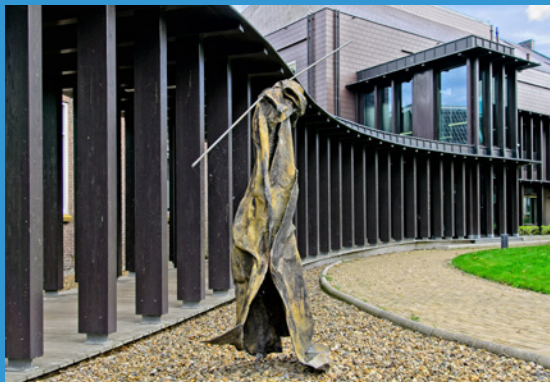


# RESEARCH AGENDA

## 2023-2027



# Fryske Akademy Research Agenda 2023-2027



*Picture Evert Doorn*

The Fryske Akademy undertakes fundamental and applied research on the Frisian context with studies of the Frisian language, history, and culture in Frisian society, from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. The Fryske Akademy is founded on wide-ranging expertise in the area of the Frisian language. Using our specialist knowledge, we tell the stories of Friesland, in which language, culture, history, landscape and identity are all linked. Our research agenda is focused on extending the boundaries of knowledge and putting Frisian Studies firmly on the international map. In other words, the Fryske Akademy is the scientific research institute for the Frisian context, rooted in Frisian society and operating in the international world of academia.

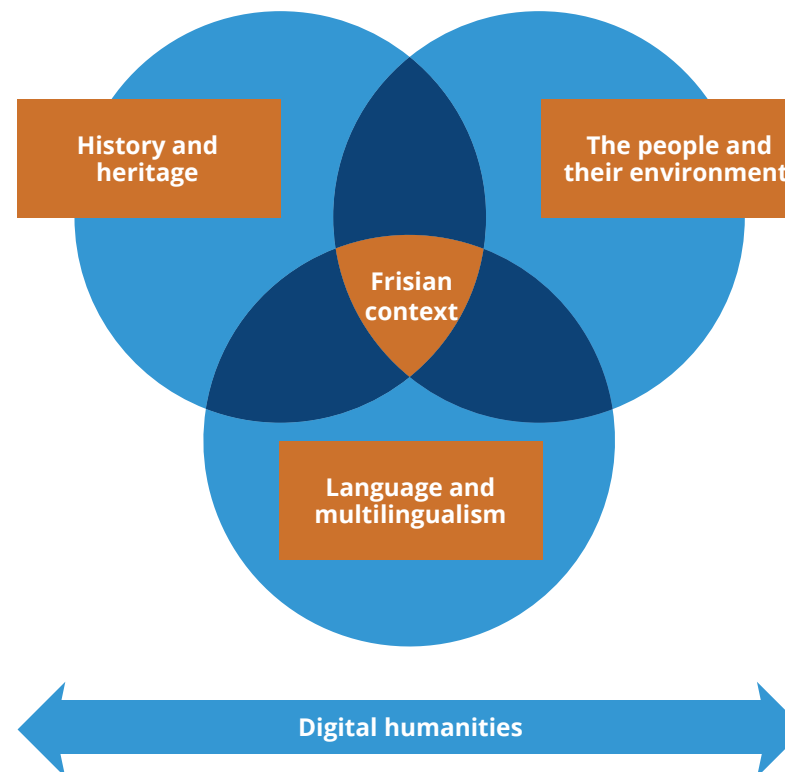
Drawing on its unique expertise, the Fryske Akademy aims to use the present agenda to approach the Frisian context as a multi-disciplinary research field, shaping the research of the future and developing new insights. We help advance knowledge by establishing regional and international connections and sharing best practices. Based on our broad foundation and research themes, we are setting an academic direction and targets for the future.

In addition, our research agenda contains a number of flagships, namely the Old Frisian period, the lexicography of Frisian, and Frisian-Dutch speech technology. The flagships are the core topics of our institute with which we distinguish ourselves internationally. Because of our particular expertise in these areas, colleagues seek us out. In addition, we actively pursue cooperation with regional, national and international colleagues. Over the past decades, this has resulted in a unique expertise that can serve as an example to other regions worldwide.

The research agenda consists of three overlapping areas of expertise that form the basis of our research. These three areas of expertise cover seven specific cores and interdisciplinary research themes, which are linked together and sometimes even overlap. The flagships are

integrated in the research themes. In addition, our research is supported by the digital humanities, or the digital infrastructure, including the language databases, digital corpora, and historical geodata about the Frisian context.

Our research projects are situated within one or more of the research themes. We often work with national and international partners, such as universities, research institutes, and social partners. An overview of our projects and partners can be found on our website.





## Areas of expertise

### Language and multilingualism

This area of expertise centres on the Frisian language and the language variants of Frisian and Dutch in Friesland, such as Hindeloopers, Stadsfries, Schiermonnikoogs, and Bildts etc. Research is carried out on purely linguistic topics, such as the study of phonetics, morphology or syntax, as well as lexicography. This area focuses on the language of today as well as the language of the past, and is concerned with both written and spoken language. In addition, we focus on the Dutch language in Friesland and the influence of the language contact between Dutch and Frisian. As a result, language sociology and sociolinguistics are also research topics. This area further examines how Frisian is changing (or not) in the multilingual context in which the language operates.

### The people and their environment

People cannot be seen separately from their environment - instead, people and their environment relate to and influence each other. This area of expertise focuses on that interaction. Research is conducted into the spatial aspect of the Frisian language, culture, history, and society. In addition, this area explores how human efforts over the centuries transformed

the Frisian landscape and how the landscape's character has influenced history, culture, language, and identity. In other words, how is the ever-changing relationship with the land and the water reflected in the language, culture, and history? And how do the Frisian people relate to their society, and how has this relationship changed through the ages?

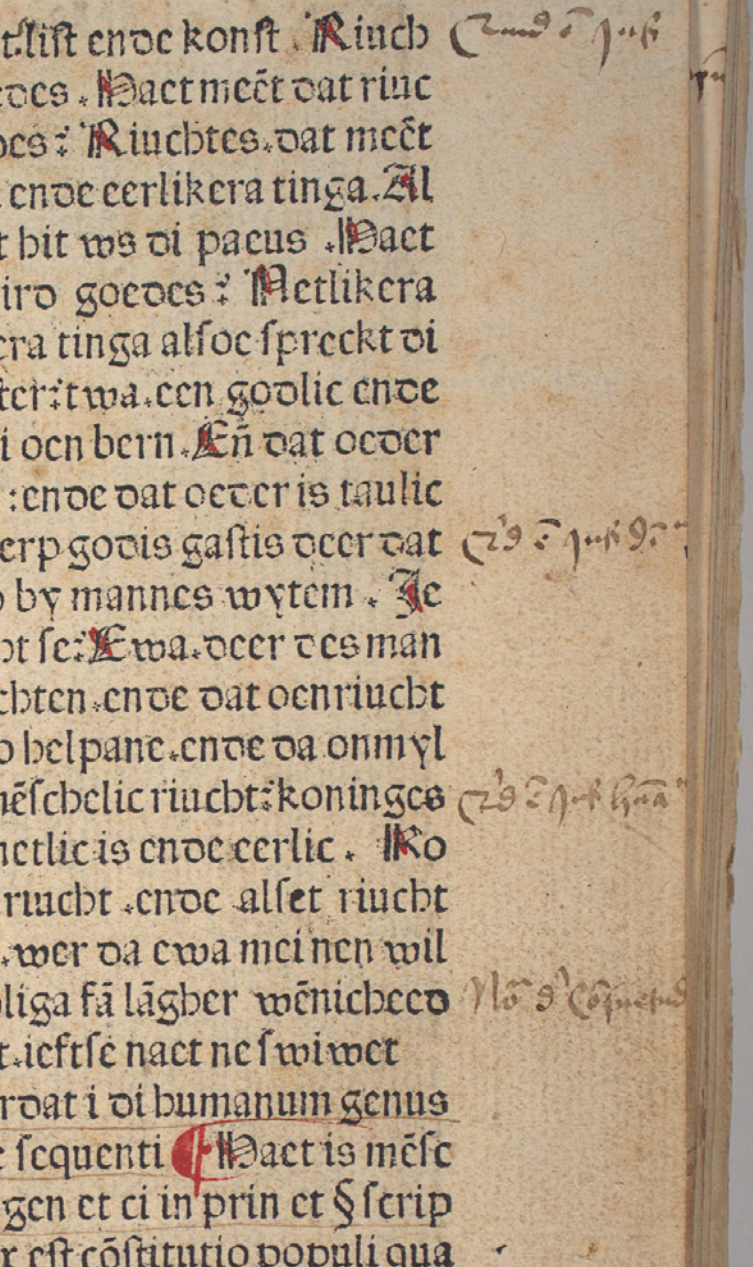
### History and heritage

This research field studies the Frisian past, both comparatively and in an international context. Particular emphasis is placed here on the 'long threads' that run through successive eras. Key themes are the Early Middle Ages with Radbod and the Vikings, law and freedom, and the development of the Frisian national identity in the 19th century. The academic study and excavation of Frisian heritage, which gives us access to that Frisian past, also falls within this research field. This could include the heritage of ancient written Frisian texts and old place names, as well as less early material, such as sound recordings of spoken Frisian.



Picture Tresoar





## Research themes

### Law and freedom in the Frisian Lands

The Old Frisian law texts form a unique collection of medieval sources. They offer insight into the legal culture of the Frisians from the 5th century up until 1500 CE. The earliest traces can be found in the category of penalty registers. Because there was no interruption due to the intervention of an external power, Old Frisian law shows organic growth over the centuries. We can now identify those historical layers, similar to the geological layers of the earth. This unique character had already been recognised by international scholars in the 19th century.

The Frisian Freedom or Frisian autonomy, as it is known, which emerged at the end of the 10th century, meant that the Frisian lands occupied a unique position in medieval Europe. De facto, the Frisian people were ruling themselves. The Frisians had also been wealthy since the early Middle Ages, which helped to buy off foreign interference. There were only a few other such regions in Europe.

The culture of medieval Friesland reveals a unique blend of openness to the wider European culture on the one hand, and firmly maintaining its own traditions on the other. This and the Frisian language, which differed greatly from Middle Dutch, created a distinct identity and

culture. This Frisian pattern will be the subject of further study over the coming years as part of our Old Frisian period flagship, with researchers using a more anthropological perspective to study Old Frisian law texts and the society of the time. Under the theme of *Language description and standardisation*, a linguistic analysis of Old Frisian will take place.

Important eras such as the Magna Frisia, the Frisian Freedom and the Hanseatic period are also referred to as Friesland's golden ages, as these eras have been often referred to and longingly recalled in later times. This portrayal in later centuries played an important part in the development of the Frisian identity, which is explored under the research theme of *Culture and identity*.

### Heritage in the Frisian lands

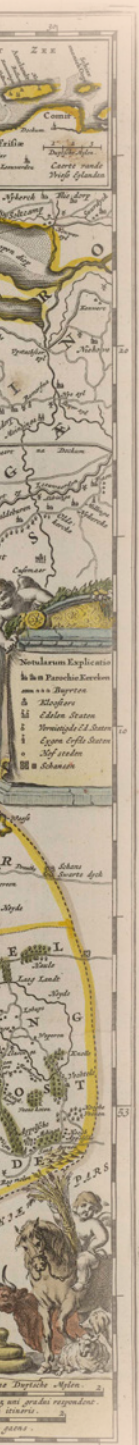
This research theme investigates Heritage in the Frisian lands. That material and immaterial Frisian heritage has been preserved in many forms and stretches from Flanders to Denmark; it is reflected in the old names of villages, estates, and water bodies, traditions and folk sports, in the collections of various museums, and in archaeological finds. But equally in the manuscripts recording the Frisian of past centuries, in the cultural landscapes left behind by the Frisian-speaking inhabitants of the North Sea





Heritage in the Frisian land





coast, and in the buildings that rose up on the Frisian lands and are still visible today. The Fryske Akademy aims to study information carriers about the Frisian heritage and, where possible, to make them accessible to a wider audience in Friesland and elsewhere. The Fryske Akademy has already made information carriers related to Frisian heritage accessible in unique and far-reaching ways by establishing its own digital language infrastructure and making historical geodata about the Frisian context accessible. A digital format also allows new data to be shared quickly and efficiently with all interested parties using Linked Open Data (LOD). To achieve this, we are collaborating with academic and social partners in the Netherlands and abroad. Depending on the type of information, the study of this heritage makes it possible to create links to all other research themes.

### **The dynamic relationship with the land and the water through the ages**

Since classical authors first set eyes on the Frisian landscape, the Frisian region has been viewed as an area where a constant struggle for space is played out between the water, the land, and animals. People have been forced to adapt to living in the patchwork of clay soil, peat pastures, lakes, islands, and cliffs created by natural forces acting upon the water and

land over centuries. And to live as agreeably as possible in this environment, people have constantly changed the landscape itself. How has living with the dynamics of land and water, and fighting for a place in the landscape shaped the Frisian cultural and linguistic identity? Because the Frisians have always been skilled navigators, there was plenty of contact with other coastal areas, sometimes more than with the hinterland. The entire southern North Sea region, known as Frisia, was connected with the coasts of the British Isles and western Scandinavia. In the early Middle Ages - the period of Radbod and the Vikings - migration, exchange, and contact developed to such a degree that a shared North Sea culture is sometimes referred to. Over time, the Frisians were always connected with international maritime networks. For example, they played an important part in the networks of the Hanseatic cities and in merchant shipping, through which the Frisian lands were connected with large parts of northwestern and eastern Europe. These dynamics are explored from various perspectives and using various sources.

Today, the Frisian land and water landscape is mainly the scene of conflicting interests and future concerns, such as how to deal with climate change, limited space, or subsidence



*Picture Daniël Hartog*

in peatland areas. Using our knowledge from this research theme, the Fryske Akademy helps to deepen these debates and contributes to choices for the future.

### **Culture and identity**

Under this research theme, we examine how the Frisian identity has been variously interpreted over the centuries. At first sight, identity would appear to be something abstract and elusive,

but by researching historical and contemporary expressions of Frisian identity, we can nevertheless learn a lot about the self-image that Frisians have formed of themselves over time. What makes a Frisian a true Frisian? And were the

things considered 'typically Frisian' today seen in the same way in the past? To what extent can we speak of a 'collective identity' of 'Frisians'? Is 'the' Frisian identity a modern invention, or has there been continuity between then and now? Using the insights from a comparative perspective, a contribution is made to larger debates and international projects about national and regional identity development.

Under this research theme, particular attention is devoted to the relationship between language and identity, the perception of one's past, the Frisian movement's origins and historical development, and the role of identity claims in the public debate. In this context, culture refers to the full range of traditions, customs, intellectual movements, and artistic expressions contributing to identity development. The study of Frisian literature will also have a place under this research theme, providing us with a perspective on culture, identity, and society. An important angle is the way Frisian literature responds to the ever-changing, modern society.

### **The multilingual society**

Friesland is a multilingual province where several dialects and migrant languages are spoken in addition to Frisian and Dutch. How the inhabitants of Friesland cope with this







multilingualism is studied in the context of The multilingual society research theme. Aspects could include the study of language proficiency, behaviour, and attitudes towards Frisian or multilingualism. And how children in Friesland grow up hearing multiple languages and Frisian from an early age. Other questions, such as how teachers can best accommodate the linguistic diversity of students in the classroom, or what multilingual language policy looks like, also come to mind.

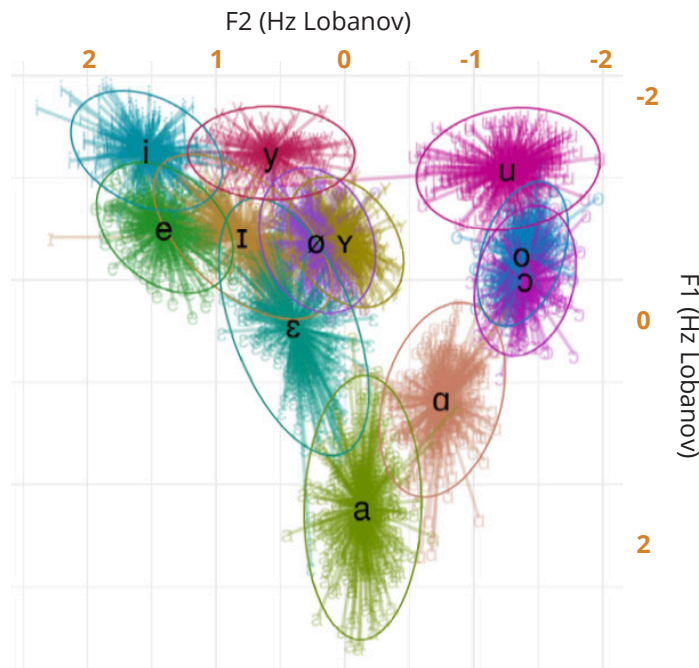
There are many regions in Europe where minority languages are spoken. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning, which is part of the Fryske Akademy, carries out much comparative research into a number of different subjects in the Frisian context and with regard to other European minority languages. This includes research into best practices with regard to language policy and multilingualism in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, both in Friesland and other European areas where minority languages are spoken. This way, the Mercator Research Centre is forging a link between Friesland and Europe. Multilingualism is by no means a recent phenomenon. It has played a significant role in the former Frisian lands for centuries. This is why we find, for instance, elements of other

languages in Frisian and of Old Frisian in modern Dutch. These phenomena are of interest to researchers because they explain much about today's Frisian. Therefore, research into these phenomena often provides links with the research theme of Language description and standardisation, as well as the Heritage in the Frisian lands and Law and freedom in the Frisian lands themes.

### Language variation and change

Under this research theme, we study the variation in the Frisian language from today and from the past. We also study the linguistic variation of the other language varieties spoken and written in Friesland. Among other things, we study how these language varieties have changed in the multilingual context over the centuries and how the modern varieties are changing in our time. Central questions are how language change in Friesland through contact (e.g., the influence of Dutch on Frisian) and internal language change (developments in Frisian itself) relate to and influence each other and what linguistic, socio-geographic, and cognitive factors play a part in this. In so doing, we focus on all language components (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation) and study the relationship between the production of language variation (spoken and written), the perception of variation (the differ-

ences distinguished by language users), and speaker attitudes towards language variation. This research theme primarily focuses on fundamental research in the area of sociolinguistics,



**Klinkerplot visible vowels**  
visiblevowels.org

making use of the natural laboratory that is Friesland. With laboratory sociolinguistics, it introduces a new approach to the study of language variation and change, and aims to bring about advances in theoretical and methodological understanding. It also provides many insights, especially in the area of the pronunciation of Frisian, which are directly applicable to modern language tools (such as speech recognition, speech synthesis, and teaching aids). Speech technology is a very important tool for a minority language such as Frisian. It is therefore also one of the flagship topics of the Fryske Akademy. For example, a bilingual speech recognition tool has been developed, which is currently undergoing further development for various applications.

Several projects overlap with the research themes Heritage in the Frisian lands, The multilingual society and Language description and standardisation. This could include projects that transfer (old) sound recordings into written texts, creating a searchable corpus of spoken Frisian. Another topic could be the speech of Frisians who constantly switch from Frisian to Dutch and back, a phenomenon known as code-switching.

## Language description and standardisation

This research theme is about describing the Frisian language in spoken and written form over time, from the Old Frisian of the Middle Ages to today's Frisian. We describe the sounds used in Frisian, how they can be combined, and how they interact. We also describe the structure of words and how words can be combined to form a sentence. In addition, the Fryske Akademy has a long lexicographical tradition. Years of accumulated know-how in this field have made lexicography one of the cornerstones of the Fryske Akademy. With its experience in Frisian lexicography, the Fryske Akademy also sets an example for other minority languages everywhere in the world. Today, lexicography is manifested in the digital dictionaries that can be found on Frysker.nl and which are available to all. Other language tools, such as our automatic translator, can be found there as well.

By accurately describing all the facets of the Frisian language, the Fryske Akademy plays an important part in the standardisation of Frisian. Among other things, one of the goals of this standardisation is to allow new speakers and language users to learn the language better. Language description and, to some extent, the standardisation create room for variation within the Frisian language and other Frisian language



variants. Therefore, there is also considerable overlap with the research theme of Language variation and change.

Within this theme, Old Frisian is studied and described from a linguistic point of view. We find this oldest form of Frisian in legal texts dating from the Middle Ages and elsewhere. Thus, the study of Old Frisian links the research themes of Language description and standardisation and Law and freedom in the Frisian lands.

Language description is a task that will never be finished because language will keep changing. We see it as our task to provide an up-to-date description of Frisian and make it available to other linguists, at home and abroad, via the Language Portal. Our description of Frisian covers the general characteristics of the language, but we also focus, of course, on the features of Frisian not found in other languages, which set Frisian apart.

The screenshot shows the Frysker website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Frysker logo, a search icon labeled 'Sykje', a menu icon labeled 'Hifkje', and a user icon labeled 'Oersetse'. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are links for 'Paadwizer', 'Help', 'Downloads', and a language selector set to 'FRY'. Below the navigation bar, there is a search bar with tabs for 'FRL' and 'NL', a dropdown menu set to 'Wurdboeken', and a search input field containing 'wurd'. A blue 'Sykje' button is to the right of the search bar. Below the search bar, the results are displayed under the heading '6 resultaten fûn'. The results are shown in a table with columns for the word, its meaning, and its grammatical category. The word 'wurd' is highlighted in blue. To the right of the results, there is a section for 'wurd' with its etymology and synonyms. The background of the website features a large image of a stack of Frisian dictionaries, with the spines of the books visible, showing numbers 1 through 25.

wurd	woord	haadwurd
wurd	klank	haadwurd
wurd	woord	haadwurd
wurde	worden	helptiidwurd
wurde	worden	tiidwurd
wurde	worden +2	tiidwurd

**wurd**  
ûr it nederlânsk-frysk • woord  
haadwurd • it • wurd

**Synonymen** —

**Farianten** —

**Hollanismen** —

**Oersettingen** wurd

# FRYSKE AKADEMY

*research centre of Fryslân*

*Coulonhûs*

*Doelestraat 8, 8911 DX Leeuwarden*

