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EFA MEPs welcome Minority Safepack initiative

Press release from the EFA MEPs

The European Free Alliance (EFA) in the European Parliament has welcomed the opportunity to debate the Minority Safepack initiative during this week's plenary session.

EFA MEPs congratulated the initiative's organisers for gaining over a million signatures across the EU for their citizens' initiative, which has led to the issue being debated at the European Parliament.

The Minority Safepack citizens' initiative calls for action at EU level to defend, protect and promote minority rights. This includes cultural, linguistic and national minority rights.

The successful citizens' initiative has been seen as a major step forward in promoting minority rights at the EU level.

François Alfonsi EFA MEP and Co-Chair of the European Parliament Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, national communities and languages said:

"The European Citizens' Initiative Minority Safepack has placed the issue of Minority rights on the European Union's agenda.

"This is a question which bears the brunt of decades of conflicting relations in several Member states. The European Union must be more democratic, more inclusive and more diverse."

Tatjana Ždanoka, EFA MEP and campaigner for linguistic minority rights said:

"One of 9 proposals of the minority safepack initiative reads as follows: Approximating equality for stateless minorities e.g. Roma.

"The long-term phenomenon of mass statelessness in my country, Latvia, is a huge problem. There are about 200,000 non-citizens of Latvia forming 10% of population. They account for 26% of the ethnic minority population.

"EU law grants the right to have a residence, to work, to provide services, to participate in local and European elections to EU citizens in all Member States other than their own. But EU law does not grant these rights to stateless persons.

"A solution for could be as follows: the Member State declares that persons who do not hold the nationality of any country, who reside in a Member State and are holders of a travel document issued by that Member State are to be in possession of the same rights that EU law is grants to EU citizens."

EFA MEP **Diana Riba** said:

"Today Europe has a double chance. On the one hand, it can establish a framework of protection for its diversity, in its multiple expressions. On the other hand, the adoption of these measures can strengthen the Citizens' Initiative, as an indispensable tool for the democracy and legitimacy of the European project.

"I therefore call on the Commission not to evade its responsibility, and to commit itself to responding to more than one million European citizens who call on it to protect diversity, a fundamental value of the Union.

"Unfortunately, still too many Member States fail this subject. Multilingualism or cultural diversity, despite being Europe's heritage and raison d'être, is under threat. Like the Roma people, still victims of racism and intolerance.

"The resolution accompanying this debate is largely positive, despite some opposing efforts, from those who see the protection of diversity as a threat to their privileges. The European institutions must protect the linguistic rights of people speaking minority languages. We ask you to act."

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Responsible MEPs



François Alfonsi

Member



Diana Riba i Giner

EFA President and first Vice President of the Greens/EFA Group



Jordi Solé

Member

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