

# **G E R M A N Y**

## **SECTION A**

### **Capital**

Berlin 3,477,900, (1994 est.)

### **Area**

356,910 sq km (137,823 sq km)

### **Form of government**

Federal Republic

### **GDP—per capita**

Purchasing power parity—\$22,700 (1999 est.)

### **Population**

82,087,361 (July 1999 est.)

### **Ethnic composition**

German	91.5%
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Turkish	2.4%
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Italians	0.7%
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Greeks	0.4%
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Poles	0.4%
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Other	4.6%
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(Made up largely of people fleeing the war in the former Yugoslavia)

Danish	50,000 (est.)
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Sorbs	60,000 (est.)
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Frisians	50,000-60,000
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Sinti and Roma up to 70,000

Note: Up to 60, 000 persons considers themselves North Frisians. 10,000 of those still speak North Frisian. Approximately 2,000 Sater Frisian speakers live in the Saterland.

### **Official language**

German (cf. for instance § 23 Act on Administrative Procedures, § 87 Fee Ordinance)

German is also in principle the language spoken in court (§ 184 Judicature Act)

### **Minority languages**

Germany includes five indigenous minority languages in addition to the official one, which is the German language. Danish and Northern Frisian are spoken in Schleswig-Holstein, Sater Frisian in the Saterland, Sorbian (High Sorbian and Low Sorbian) in the southeast of the republic, close to the Czech and Polish borders. The Romany language is spoken by Gypsies, whom are scattered throughout the territory. The minority languages are protected by law and enjoy a certain level of legal recognition inside the Länder (district) where they are used, with the exception of Romany.

### **Legislation dealing with the use of languages**

*The Constitution* adopted on May 23, 1949 became the Constitution of the United German People on October 3, 1990 and was amended through 1995

Statutes to protect minority languages:

DANISH LANGUAGE: The bilateral declarations “*Bonner und Kopenhagener Erklärungen*” of 1955 protect the use of each minority language (German in Denmark and Danish in Germany). Furthermore, the *Constitution of Schleswig-Holstein (1990)* safeguards the rights of the Danish and Frisian communities.

*The Kiel Declaration of the Land Government of Schleswig-Holstein on the Status of the Danish minority of September 26, 1949* and the *Declaration of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany of March 29, 1955* (which is identical with the Copenhagen Declaration of the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark of March 29, 1955) provide that the use of the Danish language in the courts and vis-à-vis the administrative authorities is governed by the general statutes. Under the general

statutes the Danish language is not admitted before administrative authorities and in the courts.

FRISIAN LANGUAGE: *The 1990 Constitution of Schleswig-Holstein* protects and safeguards the rights of the Danish and Frisian communities. In Lower Saxony the language receives little protection and there are only a few isolated efforts to try and arrest its decline.

SORBIAN LANGUAGE: The legal basis for the protection of the Sorbian population is provided in the *German Unification Treaty (1990)*, the *Constitutions for Saxony and Brandenburg (1992)*, the laws protecting the rights of the Sorbs (Wends) in the Land of Brandenburg (1994). An equivalent law is currently being prepared for Saxony as well as a series of other laws, directives or legal acts.

*Preliminary Act on Administrative procedures for the Free State of Saxony of January 21, 1993, Section 3 and the Act on Administrative procedures for the Land Brandenburg* allow the use of the Sorbian language vis-à-vis administrative authorities and other authorities in the German-Sorbian areas. In the Sorb settlements, the Sorbian language is used along with the German language on public signs, the signs for names of counties and municipalities, public buildings, and institutions. Roads and places must be given both in both the German and the Sorbian language.

### **Background notes**

Germany – first united in 1871 – suffered defeats in successive world wars and was occupied by the victorious Allied powers of the US, UK, France, and the Soviet Union in 1945. With the beginning of the Cold War and increasing tension between the US and Soviet Union, two German states were formed in 1949: the western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR). The newly democratic FRG embedded itself in key Western economic and security organizations, the EU and NATO, while the Communist GDR was on the front line of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.

The decline of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War cleared the path for the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and German re-unification in 1990. Germany has spent considerable funds (roughly \$100 billion a year) in subsequent years working to bring eastern productivity and wages up to western standards, with mixed results. Unemployment, which in the east is nearly double that in the west, has grown over the last several years primarily as a result of structural problems like an inflexible labor market. In January 1999, Germany and 10 other members of the EU formed a Common European Currency, the Euro, and the German

government is now looking toward reform of the EU budget and enlargement of the Union into Central Europe.

Independence: January 18, 1871 (German Empire unification), in 1945 following World War II Germany was then divided into four zones of occupation (UK, US, USSR, and later, France). Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany) was declared May 23, 1949 and included the former UK, US, and French zones. German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) was declared October 7, 1949 and included the former USSR zone. Unification of West Germany and East Germany took place October 3, 1990, all four powers formally relinquished rights March 15, 1991.

Current international disputes: individual Sudeten German claims for restitution of property confiscated in connection with their expulsion after World War II.

## **SECTION B**

### **Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?**

The Federal Government in March of 2000 announced its plan to cut financial support for the Foundation for the Sorbian people (Stiftung für das sorbische Volk) by over 12 %. This amounts to one million DM in the year 2001 and by another 500,000 DM in each of the years 2002 and 2003. Due to the considerable economic difficulties already facing them, it cannot be expected that the states of Saxony and Brandenburg, will be able to cover the loss of this financial support. There is the danger that in the near future a substantial proportion of the cultural and scientific activities by and on behalf of the Sorbian people will have to be abandoned due to a lack of funds.

There have been complaints to the authorities in the northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein over cutbacks in Frisian-language education. The Schleswig-Holstein department of education has presented new examination regulations, which will lead to serious disadvantages for the Frisian minority.

Frisian can now only be chosen as an elective to the two required major subjects. The examination can only be taken in an additional supplemental examination and the requirements correspond to only half of those required for the major subjects. This means that:

- Students who, despite the obstacles mentioned, decide to study the elective subject Frisian, must take upon themselves a considerably longer time of independent study
- The quality of the studies remains unsatisfactory as the examination requirements are only half of those of the major two subjects
- There will be no teachers education in the Frisian language at the university level, because the requirement for that part of the teachers education will be met in the two major subjects (of which Frisian can no longer be one, because it can only be studied as a secondary subject)

With the new examination regulations this means that not only the conditions to study the subject Frisian have become much worse, but also it has become impossible to meet the requirements in the second part of the teachers education.

Minorities in the northernmost German state of Schleswig-Holstein have created increased media presence for their languages and issues in state elections of February 2000. There are four indigenous linguistic minorities in Schleswig-Holstein: Danish; North Frisian, Romany and Lower German. As the election campaign intensified, all four groups increased their demands for greater media coverage. Frequent reference has been made to the aims of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which came into force in Germany last year. At the present time, the broadcasting and media situation for Schleswig-Holstein's minorities is far from the stated ideal. Only the Danish minority has a bilingual Danish-German daily newspaper, Flensburg Avis. Danish-speakers also have about two minutes of radio news each weekday on the private radio station RSH. Issues about the Frisian minority are – to a certain extent – covered by the Danish daily, but not in the Frisian language. Apart from that, the Frisians have three minutes of Frisian radio a week in the regional public service radio station NDR. The Romany community in Schleswig-Holstein has no media outlet whatsoever for its language. Lower German has a larger presence in broadcasting time. According to a report by the Independent Broadcasting Council, ULR, there are about 40 hours per month in the language on public service radio.

#### ANIMAL LITTER CASE MAY GO TO COURT IN LOWER GERMAN

(Brussels August 8, 2000, by Katy Redgrave & Brigitte Alfter )

An application for a patent for a new type of environmentally friendly animal litter was rejected because it was submitted in Lower German to

the patenting office. Lower German is recognized as a regional language of northern Germany, while the federal patent authorities are based in the south in Munich.

A local Member of the Federal Parliament, Wolfgang Börnsen, recently addressed the Minister of Justice regarding this matter, and met with a negative response.

A statement from the Ministry says that under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, Germany's obligations regarding Lower German apply to the northern regions where it is spoken, and are irrelevant to the workings of the Munich based federal office.

The claim that the rejection of the application, because of the use of Lower German, belittles the millions of speakers of this minority language, is also refuted: 'The life of a regional minority language does not depend on whether or not it can be used in communications with the administrative authorities.'

A patent lawyer from Bremen in northern Germany earlier announced that he wanted to take the case to the federal court. He charged that the rejection contravened above-mentioned Charter, ratified by Germany, reports the Institute of Lower German based at Bremen.

If the case goes all the way to the Constitutional Court as the Bremen lawyer intends, this would be the first court case in Germany to test the European Charter of Minority and Regional Languages.

The background to the case is to be found at a farm in Lower Saxony. Patent lawyer Klaus Göken applied for patenting rights for an idea for cattle and pig bedding, using materials such as flax, hemp and straw, thought up by an animal litter manufacturer. The application was written in Lower German, and despite being accompanied by a High German translation, was rejected. A second version sent in High German only was accepted.

In its defense the office reasoned that had the Lower German version been accepted, a precedent would have been set, leading to an unavoidable abundance of applications in other dialects and minority languages; this would make official procedures incomprehensible.

The office reiterated that the administrative language and that of the court must be "an understandable form of German, that is High German". However, Göken is planning to address the jury in Lower German.

## **The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other**

### DANISH LANGUAGE

The Danish language is spoken in Schleswig-Holstein, mainly in the rural districts of Rendsburg/Eckernförde, Schleswig/Flensburg, Nordfriesland and the city of Flensburg.

The Danish minority enjoys the right to education in the Danish language throughout Schleswig-Holstein (Declaration by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany of March 29, 1955, section 58, paragraph 3). This entitlement has been translated into practice in all towns and villages where the Danish minority finds it necessary to maintain a school. The members of the Danish minority attend schools of the Danish private school system, which regionally offers a large variety of schools. German language is a compulsory subject but apart from that Danish is the teaching language. However, the schools make sure that pupils who will soon leave school learn the technical terms, especially those in the field of the natural sciences, also in German. This is to prepare them for the future vocational training in enterprises and at university where German tends to be spoken. To sum up, all classes are taught in Danish with few exceptions. For most of the subjects students' books tend to be those published in Denmark. Books published in Germany and teaching material prepared by the minority or teachers of these schools are also used.

The Danish minority has a daily newspaper of its own called "Flensborg Avis". Private broadcasting station "Radio Schleswig-Holstein" produces a daily news program in Danish. The "Open Channel" television in Flensburg is also open to contributions by minorities. There is a press service attached to the Sydslesvigs Forening (South Schleswig Association), which supplies the media in Germany and Denmark with information on individual minority.

Danish language is used in family life and also in church. The Dansk Kirke i Sydslesvig (Evangelical Lutheran Danish Church in South Schleswig) organizes church activities of the Danish minority. It is not used in the business world. It is not used in official communication with the German central administration. The services of an interpreter are available, if requested by Danish speakers.

The Sydslesvigs Forening (SSF) is the cultural organization of the Danish minority in South Schleswig. One important role that SSF plays is ensuring that Danish children can go to Danish schools and kindergarten, so that they are able to grow up with the Danish culture

and language. Events such as concerts, folk dances, and parties are also planned here. This is a positive example of how minorities in a border area can work together in a harmonious way.

#### FRISIAN LANGUAGE (North Frisian and East Frisian)

North Frisian (Friisk) is spoken in Schleswig-Holstein in the rural district of North Frisia (Nordfriesland). All Frisian speakers are at least bilingual and trilingual-ism is widespread. Quadrilingual-ism is also found. Sater or East Frisian (Seeltersk) is spoken in Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) in the villages of Ramsloh, Struecklingen and Scharrel in the district of Cloppenburg.

Under Article 5 paragraph 2 of the Land Constitution the North Frisians in Schleswig-Holstein are entitled to protection and assistance. This right has not been fleshed out in the schools act. As regards the Frisian spoken in the Saterland region, the Schools Act of lower Saxony as amended in 1993 states that the schools must enable the pupils to develop their perception and feelings. It also says to put them into words using also that kind of the Frisian language, which is important in their region. In Lower Saxony a decree was drafted to give more support to the Frisian spoken in Saterland region.

Neither North Frisian nor Sater Frisian is used as a teaching language. The North Frisian language is mainly taught, on a voluntary basis, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of primary school. At other schools the North Frisian language is taught for one or two hours a week in different school years, starting in the first year of the primary school through the grammar school. However, there are also school years or semesters where there are no Frisian language lessons.

In the Saterland region in Lower Saxony Sater Frisian is taught in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year for two hours a week. The teaching material developed for North Frisian language is used and adapted to the Saterland dialect by the teachers. A pilot project at two nursery schools in Nordfriesland and also one project in the Saterland examined whether it is possible to start teaching the Frisian at that stage. As a result the Frisian population became much more aware of the Frisian language and culture.

Some local daily newspapers and some regional newspapers in Nordfriesland print articles in North Frisian. The "Nortddeucher Rundfunk" broadcasts short radio program. The North Frisian Association supports the language and culture of Nordfriesland. Also the "Nordfriisk Institut" (North Frisian Institute) plays a very important role in maintaining, researching and promoting the Frisian language, culture and history.



(August 8, 2000) After fighting for more than a year for bilingual place name signs Saterfrisians have now been successful. The transport minister for Lower Saxony, Peter Fischer unveiled the first sign in the town of Ramsloh in July of 2000. In Saterfrisian, the town is called Roomelse. This was revealed in a press release from the ministry.

## SORBIAN LANGUAGE

Sorbian is spoken in a number of communities in the German Federal Lands of Brandenburg and Saxony.

The School Act for the Free State of Saxony of July 3, 1991 guarantees that pupils are taught the Sorbian language and that in some schools selected subjects are taught in the Sorbian language at all levels. Section 4, paragraph 5 of the Schools Act for Brandenburg of April 12, 1996 provides that it is the special task of the schools to promote the knowledge and understanding of the Sorbian (Wendish) culture. In the settlement area of the Sorbs (Wends) in Brandenburg, pupils are entitled to learn the Sorbian (Wendish) language and to be taught in particular subjects in particular school years in the Sorbian language. The Saxon Act on Child Day-Care Centres of September 10, 1993 is the legal basis for teaching the Sorbian language and culture at Sorbian and bilingual child day-care centers in the German-Sorbian area of the Free State of Saxony, and thus for keeping the Sorbian language and culture alive. The Act on the Sorbs (Wends) provides for how the Sorbian language is to be promoted and taught at Sorbian child day-care centers in Brandenburg.

At present Sorbian is taught as a first language, as a second language and as a foreign language to pupils in primary and secondary schools. Teachers are trained at the Institute of Sorbian Studies at the University of Leipzig where the language is used as a teaching medium for degree courses in Sorbian, and is also taught as a subject. Adult courses are available in Bautzen and Cottbus. Sorbian schools are set up in towns and villages in the settlement area where there are enough pupils to make up a class with Sorbian as a teaching language. At Sorbian schools in the central settlement area the Sorbian language is the main teaching language, German is taught from the first year onwards. At other schools where Sorbian language is taught, German tends to be the language of instruction.

There are approximately 150 books published by the Sorbian publisher "Domowina" for teaching the Sorbian language and teaching other subjects in the Sorbian language. The Sorbs publish several newspapers and magazines also through "Domowina". Financing, aside from their revenues and allocations, is provided by the Foundation for the Sorbian

People. Along with a few periodicals, a daily newspaper is published in Upper Sorbian and a weekly in Lower Sorbian.

The TV station "Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg" (ORB) has been broadcasting a 30-minute program in Lower Sorbian once a month. Radio broadcasts exist in both languages.

In the authorities and administrations of the Sorbian communities Sorbian is permitted alongside German.

The Foundation for the Sorbian People is financed from both federal funds and that of Saxony and Brandenburg. This foundation seeks above all to maintain and develop the Sorbian language and culture, particularly in educational, scientific and other institutions, which serve this purpose. The "Domowina-Zwjazk Luziskich Serbow" is the umbrella organization of most Sorbian associations and institutions. The Domowina publisher issues not only schoolbooks but also scientific and cultural books in the Sorbian language. They also publish new and classical Sorbian literature, children's and adolescents' books and picture books, with financial support from the state.

There are Sorbian priests both in the Catholic and the Protestant parishes and the church services are held in Sorbian language.

## ROMANY LANGUAGE

The majority of German Sinti and Roma live in the capital towns of the older German federal states, which include Berlin and surroundings. This also includes the larger cities of Hamburg, Düsseldorf/Cologne, and in the industrial centers of the Rhine-Ruhr, Rhine-Main and Rhine-Neckar. Some also live in larger numbers in regions containing several smaller towns situated in close proximity to each other; for example in medium and small-sized towns in East Frisia, North Hesse, the Palatinate, Baden and Bavaria. The area in which the language is used is thus spread over most of Germany.

German Sinti and Roma children grow up bilingually with Romany and German and as a rule master both languages. The National Socialists manipulated the Romany language in Germany in the course of their so-called "scientific research" aimed at registering the entire minority in order to plan and execute the ensuing genocide of the Sinti and Roma. For this reason, the minority is of the opinion that the language should be passed on solely within the ethnic group and should be taught by teachers from within this group. The Romany mother tongue is cultivated within the family and within the community. Language courses for children are encouraged as well as in adult education provided by

teachers from within the community in an effort to maintain and strengthen the minority language and cultural identity.

German Sinti and Roma associations, and their umbrella organization the “Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma”, are demanding membership for their representatives on the controlling bodies of both public and private radio and television services. This is in order to end discrimination and to work against clichés and stereotypes with regard to the minority.

**Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?**

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages signed on November 5, 1992, ratified on September 16, 1998 and enacted on January 1, 1999.

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities signed on May 11, 1995, ratified on September 10, 1997 and enacted on February 1, 1998.

**What else can be found about languages and minorities?**

As of early 1994, approximately 6.8 million registered foreigners resided in Germany. Turks made up the largest group (1.9 million), followed by immigrants from the former Yugoslavia (930,000), Italians (565,000), Greeks (350,000), Poles (260,000), and Austrians (185,000). About 25% of these foreign residents, most of who were born in Germany is under the age of eighteen. Because of the higher birth rate of foreigners, one of every ten births in Germany is to a foreigner. However, because recruiting of Gastarbeiter stopped in 1973 at the onset of a worldwide recession, most foreign workers are middle-aged and have lived in Germany for several decades.

Although no longer recruited abroad, Germany's foreign residents remain vital to the economy, parts of which would shut down if they were to depart. They also contribute to the country's welfare and social insurance programs by paying twice as much in taxes and insurance premiums as they receive in benefits. In the long term, their presence may be seen as vital because they have a positive birth rate. The birth rate among native Germans is so low that some studies have estimated that Germany will require approximately 200,000 immigrants a year to maintain its population into the next century and to support its array of social welfare benefits.

According to the foreigner's law that came into effect in mid-1993, foreigners living in Germany for fifteen years may become German

citizens if they have no criminal record and renounce their original citizenship. Young foreigners who have resided eight years in Germany may become citizens if they have attended German schools for six years and apply for citizenship between the ages of sixteen and twenty-three. Usually, however, German citizenship depends not on where one is born (*ius solis*) but on the nationality of the father or, since 1974, on the mother (*ius sanguinis*). Thus, to many, German citizenship depends on being born German and cannot rightfully be acquired through a legal process. This notion makes it practically impossible for naturalized citizens or their children to be considered German. Some reformers advocate eliminating the concept of German blood in the 1913 law regulating citizenship, but the issue is an emotional one, and such a change has little popular support.

Article 16/2 of West Germany's Basic Law offers liberal asylum rights to those suffering political persecution. Whilst only about 5% of requests for asylum are approved, slow processing and appeals mean that many refugees remain in Germany for years. Asylum-seekers are no longer admitted into Germany if they apply from a third country.

## **SECTION C**

### **Legislation dealing with the use of languages**

***Updated (January 2003)***

#### **NORTH FRISIAN**

The new Constitution in Schleswig-Holstein, which came into force in 1990, mentions protection and promotion of the Danish minority and the Frisian people. The Frisian language; however, has no official status in Germany. The Federal Government will probably include Frisian in part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, following the suggestion made by the government of Schleswig-Holstein.

Each "Land" in the Federal Republic of Germany has its own educational system. North Frisian educational system is the same as for the rest of Schleswig-Holstein and is based upon the *Education Act of August 1, 1990* (Schleswig-Holsteinisches Schulgesetz).

Although the linguistic situation in North Frisia and on Heligoland differs from the rest of Schleswig-Holstein, there are no separate regulations for Frisian. Tertiary education is governed by the *Law concerning the Institutes of Further Education* of April 27, 1995 (Gesetz über die Hochschulen im Lande Schleswig-Holstein).

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, the North Frisian language in education in Germany

[http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale\\_dossiers/regional\\_dossier\\_northfrisian\\_in\\_germany.htm](http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_northfrisian_in_germany.htm)

## SORBIAN

In 1997, the FRG signed the European Framework Convention on National Minorities of the Council of Europe, applicable to Danes, Frisians, Sorbians, the Sinti and Roma in Germany.

In 1999, Germany signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, applicable to Danish, Frisian, Lower German and Sorbian minority.

As far as Sorbian is concerned, 38 policy measures have been signed for Lower Sorbian (Wendisch) and 44 policy measures have been declared applicable to Upper Sorbian.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, The Sorbian language in Education in Germany

[http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale\\_dossiers/regional\\_dossier\\_sorbian\\_in\\_germany.htm](http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_sorbian_in_germany.htm)

## **Background notes**

***Updated (January 2003)***

## NORTH FRISIAN

North Frisian is one of the indigenous languages in the German “Land” of Schleswig-Holstein and it is spoken in the rural district of North Frisia (Kreis Nordfriesland), on the west coast just south of the Danish-German border including the North Frisian Islands. It is also spoken on the island of Heligoland, which belongs to the district of Pinneberg.

The language has nine main dialects, each having its own name. The name of the mainland Frisian dialect is based on the concept of Frisian, e.g. fräsch, freesk, fräisch, whereas the island dialects are called after each particular island, viz. sölring (Sylt), fering (Föhr), öömrang (Amrum) and halunder (Heligoland).

North Frisian is an independent West Germanic language, which has been heavily influenced by Danish and Low German over the centuries (latterly also by High German). It is related to West Frisian in the

Netherlands and more closely to Sater Frisian in Lower Saxony (Germany).

Of approximately 156,000 inhabitants of North Frisia, about 60,000 (40 percent) consider themselves to be Frisians and some 8,000 to 10,000 speak Frisian (5-7 percent).<sup>1</sup> Frisian is traditionally an oral language and only after the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it started to be used as a written medium.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, the North Frisian language in education in Germany

[http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale\\_dossiers/regional\\_dossier\\_northfrisian\\_in\\_germany.htm](http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_northfrisian_in_germany.htm)

## SORBIAN

Sorbian is a Western Slavonic language, spoken in the region of Lower and Upper Lusatia.<sup>2</sup> It is closely related to Czech, Slovak, Polish and Kashubian. Together with Danish, Frisian and Niederdeutsch, it is one of four recognized autochthonous regional languages in Germany. Sorbian is characterized by its dialectal differentiation. Nowadays Sorbian is spoken in two main and relatively different dialects: Lower Sorbian (Wendisch) in Lower Lusatia and Upper Sorbian in Upper Lusatia. In the Sleppe Region an East Central Sorbian transitional dialect is spoken.

While in Upper Lusatia there are still families where all generations speak Upper Sorbian, in Lower Lusatia since 1945, Lower Sorbian has stopped to be passed on from generation to generation. The language is spoken only by the older generation.

## *HISTORY*

Under the influence of the Reformation the Sorbian language developed into a literary language. In 1548, the New Testament was for the first time translated into Sorbian. More than 90 percent of the Sorbs accepted the Protestant Faith. Only the area around the Cistercian monastery of St. Marienstern (present-day Panschwitz-Kuckau) and the estate belonging to the chapter of Bautzen Cathedral remained Catholic after the Reformation. They still form up to 90 percent of the total population in some localities today.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this is an estimate as the last survey encompassing the whole of the Frisian-speaking area dates from 1927.

<sup>2</sup> Lower Lusatia is a part of the Land of Brandenburg and Upper Lusatia is part of the Freistaat Sachsen (Saxony).

The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) caused a drastic shrinking of the Sorbian language area.

In 1815, a territorial restructuring of the Sorbian settlement area took place as a result of the Congress in Vienna. The subsequent administrative division led to a considerable reduction in the proportion of the Sorbian-speaking population in almost all districts.

After Bismarck established the German Empire, the Sorbs became a target of Germanization. The fact that practically all school lessons were conducted in German forced most Sorbs to change from Sorbian monoglots to bilingual (Sorbian-German) speakers, and so on only German was spoken. The Weimar Constitution, following the 1848 Constitution, granted the non-German population the possibility to develop freely; however, there was a subsequent lack of laws, which supported it.

After a short period of tolerance during the Weimar Republic, the Sorbs, as a Slavonic people, were again subjected to repressive measures under the fascist dictatorship. Sorbian institutions, language and culture were forbidden and many Sorbs were imprisoned in concentration camps. The Sorbian language and Sorbian clubs and associations were banned in 1937. Sorbian teachers and intellectuals were expelled from Lusatia. A systematic Germanization caused that especially the younger generation in Lusatia could not speak their mother tongue adequately. Therefore most Sorbs considered the collapse of the Third Reich to be liberation.

After World War II the Sorbs, supported by the Czech government, occupied a rather strong position, especially in Saxony. In 1948, the State Parliament of Saxony passed a Law concerning the protection of the rights of the Sorbian population, which allowed existence of Sorbian schools and strengthened the position of the language in public life.

In 1949, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was established. The new Constitution paid attention to the Sorbs in the article on their right to maintain their native language and culture.

Despite financial aid from the state, the number of Sorbs has constantly decreased. On one hand, the GDR pursued a large hearted cultural policy with regard to the Sorbs. Organizations such as the Sorbian Folk Theatre, the State Ensemble for Sorbian Folk Culture, the Sorbian Museum, the Domowina Publishers and the Sorbian Film Group were in fact state organizations, administrated, censored and completely financed by the state. On the other hand, the Sorbian language and culture were seriously threatened by the Republic's policy on industrialization and energy (brown coal opencast mining). Besides to the

immigration of hundreds of thousands of non-Sorbian speakers, many Sorbian-speaking people had to move, because of the enforced demolishing of villages.

After the reunification in 1990, the new German Constitution of 1994 did not have any sections devoted to minorities. In the Federal Republic of Germany, Lower Lusatia became a part of the new “land” of Brandenburg and Upper Lusatia was included to Saxony. However, the Sorbs succeeded in convincing the new authorities to support the Sorbian language and culture (under Protokoll notiz No. 14, which refers to article 35 of the Unification Treaty).

Both Brandenburg and Saxony passed an Article on the Sorbs in their Constitutions as well as the Law on the Sorbs. Moreover, the Federal State of Germany and the both “Länder,” (Brandenburg and Saxony) founded jointly the Foundation for the Sorbian People in order to solve the acute financial needs of the Sorbian infrastructure and to continue the financial support for nearly every Sorbian activity and organization. The federal support is guaranteed until 2008, although in the course of the coming years it will be decreasing.

The total number of people with active knowledge of Sorbian is estimated at 20,000. In Lower Lusatia it is 7,000.

### *HISTORY OF EDUCATION*

Before 1945, the Sorb minority had only very limited opportunities for education and development. However, after World War II, an equal rights approach established bilingual programs from nursery schools to universities. In Saxony, the 1948 law on the protection of the rights of the Sorbs guaranteed the Sorbian language a place in public life and schools. In 1952, there were 78 Sorbian elementary schools and 4 Sorbian secondary schools. Nine of these bilingual schools were the so-called “A” type schools with Sorbian as a medium of instruction. Unfortunately, circumstances soon deteriorated. The directive of October 2, 1962, prescribed the use of the German language in Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics and Citizenship Education lessons.

The following directive of April 30, 1964 almost annihilated the Sorbian education. The possibility of parents to decide whether their child will attend Sorbian classes resulted in the fact that studying of the language became voluntary and the number of pupils substantially declined. In 1963, 11,600 pupils took part in Sorbian education, a year later only 3,300 pupils did so. After 1965, only courses on the Sorbian History and Culture were included in the curriculum and made compulsory for all educational institutions. In 1968, the 1964 directive was changed again.



Schools were allowed to advise the parents about the educational program; however, the Sorbian language was equated with a foreign language and thus it had to compete with English.

Up until 1990, there existed 7 Sorbian polytechnical schools of “A” type<sup>3</sup> and 85 polytechnical schools of “B” type.<sup>4</sup> By 1990, over 500 bilingual teachers were employed in Lusatia.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, The Sorbian language in Education in Germany

[http://www1.fh.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale\\_dossiers/regional\\_dossier\\_sorbian\\_in\\_germany.htm](http://www1.fh.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_sorbian_in_germany.htm)

### **Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?**

#### ***Updated (March 2001)***

In March, UN Human Rights Committee on Racism criticized German Government for not treating all minorities on the same basis (every group has different degrees of special protection). They also asked government for investigation of the reasons for the rise in xenophobic and right-wing attacks.

In Munich, the Federal German Court for Patents concluded that Lower German has to be considered a foreign language comparable to English or French. However, Lower German is recognized as a regional language according to the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages. The case has been initiated after submitting the application for a patent of an animal litter in Lower German to the Federal Patent Authorities. The company which has already achieved recognition for its product by applying in German, intends to carry on the case to the Federal High Court.

#### ***Updated (August 2001)***

The Federal Court of Patents in Munich ruled that in the future, Lower German, a regional language in the northern part of the Federal Republic of Germany, has to be accepted by the Federal Office for Patents. The case led to the decision that applications, as well as negotiations about the patent, have to be done in the minority language if the applicant wishes so. The registration of the patent however will still be in German.

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<sup>3</sup> Schools had a Sorbian-German bilingual program and Sorbian was a medium of instruction.

<sup>4</sup> Schools where Sorbian was taught as a second language and German was a medium of instruction.

## SORBIAN

The Sorbians protested against the closure of a Sorbian school class at the secondary school in Crostwitz. Fifth grade students have for almost two weeks since the closure on August 9, 2001 received education in Sorbian classes in their school by retired Sorbian teachers, even though the class in the village school was officially closed and teachers were waiting for them in another school in a neighbouring village. However, the childrens' parents intended to continue this protest, reported regional media. The leader of the province of Saxony, Kurt Biedenkopf, announced that the Ministry of Education would reinvestigate the issue, whether the special protection of the Sorbian minority allows special conditions in the question of schools.

The closure was based on a decision by the Ministry of Education and Arts in Saxony, saying that there are not enough students to fulfil the requirements. According to the recent reform in Saxony, each secondary school is required to establish at least two parallel classes with 25 students in each - or 20 students in rural areas in each grade.

### ***Updated (September 2001)***

## SORBIAN

Parents of pupils who are thought in the Sorbian language and organizations defending the rights of the Sorbian minority in Germany are still expecting a response from the state government on the demand not to interrupt the Sorbian courses. The fact that so far this initiative has not managed to carry on leads to reopening the discussion on the need to enlarge the recognition of minority's rights. According to a Chancellor Schroeder's recent statement, the reinforcement of the protection for minorities at the federal level is not a state's priority. However, the Sorbian language is on the UNESCO's Red Book list of Europe's endangered languages.

### ***Updated (December 2001)***

## SORBIAN

The Sorbian speakers still keep protesting against the closure of a Sorbian school class.

Hans Modrow, MEP of the Party for Democratic Socialism in Germany, submitted a written question on the issue to the European Commission. The politician, who belongs to the European United Left/Nordic Green Left, points out that "this measure of the Free State of Saxony would violate the right of the Sorbian people to promote their Slavic language

and to protect their identity.” Representatives of the Sorbian minority were shocked by António Vitorino’s (Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs) reply on behalf of the European Commission. The answer showed that the Commission did not examine the Sorbian situation in detail. In the case of closed school, Commission states, “no one disputes the right of the Domowina to set up Sorbian schools but according to the second paragraph of Article 14 of the framework convention, the State is required to manage these schools only where there is ‘sufficient demand’ from pupils.”

The question of ‘sufficient demand’ is crucial in this debate. According to a school reform in Saxony, each secondary school has to have at least two parallel classes with 25 students in each grade. After protests in fear of school closures in the whole region, the authorities lowered the requirements to 20 children in rural areas. But still, it is not enough for the Sorbian minority as there are only 17 students in the fifth grade in Crostwitz, a Sorbian community with 1.200 inhabitants close to the city of Bautzen. The Sorbs protested several weeks by maintaining the original school schedule on a voluntary and unpaid basis. Now the students are forced to go to neighboring schools.

### **The use of language in everyday life, education, broadcasting and other**

***Updated (January 2003)***

#### **NORTH FRISIAN**

Schools in Schleswig-Holstein are generally state run. The only exception in North Frisia are private schools belonging to the Danish minority. These come under the auspices of the Danish School Association in South Schleswig and are funded partly by the “Land” and partly by the State of Denmark.

#### ***PRIMARY EDUCATION***

Frisian was first used in education on the island of Sylt in 1909. This, however, was soon partly forbidden by the Prussian Ministry of Education. A decree of 1925 allowed teaching of Frisian in schools in order to help prevent the decline of the language. A further decree in 1928 (May 19) specified certain measures for the teaching of Frisian. This decree had fallen into neglect due to the rise of National Socialism and the circumstances leading to the war.

Following the World War II, a decree in 1947 (October 17) fastened on the initiatives of the previous decrees, emphasizing that Frisian classes were voluntary. According to the curriculum of 1986, Frisian could be taught

as a part of the German lessons whereas the new curriculum of 1997 allowed Frisian to be included in all subjects.

Frisian is taught mostly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade generally once or twice a week. It is rarely used as a medium of instruction outside Frisian lessons except in the Danish-Frisian school in Risum, which uses the Danish, Frisian and German languages. This is also the reason why this school has a special status.

### *SECONDARY EDUCATION*

Frisian is taught in two grammar schools (in Niebüll - the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade; and in Wyk on the island Föhr in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> grade), and in three intermediate schools with a total number of 24 lessons. There is no secondary modern school teaching Frisian at present. The Danish-Frisian primary and intermediate school in Risum also teaches Frisian as a subject.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, the North Frisian language in education in Germany

[http://www1.faknaw.nl/mercator/regionale\\_dossiers/regional\\_dossier\\_northfrisian\\_in\\_germany.htm](http://www1.faknaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_northfrisian_in_germany.htm)

### *SORBIAN (BRANDENBURG LOWER SORBIAN-WENDISCH)*

#### *PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION*

Witaj is the Sorbian word for “welcome.” This project covers the initiative to approach children bilingually, in German and Sorbian. In 1998, the first bilingual nursery “Mato Rizo” in Cottbus-Sielow started with 54 children. Two years later similar nurseries were established in Dörghausen and Röhne.

A total of 105 children attending the nursery schools in Brandenburg in 2000/2001 were educated by teachers who used both languages with the aim to achieve complete bilingualism for the children.

In the school year 2000/2001, the first six children from a Witaj group went to a primary school. These children have been integrated into the German classes, but they also had seven hours a week of Reading, Writing and Arithmetic in Sorbian. The Sorbian textbooks are similar to the German ones. The German-speaking children in the same class have one hour a week in Sorbian.

## *PRIMARY EDUCATION*

The Brandenburg school law of 1996 provides pupils in the Sorbian area with the right to study Sorbian and be taught in Sorbian.

In Brandenburg, as well as in Lower Lusatia, German is the language of primary education. Sorbian is taught as a subject one hour a week in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and three hours a week in the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Teaching of the Sorbian language depends on the parents' wish.

After 1989 the number of pupils having Sorbian education decreased dramatically. In the school year 1990/1991, only 14 schools, attended by 373 pupils, offered Sorbian as a school subject. But after 1991 the number of schools and pupils has continuously increased.

## *SECONDARY EDUCATION*

Brandenburg has three school types: comprehensive schools, grammar schools and pre-university grammar schools. Students are offered Sorbian as an optional subject for three hours a week in the first two types of schools. Generally, the demand for these classes is very small. Next to Sorbian as an optional subject, it also can be taught as a compulsory second foreign language.

The Niedersorbische Gymnasium in Cottbus is the only grammar school in Lower Lusatia with Sorbian as a second foreign language in its program. In 1952, the Gymnasium began as a bilingual school with the final examination in Wendisch. As schools were forced to become monolingual and parents did not pass the language on to their children any longer, the disappearance of Wendisch classes at primary schools started. Since 1992 the school has offered Wendisch as an obligatory second foreign language. In the school year 1998/1999, 488 pupils attended the Niedersorbische Gymnasium and one year later the number rose to 513.

## *HIGHER EDUCATION*

Since 1998 the University of Potsdam has offered an additional course in Sorbian, among other reasons, to qualify teachers for teaching Sorbian in the lower classes and other people interested in teaching Sorbian in the first and second level. Six students a year, on average, take an advantage of this possibility. In 2001, 45 Lower Sorbian/Wendisch teachers studied there.

Traditionally, students study Sorbian at the Leipzig University in Saxony. Some universities in other parts of the FRG also pay attention to Sorbian.

## SORBIAN (SAXONY UPPER SORBIAN)

### *PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION*

The Saxon Law of 1993 requires day care institutions in the German-Sorbian area to teach the Sorbian language and culture. In 1997, about 700 children attended eight Sorbian day nurseries in the districts of Bautzen and Kamenz. Moreover, twenty bilingual nurseries can be found in the districts of Bautzen, Kamenz and the Niederschlesier Oberlausitzkreis. In 1997, about 1,000 children, among them 685 in Sorbian groups, attended these nurseries.

Next to Witaj nurseries in Brandenburg, the Sorbischer Schulverein took the initiative to establish four groups in Saxony. In the year 2000, 78 children took part in these groups.

Although the Witaj initiative is generally seen as hope and perspective for the future of the language by Sorbian officials, the current number of participating nurseries and children is too small to expect a real renaissance of the Sorbian language from this new development.

### *PRIMARY EDUCATION*

Paragraph 2 of the Saxon Law on Education (1991) basically set out the legal right of the Sorbs to have Sorbian as a subject and as a medium of instruction. Furthermore, for the first time in history, all schools in Saxony have to teach a basic knowledge of Sorbian history and culture.

The administrative act on Sorbian and other schools (1992) defined Sorbian schools as those where Sorbian is the medium of instruction. Other schools were defined as schools where German is the medium of instruction and Sorbian is just one of the subjects.

According to the Saxon School Law, Sorbian schools have to foster and develop the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Sorbs. They are established in places with a sufficient number of pupils to form a Sorbian class (25 pupils).

In the Sorbian language area of Saxony the former “A” type schools have been reestablished to Sorbian schools where Sorbian serves both as a subject and a medium of instruction, with the exception of the German language, which is taught in German.

In 2000, there were five Sorbian primary schools in Saxony: one in the Bautzen district and four in the Kamenz district. They were attended by a total of 575 pupils. Of these, 229 pupils had Sorbian as their mother tongue, 191 pupils studied Sorbian as a foreign language and 155 pupils had Sorbian as a second language on their curriculum.

In addition to the Sorbian primary schools, the school inspectorates of Hoyerswerda, Kamenz and Görlitz have 24 German primary schools, which offer Sorbian as a second language, either as a foreign language or as a language for basic communication. In 2000/2001, a total of 2,607 pupils attended these schools, 408 studying Sorbian as a second language, 153 studying Sorbian as a foreign language and 166 pupils studying Sorbian as a language for basic communication.

### *SECONDARY EDUCATION*

Upper Lusatia, covering the districts of Bautzen and Kamenz, has six Sorbian secondary schools: four in Kamenz and two in Bautzen. Six schools in the school inspectorate of Hoyerswerda teach Sorbian as a foreign language.

Besides these Haupt and Realschulen, Bautzen has a Sorbian grammar school. In 2000/2001, this only Sorbian pre-university school was attended by 516 pupils, of which 215 had Sorbian as a mother tongue and 186 attended Sorbian classes as a second language.

Since the recognition of Sorbian as a state-specific school final examination subject, higher-level courses have been introduced. Pupils are also allowed to choose examination in Sorbian as their mother tongue, which is now on a par with German as a fully-fledged examination subject.

In bilingual or German schools Sorbian is taught exclusively as a foreign language in small groups (of at least five pupils) in addition to the curriculum of the whole class. Lessons are aimed at acquiring an active command of a small range of vocabulary (about 2,100 words) by the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and a passive knowledge of the grammatical rules and their use. These groups are usually very heterogeneous in their linguistic composition when pupils without any knowledge of Sorbian are often taught in the same group as pupils who have an almost perfect command of Sorbian.

School principals are often not in favor of Sorbian, because it is seen as a matter for the Sorbs themselves. In the school year 2000/2001, six German secondary schools taught Sorbian as a second language. Of 2,143 pupils only 159 attended these Sorbian lessons. One German

grammar school in Hoyerswerda offered Sorbian as a foreign language, in 2000/2001 attended only by three pupils (out of 484 pupils).

### *HIGHER EDUCATION*

The teaching of Sorbian at the University of Leipzig has a long history stretching back to the early 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1716, the Wendisch Theological College, one of the University's first student colleges, was founded.

The Institute of Sorbian Studies (ISS) was established in 1951 as the first and only university establishment in Germany to offer the Sorbian Studies (the language and culture of the Lausitz Sorbs, the smallest of the Slavic peoples). Initially meant mainly for the training of Sorbian teachers and those willing to work at Sorbian institutions, the ISS later broadened its scope.

Upper and Lower Sorbian studies at the University of Leipzig has traditionally been regarded as a course for Sorbian native speakers. However, it has also been incorporated into German and international Slavonic studies, as well as into European minority research.

In addition to the existing Chair of Sorbian Studies/Linguistics, the other options are Sorbian literature and history, Sorbian teaching and methodology and Sorbian ethnology. In the academic year 2000/2001, sixteen full time students attended Sorbian Studies, six studying Sorbian as a main subject, three as an additional subject and seven as a teacher-training course.

The University Library and the German Library, both located in Leipzig, maintain extensive stocks of Sorbian literature, newspapers and magazines, as well as specialist journals on Sorbian studies. Finally, the "Sorabija" student group comprises students of Sorbian nationality studying in various faculties. It organizes lectures, discussions and traditional festivals.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, The Sorbian language in Education in Germany

[http://www1.faknaw.nl/mercator/regionale\\_dossiers/regional\\_dossier\\_sorbian\\_in\\_germany.htm](http://www1.faknaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_sorbian_in_germany.htm)



### ***Updated (July 2003)***

#### **SORBIAN MEDIUM SECONDARY SCHOOL TO BE CLOSED**

At the beginning of July a fax from the Saxonian Ministry of Culture arrived at the municipality of Crostwitz and confirmed the fears of local parents. Their school will be closed down after the summer holidays so numerous strikes, demonstrations and negotiations over the last two years have been fruitless.

The Sorbians are a Slavonic minority with approximately 60,000 people living in the German-Polish-Czech border region in the provinces of Saxony and Brandenburg.

Crostwitz is one of only two Sorbian secondary schools (age 10 to 16). The Sorbian minority has until now had two Sorbian medium primary schools (age 6 to 10) and two secondary schools. Four primary and secondary schools in the region have both Sorbian and German classes. To continue in their education Sorbian students can attend a Sorbian 'gymnasium' (college).

The school was closed due to a new Saxonian legislation requiring a minimum of twenty children per class and forty children per school. In recent years the school in Crostwitz has had only around thirteen to seventeen students per class, and after the summer holidays the first grade would have only seven pupils.

Sorbs as well as other minority representatives and organizations think that minority schools need to have a special status, as they play an important role in language education and the local community.

Unfortunately, population projections do not forecast an increase in the number of children. Even those bilingual secondary schools that will be kept in the region can only continue thanks to the exemption to the rule requesting a minimum of forty children per school.

Smaller, local schools are especially in danger. Parents, Sorbian as well as German, have been fighting against the closure of schools. In August 2001, Crostwitz parents refused to send their children by bus to the nearest school. By teaching them at school in Crostwitz they disobeyed the Ministry of Culture, which is responsible for the closure. The protest was followed by a strike, where 1,000-1,500 Sorbian students did not attend classes for a few hours.

A request for a public referendum to change the new school law was nearly successful. According to Jan Nuk, a chairman of Domowina (a

Sorbian NGO), 426,000 of the required 450,000 signatures were gathered.

The Saxonian ministry; however, does not see the closure of Crostwitz as violation of any legislation protecting the minorities, either on a provincial or European level. Referring to the possibilities to study the Sorbian language in bilingual schools, the Sorbian secondary school in Crostwitz could not continue in operation.

Source: Eurolang News, Copenhagen, July 2, 2003, by Brigitte Alfter, <http://217.136.252.147/webpub/eurolang/pajenn.asp?ID=4304>

### **To what extent are minority groups in this country disadvantaged by their language?**

***Updated (November 2002)***

#### **SORBS STRUGGLE TO SAVE THEIR LOCAL SCHOOLS**

According to “*Domowina*,” the Sorbian umbrella organization located in the German city Bautzen (Budzyn), the situation of the Slavic minority language is not the best. Sorbs struggle to save their local Sorbian-language schools.

The background for this concern is a school reform in the province of Saxony requiring a minimum of twenty students to launch a class in the Sorbian language. However, Crostwitz, the town located close to Bautzen, has only 1,200 inhabitants and thus cannot fulfill these criteria. As a result, two classes from the Sorbian school in Crostwitz currently have to take a bus every morning to a neighboring school to get lessons in Sorbian.

The fatal consequence of this tendency could be that Sorbian parents will not send their children to Sorbian schools in the future anymore.

Thus it is inevitable to push for education in Sorbian. Parents in Saxony intend to influence the educational system of the province in order to preserve small schools and small classes via a public referendum. A petition initiative hopes that by the next summer a sufficient number of signatures will have been collected so that a referendum at the provincial level can be held.

#### **DOMOWINA**

“*Domowina*,” (home or native land) was founded in 1912 as an umbrella organization for a number of cultural movements that evolved under the strict rule against the Sorbian language during the Prussian times.

From 1937 until 1945 Domowina was prohibited and the Sorbian House in the town Bautzen was burnt down by the Nazis in 1944. During the GDR (German Democratic Republic) regime, the Sorbs enjoyed renewed support, when a Sorbian high school was established and Sorbian media proceeded.

When the two Germanys united in 1990, the German-German agreement contained also an article about protection of the Sorbian minority. Today both provinces with this minority, Saxony and Brandenburg, guarantee protection and support of the minority interests in their Constitutions.

Source: Eurolang News, Copenhagen, October 17, 2002, by B. Alfter, <http://217.136.252.147/webpub/eurolang/pajenn.asp?ID=3884>

#### DANISH MINORITY LOSES AN ACCESS TO THE DANISH RADIO

Numerous members of the Danish minority in northern Germany lost without prior warning an access to the Danish radio via a cable antenna.

Due to a technical problem, the German provider "Kabel Deutschland," can no longer broadcast the Danish radio "DR1" in Germany.

The Public Broadcasting Committee (ULR - Unabhängige Landesanstalt für das Rundfunkwesen) of the Schleswig-Holstein province also refers to the technical problems. ULR is responsible for distribution of the broadcasting licenses

Previously, minority representatives were also in the Committee; however, after a change in the broadcasting legislation of Schleswig-Holstein, minority members as well as the representatives of other groups and NGOs disappeared and have not been represented in ULR for the past two years.

Currently only those living in the region very close to the Danish border can receive Danish broadcast media by antenna.

Source: Eurolang News, Copenhagen, October 21, 2002, by B. Alfter, <http://217.136.252.147/webpub/eurolang/pajenn.asp?ID=3890>

***Updated (April 2003)***

## THE NORTH FRISIAN LANGUAGE INSTITUTE UNDER THREAT

In northernmost German province of Schleswig-Holstein, the Frisian minority<sup>1</sup> struggles for the future of its language. The North Frisian Institute has just published last year's financial results and the budget for this year, and while last year showed a deficit of €28,000, this year's budget increased this deficit of another €36,000 – even though one part-time staff member has already been laid off earlier this year. The Institute will have to cut back its staff to only four full-time employees. Currently thirteen staff members share five full-time positions. The chairperson of the Institute, Tede Boysen, is not sure whether they will be able to recover after such difficulties.

Being the sole institution in the language area, the Institute provides books and educational materials for children in kindergartens and primary schools as well as conducts academic research. Future plans are educational materials for adults.

Public funding, mainly from the province of Schleswig-Holstein but also from the county of Nordfriesland, Denmark and the city of Bredsted, has been frozen for years, while wages and costs have continued to grow. Funding from the projects is hardly an option, as it usually requires extra work, which the Institute in its current situation is not able to cover.

Frisians intended to cooperate with other minorities to gather experiences; however, the special situation of the North Frisian language and its nine dialects means that learning materials have to come from the North Frisians themselves.

Moreover, funding for the other minorities of the Danish-German border Region (Danes, Frisians, Sinti and Roma in Germany as well as Germans in Denmark) has also been reduced.

Source: EuroLang News, Copenhagen, April 21, 2003, by Brigitte Alfter, <http://217.136.252.147/webpub/euroLang/pajenn.asp?ID=4211>

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<sup>1</sup> The North Frisian language is estimated to have 10,000 active speakers with nine different dialects.

## **What else can be found about languages and minorities?**

***Updated (February 2002)***

### FRISIAN

The Frisian Council (Friesenrat) organized an intensive “interfrisian” language course to help Frisians from the different linguistic Frisian communities in Germany and the Netherlands to understand each other’s linguistic varieties. The aim of the course was to learn North Frisians from Schleswig-Holstein in Germany to understand West Frisian, Frisian from the Netherlands, and vice versa. By organizing the course the Frisian Council hoped to achieve a situation where Frisians from the north, east and west feel comfortable to speak and understand Frisian during the meetings and exchange programs. At present, Frisians from the Netherlands and Germany usually speak German when they meet, because the Frisian varieties are too different to be mutually intelligible.

The Frisian linguistic communities in the Netherlands and the German regions of Niedersachsen and Schleswig-Holstein were never a linguistic or political unity. In the early Middle Ages Friesland was an independent Kingdom, which stretched along the coast from the area of river Rhine to river Weser in Germany. More than one thousand years ago Frisian settlers moved across the North Sea to North Friesland, close to the Danish border. Over the centuries North Frisian and West Frisian grew apart, although both languages still share many characteristics.

Nowadays West Frisian is a standardized language with some estimated 400,000 speakers in Friesland. North Frisian on the other hand has no standard and counts as many as 9 distinctive dialects for some 10,000 speakers. Until recently speakers of the different dialects preferred to speak Low German (Plattdeutsch) to understand each other, instead of Frisian. Young people have no difficulties in crossing the linguistic borders within North Friesland. In East Friesland (Niedersachsen) Frisian perished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, except for the small linguistic island of Saterland, which developed its own variety over the centuries. Nowadays some 2000 people speak Sater Frisian.

The need for a language course became apparent in recent years, because of more intense contacts between Frisians from the Netherlands and Germany. The Frisian councils regularly organize interfrisian exchanges for farmers, students, teachers and local politicians. Every year, the West Frisian Youth Movement FYK travels 550 kilometers to attend the main North Frisian event Biikebrennen. The popular Frisian singer Piter Wilkens will tour in North Friesland in February and sing a

few songs in North Frisian. If the result is satisfactory Wilkens plans to sing both North- and West Frisian on his next CD. Some North Frisians see West Friesland as a good example, because of the radio and television in Frisian and many other linguistic facilities which the North Frisians still lack. Frisian university students in Kiel and Flensburg learn West Frisian as a part of their study program.

### ***Updated (June 2002)***

Eurolang looked at the campaign programs of the German political parties before the federal elections on September 22, 2002. Though the German Minister of Interior, Otto Schily, promised future support to the Sorbian minority, only one party explicitly mentioned national minorities in its electoral campaign.

In May 2002, Mr. Schily visited the Sorbian minority in Easter Germany. This Slavic-speaking minority has 60,000 members. Schily promised continued federal support and pointed out that the governing social democrat-green coalition had supported minorities annually (8,1 million Euro) in spite of general cutbacks elsewhere.

The four recognized national minorities in Germany - Sorbians, Frisians, Danes and Roma, are not overtly mentioned in the draft social democrat program of the electoral campaign. "Minorities have to be able to more intensely identify with arts and everyday culture. This deepens the social cohesion," is the only sentence in the program, where minorities are mentioned.

The governing Green Party Coalition included minorities in its program, especially those in Eastern Germany. However, they are mentioned in the context of defense against racism and rightwing extremism and thus it is held on a general level. Another renewing request in its program is a demand to the European Union to recognize Roma, Sinti and Ashkali as a European nation. However neither the German Roma and Sinti, nor the other minorities are mentioned.

Concerning the opposition, one party openly mentions minorities in its program - the socialist PDS. With its roots in Eastern Germany, home to the well-known Sorbian minority, PDS requires "policies for and with the Sorbian, Danish, Frisian and Sinti&Roma minority, who have been living here for centuries." PDS requests federal constitutional protection of the four recognized minorities in order to fulfill international agreements on minority protection. "Only if the national identity is recognized all over the federal republic and the support by the federal authorities is guaranteed, the members of the national minorities can maintain their language, culture and traditions and ensure their future."

The federal party FDP, on the contrary does not consider minority protection to be an issue in Germany. According to its program constitutional state guarantees freedom and security with equal opportunities for everyone. The Danish and Sorbian minorities are protected by special agreements, and there is no discontent reported from these groups. In the Foreign Policy part of the program, however; FDP mentions minorities several times. It requests further international debate about minority questions such as non-discriminatory access to education and public service.

The conservative CDU/CSU does not mention national minorities in Germany but German minorities abroad. In its visions about EU enlargement it describes the German minorities in Central and Eastern Europe as a bridge for German cooperation with the states.

Source: Eurolang, <http://www.eurolang.net/>, Copenhagen, May 24, 2002, by Brigitte Alfter

## APPENDIX A

### MAP OF GERMANY





## **APPENDIX B**

### **GERMANY - CONSTITUTION**

(Adopted on May 23, 1949)

(Document Status July 16, 1998)

#### **Article 3**

(3) No one may be disadvantaged or favored because of his sex, his parentage, his race, his language, his homeland and origin, his faith, or his religious or political opinions. No one may be disadvantaged because of his handicap.

Note: The complete text of the Constitution and further information on the constitutional background of Germany are provided by the International Constitutional Law Project at the University of Wuerzburg.

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