it was still reviewing current state curricula to see if it needed to make any changes to fulfill the obligation.<sup>88</sup> By 2013, Low German was a part of German classes and in other subjects, where pertinent. Students mainly came in contact with the language in the form of poems in songs, just like in preschools. Some parts of science classes are also taught in Low German. Additionally, a couple of primary schools have Low German working groups. In Bremen, the state government also holds an annual Low German reading competition which, admittedly, provides an excellent opportunity for assessment and public outreach.<sup>89</sup>

Bremen accepted article (c) (iii). As in the case of primary schools, in 2000 Bremen was still reviewing current state curricula to see if it needed to make any changes to fulfill this particular obligation.<sup>90</sup> By 2013, Low German was taught in Bremen's secondary schools in a variety of subjects, though the Committee of Experts did not find that current practices had a sufficient structure or time

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<sup>86</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 165.

<sup>87</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter*, Council of Europe, last modified April 8, 2013, 54, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/GermanyPR5\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/GermanyPR5_en.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 167.

<sup>89</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 55.

<sup>90</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 171.

commitment. German classes aim to help students reflect on a form of expression – language – of their regional and national identity. This is achieved through discussions about phrases in regional, colloquial, and Standard German and the similarities between Low German and English. The secondary schools, all teaching Low German as a subject, are responsible for deciding how much they want to include Low German in their curricula. Two secondary schools have working groups and two participated in the 2012 Low German reading competition.<sup>91</sup>

Bremen also accepted to implement measure (e) (ii) to provide facilities for the study of Low German in higher education. In 2000, Bremen University offered courses covering Low German language and literature. This year, the university was also planning to introduce courses about the language for students studying to become teachers of German. It was also planning Low German activities in conjunction with universities such as Oldenburg University in Lower Saxony.<sup>92</sup> The second periodical report mentions that these courses at Bremen University also cover the history and culture of Low German.<sup>93</sup> However, the fourth periodical report stated that Low German was no longer offered as a subject on account of budget cuts and a EU initiative to switch universities to the BA/MA structure. However, it appears that the undertaking was still fulfilled because Low German was “a regular element in the syllabus” in the Department of Languages and Literary

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<sup>91</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 55.

<sup>92</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 176.

<sup>93</sup> Germany, *Second Periodical Report presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter*, Council of Europe, last modified April 2, 2004, 283, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806c8dd3>

Studies and because the university signed an agreement with the Institute for Low German which stipulated that one to three lectures dealing with Low German issues are to be given each semester.<sup>94</sup> No mention is made of this obligation in 2013 since, presumably, no further changes had been made.<sup>95</sup>

Bremen accepted the obligation of (f) (i), which mandates the creation of adult and continuing education courses for the language. Adult education centers in the state offer such courses.<sup>96</sup> The fourth periodical report states that the adult education center in Bremerhaven had introduced a Low German class and while courses were still on offer, no Low German classes had been taught for the past two semesters at the center in Bremen itself because there had been little interest. Additionally, the report noted that the Institute for Low German had designed a course on CD for adult learners and there were a number of organizations in the city that met regularly to converse in Low German.<sup>97</sup> There was no change in the situation in 2013, so no mention is made of this obligation in the fifth report.<sup>98</sup>

Bremen accepted (g), the teaching of Low German's history and culture. In 2000, the Land was reviewing the curricula of relevant courses to check if the

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<sup>94</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter*, Council of Europe, last modified June 7, 2010, 231, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806c8ddc>.

<sup>95</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 55.

<sup>96</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 181.

<sup>97</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 238-39.

<sup>98</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 55.

obligation was being met.<sup>99</sup> Efforts were being made to meet this obligation in 2013 by the incorporation of Low German in the teaching of a number of subjects.<sup>100</sup>

Bremen accepted (h), which ensures that teachers are trained in such a manner that they can successfully carry out the other accepted obligations. In Bremen, this is done by the *Landesinstitut für Schule* [Land Institute for Schools], which “offers regular teacher follow-up training in the Low German language and culture.”<sup>101</sup> By 2013, Bremen was relying on meeting this obligation through the Low German classes that teachers-in-training take at the university. The *Landesinsitut für Schule* offered a course this year, but the course was reportedly canceled because the teachers-in-training either already spoke Low German or were not sufficiently interested.<sup>102</sup>

## **HAMBURG**

From the first periodical report, Hamburg accepted section (a) (iv) in the first paragraph of Article 8. The city’s Authority for Schools, Youth, and Vocational Training asked Hamburg schools, especially from surrounding rural areas, to foster the learning of Low German in preschools. As of the first periodical report in 2000, it was unknown how much this request was subsequently implemented, because preschools are not required to report their activities.<sup>103</sup> In 2013, the Committee of Experts were still asking for more information on the extent of Low German teaching in preschools. Hamburg requires a wide variety of learning situations for

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<sup>99</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 184.

<sup>100</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 55.

<sup>101</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 187.

<sup>102</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 55-56.

<sup>103</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 165.



preschoolers to gain basic language skills in both Standard German and Low German, depending on the particular group. Regardless of the group's former exposure to Low German, all preschool students are to become familiarized with language through poems and songs.<sup>104</sup>

Hamburg has accepted (b) (iii). The state requires Low German to be brought up occasionally as a subject in German class. How often this occurs depends on the interest and the competency in Low German of the teacher. Additionally, a number of banks and the Authority for Schools, Youth, and Vocational Training support two reading competitions for 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> graders every other year, which is covered heavily by the local media.<sup>105</sup> It was assumed in the second periodical report that more Low German was used in the Land's primary school facilities than its secondary ones, because there were more informal methods of teaching such songs and sketches used in primary schools and because, presumably, students at that age had not yet developed prejudices against the language.<sup>106</sup> The third periodical report refers to this undertaking as at least partially fulfilled and reports that Low German is "incorporated into conversation" and that "the use of Low German is being thought about". At least one example of Low German literature is included in reading class each year and a training program for teachers had been set up by the Land Institute for Teacher Training and School Development.<sup>107</sup> The fourth

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<sup>104</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 59-60.

<sup>105</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 167-68.

<sup>106</sup> Germany, *Second Periodical Report*, 267.

<sup>107</sup> Germany, *Third Periodical Report presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter*, Council of Europe, last modified February 27, 2007, 101,

periodical report states that this obligation was still partially unfulfilled because Low German was not its own class and, subsequently, was often not given enough class time. The Hamburg government responded to this statement by explaining that while Low German was its own subject and in the rural areas still very much a part of the Low German area, more had to be done because the number of Hamburgers living in the city proper was declining. Therefore, a new framework plan was to be introduced in the 2010/11 school year.<sup>108</sup> This obligation was not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>109</sup>

Hamburg accepted (c) (iii), supporting Low German in secondary schools and came up with a number of ideas on how to support this measure in 2000. Otherwise, the steps taken mirror those in support of (b) (iii).<sup>110</sup> In 2010, the Hamburg school authorities declared that Low German would be henceforth one of a number of compulsory subjects elementary school students could choose from. This declaration solidified Low German's place in the state's curriculum. It also signaled for the first time that a full, binding syllabus was created for the purpose of teaching the language. This in turn was the first time Low German became not just a niche side-project, but a fundamental part of the classroom experience. Included in this is the creation of a textbook with an accompanying puppet.<sup>111</sup> In Low German class,

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<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806c8dd6>.

<sup>108</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 220.

<sup>109</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 60.

<sup>110</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 171-72.

<sup>111</sup> Reinhard Goltz, "Niederdeutsch im Bildungswesen in den Norddeutschen Ländern – Ein Vergleich," *Bildungs- und Integrationschancen durch Niederdeutsch*, Band 8 (2014): 29, accessed November 27, 2016,

the acquisition of language is paired with material to make the students competent in the regional cultural heritage, customs, and linguistic pragmatics associated with the language.<sup>112</sup>

In the years since the institution of Low German classes in Hamburg, teachers have made a number of observations. The students are by-and-large very open-minded to learning the language. They typically become even more motivated when they find out that this language is used right in the area in which they live. It has also been observed that students who already speak another language generally learn Low German more easily.<sup>113</sup> Parents also generally show a very positive attitude towards classes of Low German. Hamburgers at large are also very sympathetic to the cause of Low German rejuvenation. However, there are sometimes heated discussions among teachers about how useful and relevant the language actually is.<sup>114</sup>

Hamburg accepted (d) (iii) in support of Low German in technical and vocational education. As of 2000, not much was being done except sometimes mentioning Low German when possible in German class.<sup>115</sup> It was reported in 2013 that Low German culture and language were discussed sometimes, but the subject was not seen as very important to these schools' practical goals. Consequently, they did not plan to greatly expand Low German's role in their curriculum.<sup>116</sup>

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[http://www.ostfriesischelandschaft.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PLATTDEUTSCHBUERO/TEXTDATEIEN/Doku\\_Oll\\_Mai\\_internet.pdf](http://www.ostfriesischelandschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PLATTDEUTSCHBUERO/TEXTDATEIEN/Doku_Oll_Mai_internet.pdf).

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 31.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>115</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 175.

<sup>116</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 60.

Hamburg accepted (e) (ii). As of 2000, Hamburg University offered seminars in Low German language and literature. The subject was also available as a minor for the university's M.A. in German.<sup>117</sup> Like Bremen, Hamburg's separate undergraduate Low German classes were discontinued after the switch to BA/MA courses at European universities, but the obligation was considered fulfilled because a Chair for Low German existed at Hamburg University who could help students majoring in German Literature and Language focus on Low German studies. Low German components are also an option in courses counting towards an M.A. and a B.A. in teaching course, but the university did not currently have enough resources to make Low German courses regularly available.<sup>118</sup> This obligation was not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>119</sup>

Hamburg accepted (f) (ii). It offers two courses for learning and practicing Low German.<sup>120</sup> The third periodical report informs that increasing interest and attendance means that ever more classes have been offered.<sup>121</sup> No change to this situation was mentioned in either the fourth or fifth periodical report.<sup>122</sup>

Hamburg accepted (g). In 2000, history classes in the state teach the kids about Low German culture and language in Hamburg during the time of the Hanseatic League.<sup>123</sup> No further comment had been given, however, by the time of

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<sup>117</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 176.

<sup>118</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 231-32.

<sup>119</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 60.

<sup>120</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 181.

<sup>121</sup> Germany, *Third Periodical Report*, 109.

<sup>122</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 239; *Fifth Periodical Report*, 60.

<sup>123</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 184.

the fourth periodical report.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, this obligation was not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>125</sup>

Hamburg accepted (h). However, though Hamburg University offers Low German, it is not available as a subject on the teaching examination. Most teachers who want to deal with the language know it from their childhood. The *Institut für Lehrerfortbildung* [Teacher Follow-up Training Institute] does offer continuing education to teachers on the subject.<sup>126</sup> This was still true in 2013. The Institute also began offering a forum every two years in 2013, where educators and members of the public were invited to talk and form a network to assist with the teaching of the language.<sup>127</sup>

Hamburg accepted (i), which stipulates the creation of a supervisory body to monitor the progress of measures the Land signed up for and to write periodical reports available to the public. This responsibility in Hamburg falls to the 'German Language' Section of the Authority for Schools, Youth, and Vocational Training.<sup>128</sup> However, the fourth periodical report refers to this obligation as still unfulfilled and it was not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>129</sup>

## **MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN**

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern had accepted (a) (iv) of Article 8's first paragraph by the first periodical report in 2000. Unlike some of the other Länder,

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<sup>124</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 241.

<sup>125</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 60.

<sup>126</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 187.

<sup>127</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 60-61.

<sup>128</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 189-90.

<sup>129</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 246; *Fifth Periodical Report*, 61.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern had already passed local laws in 1991 that encouraged the learning of Low German. The state recommended that preschool-age children become acquainted with Low German through instruction by tutors or elementary school teachers proficient in Low German. As of 1999, the social service provider *Volkssolidarität Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* had 56 day care centers that introduced Low German from time to time through songs, rhymes, and games. Additionally, the Schwerin, Rostock-Stadt, and Rügen *Kreis* Associations have five special interest groups of 58-68 children where the children learn songs, verses, rhymes, dances, and stories and then present them in front of their parents and peers. The German Red Cross's day care centers also have the children learn a Low German program for special occasions.<sup>130</sup> In 2000, the first periodical report recommended that the state come up with a long-term plan to train and increase the education of Low German language tutors.<sup>131</sup> Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's Low German commissioners developed a model for a more systematic approach to the teaching of Low German in preschools and nursery schools in the 2009/10 school year. Books, workbooks, and games were sent to 20 participating nursery schools. A 2011 evaluation meeting of educators resulted in the development of teaching materials and the goal to have Low German as a language of instruction.<sup>132</sup>

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has accepted (b) (iii). As with (a) (iv), Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has passed local laws in support of this obligation before the ECRML even entered into force. The relevant law, Section 2, para. 3 of the

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<sup>130</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 165.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, 166.

<sup>132</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 65.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Land Schools Act of 15 May 1996, reads: “The attachment of pupils to their natural, social and cultural environment, and the cultivation of the Low German language shall be promoted”. Furthermore, promotion of Low German at the primary school level was already enshrined in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in 1991 with required use of Low German in a number of diverse subjects as per the competency of the teacher in the Low German language. As of 2000, Low German was offered throughout the Land as one of several courses students are obligated to pick from and in the form of after-school activities. A survey was conducted in 1997, which found that 92.4% of primary schools in the Land used Low German during festivities and ceremonies. Additionally, 94% of the 125 participating schools used Low German sometimes during regular class instruction in a wide variety of subjects that included science as well as the perhaps more predictable German and music.<sup>133</sup> As in Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern cooperates with local savings banks to host a Low German reading and recital competition for primary and general-education secondary school students. Approximately 2,000 students participate in this competition every year.<sup>134</sup>

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern accepted (c) (iii). As with other measures it pledged to undertake from the Charter, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern had already passed laws supporting Low German in secondary education in 1991 and 1996. This made Low German an Optional Compulsory Subject in secondary schools. A framework for the curricula of Low German courses at this level was developed in

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<sup>133</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 168.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 169.

1995, that is before the ratification of the Charter by Germany, which also included recommendations about how Low German could be worked into other subjects. By 2000, the framework was proven effective. In the same year, secondary schools in the Land had on average 10.2 teachers per school who could understand Low German and 3.1 teachers per school who could proficiently speak it, though those trained in pedagogical methods for the language was small. Despite all of this, 2000 saw a decrease in the teaching of Low German from a couple years before it because the language was not explicitly featured in the Ministry of Education's mandatory list of courses, teachers competent in the language retired, and the many students were disinterested.<sup>135</sup> By 2013, Low German had still not become a separate subject in either primary (b) (iii) or secondary (c) (iii) schools. Nor had training for teachers at either of those levels or for preschool teachers been given for the teaching of Low German in the state since 2009.<sup>136</sup>

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern accepted (d) (iii) in support of technical and vocational education. This facet of education is also mentioned and covered by laws passed in 1991. Suggestions in the 1999 Low German Framework Curriculum on how to include Low German in the classroom are also to be taken into account by technical and vocational schools.<sup>137</sup> By 2013, Low German had been incorporated into German classes. However, there were no plans to include the language in a more integral manner in the technical and vocational school curricula.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 173-74.

<sup>136</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 65.

<sup>137</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 176.

<sup>138</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.



Mecklenburg-Vorpommern accepted (e) (ii). In 2000, colleges and universities across the Land offered a wide array of courses in the subject of Low German. As of 2000, Rostock University offered many Low German courses that count toward an M.A. in Germanic philology or a degree in the teaching of German. This includes a 2-hour course that all students studying the teaching of German must take every semester.<sup>139</sup> This was all still true in 2013.<sup>140</sup> Ernst Moritz Arndt University in Greifswald established a position for a professor of Low German in 1992. Courses in Low German-related subjects are meant to meet the goals of the Land, so that students may later be hired as teachers, serve in cultural institutions, or join the media. Courses meeting these requirements are subjects such as regional speech, the role of Low German in local churches since the Protestant Reformation, regional folk culture, and local literature. Additionally, the university created a B.A. degree for the study of Low German.<sup>141</sup> Currently, the only degree available at the University for the study of Low German is a Minor in teaching.<sup>142</sup>

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern accepted (g). Rostock University and Ernst Moritz Arndt University in Greifswald cover Low German's connection to Northern German, North Sea, and Baltic Sea culture in their courses about the language. There are also linguistic cultural events available at these locations, such as stagings of Low German theater.<sup>143</sup> Thanks to these public initiatives, the undertaking was considered fulfilled by the third periodical report and confirmed in the fourth

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<sup>139</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 177.

<sup>140</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.

<sup>141</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 176-79.

<sup>142</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.

<sup>143</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 184.

periodical report.<sup>144</sup> Consequently, this obligation is not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>145</sup>

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern accepted (h). Continuing education for teachers in Low German pedagogy has been offered by the *Landesinstitut Mecklenburg-Vorpommern für Schule und Ausbildung* [L.I.S.A. – Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Land Institute for Schools and Training] since 1992. This training focuses on encouraging teachers to think of new ways of introducing Low German in their schools. L.I.S.A. also has materials, publications, and information and addresses of contact persons for the use of teachers.<sup>146</sup> The fourth periodical report notes that this teacher training has increased the teaching of Low German in the Land to a great extent.<sup>147</sup> This obligation is not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>148</sup>

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern accepted (i). The situation of Low German in the general-education schools is reported on by L.I.S.A. The *Niederdeutsch-Beirat Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* [Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Low German Consultative Council], founded by the Land's ministry of education in 1996, brings together 15 subject-field experts and the Minister of Education to efficiently plan and coordinate the efforts to promote the language and where state money should be located.<sup>149</sup> This obligation was not considered fulfilled by the fourth periodical report and is not mentioned in the fifth periodical report.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 241.

<sup>145</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.

<sup>146</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 189.

<sup>147</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 244-45.

<sup>148</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.

<sup>149</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 190.

<sup>150</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 246; *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.

## LOWER SAXONY

Lower Saxony has accepted (a) (iv) since the beginning. Its first effort to encourage Low German in preschools and day cares was an experiment from 1997-2000, that is during the time leading up to the ratification of the Charter by the Federal state, that introduced bilingualism in 36 nursery schools in the northwest region of Ostfriesland. The experiment was successful and the state planned to continue Low German in preschools. In 2000, the state partnered with *Ostfriesische Landschaft*, a public-law corporation, to further train day care employees in bilingual education.<sup>151</sup>

Lower Saxony accepted (e) (ii). As of 2000, Göttingen University offers Low German as an independent course of study.<sup>152</sup> This course was eliminated by the second periodical report. However by the third periodical report, the University of Oldenburg hired a professor of German Philology who was to primarily research Low German issues, and modules of Low German were offered to students in the B.A. and M.A. in German programs. Additionally, the University signaled that it would open a Dutch, Low German and Sater Frisian language center.<sup>153</sup> The fourth periodical report, however, reported that in 2007 instead of a language center, an Institute for German philology with a concentration in the three above language was founded.<sup>154</sup> This report also noted that students in German Studies could focus on and earn a certificate in Low German studies and that the University of Oldenburg

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<sup>151</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 166.

<sup>152</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 179.

<sup>153</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 234.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, 157.

had an agreement with the Oldenburg State Theater that allows students to complete a traineeship in the theater's Low German department. Additionally, tickets for Low German plays put on by the theater are paid for as part of students' university fees.<sup>155</sup> Thanks to this unique association and support for Low German through the performing arts, the fourth periodical report considered the obligation as partially fulfilled.<sup>156</sup> This obligation is not mentioned in the fifth periodical report.<sup>157</sup>

Lower Saxony accepted (f) (iii). Adult education centers in Ostfriesland hold courses where adults can practice having conversations in the Low German.<sup>158</sup> The fourth periodical report says that Low Saxony reimburses adult education lessons for the language.<sup>159</sup> This obligation is not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>160</sup>

Lower Saxony accepted (g).<sup>161</sup> The core curriculum for schools on every level in the state take the regional context into account for lesson planning. In keeping with the goals of the Charter, the Land declares it especially important that regional issues are addressed in the subjects of German, history, geography, biology, music, and art.<sup>162</sup>

Lower Saxony accepted (i). A Working Group was founded in 1997, bringing together representatives from the regional local authorities, the Lower Saxon Union

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<sup>155</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 235.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, 234.

<sup>157</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.

<sup>158</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 182.

<sup>159</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 239.

<sup>160</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 66.

<sup>161</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 185.

<sup>162</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 68.

for Local and Regional Traditions and the schools offices. This working group oversees the Land's implementation of its obligations towards the Charter. The Lower Saxon Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs is responsible for the state's periodical reports.<sup>163</sup> However by the fourth periodical report, the undertaking was still considered unfulfilled for Low German.<sup>164</sup> This obligation is not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>165</sup>

### **SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN**

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (a) (iv) from the beginning. Low German is still spoken throughout the state, and many day cares have tutors that can help ensure that this remains the case. Beginning in 1998, *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutsches Schleswig* has offered Low German at seven of its nursery schools.<sup>166</sup> The fourth periodical report states that there were no problems to report and that the importance of including Low German in day-care centers into the state's "Leitlinien zum Bildungsauftrag von Kindertageseinrichtungen" (Guidelines for the Educational Mandate in Children's Day-care Centers). Additionally, that the Centers for Low German in Leck and Ratzeburg offer materials and training to help ensure that Low German is included in day-care centers.<sup>167</sup> Consequently, this obligation is not mentioned in the fifth periodical report.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 190.

<sup>164</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 246.

<sup>165</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 68.

<sup>166</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 167.

<sup>167</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 217-18.

<sup>168</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71.

Schleswig-Holstein has accepted the provision (b) (iii). In 1992, the Ministry of Education provided the framework for the teaching of Low German with the decree “Low German in School”. The government also compels schools to include teaching about the culture of Northern Germany, a culture in which Low German plays an essential part. These culture classes therefore include the teaching of Low German. Schools are also compelled to teach Low German literature and to include Low German in subjects that the language has influenced. As in other Länder, primary and secondary schools host a reading competition, though as of 2000 the competition did not have the regular support from the state and local banks that other states enjoyed. One exception occurred in 1998 when a local bank gave out 75,000 readers to schools of different levels throughout the state.<sup>169</sup> As of 2013, Schleswig-Holstein did not plan on making Low German a separate subject.<sup>170</sup> Curiously enough, elementary school lessons in Low German are not as prominent as in Hamburg where the Low German is admittedly spoken less. The option does exist, nonetheless, despite the plans to the contrary in 2013. The first classes were held during the 2014/15 school year with 27 elementary schools in the state participating and a total of 44 applying for the necessary funding to hold the classes. The classes amount to two hours per week.<sup>171</sup>

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (c) (iii) in support of Low German in secondary schools. The state’s Ministry of Education emphasized the teaching of Low German in 1992 and adopted policy guidelines to be implemented in the schools. This

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<sup>169</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 169.

<sup>170</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71.

<sup>171</sup> Goltz, “Niederdeutsch im Bildungswesen,” 33.

includes a framework for encouraging Low German for the mandatory teaching of North German culture. In 1997, curricula to be taught ensured that the inclusion of Low German in education would be a general principle for schools to follow and identified subjects where the teaching about Low German definitely needed to be included.<sup>172</sup> However, as of 2013 Schleswig-Holstein did not have plans to add Low German as a separate subject.<sup>173</sup>

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (e) (ii). At the University of Kiel and the University of Flensburg, students studying the teaching of German must take at least one course in Low German or Frisian. Low German is also available as a minor within the teaching major. Kiel University has an entire department dedicated to Low German. The courses offered by this department can be counted towards the Major in German. The department also offers a course every semester designed for theology students to help them in their future careers as pastors in the region.<sup>174</sup> The fourth periodical report calls this obligation fulfilled because of the continuing existence of modules, seminars, and a Chair of German Linguistics focusing on Low German language and literature in the Land. This can be considered a significant achievement, as the Major in Low German, previously offered after the change to the BA/MA system among German universities, was discontinued.<sup>175</sup> This undertaking is not mentioned in the fifth periodical report.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 175.

<sup>173</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71.

<sup>174</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 180.

<sup>175</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 236.

<sup>176</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71.

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (f) (iii). Over forty adult education centers in the Land held courses for learning and practicing Low German in 1999.<sup>177</sup> The second periodical report states that 575 students participated in these adult education classes in 2002. There are also a variety of groups that promote Low German conversation, theater, and writing.<sup>178</sup> Taking these opportunities into account, the undertaking was considered fulfilled by the third periodical report.<sup>179</sup> Therefore, this obligation is not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>180</sup>

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (g). As noted above, schools at all levels have ways of featuring discussions on Low German during class. Schleswig-Holstein's languages and speech communities are mentioned in German classes.<sup>181</sup> No new information on this type of activity is recorded, however, by the fourth periodical report.<sup>182</sup> Therefore, this obligation is not mentioned in the fifth periodical report.<sup>183</sup>

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (h). In 2000, it was reported that it would be necessary in the future for teachers of German in the state to show proof that they took a course in Low German or Frisian. Since 1998, students studying pedagogy can take courses at the University of Kiel and the University of Flensburg offers courses on Low German specialized for different types of schools. Teachers also have access to advisors at the University of Kiel's Low German Language and

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<sup>177</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 182.

<sup>178</sup> Germany, *Second Periodical Report*, 294.

<sup>179</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 240.

<sup>180</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71.

<sup>181</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 187.

<sup>182</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 242-43.

<sup>183</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71.



Literature Department and the department's library.<sup>184</sup> In 2012/13, the state's expert advisor at the Institute for Advanced Teacher Training at Schleswig-Holstein's schools held a certificate course for further training of teachers in Low German. The state centers for Low German in Ratzeburg and Leck also offer many services, including teacher training. This includes a special class for day care and preschool workers and teachers. This program receives EU funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Teacher training is also offered by the *Schleswig-Holstein Heimatbund* (SHHB). This organization also cooperates closely with the centers for Low German and the state commissioner for Low German in the schools and hosts annual theater workshops.<sup>185</sup>

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (i). Supervision of primary schools, *Realschulen* secondary modern schools and secondary technical schools is done on the *Kreis/kreisfreie Städte* [county-like administrative districts/non-district municipalities] level. For *Gymnasien* [college-prep grammar schools], comprehensive schools and vocational schools, on the other hand, the Ministry for Education, Science, Research and Cultural Affairs is the designated supervisor.<sup>186</sup> Despite these measures, the fourth periodical report still referred to this obligation as unfulfilled overall for Low German.<sup>187</sup> This obligation is not mentioned in the 2013 periodical report.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 189.

<sup>185</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71-72.

<sup>186</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 190-91.

<sup>187</sup> Germany, *Fourth Periodical Report*, 246.

<sup>188</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 71.

Schleswig-Holstein accepted (2), which stipulates that the signee encourage minority language education outside the language's traditional area, such as where Danish and Frisian are traditionally spoken instead, if there a justifiable number of students. As of 2000, this was passively accepted by Schleswig-Holstein.<sup>189</sup> By 2013, Schleswig-Holstein was funding adult education centers offering Low German language classes. In this year, 620 adult students took these classes, which was a 25% increase in enrollment since 2007. Schleswig-Holstein's adult education centers for nursery school staff include Low German in their curriculum. A joint working group consisting the adult education centers in the Land and the SHHB was working in 2013 to develop a course on becoming a guide to regional history and culture, which emphasized Low German.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Germany, *Initial Periodical Report*, 191-92.

<sup>190</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 72-73.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS

As can be seen in the previous chapter, each of the states have instituted or supported a large variety of programs, but are they enough? The official answer can be found in the Committee of Experts' evaluation reports. A summary of which measures the Committee of Experts considers fulfilled and which they do not can be seen below in Table 3. A few immediate conclusions can be drawn from this table and the information in the previous chapter. First, the Land that has undertaken the fewest measures is definitely Lower Saxony. This makes sense since a large portion of the state's territory is south of Low German's traditional territorial extent. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the two Länder that have undertaken the most measures and have also been the most successful in implementing them are Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, but Bremen and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are not too far behind in the number of measures they have adopted, though their success rate is much less impressive.

It is interesting to note here the geographical spread of success in revitalization measures. The city-state of Hamburg and its surrounding state, Schleswig-Holstein, are doing well, while the city-state of Bremen and the state that surrounds the city, Lower Saxony, are doing less well in light of the above measures. Meanwhile, the more isolated and only former-East German Land committed to the revitalization of Low German, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, is also doing relatively

poorly compared to Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein. This geographical differentiation of comparative success may be indicative of mutual learning and networks between states and their neighboring city-states and the lack thereof with the eastern Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. As will be mentioned later, not all varieties of Low German have had learning materials developed for them, so Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg's success could also stem from the creation of shared learning materials that would teach a variety similar to both areas' local dialects of the language.<sup>191</sup> Lastly, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern relatively poor showing could also be partly attributed to the state's continuing relative lack of wealth as a former part of the German Democratic Republic.

Among the Bundesländer that are doing relatively poorly, the lack of success so far is especially surprising for Bremen, given how it has set itself up in many ways as the center of revitalization efforts by hosting the Institute for Low German Language. Though it must also be noted that beginning in the fall of 2014, a number of elementary schools in Bremen added a separate Low German class to the curriculum in reaction to criticisms of the state's progress.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, by the time the next evaluation report comes, it would not at all be surprising if this measure was considered at least partly fulfilled by the Committee of Experts. Other than the initiatives mentioned above, the differences between the Länder are not that substantial. Many have adopted more or less the same provisions and have had a

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<sup>191</sup> Thomas Hahn, "Ik snack Platt! Du ok?," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, last modified February 28, 2016, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/bildung/snacken-und-kloenen-fremde-heimatsprache-1.2882943>.

<sup>192</sup> Institut für niederdeutsche Sprache, *Platt auf dem Bremerstudienplan*, last modified July 30, 2014, [http://www.ins-bremen.de/fileadmin/ins-bremen/user\\_upload/presse/ins300714.pdf](http://www.ins-bremen.de/fileadmin/ins-bremen/user_upload/presse/ins300714.pdf).

similar success rate in implementing them. Therefore, the following analysis will mainly focus on a regional level, since it seems that most observations would apply generally to them all.

Table 3. Summary of the status of planning measures adopted by five autonomous states protecting Low German following the provisions of the ECRLM according to the Committee of Experts' Fifth Evaluation Report.

**F** = fulfilled (1 pt), **P** = partly fulfilled (0.5 pt), **N** = not fulfilled (0 pt)

	Bremen	Hamburg	Lower Saxony	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	Schleswig-Holstein	Total per type
<b>Article 8 - Education</b>						
pre-school	N	P	P	P	<b>F</b>	2.5
primary	N	<b>F</b>		N	P	1.5
secondary	N	P		N	P	1
vocational		N		N		0
higher	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	5
adult continuing	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>		<b>F</b>	4
teaching history and culture	N	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	4
teacher training	N	<b>F</b>		N	<b>F</b>	2
supervisory body		N	N	N	N	0
teaching outside traditional territory					needs more info*	n/a
measures undertaken	7	9	5	8	9	
measures fulfilled	2	6	3.5	2.5	6	

\*The Committee of Experts only received information in the Fifth Periodical Report concerning the implementation of paragraph 2 for adult and continuing education.<sup>193</sup>

<sup>193</sup> Germany, *Fifth Periodical Report*, 75.

Before a more detailed analysis can be given, however, a few details must be mentioned first about what makes a good revitalization policy. One of the main points is that the policy works towards the goal of creating a self-priming mechanism for the reproduction of the regional or minority language.<sup>194</sup> Successfully creating this mechanism would mean that the language would be at stage 5 (developing) of the graded intergenerational disruption scale, which was discussed in Chapter 1.<sup>195</sup> Low German is currently at stage 7 (shifting), which means that the language is more endangered than the projected goal.<sup>196</sup> It is uncertain how old this information is, however, and it would not be surprising to discover that Low German had progressed beyond the stage revealed in these periodic reports. Still, Low German remains in need of help. The goal of creating a self-priming mechanism is realized by providing the conditions necessary for a language to thrive, as mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2. These are: capacity, opportunity, and desire. Education's primary role in this process is fostering capacity among the population.<sup>197</sup>

Additionally, it is important that goals are given a rational order in which they are to be developed. For example, in most situations it makes the most sense for more resources to be allocated initially in the creation of a strong primary education program before university courses in the language, so that there are

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<sup>194</sup> Grin, 87.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>196</sup> Ethnologue, "Low Saxon in the Language Cloud," accessed March 18, 2017, <https://www.ethnologue.com/cloud/nds>.

<sup>197</sup> Grin, 100.

enough people with enough competence to take such courses.<sup>198</sup> Additionally, it is important to institute strong primary education programs as soon as possible, because children in primary school are at the critical age where they can learn a new language the best. Is this what is happening for Low German in northern Germany in the Länder's efforts to foster the capacity of their citizens in the language? A glance at Table 3 would suggest that it is not. A majority, that is 9/17 or 53%, of fulfilled measures are either related to higher education or adult education. On the other hand, pre-school and primary education only have one Bundesland, each fulfilling their obligations and together representing 2/17 or 12% of fulfilled obligations. No state has fulfilled their secondary education obligation as of the last report, though two out of the four are partly fulfilled. Even if we counted these partly fulfilled goals as half a point, pre-school through secondary education would still only get five points compared to higher and adult education's collective nine. In other words, pre-school through secondary education measures are the ones that still need to be developed the most. As outlined in Chapter 2 with the discussion of education levels, the lack of success so far on the lower levels is an important situation for language planners to consider because of the promise of these earlier years of education in ensuring a healthy future for the language through the creation of a broad base of young individuals in the region who are competent in the Low German language.

There are a number of reasons that might account for this situation. First and foremost, the Committee of Experts are pushing for the Low German language to be taught as its own subject in primary and secondary schools across all the states and

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 87.

for more hours to be devoted to the language each week on these levels.<sup>199</sup> All the efforts detailed in the previous chapter have been deemed insufficient if they do not meet this particular goal. This makes sense as a goal because the widely adopted policy mentioned in the previous chapter wherein the teachers would mention or use the language when relevant seems to have ended up meaning that the language is hardly mentioned or used at all. This does not constitute the regular exposure that students need to get in a language in order to become proficient users of it. The main exception to this situation is the Bundesland of Hamburg, which has begun to institute Low German classes as its own subject as a fundamental part of the primary school curriculum. It has also developed it as an optional class in secondary schools, with an intention of integrating it more fully in the years to come.<sup>200</sup> Schleswig-Holstein has introduced a pilot project in a number of schools to this same end, which hopefully means that it will institute its own separate classes in both primary and secondary schools in the near future.<sup>201</sup>

However, the lack of widespread success so far in implementing measures on the levels of secondary and primary education does not necessarily mean that the Länder are showing a bias towards developing higher educational at the expense of the former. Part of the reason why there is so much success on the level of university-level education could be related to the comparatively low standards that

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<sup>199</sup> Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany: 5<sup>th</sup> monitoring cycle*, Council of Europe, last modified December 4, 2002, 47, 62, 73, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806d87ef>.

<sup>200</sup> Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany: 5<sup>th</sup> monitoring cycle*, 54-55.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, 73.



the Committee of Experts had set for that level. For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, some universities in Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg offer a few classes so that students in the German course can concentrate on Low German studies.<sup>202</sup> Even though an object of study at universities can be promising for the status of the language and also important in setting up the educational system's capacity to teach the language at the lower levels by training adults who are competent in the language, university classes are typically only aimed at a handful of students. They also tend to have a very small direct impact on the overall vitality of the language, even though the impact may grow over time. Another policy considered sufficient is one of the universities in Bremen offering three seminars on Low German with the Institute for Low German Studies every semester.<sup>203</sup> Again, while this is an important measure, it seems relatively easy to set up and arrange compared to planning that entails intervention into the general curriculum meant for everybody.

As stated above, while not discounting the achievement of setting these programs up, creating courses mainly for German majors to choose from is a relatively independent venture compared to setting up an appropriate course or bilingual education at the lower levels, where the curriculum is for the most part the same for all students and any addition comes at the expense of an existing class.

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<sup>202</sup> Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany: 5<sup>th</sup> monitoring cycle*, 73-74.; Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany: 3<sup>rd</sup> monitoring cycle*, Council of Europe, last modified July 9, 2008, 70, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806d8824>.

<sup>203</sup> Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany: 3<sup>rd</sup> monitoring cycle*, 61.

Even if Low German classes were to offer Low German class as an elective, most secondary schools have limited space and capacity for electives. For instance, Hamburg is currently offering Low German as an elective on the secondary level, a measure which has still only been deemed partly fulfilled. Additionally, as the Charter says in the Preamble, “...the protection and encouragement of regional or minority languages should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn”, which would be a pressing concern for primary education but not so much at the university level.<sup>204</sup> The obvious reason why is that teaching the national language is one of the main goals of primary education and students going to a university that holds classes in the state language are already very capable in that language. Also, as mentioned in Chapter 2, all of the states adopted **e (ii)** as the subparagraph for higher education, which just demands the provision of facilities for the study of the relevant language. On the other hand, the adopted primary and secondary education subparagraphs demand that the relevant language be taught as an “integral part of the curriculum.”<sup>205</sup> These are obviously very different standards that the Bundesländer have decided to apply to each educational level, though it is good for the health of the language that they did decide to hold the lower levels to a higher standard before its obligations could be considered fulfilled.

It is additionally interesting to note that the two Länder that have successfully fulfilled its stated goals in teacher education have also been more successful in carrying out their primary and secondary education policies. Indeed, these two Länder, Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein, are the only two that have

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<sup>204</sup> “European Charter.”

<sup>205</sup> “European Charter.”

fulfilled the obligations selected in the pre-school and secondary education categories. Additionally, neither of them have any outstanding measures in these categories. There is probably a direct correlation between these two facts. A lack of teachers who are also qualified speakers of Low German in the other Länder could be adversely impacting these Länder's ability to carry out related measures successfully. Finally, there might be added difficulty with some obligations due to the fact that there are innumerable regionally-based sub-dialects of Low German, so it is not always clear to educators which variety should be taught. This creates additional problems, because not all varieties have learning materials available.<sup>206</sup> Having to create original learning material for the area's specific variety of Low German definitely would add a whole other layer of burden in addition to the creation of a new, separate class for Low German. Additionally, if a community chooses to teach the variety specific to that area, that means even more of the legwork has to be done at the regional or community level rather than using materials prepared by the Bundesland's education ministry. For these reasons, despite what a cursory glance would suggest, the Committee of Experts' designations of success or failure so far do not necessarily show that the Länder are "putting the horse before the cart", so to speak, in their development of Low German at the different educational levels.. It is now time to discuss how well the measures put into place at the various levels fulfill François Grin's conditions that need to be fostered for a successful language revitalization policy and a self-sufficient language.

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<sup>206</sup> Thomas Hahn, "Ik snack Platt! Du ok?"

While it is certainly important that the north German states implement their chosen measures successfully, it is a different question whether the adopted policies successfully increase students' capacity for Low German or not. This is a more intricate question to answer, since there are no statistics that shed light on proficiency in Low German directly—at least that have been released publically. However, more general statistics have been collected about the population in these Länder's competence in Low German. They have been broken down a number of ways at a couple different points in time, including in 1984 before the Charter and 2008 after it. As mentioned in the literature review, another similar study is also currently being prepared in Germany, which would have been a very useful source of up-to-date information, had it been available before the completion of this thesis. The most relevant breakdown among the sets of statistics that have been released is statistics by age. Unfortunately, the youngest age group in these surveys are students between 18-34 years of age, which means that the main phenomenon that could be analyzed is the difference between the periods of pre- and post-educational support for the language being put into practice rather than competence between the different grade levels.

In addition to not being able to compare the effectiveness of each grade level, having 18-34 years old as the youngest age group is also problematic in this case because the age group does not make up a natural cohort of people who grew up completely with or without the implementation of the Charter in the schools; it offers a rather mixed picture. The youngest learners surveyed could have been exposed to lessons in Low German starting at the late primary school level after the

ratification of the Charter. The oldest learners could have only been exposed to these classes at the university or adult and continuing education levels.

Consequently, and to the best of my knowledge, I used the best data that is currently available. A survey from 1984, long before the adoption of the Charter, puts the competence of the age bracket of 18-34 years olds in Low German at 23%.<sup>207</sup> A second survey of the same group from 2008, a large portion of whom would have attended school at least a couple years after the current policies were put into practice, though the youngest would have already been in late primary school, shows competence to be 26%.<sup>208</sup>

The above result is not a significant difference. Neither do the above surveys use the exact same parameters. The one from 1984 questioned only residents of the Land Schleswig-Holstein, while the one from 2008 collected information from all of the relevant Länder. However, Schleswig-Holstein is, at least today, the state where the most people understand Low German, so the difference between the two statistics might have been greater if the survey from 1984 had included all of Low German-speaking Länder.<sup>209</sup> With these parameters in mind, it is even more remarkable that there was any kind of increase at all, since we are talking about a language that has been losing rather than gaining ground to High German for centuries.

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<sup>207</sup> Frerk Möller, *Der Typisierte Plattsprecher* (Göttingen: Verlag Schuster Leer, 1996), 119.

<sup>208</sup> Frerk Möller, *Plattdeutsch im 21. Jahrhundert: Bestandsaufnahme und Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: Verlag Schuster Leer, 2008), 65.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

But even if there were a bigger difference, it would be hard to determine how much of that could be attributed to educational policies. Based on the statistics gathered in 2008, 46% of the north German population could understand Low German well or very well and 14% could speak it well or very well compared to 66% and 35% respectively in 1984.<sup>210</sup> Of course, this decrease could at least be partially explained by the continual shrinking of the generation that knew the language best. Also, and again, still not much time had elapsed at the time of the survey from when the educational policies in support of Low German were adopted. Thus, despite the continuing loss of the generation that knows the language best, a relatively large percentage of north Germans can still understand and use Low German to a remarkable degree among languages considered to be endangered.

However, it is a little difficult, though not impossible, to determine how the current generation gained this competence. According to the 2008 study, a whole 55% of those surveyed who spoke or understood Low German gained their competence from a very early age. For the different school levels, 3% learned Low German in kindergarten, 15% in school, and 4% during vocational education.<sup>211</sup> While the percentages for the various educational levels are small compared to the “from a very early age” category (*schon ganz früh als Kind*), one must remember that these statistics are for the entire population. If one considers how much of the population comprises the generation who could have taken Low German in school, since basically everyone who would have learned German in school would have done so under the measures adopted from the Charter, these figures probably

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid, 14, 28, 32.

<sup>211</sup> Frerk Möller, *Plattdeutsch im 21. Jahrhundert*, 43.

represent the majority, if not basically all, of this generation. This is despite the fact that at least some children still first learn the basics of the language at home.<sup>212</sup>

Regardless of the above claim that it is hard to sort out how much of the population's competence in the language is due to these education policies, it seems that these policies have started to have a positive effect on the region's competence in Low German.

From all of the above statistics, we can conclude two things about the effectiveness of the measures in fostering capacity for Low German among north German youth. First, 2008 was probably too early to get a really good picture of how and to what extent these policies have affected northern Germany's linguistic landscape. As explained above, this is because the current data available is not divided in an organic way, since the youngest group had a variety of experiences and their exposure to Low German classes is variable. Additionally, even if the data was divided in a more logical way for the ends of this study, there had not yet been a group of students in 2008 that had started Low German classes in kindergarten or pre-school and took them, or had the option to take them, all the way through university and beyond. However, we can also reasonably conclude that school has largely replaced the home as the place of transmission of Low German.

Transmission which, it can be safely assumed based on the graded intergenerational disruption scale, was not carried out to a great extent anyway. We can assume this is the case, or at least was starting to be, given Low German's rating as a level 7 (shifting) on this scale, which means that the parent generation is not passing the

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<sup>212</sup> Thomas Hahn, "Ik snack Platt! Du ok?."

language to their children. Additionally, as mentioned above, a large percentage of respondents in 2008 said they learned Low German at school, and this was a survey that added up to one hundred percent (i.e. respondents could only choose one option), which means they rated school as their primary place of picking up the language. While some ambiguity remains about the success of the Länder's adopted measures to produce capacity among students, policy seems to have already begun to have a positive effect back in 2008.

The adopted educational policies can also provide opportunity to use Low German. As mentioned before, this is not the case in general for pre-school, primary school, and secondary school policies, at least beyond ad hoc mentions of the language and lessons limited to a "songs and poems" format. Among these policies across the various Länder there are five "not fulfilled categories", six "partly fulfilled measures", and only two "fulfilled ones." All of the measures not marked "fulfilled" are marked so because students are not being given enough opportunity to use and be exposed to Low German according to the stipulations of the adopted measures from the Charter, let alone the recommended amount of exposure discussed in Chapter 2. Though, as will be discussed in more depth later, it seems that due to the way in which the language is perceived in relation to High German, there is no intention or desire to broadly develop the immersion education that is recommended in Chapter 2. Rather, the language is being developed to a more modest standard to mainly cover conversational and cultural competencies.

The case is mostly the same for vocational education. The two Länder that have adopted measures in support of this level, Hamburg and Mecklenburg-



Vorpommern, have not fulfilled the expectations of the Committee of Experts' for the measure. Additionally, neither state plans on developing the measure much further, citing unimportance for the labor market. In both cases, local speakers disagree, saying that there could be a use for Low German especially within the field of healthcare, where workers have to interact with older people who may be more familiar with Low German than High German.<sup>213</sup> An additional counterargument to the vocational schools claim that Low German is irrelevant is that the ability to speak Low German has increasingly been perceived positively rather than negatively by regional employers, buoyed by a rising regionalism in Europe that gave the language a new legitimacy by the passage of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.<sup>214</sup> Therefore, more and more the ability to speak Low German is being considered an asset to working with people in the region rather than being a shameful marker of lower class status. Still, the perception of lower status seems to persist in vocational schools, where the learning of technical English is seen as a more useful investment of time.

Besides the perceived lack of need for the future careers of students at vocational schools, there may also be less need to provide these students opportunities to speak Low German (besides that these two Länder have pledged themselves to do just that). Traditionally, those in careers using skills taught at vocational schools have been the most likely speak Low German. In the old

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<sup>213</sup> Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany: 5<sup>th</sup> monitoring cycle*, 55, 62.

<sup>214</sup> Doerte Hansen, "Man spricht plattdeutsch: Regionalsprachen sind auf dem Arbeitsmarkt wieder gefragt," *Zeit Online*, last modified June 21, 2001, [http://www.zeit.de/2001/26/Man\\_spricht\\_plattdeutsch/komplettansicht](http://www.zeit.de/2001/26/Man_spricht_plattdeutsch/komplettansicht).

Democratic Republic of Germany, workers and farmers in a Collective used Low German as a working language (Betriebssprache), even if they only spoke High German with their families in order to show solidarity and membership in the group.<sup>215</sup> Similarly, in West Germany in the same period of time Low German was used most among farmers, some manual laborers, and workers in the maritime industry.<sup>216</sup> This class-based competence can also be seen in the statistics from 2008, where 24.74% of students who attended *Hauptschule* (the secondary school that most commonly leads to vocational education and/or the careers associated with it) could speak Low German well or very well. Of students who attended *Gymnasium* (college-prep secondary school), on the other hand, only 6.75% could speak equally well.<sup>217</sup> We can probably safely assume that the class and therefore the career path of these Low German-speaking blue collar workers is probably relatively similar. Therefore, it is possible that they are more likely to have learned Low German in the home than children of a higher class origin. This could be another one of the reasons why the planners on this level of attainment did not see a need to include Low German classes, since these students spoke it on some level anyway.

Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter 2, developing vocational education, along with continuing education, is not typically given much weight in revitalization policies. This is because of much more weight needs to be given to developing pre-

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<sup>215</sup> Hans Joachim Gernentz, *Niederdeutsch – gestern und heute* (Rostock: Hinstorff Verlag, 1980), 155.

<sup>216</sup> Willy Sanders, *Sachsensprach, Hanesprache, Plattdeutsch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1982), 202.

<sup>217</sup> Frerk Möller, *Plattdeutsch im 21. Jahrhundert*, 95.

school through secondary school education, since this is the critical period of language learning. Because of this need, these levels are given a priority in the fulfillment of the goal of inter-generational transmission of the language and its subsistence and development. As it is more explicitly stated in the Committee of Experts' evaluation report, however, the perceived lack of need for Low German is also due to Low German's historical perception and place in society.

As it was commonly thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "It is generally agreed by the opponents that Low German is *linguistically* unsuitable for the expression of abstract and technical concepts and thus a conversation about scientific or academic subjects would simply not be possible. Low German is not a language for science (*Wissenschaft*)." This was not the case for literary expressions, poetry, and folklore, however, i.e. the realm of culture, where Low German seemed to have been found suitable by many who thought it to be an "important cultural treasure(s) which the children ought to acknowledge and become aware of."<sup>218</sup> This nineteenth century attitude that Low German is not suitable for scientific and business pursuits with the outside world but good for local literature and cultural pursuits can continue to be seen in the lack of Low German in vocational education. In the three lower educational tiers, much of the time dedicated to Low German seems to be spent on "songs and poems".

Despite all of the above explanations as to why the states have not yet fulfilled the vocational education obligations, the main point to take away is that the

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<sup>218</sup> Nils Langer and Robert Langhanke, "How to Deal with Non-Dominant Languages – Metalinguistic Discourses on Low German in the Nineteenth Century," *Linguistik online* 58 (2013).

opportunities that Hamburg and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have promised to provide, and are legally obligated to provide by adopting this provision, do not have been provided. Additionally, while more Low German education on this level is not strictly necessary, it definitely could not hurt. Besides the concrete examples provided by speakers from these two Bundesländer, such as in entry-level health professions where a knowledge of Low German could be eminently practical, giving Low German a place in vocational education could help cement the historic connections between the types of skills and result in jobs that vocational education is connected to. As explained in Chapter 2, every social domain of language use counts in boosting use and exposure to the language, and providing Low German in vocational schools could help cement its position in both the education and work domains in the region. After all, usage in the lower work sphere, which this measure would promote, is the primary characteristic of Fishman's stage 3 of the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale.<sup>219</sup>

The success of the adult and further education measures adopted by the Länder, on the other hand, is a completely different story. As we can see from Table 3 above, and as mentioned ad nauseam at the beginning of this chapter, all four Bundesländer that decided to provide adult and continuing education quickly fulfilled their obligation by providing many popular classes and events in and about the language for the larger community. The success is despite what we may expect from the usual de-emphasis of adult and continuing education along with vocational education, as explained above. While it varies which of the specific subparagraphs

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<sup>219</sup> Education Sector, *UNESCO'S Language Vitality and Endangerment*, 7.

was adopted, all four Länder supporting this measure have received a “fulfilled” mention from the Committee of Experts. And this has been the case for all of the Länder since the first evaluation report, except for Lower Saxony, which fulfilled this obligation by the second evaluation report.<sup>220</sup> These programs have provided many opportunities for the population at large to learn and speak Low German. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hamburg regularly offers two courses for adults, Bremen offers regular courses on Low German language and literature, Schleswig-Holstein has forty adult education centers that offer Low German culture, and Lower Saxony has 33 adult education centers that host 170 adult education classes.<sup>221</sup> It seems like a reasonable assumption that any citizen of these states that wants to improve or use their Low German has plenty of opportunity. Therefore, no improvements have to be made on this level for a self-priming mechanism for the Low German language to be created.

Education, when done right, can also affect the third part of the self-priming mechanism by increasing the desire of students to learn the language. Unfortunately, there is no data available on motivation (or reliably foster it for that matter, given the diversity of people’s interests). One good sign to this end could be that four out of five Länder have successfully implemented the subparagraph

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<sup>220</sup> Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany*, Council of Europe, last modified December 4, 2002, 61, 68, 89-90. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806d87ef>; Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany: 2<sup>nd</sup> monitoring cycle*, Council of Europe, last modified March 1, 2006, 98, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806d8821>.

<sup>221</sup> Committee of Experts, *Application of the Charter in Germany*, 61, 68, 89-90.; *Application of the Charter in Germany: 2<sup>nd</sup> monitoring charter*, 98.

concerning the teaching of the history and culture associated with Low German. It is possible that students' desire to learn Low German increases when they know its importance to the history and culture of where they live, since students often become more excited about a topic that they are connected to rather than one that seems abstract or too remote from their preoccupations. Schools in the region have used this subparagraph to help perceive the language as more practical. For example, the education plan for elementary schools in Hamburg have a regional-cultural component that students must master. This includes memorizing children songs and stories as well as expressions and phrases and be useful for living in north Germany. These include being able to recognize the meaning of everyday words in Low German and acquiring the pragmatic competences to when this lexical stock should be used. Being able to apply knowledge of the language to daily life would help children see the language beyond its abstract structure, which could increase their interest in learning it.<sup>222</sup>

Mentioning the practicality of Low German indeed has positive effects on students' interest. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the motivation of students in Hamburg was indeed reported to have been positively affected by learning of the local applications of the language.<sup>223</sup> Schleswig-Holstein's recent introduction of voluntary Low German classes in a number of primary schools also encouragingly attracted more students than expected in the first year that it was in effect, and even

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<sup>222</sup> Hamburg, *Bildungsplan Grundschule: Niederdeutsch*, Behörde für Schule und Berufsbildung, last modified 2011, 21, <http://www.hamburg.de/contentblob/2965720/data/niederdeutsch-gs.pdf>.

<sup>223</sup> Reinhard Goltz, "Niederdeutsch im Bildungswesen," 31.

more students were expected to sign up the following year.<sup>224</sup> Another marker of desire could be the relatively popular reading competitions that a few Länder hold and that were mentioned in the previous chapter. In the end, though, the effects of the adopted Charter policies on this aspect of the self-priming mechanism are rather opaque from the available information. Furthermore, one could probably safely say that any fostering of desire to learn the language among students depends more on the way the policies are applied on the ground rather than on the exigencies of the Charter itself. This is because there is no wording in the Charter explicitly targeting the psychological facets of the language learning, teaching, and preservation process. But even if the Charter did reflect on such aspects, motivating people to learn a language could be a rather onerous and nebulous obligation to the learner and difficult to evaluate by the educator. Therefore, it is up to the state-parties to keep this part of the self-priming mechanism in mind when designing educational policies.

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<sup>224</sup> Schleswig-Holstein, "Niederdeutsch lernen in der Schule," accessed March 19, 2017, [https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/Fachinhalte/S/schule\\_und\\_unterricht/niederdeutsch.html](https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/Fachinhalte/S/schule_und_unterricht/niederdeutsch.html).

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

Have educational policies created a self-priming mechanism for Low German? The analysis in the preceding chapter seems to suggest that the answer is not straightforward. Opportunities have definitely been given to students to learn and use the language, though not to an optimal degree at the pre-school, primary, and secondary levels. Overall though there are signs that one can expect further developments in the near future. Much the same could be said for the policies' ability to foster capacity among students. Any time devoted to the language will help increase students' capacity, but not enough is currently being done, although the Länder are working to reach an acceptable point, and will do so perhaps in the near future as well. At the very least, statistics suggest that the introduction of Low German has helped preserve at least basic level understanding of the language. This fact is encouraging in itself, as it seems to have fostered active transmission by many in the parents' generation (hence being stage 7 language on the graded intergenerational disruption scale) and could have helped create a slight rise in basic competency in the language across the region. In particular, we can see this in the statistics showing that competence in the language has increased since the pre-Charter 1980s, however modestly, and that a lot of this competence among young adults is due to the language's presence in the region's schools. Additionally, students with a foundation of Low German are more likely to continue to learn it



throughout their life than students never introduced to it. As for desire, programs such as reading contests have proven a popular motivator. Just the presence of Low German in school has probably also done much to give a neutral or positive view of the language. This is important because beforehand, in the not so distant past, speaking a purportedly unrefined language such as Low German was interpreted as an indication of not being able to speak Standard German.<sup>225</sup> At least for some, combating this impression has been an explicit goal of the introduction of Low German in the classroom.<sup>226</sup> The language's prominent placement in the German studies departments in universities across the region have probably also helped the language's reputation among society at large. Broadly put, from the statistics mentioned above we can conclude that the policies that the Bundesländer have adopted have been moderately successful, but work still has to be done, both to fulfill the adopted obligations and to ensure the language reaches a point that it becomes self-priming.

What does all of this say about the ideology surrounding Low German acquisition planning? At least as the situation stands right now and notwithstanding the special difficulties of fitting a language in a general curriculum discussed in the previous chapter, one must note the disparity in the success and speed of implementing measures for university education and the lower educational levels. This could perhaps signal a general belief in the importance of a moderate and passive capacity for the language, with basic skills being acquired in primary and secondary school mainly through the limited "poems and songs" approach, but

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<sup>225</sup> Sanders, 203.

<sup>226</sup> Doerte Hansen, "Man spricht plattdeutsch."

otherwise mainly being the domain of people with a special interest in the language (German majors concentrating in Low German studies). This is only a hypothesis, however. After all, the intention is supposedly still there to develop the lower educational levels further, since that is still the obligations that the Bundesländer signed up for through the Charter. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a number of Länder have issued statements saying that they intended to meet the Low-German-as-a-separate-class goal. Indeed, pushing for Low German as its own subject in primary and secondary schools has been one of the main goals of the group Bundesrat für Nedderdüütsch [Federal Council for Low German].<sup>227</sup>

All the same, the rejection of the language by vocational schools and the apparent emphasis in universities on preparing for jobs offered by institutions like schools, regional theaters, and regional radio stations seem to suggest that the educational policies in support of Low German seek mainly to keep the language as a regional cultural artifact. As explained in Chapter 6, this is in accordance with the language's historical role. It is doubtful that more action on the lower levels would change this apparent goal, especially since there is little sign of any intention of instituting widespread immersion education, which would be needed to develop the language to the next level. Even the university courses seem to be mainly concerned with fostering vernacular and region-specific uses for the language, being primarily targeted at students in German literature departments whose main interest is regional literature and culture. Fostering local culture is explicitly the justification

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<sup>227</sup> Bundesrat für Nedderdüütsch, "Niederdeutsch in der Schule – Grundsätze zur Bildungspolitik," last modified October 2013, <http://bundesrat-nd.de/Dateien/article/151/Niederdeutsch%20in%20der%20Schule.pdf>.

for Low German in the schools in a document written by Mecklenburg-Vorpommern's Ministry for Education, Science and Culture explaining the adoption of a law requiring the teaching of Low German in state schools. The document argues that the retreat of Low German would mean the eventual extinction of its related culture, literature, history, and customs, and that this endangerment and loss of culture would affect all north Germans, whether they speak Low German or not.<sup>228</sup> Whether people speak Low German or not, the language is now widely held as a symbol of identity with high prestige.<sup>229</sup> This region-based goal would be consistent with Germany's strong federal structure. Low German in this case would represent a trans-regional lingua franca that has been given status on a regional level, but High German reigns supreme in any business or government communication done with the world outside the northern Länder.

How does all of this relate to the EU? In her article "The European Charter for regional or minority languages: a *magnum opus* or an incomplete *modus vivendi*?" Tatjana Soldat-Jaffe argues that the European Union and the Council of Europe have two different visions of language diversity and the principle of language rights. She argues that, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper, the EU embraces political, cultural, and linguistic diversity. On the other hand, Soldat-Jaffe argues that the Council of Europe and its Charter for Regional or Minority Languages "as a

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<sup>228</sup> Ministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft, und Kultur Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, "Niederdeutsch in der Schule: Verwaltungsvorschrift des Ministeriums für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kultur," last modified March 9, 2004, 1, <https://www.bildung-mv.de/export/sites/bildungsserver/downloads/Verordnung-Niederdeutsch-in-der-Schule.pdf>.

<sup>229</sup> Wolfgang Krischke, "Schnacken wie die Alten," *Zeit*, last modified January 12, 2012, <http://www.zeit.de/2012/03/Plattdeutsch-Unterricht>.

linguistic authority cannot operate in the same unrestricted manner. In the desire to manage diversity most efficiently, the ECRML has assumed the romantic idea of promoting language function, which is the notion that language is a marker of national identity and that it reflects and strengthens collective identity. Thus the ECRML has chosen the territorial solution.”<sup>230</sup> Soldat-Jaffe rightly argues that the ECRML is based on the territorial language rights principle instead of the human rights principle or collective rights principle.<sup>231</sup> However, as mentioned in the introduction, the dichotomy between the systems only goes so far. All EU members are members of the Council of Europe and new members must ratify the Charter. These principles are not mutually exclusive either. Rights that are afforded to a territorially bound language are, to some extent, also rights given to groups and individuals. Let us take Low German education policy as an example. The language is taught as the heritage language of the region; this is true. However, it is also understood as symbol of both personal and group identity. The connection is not abstract either. Many of these children still have grandparents who speak this language and some were even taught it as very young children. Having Low German be taught in schools in the region adds legitimacy to this language and has increased the capacity of young people to interact with neighbors and relatives and perhaps eventually provide professional services to people in the area in their own language. This relates to the human right to be understood in one’s own language.

The results of this paper show the collective power that the European Union

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<sup>230</sup> Tatjana Soldat-Jaffe, “The European Charter for regional or minority languages: a *magnum opus* or an incomplete *modus vivendi*?” *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (2015): 382-383.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, 383. .

and the Council of Europe can have in affecting positive cultural change. This is true when they work explicitly together on a particular problem, but implicitly as well. Low German education policy is a good example of the latter. The EU has not provided explicit assistance in developing the language. All the same, the CoE's visionary Charter has been given life by becoming law of the EU, which has powers of enforcement that the CoE alone does not. These powers of enforcement can help make sure that signees of the Charter remain faithful to their obligations. While both organizations strive to be paragons of normative behavior, we can see a slight dichotomy in the roles they both can play in bringing about change. In this partnership, the CoE comes up with new norms that they believe should be taken up by the European community and the EU helps give these new norms further weight and legitimacy by holding state-parties accountable. The EU's image of being a normative power also gives any legislation it takes up from the CoE even more moral legitimacy. The cooperation of these two organizations has helped the northern German Bundesländer seriously pursue the revitalization of Low German. The strengthening of Low German in northern Germany through the education system from this joint effort has led to a Germany that is more similar to both the Council of Europe's the European Union's ideal Europe that is "united in diversity."

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