



Seven perspectives on Bildts

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The Bildts language status in a European context

Project manager: Cor van der Meer

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Preface

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Cover photo:

Maisy, wêr bist? (2013), Bildts landscape poetry project by Typesetters

Summary in English

Bildts is a minority language spoken in the Northwestern part of the province of Fryslân in the Netherlands. It has some 6000 native speakers. Currently, Bildts does not have official recognition as a minority language in the Netherlands, although it receives support from both the province and the local municipality, Het Bildt. This municipality is planned to be merged into a larger municipality in 2018. Due to this merger, the future for the Bildts language has become a matter of concern. At the same time, the municipal council of Het Bildt has set elevation of Bildts as one of its policy goals.

This report provides a vision for a Bildts language policy to be set out in the preparatory process towards this merger of municipalities. More specifically, it explores chances for and expected consequences of inclusion of Bildts in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. This exploration is done through a literature review of the language status of Bildts and through comparison with other minority languages in Europe. Some of these other languages studied are presently protected by this Charter, while others are not. In this manner, the expected effect of the Charter may be weighed against the alternatives.

Part I: Description of the Bildts language status

The development of Bildts as a separate language began in the sixteenth century. In this period, dykes were built to enclose what would become Het Bildt. This land was then settled by colonists from Holland and Brabant. From this period onwards, the dialect of these settlers evolved independently to become Bildts. In the centuries following, Bildts developed mainly under Frisian influence.

The consciousness of Bildts as an integral part of Bildts identity started in the first half of the twentieth century. In the seventies, a Bildts language movement arose as a reaction to the introduction of Frisian in education and to the reorganisation of municipalities in 1984. The effort of this movement resulted in the optional inclusion of Bildts in primary education and the development of Bildts teaching materials.

Since roughly the year 2000, Bildts is increasingly used in writing, for example in advertisements and articles in the local newspaper. Moreover, the Bildts standard language has been made accessible with the publication of a dictionary that serves as a work of reference and as a usage guide.

The relative amount of speakers of Bildts has remained steady, with around 35% of the population of Het Bildt speaking Bildts natively. Similarly, Bildts has retained its function in the public space, meaning it is still used in several domains. It is used in education and administration but also as a family language, for example.

In order to be included in the Charter, Bildts must be a language and not a dialect. Comparison with Standard Dutch and Standard Frisian demonstrates that neither of these languages may be seen as the standard Bildts is a dialect of. Like Standard Dutch, Bildts has its genesis in primarily Hollandic dialects, but these two languages have been geographically isolated from one another since well before either standard developed. Due to this isolation, there has never been a dialect continuum between Bildts and what would later come to constitute dialects of Standard Dutch. This is a qualitative difference with Zeelandic and Low Saxon, both of which may be considered dialects of Dutch within this definition. Moreover, Frisian serves as a standard for Bildts, which has led to a situation where ‘pure’ Bildts typically has Frisian characteristics whereas ‘unpure’ Bildts often looks more Hollandic. However, Standard Frisian differs so much from Bildts that it cannot itself have the function of standard variety of Bildts.

Another aspect that has made Bildts a language of its own is its own standard. A Standard Bildts has existed since the nineteenth-century author Waling Dykstra, but it has been further developed through linguistic study and through an authoritative dictionary. This Standard Bildts functions as a standard for its spoken variety.

These linguistic and sociolinguistic arguments demonstrate that Bildts has developed as an independent language. Using these arguments, Het Bildt may apply for recognition of Bildts within the Charter. Even so, the Dutch government will have the final say in whether it will include Bildts as a minority language for the purposes of the Charter. It will base its decision on two criteria: Bildts must be a language, and it must have a territorial basis in the Netherlands. The Dutch government may ask the Taalunie to judge these claims.

Part II: A comparative analysis of Bildts in a European context

The second part of this report compares Bildts with seven other European minority languages. These languages are Cornish, Elfdalian, Low German, Mirandese, North Frisian, Sorbian, and Ulster Scots. Most of these languages are protected by the Charter. Like Bildts, these languages are commonly seen as a dialect instead of a language, but they have gained recognition as a minority language nevertheless. In addition, most of these languages are comparable to Bildts in terms of number of speakers, and they do not typically have a long written tradition.

Comparison with these minority languages has demonstrated how well Bildts is doing, relatively speaking. It has also shown which measures would and would not be worthwhile to take in order to elevate Bildts. The outcome is that an application for recognition within the Charter will be a valuable step towards this goal. Comparison also shows, however, that recognition within the Charter is not a valid end goal in itself. Rather, it may serve as a

starting point for a campaign to emancipate Bildts. It is for this reason that this report also gives examples of how to concretely improve the status of Bildts in e.g. education and in the public space.

Cornish in the United Kingdom demonstrates that even a language with just several hundred speakers may gain recognition within the Charter. After recognition, speakers and the government came to a comprehensive vision for the Cornish language, and relevant organisations were bundled in the Cornish Language Partnership. Recent developments in education demonstrate how such a small language may use education as a means to revitalisation.

Elfdalian in Sweden is not recognised under the Charter, because speakers' organisations and the Swedish government fail to come to a consensus over whether Elfdalian is a language or a dialect. Traditionally, Elfdalian was seen as a dialect of Swedish, but the notion that Elfdalian is a separate language is gaining support among speakers and linguists. Elfdalian is an example of where pitfalls in applying for recognition may lie, but it also gives an example how the process of seeking recognition alone may lead to consciousness of the language status of a minority language.

Low German in Germany shows that a language formerly considered a dialect may gain recognition within the Charter. In the past, Low German was commonly seen as a dialect of High German, the standard language of Germany. Its language history shows that Low German goes back to a completely different branch of Germanic than High German does, however. Moreover, the initiative to apply Low German to the Charter had broad support under its speakers. Low German thus demonstrates how a language may gain recognition within the Charter as a result of new linguistic insights and broadly carried activism.

Mirandese in Portugal is not currently protected under the Charter because Portugal has not signed it. Instead, it enjoys co-official status in Portugal. Despite this, the language is in a poor state due to lack of linguistic infrastructure. For example, financial troubles and personal conflicts have prevented a single organisation representing Mirandese speakers from existing, and Mirandese teachers are responsible for developing their own teaching material. Mirandese demonstrates how official recognition as a language is not in itself enough unless an infrastructure exists to ensure execution of its provisions.

North Frisian in Germany is protected under the Charter, and it has official status in its *Bundesland*. It has about 10.000 speakers divided over several strongly diverged dialects. Even so, North Frisian has a well-developed infrastructure in education, local government and public visibility. North Frisian as a minority language must position itself not only to

Standard German, but also to the more popular Low German, just like Bildts needs to position itself towards both Dutch and Frisian.

Sorbian in Germany is protected by the Charter and by the constitutions of its *Bundesländer*. Nevertheless, the language is in dire state as a result of to displacement of speakers away from the Sorbian language area due to mining projects. Despite this, the local government has enacted a thorough Sorbian language plan promoting the use of Sorbian in many linguistic domains.

Ulster Scots in the United Kingdom is an example of a language commonly seen as a dialect that has managed to gain recognition under the Charter. Since recognition, Ulster Scots has developed a professional organisation to promote Ulster Scots language and culture through education and activities. The use of Ulster Scots on place name signs is subject to debate. This discussion may serve as a mirror for similar discussions on Bildts.

Samenfatting in 't Bildts

't Bildts is 'n minderhydstaal sproken in Noordwest-Fryslân met soa'n 6.000 mimmetaalsprekers. Op 't stoit het 't Bildts gyn offisjele erkining as minderhydstaal binnen Nederland, maar wort 't wel ondersteund deur gemeente 't Bildt en de Prevînsy Fryslân. De gemeente 't Bildt sil per 2018 fúzzere met meerdere ândere gemeenten. De toekomst fan 't Bildts in deuze nije gemeente is onwis. T'ngelyk het gemeente 't Bildt ferheffing fan 't Bildts as belajdsdoelstelling angeven.

Dut rapport geeft fize op 'n Bildts taalbelajd in anloop na deuze fúzzie in 2018. Dut rapport ferkint spesifyk de kânsen foor en de ferwachte útkomsten fan erkining fan Bildts binnen 't Europees Hândfest foor Regionale en Minderheidstalen. Deuze ferkinning is maakt deur 'n literatuurstúddy na de taalstatus fan 't Bildts en deur fergelyking met ândere minderhydstalen in Europa. Goenent fan deuze minderhydstalen binne beskermd deur 't Hândfest, maar ok ândere talen binne bestudeerd. Soa kin 't effekt fan 't Hândfest ôfwogen worre tunover de alternativen.

Part I: Beskriving fan 't Bildts

De ontwikkeling fan 't Bildts as selsstandige taal fong an 't begin fan de sestynde eeuw an. In deuze perioade worde 't Bildt bedykt en worden kolonisten út Holland en Brabant antrokken. Fan deuze perioade ôf ontwikkelt 't dialekt fan deuze kolonisten 'm selsstandig tot 't Bildts. In de eeuwen derop ontwikkelt 't Bildts 'm fral onder invloed fan 't Frys.

't Bewustwezen fan 't Bildts as dragend elemint fan Bildtse identiteit begon in de eerste helft fan de twintigste eeuw. In de jaren '70 ontston de eerste Bildtse taalbeweging as reaksy op de infoering fan Frys in 't onderwijs en later de gemeentlike herindeling fan 1984. Ferdiensten fan deuze beweging binne dat 't Bildts nou fakultatyf opnommen is in 't onderwijs en dat d'r hulp geven wort foor de ontwikkeling fan Bildtstalig lesmateriaal en boeken.

Sont ruugweg 2000 wort 't Bildts meer skreven, soa't bevoorbeeld doet bliken út 't tal Bildtstalige adfertînsys en artikels in de lekale krant. Feerder is in deuze perioade de Bildtse standaardtaal toegankliker maakt deur 'n woordeboek. Dut woordeboek funksjoneert niet allenig as referînsy foor 't Bildts, maar ok as produksywoordeboek.

In de ôflopene jaren is 't relative sprekersantal fan 't Bildts stabyl bleven: soa'n 35% fan de inweuners fan 't Bildt praat Bildts as mimmetaal. Belangryk foor de taalfitaliteit fan 't Bildts is 't tal domeinen der't 't Bildts in brûkt wort. 't Doet bliken dat Bildts nag altyd funksy het in de openbare rúmte. Soa wort 't naast huus en hiem ok brûkt in 't onderwijs en bij de gemeente.

Foor erkining in 't Hândfest mot 't Bildts 'n selsstandige taal weze en gyn dialekt fan een fan de meerderhydstalen. Út fergeliking met 't Standaardnederlâns of Standaardfrys doet bliken dat 't Bildts fan gyneen fan deuze talen 'n dialekt weze kin. 't Bildts het krekt as 't Standaardnederlâns syn oorsprong in fral Hollânse dialekten, maar al foor 't ontstaan fan deuze Nederlânse kultuurtaal riek 't Bildts geografys isoleerd fan de dialekten die't 't Nederlâns forme souwen. Derdeur het d'r nooit 'n dialektkontinuüm weest tussen 't Bildts en 't Nederlâns, in teugenstelling tot befoerbeeld 't Seeuws of 't Nedersaksys, die't binnen deuze definisy wel dialekten fan 't Standaardnederlâns binne. In 't plak fan Nederlâns opereerde 't Frys as 'n standaard foor 't Bildts, wat bliken doet út dat 'goed' Bildts faak 'n ferfrising inhout fan 'min' Bildts. Maar 't Frys staat as taal soa feer fan 't Bildts ôf dat 't nooit de funksy fan standaardtaal foor 't Bildts annimme kinnen had.

'n Ânder aspekt dat 't Bildts 'n selsstandige taal maakt, is de aigen standaard. 'n Standaardbildts bestaat al sont 't werk fan Waling Dykstra in de negentynde eeuw. Deuze standaard is feerder ontwikkeld deur taalkundige stúddy en 't ontwikkelen fan 'n gesaghewend woordeboek. Dut Standaardbildts funksjoneert as kultuurtaal foor 't sproken Bildts.

Op basis fan linguistise en sosjolingvistise arguminten doet bliken hoe't 't Bildts 'm ontwikkeld het as 'n selsstandige kultuurtaal. Met deuze arguminten kin 't Bildt bij de Nederlânse overhyd erkining binnen 't Hândfest anfrage. 't Is allikewel an de Nederlânse overhyd om 't Bildts al of niet op te nimmen as minderhydstaal in 't Hândfest. De overhyd sil soks doen op basis fan twee kriteria: Bildts mot 'n taal weze en 't mot fitaliteit in 'n territoriale basis hewwe. Hierbij kin de Nederlânse overhyd de Taalunie om adfys frage over de frage of 't Bildts foldoet an kriteria foor opname.

Part II: 'n Fergelikende analize fan Bildts in Europese kontekst

't Tweede deel fan dut rapport fergelikent 't Bildts met seuen Europese minderhydstalen. Deuze talen binne Kornys, Elfdals, Leegdúts, Mirandees, Noordfrys, Sorbys en Ulster Skots. De meeste fan deuze talen binne beskermd binnen 't Hândfest. Krekt as Bildts worre deuze talen gau 's sien as dialekt in 't plak fan taal. Dos hewwe se faak erkining binnen 't Hândfest kregen. Feerder hewwe de meeste fan deuze talen 'n fergelykber antal sprekers met Bildts en hewwe se meestentiids krekt as Bildts gyn lange skreven tradisy.

Fergeliking met deuze minderhydstalen het foor 't Bildts dúdlik maakt hoe't 't Bildts d'r relatyf foor staat en welke maatregels weerdefol en niet weerdefol binne foor de ferheffing fan 't Bildts. Hier blykt út dat 'n anfrage foor erkining binnen 't Hândfest 'n weerdefolle stap weze kin. 't Doet allikewel ok bliken dat 't soeken naar erkining gyn falide eandpunt is in 't streven na ferheffing fan 't Bildts, maar fral 'n beginpunt in 't streven na taalemansipasy foor 't Bildts.

Dit rapport geeft derom ok foorbeelden fan ândere minderhydstalenen over welke konkrete maatregels te nimmen om de status fan 't Bildts te ferhogen in onder ândere 't onderwijs en de publike rúmte.

't Kornys in 't Ferenigd Koaninkryk laat sien dat sels 'n taal met maar 'n paar hondert sprekers erkinning krije kin binnen 't Hândfest. Na erkinning fonnen sprekers en overheden nander in 'n samenhangende fizy foor de Kornise taal en worden relevante organisasys foor 't Kornys bij nander brocht in 't Cornish Language Partnership. De tunworige ontwikkeling fan Kornys in 't onderwijs is 'n goed foorbeeld fan hoe't 'n klaine taal onderwijs brúkke kin as middel fan refitalisasy.

't Elfdaals in Sweden is niet erkind binnen 't Hândfest. Op 't stoit kinne sprekersorganisasys en de Sweedse overhyd 't niet eens worre over de fraag of Elfdaals 'n taal is of 'n dialekt, maar onder sprekers en taalkundigen groeit 't idee dat Elfdaals 'n selsstandige taal is. Elfdaals laat sien wer't de knelpunten lêge bij 't soeken naar erkinning, maar 't laat ok sien dat 't soeken naar erkinning alleen al bijdrage kin an 't taalbewustwezen fan 'n minderhydstaal.

't Leegdúts in Dútsland laat sien dat 'n taal die't eerder as dialekt sien worde, opnommen worre kin in 't Hândfest. 't Leegdúts worde lang sien as 'n dialekt fan 't Hoogdúts, de standaardtaal fan Dútsland. Maar út syn ôfstammingsgeskiedenis doet bliken dat Leegdúts naar 'n folledig ândere tak fan 't Germaans weromgaat as 't Hoogdúts. Feerder worde 't inisjatyf om Leegdúts op te nimmen in 't Hândfest breed droegen onder sprekers. Leegdúts laat sien hoe't 'n taal deur nije insichten en aktivisme dat breed droegen wort, erkinning binnen 't Hândfest krije kin.

Mirandees in Portugal wort niet beskermd deur 't Hândfest, omdat Portugal 't ferdrag niet tekend het. Dos het 't status as tweede offisjele taal fan Portugal. Evengoed staat de taal d'r min foor deur 't ontbreken fan infrastruktuur. Soa is d'r gyn sintrale organisasy die't sprekers ferteugenwoordigt deur gebrek an sinten en deur persoanlike konflikten en motte dosinten sels hur lesmateriaal ontwikkelde. Mirandees leert ôns soa hoe't offisjele erkinning foor 'n taal allenig doel het bij 't hândhaven fan 'n infrastruktuur foor de taal.

't Noordfrys in Dútsland is beskermd onder 't Hândfest en het offisjele status in 't Bundesland. 't Het ongeveer 10.000 sprekers en 't is fersplinterd in ferskaidne lastig ônderling ferstaanbere dialekten. Dos is d'r foor 't Noordfrys 'n sterk ontwikkelde infrastruktuur in onderwijs, lekaal bestuur en wat openbare sichtberhyd angaat. Noordfrys staat as minderhydstaal niet alleen tunover 't Standaarddúts, maar ok tunover 't feul meer spoken Leegdúts, krekt as Bildts 'n minderhydstaal is tunover Frys en Nederlâns.

't Sorbys in Dútsland is ok beskermd onder 't Hândfest en 't is opnommen in de grôndwet fan syn Bundesländer. De taal staat d'r min foor deurdatsprekers in 't Sorbise taalgebiet faak ferhuze motte deur mynbouprojekten. Dos het de lekale overhyd 'n feergaand Sorbys taalplan infoerd om 't brúkken fan 't Sorbys na soa feul mooglik domeinen út te braiden.

't Ulster Skots in 't Ferenigd Koaninkryk is 'n foorbeeld fan 'n taal die't gau 's sien wort as dialekt, maar die't dos opnommen is in 't Hândfest. Sont erkinning is d'r 'n profesjonele taalorganisasy opset die't aktiviteiten op 't terrain fan taal, kultuur en onderwijs organiseert. Feerder leeft d'r 'n diskussy over 't brúkken fan Ulster Skots op plaknaambôrden. Deuze diskussy is fergelykber met diskussys over 't Bildts en kin dermet diene as 'n spiegel foor deuze diskussys.

Gearfetting yn it Frysk

It Biltsk is in minderheidstaal sprutsen yn Noardwest Fryslân mei sa'n 6000 memmetaalsprekkers. Op it stuit hat it Biltsk gjin offisjele erkenning as minderheidstaal binnen Nederlân, mar wurdt it wol stipe troch gemeente It Bilt en de Provinsje Fryslân. De gemeente It Bilt sil per 2018 gearfoege wurde mei meardere oare gemeenten. De takomst fan it Biltsk yn dizze nije gemeente is ûnwis. Tagelyk hat gemeente It Bilt ferheffing fan it Biltsk as beliedsdoelstelling oanjûn.

Dit rapport jout fyzje op in Biltsk taalbelied yn oanrin nei dit gearfoegjen yn 2018. Dit rapport ferkent spesifyk de kânsen foar en de ferwachte útkomsten fan erkenning fan Biltsk binnen it Europeesk Hânfêst foar Regionale en Minderheidstalen. Dizze ferkenning is makke troch in literatuerstúdzje nei de taalstatus fan it Biltsk en troch fergelyking mei oare minderheidstalen yn Europa. Guon fan dizze minderheidstalen binne beskerme troch it Hânfêst, mar ek oare talen binne bestudearre. Sa kin it effekt fan it Hânfêst ôfwage wurde tsjinoer de alternativen.

Part I: Beskriuwing fan it Biltsk

De ûntjouwing fan it Biltsk as selsstannige taal begûn oan it begjin fan de sechstjinde iuw. Yn dizze perioade waard It Bilt bedike en waarden kolonisten út Hollân en Brabân oanlutsen. Fan dizze perioade ôf ûntwikkele it dialekt fan dizze kolonisten him selsstannich ta it Biltsk. Yn de iuwen dêrop ûntwikkele it Biltsk him foaral ûnder ynfloed fan it Frysk.

It bewustwêzen fan it Biltsk as dragend elemint fan Biltске identiteit begûn yn de earste helte fan de tweintichste iuw. Yn de jierren '70 ûntstie de earste Biltске taalbeweging as reaksje op de ynfiering fan Frysk yn it ûnderwiis en letter de gemeentlike weryndieling fan 1984. Fertsjinsten fan dizze beweging binne dat it Biltsk no fakultatyf opnommen is yn it ûnderwiis en dat der stipe jûn wurdt foar de ûntwikkeling fan Biltsktalich lesmateriaal en boeken.

Sûnt omtrint 2000 wurdt it Biltsk mear skreaun, sa't bygelyks blykt út it tal Biltsktalige advertinsjes en artikels yn de lokale krante. Fierder is yn dizze perioade de Biltске standerttaal tagonklik makke troch in wurdboek. Dit wurdboek funksjonearret net allinne as referinsje foar it Biltsk, mar ek as produksjewurdboek.

Yn de ôfrûne jierren is it relative sprekkersoantal fan it Biltsk stabyl bleaun: sa 35% fan de ynwenners fan it Bilt sprekt Biltsk as memmetaal. Wichtich foar de taalfitaliteit fan it Biltsk is it tal domeinen wêryn't Biltsk brûkt wurdt. It blykt dat Biltsk noch altiten funksje hat yn de iepenbiere romte. Sa wurdt it neist hûs en hiem ek brûkt yn it ûnderwiis en by de gemeente.

Foar erkenning yn it Hânfêst moat it Biltsk in selsstannige taal wêze en gjin dialekt fan ien fan de mearderheidstalen. Út fergelyking mei it Standertnederlânsk of Standertfrysk blykt dat

it Biltsk fan gjinien fan dizze talen in dialekt wêze kin. It Biltsk hat lykas it Standertnederlânsk syn oarsprong yn benammen Hollânske dialekten, mar al foar it ûntstean fan dizze Nederlânske kultuertaal rekke it Biltsk geografysk isolearre fan de dialekten dy't it Nederlânsk foarmje soenen. Dêrtroch hat der nea in dialektkontinuüm west tusken it Biltsk en it Nederlânsk, yn tsjinstelling ta bygelyks it Siuwsk of it Nedersaksysk, dy't binnen dizze definysje wol dialekten fan it Standertnederlânsk binne. Ynstee fan Nederlânsk opereare boppedat it Frysk as in standert foar it Biltsk, wat docht bliken út dat 'goed' Biltsk faak in ferfrysing ynhâldt fan 'min' Biltsk. It Frysk stiet lykwols as taal sa fier fan it Biltsk ôf dat it nea de funksje fan standerttaal foar it Biltsk oannimme kinnen hat.

In oar aspekt dat Biltsk in selsstannige taal makket is de eigen standert. In Standerdbiltsk bestiet al sûnt it wurk fan Waling Dykstra yn de njoggentjinde iuw. Dizze standert is fierder ûntwikkele troch taalkundige stúdzje en it ûntwikkeljen fan in gesachhawwend wurdboek. Dit Standerdbiltsk hat de funksje fan kultuertaal foar it sprutsene Biltsk.

Op basis fan linguistyske en sosjolingvistyske arguminten blykt hoe't it Biltsk him ûntwikkele hat as in selsstannige kultuertaal. Mei dizze arguminten kin It Bilt by de Nederlânske oerheid erkenning binnen it Hânfêst oanfreegje. It is lykwols oan de Nederlânske oerheid om it Biltsk al of net op te nimmen as minderheidstaal yn it Hânfêst. De oerheid sil dit dwaan op basis fan twa kritearia: Biltsk moat in taal wêze en it moat fitaliteit yn in territoriale basis hawwe. Hjirby kin de Nederlânske oerheid de Taalunie om advys freegje oer de fraach of it Biltsk foldocht oan kritearia foar opname.

Part II: In fergelykjende analyze fan Biltsk yn Europeeske kontekst

It twadde diel fan dit rapport fergeliket it Biltsk mei sân Europeeske minderheidstalen. Dizze talen binne Kornysk, Elfdalensk, Leechdútsk, Mirandeesk, Noardfrysk, Sorbysk en Ulster Skotsk. De measte fan dizze talen binne beskerme binnen it Hânfêst. Lykas Biltsk wurde dizze talen gauris sjoen as dialekt ynstee fan taal. Dochs hawwe se faak erkenning binnen it Hânfêst krigen. Fierder hawwe de measte fan dizze talen in fergelykber oantal sprekkers mei Biltsk en hawwe se meastentiids lykas Biltsk gjin lange skreaune tradysje.

Fergelyking mei dizze minderheidstalen hat foar it Biltsk dúdlik makke hoe't it Biltsk der relatyf foar stiet en hokker maatregels weardefol en net weardefol binne foar de ferheffing fan it Biltsk. Hjirút docht bliken dat in oanfraach foar erkenning binnen it Hânfêst in weardefolle stap wêze kin. It docht lykwols ek bliken dat it sykjen fan erkenning gjin falide einpunt is yn it stribjen nei ferheffing fan it Biltsk, mar krekt in begjinpunt yn it stribjen nei taalemansipaasje foar it Biltsk. Dit rapport jout dêrom ek lessen fan oare minderheidstalen oer hokker konkrete maatregels te nimmen om de status fan it Biltsk te ferheegjen yn ûnder oaren it ûnderwiis en de publike romte.

It Kornysk yn it Feriene Keninkryk lit sjen dat sels in taal mei mar in pear hûndert sprekkers erkenning krije kin binnen it Hânfêst. Nei erkenning kamen sprekkers en oerheden mei elkoar ta in gearhingjende fyzje foar de Kornyske taal en waarden relevante organisaasjes foar it Kornysk by inoar brocht yn it Cornish Language Partnership. De tsjinwurdige ûntwikkeling fan Kornysk yn ûnderwiis is in goed foarbyld fan hoe't in lytse taal ûnderwiis brûke kin as middel foar refitalisaasje.

It Elfdalensk yn Sweden is net erkend binnen it Hânfêst. Op it stuit kinne sprekkersorganisaasjes en de Sweedske oerheid it net iens wurde oer de fraach of Elfdalensk in taal is of in dialekt en oft it opnommen wurde moat yn it Hânfêst. Tradisjoneel waard Elfdalensk sjoen as in dialekt, mar ûnder sprekkers en taalkundigen groeit it idee dat Elfdalensk in selsstannige taal is. Elfdalensk lit sjen wêr't de knyp punten lizze by it sykjen nei erkenning, mar it lit ek sjen dat it sykjen nei erkenning allinne al bydrage kin oan it taalbewustwêzen fan in minderheidstaal.

It Leechdútsk yn Dútslân lit sjen dat in taal dy't earder as dialekt sjoen waard opnommen wurde kin yn it Hânfêst. It Leechdútsk waard lang sjoen as in dialekt fan it Heechdútsk, de standerttaal fan Dútslân. It blykt lykwols út syn ôfstammingsskiednis dat Leechdútsk nei in folslein oare tûke fan it Germaansk weromgiet as it Heechdútsk. Fierder waard it inisjatyf om Leechdútsk op te nimmen yn it Hânfêst breed droegen ûnder sprekkers. Leechdútsk lit sjen hoe't in taal troch nije ynsjoggen en breed droegen aktivisme erkenning binnen it Hânfêst krije kin.

Mirandeesk yn Portugal wurdt net beskerme troch it Hânfêst, omdat Portugal it ferdrach net tekene hat. Dochs hat it status as twadde offisjele taal fan Portugal. Likegoed stiet de taal der min foar troch it ûntbrekken fan ynfrastuktuer. Sa is der gjin sintrale organisaasje dy't sprekkers fertsjintwurdiget troch gebrek oan finânsjes en troch persoanlike konflikten en moatte dosinten sels harren lesmateriaal ûntwikkelje. Mirandeesk leart ús sa hoe't offisjele erkenning foar in taal allinne doel hat by it hânhavenjen fan in ynfrastuktuer foar de taal.

It Noardfrysk yn Dútslân is beskerme ûnder it Hânfêst en hat offisjele status yn it *Bundesland*. It hat likernôch 10.000 sprekkers en it is fersplintere yn ferskate lestich ûnderling fersteanbere dialekten. Dochs is der foar it Noardfrysk in sterk ûntwikkele ynfrastuktuer yn ûnderwiis, lokaal bestjoer en wat iepenbiere sichtberens oanbelanget. Noardfrysk stiet as minderheidstaal net allinnich tsjinoer it Standertdútsk, mar ek tsjinoer it folle mear sprutsen Leechdútsk, krekt as Biltsk in minderheidstaal is tsjinoer Frysk en Nederlânsk.

It Sorbysk yn Dútslân is ek beskerme ûnder it Hânfêst en it is opnommen yn de grûnwet fan syn *Bundesländer*. Lykwols stiet de taal der min foar trochdat sprekkers yn it Sorbyske taalgebiet faak ferhúzje moatte troch mynbouprojekten. Dochs hat de lokale oerheid in fiergeand Sorbysk taalplan ynfierd om it gebrûk fan it Sorbysk nei sa folle mooglik domeinen út te wreidzjen.

It Ulster Skotsk yn it Feriene Keninkryk is in foarbyld fan in taal dy't gauris sjoen wurdt as dialekt, mar dy't dochs opnommen is yn it Hânfêst. Sûnt erkenning is der in profesjonele taalorganisaasje opset dy't aktiviteiten op it mêd fan taal, kultuer en ûnderwiis organisearret. Fierder libbet der in diskusje oer it brûken fan Ulster Skotsk op plaknammebuorden. Dizze diskusje is fergelykber mei diskusjes oer it Biltsk en kin dêrmei tsjinje as in spegel foar dizze diskusjes.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Goal of this report

The goal of this study is to advise the municipality of Het Bildt on Bildts language policy after its merger into a new, larger municipality. Specifically, this study explores the conditions and consequences of recognition within the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Results of this research may improve chances for Bildts to be included in this Charter.

1.2 Background

In the municipality of Het Bildt, a minority language called Bildts is spoken. This language has some 3000 speakers living within its borders and about 3000 living elsewhere. Most speakers living elsewhere live just beyond its borders. It is completely surrounded by Frisian-speaking areas, and this insular position has created a unique blend of languages. The linguistic position and unicity of Bildts will be explored in the first part of this report. Bildts has remained steady as to its number of native speakers: between 2007 and 2014, it has hovered between 30% and 45% of the total population of the municipality (Provinsje Fryslân, 2007, 2011, 2014). Nevertheless, Bildts does not have official status and it is not currently protected by national or European laws. As it stands, it only receives protection from the municipal government and the province of Fryslân.

Meanwhile, this municipal government is expected to merge into a larger, mainly Frisian-speaking municipality in 2018. This proposed merger of municipalities in Northwestern Friesland is the immediate cause for this report. The proposed merger of Het Bildt into a new municipality (working name: Westergo) will cause the traditionally Bildts-speaking area to constitute no more than a small minority in the new municipality. Maintenance of the Bildts language in this new configuration will require an assessment of its current and expected strengths and weaknesses.

On the basis of such an assessment, a vision for the Bildts language may be formed. Within the Netherlands, the position of Bildts as a minority language within a minority language-speaking area is unique within the Netherlands, as is its status as a regional minority language with so few speakers. This position is not unparalleled in other European countries, however. It is for this reason that any vision for the Bildts language may draw inspiration from these languages.

The Netherlands have ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, so this Charter may serve as a good starting point to attain these goals. The working of this Charter will be explained in this report.

The second part of this report will explore what parallels between Bildts and similar minority languages have been found. It will analyse the challenges these languages face and how they surmount them. Lessons may be learned from them, so that municipality het Bildt can learn from their best practices. A comparison to other minority languages will focus on the effect of legislation on their vitality, visibility and educational systems. More specifically, the hypothesis that formal recognition for Bildts as a regional language will strengthen its role as an essential part of Bildts identity and linguistic consciousness will be explored. Moreover, the role of recognition for a balanced language policy in the future municipality will be explored. A proposed language policy may encompass the use of Bildts in dealing with the local government and in public space, such as on information signs, place name signs and street name signs. It may also regulate the use of Bildts beside Frisian, Dutch or even English in schools and pre-schools. Finally, recognition of Bildts as a regional language for the purposes of the Charter may open up communications with other minority languages. In this manner, recognition may lead to inclusion in a far-reaching network where good and bad practices may be shared and where activities may be organised.

2 Part I: Description of Bildts and its language status

The first part of this report charts the linguistically insular position of the Bildts language. Firstly, a description will be given of the history of Bildts, its use in the public domain and its increasing importance as a focal point for local identity. Secondly, the relation of Bildts to Dutch and Frisian will be explored. These parts serve two purposes: they provide a foundation for the idea that Bildts is a separate language deserving official recognition, and they serve as a point of comparison with other minority languages. The last section outlines initiatives that may be taken in coming years to elevate the status of Bildts.

2.1 The development of the Bildts identity

Bildts is a language spoken in the historical polder of Het Bildt in Northwestern Friesland. Its genesis may be dated to the same timeframe as the genesis of the land itself. In 1505, dykes were built around an alluvion following an agreement between several South Hollandic lords and duke George of Saxony. These dykes were built by Hollandic labourers (Kuiken, 2013b, p. 1). Due to its creation by Hollandic labourers, the landscape of Het Bildt still betrays its non-Frisian roots and unique character in Friesland:

Meindert Schroor [...] prijst de polder om de 'fraaie, blokvormige renaissanceverkaveling'. Het precedent ziet hij in vijftiende-eeuwse blokverkavelingen in Zuid-Holland. (Kuiken, 2013b, p. 45)

In the early sixteenth century, immigration of Hollandic, Zeelandic, Brabantian and other settlers set in motion the development of Het Bildt and the Bildts language:

Het Bildt [werd] behalve door Friezen [...] bevolkt door immigranten uit Holland, Zeeland, Brabant *ende andere diversche nacien*. Deze bevolkingssamenstelling verschilde sterk van die elders op het laatmiddeleeuwse Friese platteland. (Kuiken, 2013b, p. 1)

Although its Hollandic roots have played an integral part in forming the Bildts identity and language, Het Bildt underwent a high degree of intraregional migration. Kees Kuiken summarises the different initial migration patterns as follows:

[T]he migration history of Het Bildt is characterised by an initial wave of contract migration around 1505, followed by chain immigration during most of the 16th century and a pattern of intraregional labour migration among the lower classes. (Kuiken, 2013b, p. 262)

Until the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), Bildts grain was traded in Amsterdam. Access to this trading hub was temporarily disrupted during this war, leading Het Bildt to trade with

neighbouring towns instead, marking the start of a period when the Bildts identity started diverging from its Hollandic roots. In the centuries following, local patricians maintained translocal networks within as well as beyond Friesland:

Eerder dan een ‘Hollandse enclave in Friesland’, zoals Het Bildt in de twintigste eeuw wel werd genoemd, kunnen we spreken van een vroegmoderne polder met sterke externe contacten. (Kuiken, 2013b, p. 1)

Over the centuries following its colonisation, the Bildts identity and language continued to run their own course. *Bilkerts* continued to adopt Frisian elements in their language and culture, although they never quite claimed the Frisian identity as their own.

Another way in which Het Bildt maintained ties to its non-Frisian roots is through the collective memory of its inhabitants. Over the centuries, inhabitants of Het Bildt used several symbols, real or imagined, to stress its culturally insular position:

One example is the romantic invention of one ‘Steven Huygen’ (fl. ~1500) as the common ancestor of all ‘genuine Bildt people’. (Kuiken, 2013b, p. 262)

This Steven Huygen figure remained a defining marker until about halfway the twentieth century, when the Bildts language became a defining feature for ‘Bildtsness’:

Most notably after World War II, electoral reform and progressive secularisation gave rise to new local elites which in turn adopted new collective symbols. Not common descent but the local dialect became a major cohesive element [...]. (Kuiken, 2013b, p. 263)

The rise of the Bildts language as a marker for Bildts identity led to the emergence of a Bildts language movement. This movement and its effects will be discussed below.

2.1.1 *The Bildts language movement*

The Bildts language movement went hand in hand with the Frisian language movement. In 1972, Sytze Buwalda started organising Bildts language courses. This initiative was a cautious start for what would grow into a fully-fledged language movement in the form of *De Commissie Bildts* in 1979 (Hibma, 1985, p. 18). In 1974, a local political party called *Werkgroep het Bildt* was founded. Key issues were preservation of the Waddenzee and the language and culture of Het Bildt (Kuiken, 2014, p. 298).

The immediate cause for a Bildts language movement to be called into action in politics was a law in 1974 mandating the teaching of Frisian in elementary schools in Friesland from 1980 onwards. This law was met with resistance in Het Bildt. Frisian was introduced as a

compulsory subject nevertheless, but Bildts was allowed to be taught beside Frisian. One stipulation for this provision was that there should be teaching material to teach Bildts. In 1979, *De Commissie Bildts* was formed in order to develop this material (Hibma, 1985, pp. 19-21). Nowadays, this commission's work is carried out by the *Kemissy Meertalighyd*, which develops teaching material in Dutch, Bildts, Frisian, and English for primary schools in Het Bildt in cooperation with *Cedin*, an advice bureau on education (Kemissy Meertalighyd, 2010).

A second issue that called into life a Bildts language committee is the reorganisation of municipalities of 1984. In this year, the traditionally Frisian-speaking village of Minnertsga was added to the municipality of Het Bildt. Initially, the plan to redraw municipal borders included the addition of several more villages, but this plan was toned down to one village due to pressure from *comité 't Bildt mot 't Bildt blive'*. This committee feared for the future of the Bildts language in a municipality where only about half of its area would be traditionally Bildts-speaking. Within the new municipality of Het Bildt (including Minnertsga), *Werkgroep het Bildt* proposed a language border at the former municipal border. It argued that the municipality should not concern itself with stimulating both Bildts and Frisian, but only Bildts (Hibma, 1985, pp. 29-38). In the end, *Werkgroep het Bildt* decided against a language border. A political party called *Frije Bilkerts* then came into being as a splinter group from *Werkgroep het Bildt* due to discontent with the decision against drawing a language border (Kuiken, 2014, p. 301). The upshot of this political struggle is that Het Bildt has had a language policy which stimulated Bildts and Frisian equally since 1984.

By now, two parties put the Bildts language on the agenda of municipal politics, forcing other parties to adopt a more inclusive approach towards Bildts. In Minnertsga, the FNP, the Frisian National Party, was traditionally strong. This party understood that it had to aim for an inclusive language policy for Bildts in order to gain footing within the newly redrawn municipality. A result of this charm offensive was that *Afûk* received funding to publish in Bildts and Stellingwerfs as well as Frisian (Kuiken, 2014, p. 301).

The matter of municipal reorganisation increased consciousness of the Bildts language and culture. As a result, a foundation to support the Bildts language and culture was created: *Stichting Ons Bildt*. Since its creation, it has stimulated the use of Bildts by organising courses in written Bildts and by publishing works in and on the Bildts language. Moreover, the Bildts language gained equal status to Frisian in the newly delineated municipality.

When the Netherlands signed (1992) and ratified (1996) the Charter, Frisian was immediately included as a minority language. Later on, Limburgish and Low Saxon were recognised under the Charter. Bildts was not recognised at any of these points in time,

because local authorities never asked for it. Apparently, the linguistic infrastructure and public consciousness of the Bildts language were not sufficiently developed at this point¹.

2.2 Present position of Bildts

2.2.1 Institutional support

Since the accession of the Netherlands to the Charter and its inclusion of both Low Saxon and Limburgish, the politics as well as the sociolinguistics around Bildts has changed. For instance, the official policy of the Provinsje Fryslân is to support the use of *streektalen* 'regional languages'. In 2004, the *Notysje Streektalen* came into effect. This memorandum aims to support Bildts and the Low Saxon dialect of Stellingwerfs. This memorandum designates local municipalities as the primarily responsible parties for the fate of these regional languages. In principle, the effect of this memorandum is that the province co-finances cultural institutes dealing with regional languages. In the case of Het Bildt, this institute is *Stichting Ons Bildt*. It also sets out a policy aimed towards youth and education. The implementation of this policy is found in the subsidy of the *Kemissy Meertalighyd*. Since Stellingwerfs, as a dialect of Low Saxon, is covered by the Charter, the formal coverage of both languages covered under the *Notysje* has been asymmetrical since the inclusion of Low Saxon in the Charter.

The 2013 policy document *Grinzen Oer* sets out the policy of the Provinsje Fryslân towards language, culture, and education.

Mei meartaligens bedoele wy net allinnich it brûken fan talen lykas Frysk en Nederlânsk. De Fryske streektalen spylje ek in wichtige rol [...]. Wy harkje dêrmei nei de rop út de Fryske maatskippij en de polityk om ús eachweid te ferbreedzjen. Foar alle streektalen jildt wol dat de oanbelangjende gemeenten earstferantwurdlik binne. Wy fiere yn prinsipe in folgjend belied, mar kinne ek stimulearjend hannelje.
(Provinsje Fryslân, 2013, p. 43)

In essence, the province has a well-willing attitude towards regional languages, although it delegates the primary responsibility to local municipalities.

Stichting Ons Bildt became part of the *Europeesk Buro foar Lytse Talen* (EBLT) in 2013 following a visit to Het Bildt in 2013. This foundation, an associate member of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NLPD), lobbies at the national and European level for promotion and protection of smaller languages in the Netherlands.

¹ This case mirrors Low German

The year 2015 saw the birth of *'t Bildts Aigene*, an umbrella organisation for all inhabitants in Het Bildt that provides a platform and a point of contact for the municipality-to-be of Westergo. It is an umbrella organisation for the already-mentioned *Stichting Ons Bildt* and the *Kemissy Meertalighyd*. In addition, it comprises *Aerden Plaats*, an exhibition space and archaeological centre, as well as the *Bildts Dokumintasyintrum*, a centre for documentation of historical material relevant for Het Bildt. *'t Bildts Aigene* and its daughter organisations are supported by the municipal government and the province. With the exception of one employee of the *Bildts Dokumintasyintrum*, all organisations are wholly dependent on volunteer efforts.

2.2.2 *The use of Bildts in the public domain*

A defining feature of a language as opposed to a dialect is its extent of usage. Whereas a dialect is mostly confined to purely informal discourse, Bildts tends to be spoken in a wider range of situations:

[H]et prestige van het Bildts daalt volgens ons (nog) niet of nauwelijks, omdat dit dialect zich niet alleen beperkt tot 'huis en heem', maar ook nog altijd levend is in andere domeinen. (Koldijk, 2004, p. 186)

The presence of Bildts in multiple domains is also evidenced by its use in writing. Although it is not written often by commercial parties due to its lack of a *lingua franca* status for trade, Bildts is still found in the public space. The most recent account of the use of written Bildts in the public space is given by Varkevisser (2014). She documented the use of different languages on the two main streets of Sint-Annaparochie: the Van Harenstraat and the Warmoesstraat. In signs whose language could have been influenced by its placer², Bildts is found on 6.9% of the monolingual signs, on 8.3% of the bilingual signs, and on 20% of the multilingual signs. Although the absolute majority of signs is written in Dutch, an important outcome of her research is that Bildts is used more than Frisian on monolingual and bilingual signs³.

Bildts is used alongside with Dutch on place name signs, although only Dutch place names have official status. There is a strong opposition to this policy in the municipal council, with several members advocating their Bildts language versions to be the official place names (De Jong, 2015).

An enquiry under Bildts speakers made for the *Streektalenatlas 2014* shows that 45% of its respondents (including non-speakers) support increased public visibility for the Bildts

² E. g. signs from large supralocal chains are excluded

³ In the same category, Frisian is found in 5. 2% of monolingual signs, 6. 7% of bilingual signs, and 30% of the bilingual signs.

language, even though only about 60% of the respondents indicated speaking Bildts on a daily or frequent basis (Provinsje Fryslân, 2014, p. 14). These data demonstrate that Bildts speakers have a high degree of consciousness of the language status of Bildts. These data also demonstrate a support for elevation of the Bildts language in the public domain among its speakers.

Another point that demonstrates the position of the Bildts language in the public sphere is its recognition by Het Bildt and its oral and written use within the municipal government. Bildts is used both internally and externally, i.e. in council meetings as well as at the counter.

Zorgcentrum het Bildt, an elderly care facility in St. Annaparochie consciously uses Bildts as part of its service provision (Zorgcentrum het Bildt, 2015, p. 8).

Currently, there is one weekly newspaper printed in Het Bildt covering primarily Bildts affairs: *de Bildtse Post*. In July 1941, this newspaper contained a Bildts language story for the first time (Kuiken, 2014, p. 136). Kuiken documented the relative use of Bildts in articles and advertisements (Kuiken, 2014, pp. 138-139). He did this by taking the final newspaper of the months of July and December as samples for every decade. The results of his sampling show that between 1950 and 1990, the percentage of Bildts language articles remained steady between 0 and 8%. In advertisements, this percentage hovered between 0 and 3%. Since 2000, the percentage of Bildts language articles has risen to between 6 and 22%. Bildts language advertisements formed about 10% of total advertisements during this period. Notably, the relative frequency of Bildts language articles as well as advertisements surpassed Frisian around the 2000 mark. These samples demonstrate that Bildts has spread to relative mainstream use in written media since about fifteen years ago.

There is no separate radio or television channel that mainly or exclusively serves Het Bildt due to the high cost of maintaining these infrastructures. Nevertheless, *Radio Eenhoorn* has some Bildts language programming (Radio Eenhoorn, 2015). The radio and television stations of *Omrop Fryslân* occasionally broadcast Bildts, but have no structural programming for it (Kuiken, 2014, pp. 147-148). Some musicians use Bildts, sometimes as a statement. Names of musicians and bands are: Jan de Vries, Feetwarmers, and Hein Jaap Hilarides.

Bildts is increasingly being used as a means for outreach towards other cultures, such as the Maltese culture. Malta and Het Bildt share a long-standing tradition of potato trade. In April 2015, the year's first potatoes from Malta arrived along with Maltese language poems. Maltese is a minority language like Bildts, so this common feature may serve to forge a connection. Next autumn, Bildts poems made by professional poets as well as primary school children are expected to be sent with Bildts potatoes. Through its own language, Het

Bildt has created an internationally distinct profile which may benefit trade and tourism (Leemhuis, 2015).

These data all show that the Bildts language is publicly employed as a way to express Bildts identity. In this function, it serves a purpose for the speaker in that it allows him to identify himself as a *Bilkert*. As it stands, the use of Bildts in the public domain is not diminishing. Instead, new ways of use are found in the public domain, in writing and speech, as is demonstrated by its use in formal settings such as municipal council meetings. This is a vital point, because languages die when they no longer serve a purpose to their speakers. The fact that Bildts continues to serve a purpose in these domains bodes well for its continued existence under current circumstances.

2.2.3 *Bildts in education*

In pre-school education, Bildts may be used informally in all locations. The child nursery in St.-Annaparochie is officially trilingual: Dutch, Frisian and Bildts are part of the programme. The use of Frisian in this nursery is stimulated by the *Sintrum Frysktalige Berne-opfang*. There is no similar organisation for Bildts. The use of Bildts in these locations is not presently stimulated by the municipality, but the municipal and provincial government have been discussing a comprehensive language policy for all stages of education.

In primary schools, Bildts may be given alongside with or instead of Frisian during hours otherwise designated for Frisian in Friesland. In practice, this amounts to about an hour a week for Bildts. The municipality subsidises these activities by financing the *Kemissy Meertalighyd*'s efforts in providing educational materials and teacher training. In St.-Annaparochie, a new secondary school campus is currently in the final stages of being built: *Campus Middelsee*. Bildts is not presently used in secondary education, but the municipality has expressed that it gives serious thought to the matter of multilingualism in this new campus.

Stichting Ons Bildt and the *Kemissy Meertalighyd* provide adult education for Bildts. These organisations are financed by the municipality or the province, so these activities are indirectly financed as such. Nevertheless, these courses also exist by the grace of volunteer effort, having allowed this infrastructure to exist cost-effectively. Municipal employees may have the costs of these courses reimbursed.

Learning materials for Bildts are developed by the *Kemissy Meertalighyd*. This organisation develops multilingual teaching material for primary schools in four languages: Bildts, Frisian, Dutch and English. In addition, it provides teacher training in multilingualism and in Bildts. In return, primary schools must develop a vision and policy on multilingualism. It also helps

primary schools in developing a vision on multilingual education and a subsequent policy. It is financed by the municipality. This organisation's effort has allowed for an adequate infrastructure to train and certify teachers.

The *Kemissy Meertalighyd* and *Stichting Ons Bildt* also serve to make the learning of Bildts available through Internet. Educational resources are published online in order to reach out to those who want to learn Bildts at their own pace. Another initiative to learn Bildts independently over the Internet is *EduBildts*. This is a course being developed through volunteer effort within *Stichting Ons Bildt* in cooperation with *Afûk*. It is modelled on the existing programme of *EduFrysk*.

2.2.4 *Language transmission*

The *Streektalenatlas 2014* (2014) shows that intergenerational language transmission among speakers is strong in Het Bildt. Of all Bildts speakers with children, only about 10% of respondents state they do not speak Bildts with their children. Moreover, respondents stated that they had a positive attitude towards Bildts language education in primary education. The atlas also identified threats to the Bildts language: respondents who grew up outside of Het Bildt tend not to use Bildts. This tendency is even stronger for respondents who grew up outside Friesland. When non-speakers were asked why they did not use Bildts, only just over 20% of the respondents cited lack of interest in speaking Bildts. The majority of respondents cited their lack of skill in speaking it (Provinsje Fryslân, 2014, p. 15). These numbers demonstrate that, even among non-speakers, the primary reason for not speaking Bildts is lack of ability rather than lack of interest. This demonstrates that there may be room for outreach towards this demographic in order to ensure vitality of Bildts.

2.2.5 *Literary tradition*

Bildts as a literary language is a recent phenomenon. Literary Bildts started with the nineteenth-century writings of Waling Dykstra (Buwalda, 1948, p. 7). Kuiken aptly describes his role in standardising the literary register of Bildts:

Zoals het Fries van Gysbert de 'gouden standaard' was voor Waling Dijkstra, zo was het negentiende-eeuwse Bildts dat voor Buwalda. (Kuiken, 2014, p. 292)

The stories he wrote in this standard register were short stories. In addition, he wrote extensively in Frisian. One of his novels, *De Sulveren Rinkelbel*, was posthumously translated into Bildts.

More recently, a larger quantity of Bildts-language literature has emerged. This includes children's literature under the auspices of *Afûk*. For adults, a wide range of books in Bildts is

available, including poetry, short stories and literary non-fiction. *Stichting Ons Bildt* plays an important role in publishing works in the Bildts language.

2.2.6 *The linguistic study of Bildts*

The first linguistic study of Bildts is found in notes written down by Bruno van Albada, who was a school teacher in Oudebildtzijl from 1816 until 1826. The modern study of Bildts started with Hotze Buwalda in the first decades following the Second World War: a time frame roughly concurrent with the inception of the Bildts language movement and the development of the language as a marker for Bildts identity (Hibma, 1985, p. 18).

Bildts has a standard variety which is codified in a dictionary. This standard is based on the literature written by Waling Dykstra in the 19th century. This dictionary also contains a grammatical supplement. Because Bildts does not stand in a dialect continuum with its phylogenetically most related languages, the language border between Bildts and not Bildts is clear. Moreover, Bildts has not suffered from dialectal splintering of any significance, meaning all dialects of Bildts are easily understood by all speakers. These three facts have allowed for a standard Bildts register to develop. This standard register is based on a literary canon of several 19th and 20th century writers. The 2013 edition of the *Woordeboek fan 't Bildts* contains an overview of phonology, morphology and syntax of Bildts detailing this linguistic standard.

2.2.7 *Existence of a dictionary*

In 1996, the *Woordeboek fan 't Bildts* was published. This dictionary played a vital role in opening up the standard register of the Bildts language for a broader public (Buwalda et al., 2013). According to some, the dictionary gave the language more status and even elevated it from a dialect to a language at an instant. Irrespectively of the truth of this statement, it sold quite well, eventually leading to a second edition in 2013. This demonstrates that this dictionary fulfilled the need for an authoritative work of reference on the Bildts language. The 2013 edition contains a supplement detailing orthography and grammar, as well as a Dutch-Bildts index. With these additions, it transcends the function of mere description, so that it may also be used as a reference to produce Bildts translations.

As such, the dictionary serves not only to document, but also to standardise the Bildts language. As a result, speakers must make a fundamental choice between either Bildts or Dutch/Frisian. No in-between registers exist. This leads to another conclusion: speakers of Bildts regard the language as a wholly alternative system of communication to either of the standard languages. When a local language functions as such in a community, it may reasonably be said to be a separate language

2.3 Bildts in relation to Dutch and Frisian

This chapter contains a linguistic analysis of how Bildts has developed as a language independent from Frisian or Dutch. It further confirms its language status as opposed to a dialect on linguistic grounds, which in turn is a necessary condition for recognition of Bildts in the Charter.

2.3.1 *The relationship of Bildts to Standard Dutch*

A fundamental difference between Bildts and other regional languages in the Netherlands is its relationship to its national language, or what the *Raad voor de Nederlandse Taal en Letteren* of the Taalunie calls its *cultuurtaal*. In 2001, it advised against including Zeelandic in the Charter on the grounds that it was not a language separate from Dutch, but rather a dialect of it. Its classification of Zeelandic as a dialect of Dutch is based on the Dutch role of *cultuurtaal* for Zeelandic:

De Raad wijst in dit verband met instemming op de door J. Goossens in zijn 'Inleiding tot de Nederlandse Dialectologie' (Groningen, Wolters-Noordhoff, 1977, tweede druk) gegeven definitie: 'Nederlandse dialecten zijn met het Nederlands verwante dialecten die gesproken worden in het gebied waar het Nederlands, en geen enger verwante taal, de rol van cultuurtaal vervult' (p. 23). (Raad voor de Nederlandse Taal en Letteren, 2001)

What Goossens does is define dialects of Dutch geographically rather than by linguistic criteria. Varieties of Germanic within the area where Dutch fulfils the role of *cultuurtaal* are by this definition dialects of Dutch. Varieties outside of this area are not dialects of Dutch. Dutch as a *cultuurtaal* is confined to a certain area. Goossens defines the northern border of the Dutch *cultuurtaal* as follows:

De afbakening van de Nederlandse dialecten langs de noordzijde stelt niet veel problemen. In Friesland worden twee cultuurtalen naast elkaar gebruikt, het Fries en het Nederlands. De dialecten van die provincie zijn met beide beschaafde systemen verwant, maar het grootste deel ervan lijkt veel meer op Fries dan op het Nederlands. Tussen deze dialecten en de andere loopt er een taalgrens. (Goossens, 1977, p. 22)

In contrast to Zeelandic, Bildts is on the other side of such a linguistic border. The area where Bildts is spoken is completely surrounded by dialects under the Frisian *cultuurtaal*. The result of this is that there is no dialect continuum between Bildts and its immediate neighbours. In effect, this geographic position means that Bildts has been isolated from linguistic innovations impinging on Standard Dutch and its local varieties. The linguistic isolation of Het Bildt lends credibility to the perceived insular position of Bildts. This is a

qualitative difference with Zeelandic, and also with the recognised regional languages Low Saxon and Limburgs.

By defining dialects of Dutch by geography rather than phylogeny, languages close to Dutch phylogenetically cannot be assumed to be dialects of Dutch on the grounds of their phylogeny. Therefore, its phylogenetic relation to Zeelandic and Southern Hollandic dialects does not mean Bildts is a dialect of Standard Dutch. The case of Afrikaans demonstrates this. The Taalunie has no say on Afrikaans, because it is a different language than Dutch. In the seventeenth century, Dutch colonists established themselves in South Africa under the leadership of Jan van Riebeeck (Van der Sijs & Willems, 2009, pp. 143-145). Therefore, the Afrikaans-Dutch split cannot be said to have occurred any earlier than this. The Bildts-Dutch split took place in an even earlier period: with the settlement of Dutch colonists in Het Bildt in the sixteenth century.

It was the migration of these early settlers that kickstarted the Bildts-Dutch split. Migration of Hollandic settlers to Het Bildt continued to bolster the number of Hollandic speakers throughout the sixteenth century. In half a century after the first Hollandic workers were hired to build dykes around the reclaimed land, only about a quarter of the population of Het Bildt consisted of Frisians (Kuiken, 2013a, p. 215). It can be said, then, that Bildts split off from these Hollandic dialects in the sixteenth century.

This split goes back further than the Afrikaans-Dutch split. Significantly, the split happened before the emergence of Standard Dutch in the eighteenth century. In other words, the Southern Hollandic dialects that Bildts is related to bear no relationship to Standard Dutch at all, except that the Hollandic dialects that stayed in Holland came to fall under the heading of dialect of Standard Dutch after Dutch became a standard language. The Taalunie has no say on Afrikaans language policy because it is not a dialect of Standard Dutch. Similarly, the Taalunie should have no say on Bildts language policy because it is not a dialect of Standard Dutch.

There is another fundamental difference between Zeelandic and Bildts: their respective national languages. In the area where Zeelandic is spoken, Standard Dutch solely fulfils the role of *cultuurtaal*. By contrast, Standard Frisian is the *cultuurtaal* in Het Bildt beside Standard Dutch. In practice, Frisian has a much larger standardising influence on Bildts than Dutch does. An example that shows Frisian rather than Dutch fulfils plays the role of a standardising force is a weekly comic in the *Bildtse Post*. Kuiken writes:

Op de voorpagina van de *Bildtse Post* staat sinds november 2001 een soortgelijke 'taalspiegel'. Iedere week werd hetzelfde plaatje afgedrukt: een grijze roek die iets in

'slecht (*min*) Bildts' zegt tegen een witte meeuw die hem in 'goed Bildts' terechtwijst. De tekst van de eerste aflevering was:

Goeie, bin ik hier *in* 't Bildt? / Welkom *op* 't Bildt.

[...] Wie zou verwachten dat het Bildts hierin werd gedistantieerd van het Fries, vergist zich. In bijna 60% van deze afleveringen was het 'goede' Bildts een frisisme [...]: een 'verbildtste' Friese uitdrukking in de Bildtse standaardspelling. In 40% van de gevallen was het 'goede' Bildts een Bildtse uitdrukking [...] die noch in het *WFT*, noch in de 'dikke *Van Dale*' werd gevonden. In twee gevallen werd alleen de spelling verbildtst.

In feite pleitte de *BP* in deze rubriek dus niet voor taalpurisme maar voor verfrising. (Kuiken, 2014, p. 295)

In many cases, the 'purest' Bildts contains a more Frisian colouring than Dutch. The example of these comics and their tendency to take Frisian rather than Dutch as their standard shows that the source of superstrate influence on Bildts is principally Frisian. Indeed, the Bildts language movement spoke out against the encroachment of Frisian, but certainly recognised the Frisian standard as its own:

[I]n taalkundig opzicht was de houding tegenover het Fries veel meer inclusief. *Geef Frysk* mocht blijkbaar ook 'goed Bildts' worden. (Kuiken, 2014, p. 296)

On a sociolinguistic level, then, Bildts may be regarded as a variety of speech influenced by the Frisian standard language.

In spoken Bildts, the standardising influence of Frisian may be seen in the disappearance of the perfect prefix *ge-*. In present-day Bildts, *ge-* is not used to form the perfect tense, following Frisian rather than Dutch. Seventeenth-century Bildts, however, employed the *ge-* prefix. Kuiken writes:

De enige zeventiende-eeuwer van wie geschriften in het Bildts bewaard zijn, is de boer Dirck Jansz. [...] De taalactivist Hotze Buwalda vond dit echter geen Bildts. In 1946 schreef hij:

Het dagboek van de Bildtboer Dirck Jansz [...] is jammer genoeg in het Hollands geschreven, hoewel er veel Bildtse woorden in voorkomen.

Dit was een misvatting. Dirck Jansz schreef Bildts dat in de vroege zeventiende eeuw werd gesproken, en dat is niet het Bildts zoals het in de negentiende en twintigste

eeuw klonk. Evenals het Stadsfries lijkt het Bildts omstreeks 1600 meer Hollands gekleurd dan tegenwoordig. Zo begint Dirck zijn voltooide deelwoorden vaak met ‘ge-’ (bijvoorbeeld: *hadde ghesijen*) waar in het negentiende- en twintigste-eeuwse Bildts (en Fries) een deelwoord zonder ‘ge-’ normaler is (*hadde sien*⁴). (Kuiken, 2014, p. 292)

The examples above demonstrate that both standard Bildts and spoken Bildts are subject to Frisian superstratal influence.

In his chapter on the future of Bildts, Koldijk warns about the encroachment of Frisian on Bildts due to changing patterns of marriage and migration:

Het Bildt is altijd een landstreek geweest met, dialectisch gezien, een vrij homogene bevolking, waar de bewoners niet sterk wisselden met uitzondering van de periferie, waar zich nog wel eens Friezen wilden en willen nestelen. [...] Toch brokkelt het Bildts de laatste tijd enigszins af, vooral door het feit dat verscheidene Bilkerts naar de nieuwe IJsselmeerpolders trokken, terwijl er aan de andere kant sprake is van een immigratie van Friestaligen en Hollandstaligen, die de open plaatsen der Bildste emigranten innemen. [...]

Het Fries heeft men op het Bildt altijd als een vijand en indringer gezien. Dat werd ook versterkt doordat de Friese gebieden Barradeel, Menaldumadeel, Leeuwarderadeel en Ferwerderadeel eraan grensden. Het is bijna vanzelfsprekend, dat het Fries in de loop van de tijd aan het Bildste taalgebied geknabbeld heeft en het Bildts, vooral in het zuiden en voor een klein gedeelte in het noordwesten, teruggedrongen heeft. [...]

De toekomst zal leren of het Bildts vitaal genoeg is om zich tegen de voortgaande invloed van het Fries te verzetten. Behalve met het Fries van de omringende streken moeten we hierbij ook rekening houden met het belangrijker geworden Standaardfries. (Koldijk, 2004, pp. 189-190)

Significantly, the role of Frisian as the *cultuurtaal* of Friesland has steadily increased over the twentieth century. Already in 1984, Gorter e.a. observe

[...] een bescheiden proces van verfriesing, met als gevolg dat er een beetje Fries gekomen is in die domeinen waar het eerder nog minder voorkwam. (Gorter et al., 1984, p. 416)

⁴ Or as in present-day Bildts: ‘sien had’, which shows a Frisian syntax

Over the twentieth and twenty-first century, the position of Frisian in education, government and public space has improved even further. Key events in this development have been the Dutch ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority languages and its inclusion of Frisian, and the *Wet gebruik Friese taal* (2013). This tendency of increasing use of Frisian is expected to impinge on Bildts to an increasing degree, especially after the planned merging of municipalities in 2018.

In contrast to Zeelandic, then, its vulnerability lies not in encroachment of the standard form of the same language on the local dialect, but rather in the spread of a different local majority language to the area where the language variety is spoken.

2.3.2 *The relationship of Bildts to Standard Frisian*

The position of Bildts as a dialect of Frisian is untenable from a phylogenetic point of view. This is evidenced by linguistic research. Phylogenetically, Bildts stems from several Hollandic dialects from the South of Holland. Although it has by now integrated many Frisian features, it still shows a Hollandic matrix. This situation has caused Frisian to encroach on Bildts as a *Dachsprache*, rather than as a standard register or *cultuurtaal*. The exact nature and scope of these Frisian encroachments is a matter of some debate.

Two possible scenarios may explain how Bildts developed over the centuries after its separation from other Hollandic dialects. Koldijk writes:

Did it result from expansion, i.e. from foreign upper class Dutch influences and did Frisians borrow prestigious forms from a small group of colonists, who, whether they formed the majority of the population or not, brought their own language to het Bildt? [...] the two protagonists in this debate are G. G. Kloeke and Wobbe de Vries. Assuming that the Dutch speaking colonists formed a prestigious and influential minority, Kloeke argues for the expansionist point of view. An important problem with his theory is that it is questionable whether the rich contractors in fact settled in het Bildt. [...] His most important opponent was Wobbe de Vries, who regards the Bildt dialect essentially as originally imported from Holland. Whether the Frisians formed the majority of the population or not was in his view irrelevant; the Frisians living in het Bildt took over Dutch because they regarded it as a more prestigious and useful means of communication. Frisian features are, in this view, of a later date. (Koldijk, 2004, p. 199)

If the latter scenario approximates the nature of Bildts the closest, then Bildts is unquestionably a Hollandic dialect: there is direct continuity between Hollandic-speaking settlers and present-day Bildts speakers. If the former scenario is true, then the lines of

phylogeny may be blurred: Frisian speakers learned this variety of Hollandic, and in doing so carried over parts of the Frisian matrix language. However, there is at least one reason to assume Bildts is not a Frisian dialect with a Dutch superstrate, but rather a Hollandic dialect with a Frisian superstrate: the fact that the Hollandic elements are often not found in standard Dutch. A striking example of this is the Bildts diminutive system. The Bildts diminutive system corresponds closely to the system as documented in the Hollandic dialect of Gouda. Hoekstra writes:

Enerzijds lijkt het Bildts een eenvoudig geval te zijn van tweedetaalverwerving van een Hollands dialect door Friese moedertaalsprekers. Dat verklaart, zoals we uiteen zullen zetten, de grammaticale overeenkomsten met het Fries. Anderzijds is het diminutiefsysteem een unieke ontwikkeling op basis van het oorspronkelijke Hollandse dialect, en zitten er in de woordenschat eveneens typisch Hollandse woorden. We zullen deze tegengestelde tendensen verklaren uit de het immigratiepatroon van het Bildts: er zijn immers zowel Friese als Hollandse moedertaalsprekers heen getrokken dus het resulterend dialect vertoont zowel sporen van Fries als Hollands substraat. (Hoekstra & Van Koppen, 2001b, pp. 107-116)

Frisian speakers switching to Dutch for prestige reasons would not be expected to adopt such non-standard dialectal features. Nevertheless, the present-day Bildts language shows these features. So even if Bildts is a Hollandic dialect, but it has been acquired mainly by Frisian speakers shifting to this dialect, then it should be noted that its acquisition took place largely from speakers of a Southern Hollandic local dialect rather than a more prestigious dialect of Standard Dutch found in trade and government. These Hollandic dialect speakers are documented in history.

This shows that irrespectively of whether the Frisian elements in Bildts are substratal, superstratal, or both, the Hollandic input into Bildts may be traced back to the origin of its original settlers. The original matrix of Bildts is undoubtedly Hollandic. The Frisian elements of Bildts are due to contact with the neighbouring Frisians, Hoekstra writes:

Het is niet verwonderlijk dat het Bildts er zo Fries uitziet. Getalsmatig vormden de Bildtkers een kleine groep (zelfs in onze tijd 10.000 sprekers). Er is maar één keer sprake geweest van Hollandse migratie maar eeuwenlang van Friese immigratie. Bovendien was er een voortdurende beïnvloeding van Bildtse moedertaalsprekers door hun Fries dat ze als tweede taal kenden. (Hoekstra & Van Koppen, 2001a, pp. 89-106)

The only possible scenario where Bildts could be regarded as a dialect of Frisian phylogenetically is if the oldest Bildts were a Frisian dialect, which would then slowly be relexified and have its morphology supplanted by Dutch. This scenario would require continuous settlement of the region by Dutch speakers until well after the sixteenth century. This scenario is not supported by facts. Moreover, the oldest Bildts written by Dirck Jansz most certainly has a Hollandic matrix, demonstrating that the point of departure for Bildts was Hollandic.

Another reason Bildts may not be considered a dialect of Frisian is the fact that the linguistic border between Bildts and Frisian is discrete. Unlike Zeelandic, for example, there is a single line that may be drawn between Bildts and Frisian dialects. On the Frisian side on this border, Frisian functions as the *cultuurtaal* for these dialects, on the Bildts side, the function of Frisian is that of a *Dachsprache*.

In short, the fact that Bildts has a Hollandic matrix means that Bildts is phylogenetically just as distantly removed from its *cultuurtaal*, Frisian, as Frisian is from Dutch. This means that classifying Bildts as a dialect of Frisian would imply that Frisian would be a dialect of Dutch. The position of Frisian as a language separate from Dutch is uncontested, so there is no reason to recognise Bildts as a dialect of its *Dachsprache* Frisian.

2.3.3 *Bildts as a mixed language*

The previous argumentation shows that Hollandic dialects would be more fitting than Frisian as the immediate ancestor of Bildts. However, the choice between these two options may be a false dilemma. An alternative to supposing either Dutch or Frisian as a superstrate language would be to classify Bildts as a mixed language. Mixed languages are languages incorporating elements of two different languages. These languages come to being when a fully bilingual community feels alienated from the communities of both languages spoken. In essence, they are the result of a social need for language to reflect identity rather than a basic communicative need. As such, they should be carefully distinguished from pidgins and creoles:

Whereas pidgins and creoles arise from a need for a medium of communication among groups that share no common language, the other mixed languages arise instead within a single social or ethnic group because of a desire, or perhaps even a need, for an in-group language. All members of the group already speak at least one language that is used as a medium of communication with the other group(s) in the contact situation and that could be used for all in-group communicative functions as well. The new mixed language is likely to serve one of two functions: keeping group

members' conversations secret from the other group(s), or being an identity symbol of an ethnic or subethnic group within a speech community. (Thomason, 2001, p. 198)

As of yet, Bildts has not been classified as a mixed language. It does, however, have the correct social breeding ground for contact languages. It mirrors the case of Media Lengua, where a group of Quechua speakers moved to an area where Spanish is spoken. Due to isolation from the Quechua-speaking larger community, this community developed its language independently. The intensity of their contact with their Spanish-speaking neighbours further distanced them from their heritage, although they never fully integrated into the Spanish community. As a result of this isolated position, they are neither Quechua nor Spanish culturally. Their language mirrors this: it combines a fully developed Quechua matrix with a Spanish lexicon. Notably, they did not learn imperfect Spanish, but rather unconsciously developed a language that mirrored their culturally insular position. Replace the Quechua speakers with Hollandic speakers and the Spanish community with the Frisian community, and this scenario may aptly describe the history of Bildts (Thomason, 2001, p. 203).

It should be noted that the Hollandic character of the first written Bildts records do not present an *a priori* objection to the mixed character of Bildts: in order for Bildts to develop as a mixed language, a sustained period of fluent bilingualism within the Bildts community must have existed before this bilingualism collapsed into a single mixed language. The Hollandic-looking diary of Dirck Jansz may have represented the Hollandic half of the bilingual community in this mixed-language scenario.

The case for Bildts as a mixed language also hinges on the continuation of the complexity of its parent grammars. If Bildts is to be a mixed language, it must contain structural elements of both Frisian and Dutch. Moreover, these structural elements must not be simplified due to a process of creolisation or pidginisation. This does indeed seem to be the case, since Bildts has incorporated the Southern Hollandic diminutive system as well as the Frisian infinitive system, both of which are quite complex. Both systems appear unscathed in the same form as their parents' languages (Hoekstra & Van Koppen, 2001a, 2001b)

Mixed languages are rare cases providing exceptions to the idea that languages may only evolve linearly from a single proto-language into a daughter language. Indeed, Bildts seems to have two parents, as it were. In this configuration, Bildts is neither a dialect of Frisian nor Dutch. Rather, it is a descendant of both, reflecting the unique history of its speakers and its landscape. Moreover, classifying Bildts as a mixed language not only reaffirms its language status; it also merits recognition for Bildts due to the extreme rarity of this development.

2.4 Planned and other possible initiatives for the period 2014-2018

2.4.1 *Plans for elevation of Bildts*

The coalition agreement in the municipal council of Het Bildt for 2014-2018 aspires to 'elevate Bildts' as part of its cultural policy. It operates from the principle that the disappearance of municipality Het Bildt will not change the Bildts cultural identity, but that now is the time to set up the proper infrastructure to ensure its vitality. Concretely, the municipality emphasises the value of *'t Bildts Aigene* by combining different local cultural institutes, seeking status elevation for the Bildts language, and by further formalising trilingualism in municipal communication.

This chapter will concern itself with elevation of the status of Bildts. The most obvious means to gain elevation for the Bildts language is through the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Alternatively, Het Bildt may seek elevation for its language as an integral part of the municipal reorganisation. Already, the municipalities involved have listed a balanced language policy between Bildts, Frisian and Dutch as an objective for the municipality of Westergo.

2.4.2 *The Charter*

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter: the Charter) is a European treaty that obliges its signatories to protect and promote their minority languages. Before a minority language may receive protection in this manner, a state must specify which minority languages are traditionally spoken in its area. These languages must not be dialects of the majority language, and must either have a territorial basis in a specific region, or must be traditionally used as a minority language within the state as a whole.

In order for Bildts to be recognised under the Charter, the government of the Netherlands must submit Bildts as a regional or minority language to be protected under the terms of the Charter at the Council of Europe. When a speaker community submits a minority language for inclusion to the Dutch government, the government will review whether this minority language may indeed be considered a relevant candidate for inclusion. The Taalunie is expected to judge for the Dutch government whether Bildts fits the criteria for inclusion.

2.4.3 *What does the Charter do?*

Formal recognition does not have immediate legal consequences in itself. However, recognition does open up a dialogue between the signatory party i.e. the Dutch Government and the local authorities i.e. municipality Het Bildt. The exact implementation of the aims of the Charter should be the upshot of a dialogue between these two parties. In many cases, accession to the Charter has not immediately led to changes in the level of protection for minority languages. Hemminga observes:

In het geval van zowel de Duitse als de Nederlandse ratificatie reikt de werking van Kaderconventie en Handvest niet verder dan de reeds bestaande nationale regelgeving inzake respectievelijk het Noord- en Saterfries, het Sorbisch, en het Fries. Van der Goot [...] spreekt in dit verband over een codificatie van bestaand beleid. (Hemminga, 2000, p. 164)

It should be noted that the scope of the Charter is exclusively limited to the matter of language. It does not grant or support political autonomy, protection for customs or any recognition of an ethnic identity. Hemminga states:

Het Europees Handvest voor Regionale of Minderheidstalen gaat niet om de bescherming van minderheden, maar om de bescherming van talen, waarbij de kwalificatie minderheid wordt gezien als een eigenschap van een taal. (Hemminga, 2000, p. 164)

After a language has been submitted to be recognised under the Charter, state efforts to apply the Charter are monitored by a committee of independent experts of the Council of Europe. This monitoring takes place in three-yearly cycles, with three distinct stages:

The first stage is submission of a periodical report by the state. This report mainly contains the main legal acts the state has enacted to implement the Charter, the languages it has covered under the Charter, organisations established. It also reports on the measures a state has taken and aims to take to apply the specific measures the state has committed itself to.

The second stage is the monitoring cycle, in which the committee of experts examines this report, informs on unclear areas, organises a visit to the state to meet relevant authorities and other relevant bodies, and examines other relevant reports written in the state. On the basis of these steps, it prepares its own report with recommendations, which is then addressed to the Committee of Ministers.

The Committee of Ministers then decides on recommendations on implementation of the Charter to make to the state. A follow-up meeting may then be organised in the country concerned in which experts, authorities, and minority associations may discuss concrete steps towards implementation of these recommendations.

When submitting a language to be included in the Charter, a country has the option to accede to either Part II of the Charter only, or to accede to Part III also, or at least Part II with at least 35 paragraphs of Part III. The significance of Part II and Part III will be discussed below.

2.4.4 *Part II of the Charter and Bildts*

Relevant parts of the first paragraph of Part II of the Charter are found below. This paragraph obliges countries to ‘base their policies, legislation and practice on the following objectives and principles:’

- a. the recognition of the regional or minority languages as an expression of cultural wealth;
- b. the respect of the geographical area of each regional or minority language in order to ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of the regional or minority language in question;
- c. the need for resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them;
- d. the facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life;
- e. the maintenance and development of links, in the fields covered by this Charter, between groups using a regional or minority language and other groups in the State employing a language used in identical or similar form, as well as the establishment of cultural relations with other groups in the State using different languages;
- f. the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of regional or minority languages at all appropriate stages;
- g. the provision of facilities enabling non-speakers of a regional or minority language living in the area where it is used to learn it if they so desire;
- h. the promotion of study and research on regional or minority languages at universities or equivalent institutions; (*European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Charter)*, 1992, Article 7)

These provisions concern objectives. As such, they are not rules, but they clarify the end goal of rules. As it stands now, most of these objectives are already *de facto* fulfilled, although not always to a satisfactory degree:

- a. The 2013 Nota *Grinzen Oer* by the province of Fryslân recognises Bildts as an expression of cultural wealth. A similar recognition of Bildts as an expression of cultural wealth has not been granted by the Dutch national government.
- b. The 1984 redrawing of Het Bildt was carried out in such a way that it would not present an obstacle to the promotion of Bildts. In the end, not all of Barradeel was added to Het Bildt to maintain the political clout of Bildts speakers locally. Although the Charter does not hold this consistency to be a requirement, the Charter considers consistency between a minority language area and an administrative area desirable. The future municipality of Westergo intends to maintain equality between Bildts and Frisian already, although it remains to be seen whether this provision will not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of Bildts in practice.
- c. The province and the municipality have already taken action to promote Bildts by subsidising local cultural institutes. Continued engagement to this commitment within Westergo remains to be seen.
- d. The use of Bildts in speech as well as writing has been promoted, among others, by having a dictionary serving as a language guide published and by setting the right example within the municipal government.
- e. Links have already been laid between the Bildts minority, the Low Saxon minority and the Frisian minority through the EBLT. The Bildts language area is not fragmented, so there is no need to set up an overarching infrastructure for fragmented Bildts-speaking areas
- f. The *Kemissy Meertalighyd* already provides means for the teaching of Bildts, although it does not support all appropriate stages of learning equally well.
- g. *Stichting Ons Bildt* already provides Bildts language education for adults
- h. Research on Bildts is presently supported by *Stichting Ons Bildt*, although it does not concern itself with the Bildts language in particular.

Based on the points of departure stated above, paragraphs two through five stipulate that countries must undertake the following concrete measures under Part II of the Charter. The relevant paragraphs among these read as follows:

2. The Parties undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it. The adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages.

3. The Parties undertake to promote, by appropriate measures, mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country and in particular the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to regional or minority languages among the objectives of education and training provided within their countries and encouragement of the mass media to pursue the same objective.
4. In determining their policy with regard to regional or minority languages, the Parties shall take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the groups which use such languages. They are encouraged to establish bodies, if necessary, for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to regional or minority languages.
(*Charter*, 1992, Article 7)

Paragraph 2 prohibits discrimination against the use of the minority language. For this reason, a country undertakes to eliminate any measures discouraging the use of the minority language. It does not imply complete equality to the majority language, so policies laid out for the national language, but not for the minority language, do not automatically mean that the policy is discriminatory. For example, this paragraph would not stipulate that Dutch and Bildts receive equal representation in education. The explanatory report of the Charter states:

In particular, the measures laid down by each state in favour of the use of a national or official language do not constitute discrimination against regional languages on the sole grounds that these same measures are not taken for their benefit. However, such measures must not constitute an obstacle to the maintenance or development of the regional or minority languages. (Council of Europe (CoE), 1992, para. 72)

Conversely, the local minority language may benefit from special measures precisely because of the disparity between the majority and minority language. For example, expressing a preference for hiring a Bildts speaker for an office may not be construed as discrimination against non-speakers under the terms of the Charter. Similarly, a proposed policy favouring Bildts may not be construed as an act of discrimination against speakers of other languages under the Charter.

Paragraph 3 states that a state has the responsibility to ‘develop understanding for a situation of language plurality within a state’ (CoE, 1992, para. 74). In practice, this means that a state must make a stand against the expression of negative attitudes towards minority languages and their speakers. Education and media are important factors in ensuring such an understanding.

Paragraph 4 stipulates that users of a minority language need to be taken into account when a state determines its policies as to these affairs. These speakers' interests should be represented by a public body. Bildts speakers do not currently have such a formal representative body, so the Bildts government must develop one in order to comply with the Charter. It seems, however, that *'t Bildts Aigene* may be fit to play such a role in the future while *Stichting Ons Bildt* has played such a role in the past.

2.4.5 Part III of the Charter and Bildts

Recognition for a minority language under Part III of the Charter obliges a state to take a more active role in promoting the vitality of the language. States must select at least 35 undertakings for languages covered under Part III in some or all of the following domains: Education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges.

At this point, the government of the Netherlands is not expected to have any ambitions whatsoever to sign Part III of the Charter for Bildts. This may be inferred from minister Plasterk's dismissive comments regarding recognition of Low Saxon within Part III of the Charter (De Stentor, 2013). Nevertheless, article 3.2 of the Charter states that countries are encouraged to add to their commitments as their legal and financial situation develops.

2.4.6 Expected consequences of recognition

A meaningful difference between the present situation and the expected situation after recognition would be that the State of the Netherlands will be responsible for observation of the terms of the Charter as the signatory party. This responsibility would mean that the national government would have to ensure that the upcoming municipal reorganisation shall not have negative effects on the promotion of Bildts. Presently, making these provisions is completely dependent on local municipalities.

Part II of the Charter will mainly guarantee the promotion of language transmission and non-discrimination. At this level, Bildts will be considered a valued part of the local cultural heritage and its public use emancipated, but it will not gain the status of a co-official language even locally. Elevation of Bildts will remain confined to be a matter of protecting and promoting a cultural asset. In practice, most of the goals formulated in the first paragraph of Part II of the Charter have already been met, and the process of implementation of the Charter may be confined to setting up a proper infrastructure for consulting speakers of Bildts and implementing a monitoring mechanism by the Council of Europe. This infrastructure for

consulting Bildts speakers may be achieved by giving *'t Bildts Aigene* or *Stichting Ons Bildt* a formal role as advisory body on Bildts language matters in the future municipality⁵.

Nevertheless, protection by Part II will not be a merely ceremonial gesture. Currently, initiatives for the protection and promotion of Bildts exist mainly by the grace of the municipal and provincial government. Long-term continuity of these efforts is unclear in the future municipality of Westergo if Bildts does not end up being recognised under the Charter. Recognition of Bildts within the Charter is expected at least to ensure continuity with current policies of the municipality.

In addition to strengthening the legal position of Bildts, recognition of Bildts in the Charter should yield several more results. One expected effect is that it would itself lead to increased linguistic consciousness among Bildts speakers. This, in turn, should reaffirm its language status and emancipate its use among non-speakers. Moreover, with recognition of Bildts as a minority language within the Charter, Bildts language organisations are expected to find it easier to form partnerships with other minority language organisations⁶.

In short, the Charter will mean that the national government will open up a dialogue with the local authorities to ensure that the terms of the Charter are carried out. If changes in policy are needed, it is up to these parties to choose how to implement specific measures. Because of the broad terms laid out in the Charter, inclusion in the Charter is not a valid end goal in itself. It will rather be the start of a process of policy review and policy making inclusive of Bildts speakers. This process will be subject to review by independent experts who will make recommendations based on current practices. In this manner, the Charter does not provide a vision for how Bildts language infrastructure may look in the future, but it does provide an independent control mechanism for any future infrastructure.

2.4.7 *Alternatives to recognition*

Municipal reorganisation may serve as a welcome opportunity to implement an official policy of trilingualism in the municipality to be. This ambition has already been agreed upon as part of negotiations between the relevant municipalities. As such, the Charter may not be a hard prerequisite for ensuring an effective language policy for Bildts in Westergo.

On the other hand, Bildts speakers will form a small minority of the total population in the new municipality. It stands to reason that the subsequent lack of political clout of Bildts

⁵ Currently, *Stichting Ons Bildt* does not formally play a role in municipal politics. However, the board of the Stichting has lobbied for and advised on Bildts names for villages, canals and streets.

⁶ The case of Cornish is an example that demonstrates how effective the Charter may be in generating consciousness about the Cornish language and its position in forming Cornish identity, as may be seen in chapter 3.1. Contact with other organisations may happen directly or through umbrella organisations such as the NPLD.

speakers will lead to a diminishing position of Bildts in the areas where it is traditionally spoken. The Charter will require an infrastructure to be formed where speakers must be consulted when developing a language policy. However, the formation of such a body need not depend on the Charter. Het Bildt or Westergo may decide to regularly and formally consult an existing institute concerning itself with Bildts when the need arises. Even then, however, the execution of such a policy will not be monitored by an independent Committee of Experts.

2.4.8 *Gemeenten & Frysk*

One model which may be used to ensure the use of Bildts is the *Wet gebruik Friese taal* (2013), which obliges local governments to create an ordinance detailing how the Frisian language is to be used within their administration. This law came into force in January 2014. An ordinance on the basis of these broadly formulated laws is to be expected soon. The *Afûk* launched a website called *Gemeenten & Frysk* (2015), which supports municipalities in developing a such Frisian language policy. In Westergo, a balanced language policy where Bildts enjoys the same level of protection as Frisian should be developed in close cooperation with the province of Fryslân and *'t Bildts Aigene*. Such a policy may be enacted irrespectively of the Charter.

2.4.9 *A proposed regional language policy by the Taalunie*

In its letter responding to the request to include Zeelandic to the Charter, the *Raad voor de Nederlandse Taal en Letteren* of the Taalunie ends its statement by stating its own visions on the promotion of non-standard dialects of Dutch:

In het binnenkort uit te brengen advies 'Naar een samenhangend taalbeleid voor het Nederlands vanuit Europees perspectief' heeft de Raad een aantal aanbevelingen geformuleerd tot bescherming van dialecten en allochtone minderheidstalen, op een wijze die vergelijkbaar is met die in het Handvest. Ook worden voorstellen gedaan voor de introductie in het onderwijs van elementen die gericht zijn op tolerantie en waardering voor niet-standaardvariëteiten en de bevordering van interculturele communicatie, en voor de zorg voor meertalige burgers van Europa die een andere dan de dominante taal van een van de lidstaten als eerste taal hebben. (Raad voor de Nederlandse Taal en Letteren, 2001)

This advisory report indeed recommends that these dialects should be protected and supported:

De dialectale variatie van het Nederlands, waartoe, onder meer, in Nederland de Nedersaksische en in Nederland en Vlaanderen de Limburgse en de

Zeeuwse/Zeeuws-Vlaamse dialecten behoren, dient beschermd en ondersteund te worden. Dat dient echter niet te gebeuren door aan deze dialecten van het Nederlands de status van regionale of minderheidstalen toe te kennen in de zin van het Europees Handvest voor regionale talen of talen van minderheden. (Smeets, 2001, pp. 15-16)

This recommendation is odd, as the Taalunie concerns itself with the well-being of Standard Dutch, and not with specific dialects. Indeed, the working group has not supported Dutch laws or policies encouraging the use and visibility of non-official dialects. So even if Bildts were a dialect, then Bildts would find no pre-existing legal infrastructure in fulfilling these goals. The alternative proposed, therefore, is unprecedented.

The case of Zeelandic may serve as an example of what failure to accede to the Charter may result in. The provincial government of Zeeland financed a functionary to support Zeelandic and carry out its terms and stimulate Zeelandic. After failing to gain recognition for Zeelandic within the Charter, enough political will remained for this functionary to remain in office on a structural basis. Since the advent of the crisis, however, the punching power of this functionary has been quite limited, and individual projects had to be financed through other means. Projects since have chiefly focused on promoting Zeelandic as a part of intangible heritage rather than promoting it as a living language. Individual projects include singing competitions in Zeelandic, language courses, and lectures.

What Zeelandic has achieved is similar to the state Bildts is in presently. Zeelandic has not been able to create an infrastructure similar to languages covered under Part II of the Charter, however. For Bildts, it seems that it has come as far as it reasonably can without help of the Charter. Moreover, the Dutch authorities have not introduced a comprehensive policy for dialect use. For these reasons, the Charter holds up much better than the alternatives.

3 Part II: A comparative analysis of Bildts in a European context

This part of the report consists of a comparative analysis of Bildts with seven other minority languages. Different languages are described in differing detail, depending on the relevance each language has for Bildts. On the basis of best practices of these languages, a vision for the future of Bildts may be developed. As these languages will demonstrate, many challenges Bildts faces are not unique to Bildts. Moreover, these languages give insight into how to gain recognition within the Charter, and what to do afterwards. Some of these languages mentioned are not protected by the Charter so that the effectiveness and desirability of the Charter may be weighed against the alternatives.

3.1 Cornish

One success story of gaining recognition by a small language is Cornish. The last native speaker of Cornish, Dolly Pentreath, died in 1777. There is only sparse evidence of the usage of Cornish since then. In 1904, however, the revival of the Cornish language began with the *Handbook of the Cornish Language*. Throughout the twentieth century, a number of Cornish people learned the language as adults. It is spoken as a first language by several hundred people in Cornwall, in the southwest of England. In 2002, the United Kingdom recognized the Cornish language under Part II of the Charter.

The example of Cornish is an example of good practices for Het Bildt. The Cornish language shows how a language with very few speakers may gain recognition within the Charter. Its number of speakers is smaller than Bildts, so the Cornish example may serve to demonstrate how an effective educational system may be organised with few speakers. Cornish is covered by Part II of the Charter, so comparison between the situation of Cornish before and after recognition within the Charter may offer concrete data on what the effects of recognition of Bildts may be.

3.1.1 *How the Cornish language gained recognition under the Charter*

The Cornish language movement began with a grassroots movement of some language enthusiasts. Their impact was smaller than they hoped for initially. The reason for this was the fact that the teaching of Cornish was dependent on voluntary efforts, and because of unwillingness of the state to appreciate its multilingual character. Indeed, Cornish language teaching was confined to evening classes organised by volunteers. Hicks notes that 'several teachers have expressed their exasperation with the failure by the state to offer any integration into the public education infrastructure' (Hicks, 2005, p. 17).

A vital moment in the campaign to gain recognition for Cornish under the Charter was 1997. In this year, Member of Parliament Andrew George was inaugurated into the House of Commons. He chose to hold a part of his maiden speech in Cornish. In 2005, after recognition within Part II of the Charter, he chose to swear his oath of allegiance to the Queen in Cornish. This move followed the more widespread practice of swearing the oath in Welsh or Gaelic. By doing this, the position of Cornish as a separate language autochthonous to Britain was put on the agenda (Mills, 2010, p. 201).

In 2002, the Portfolio Holder for Education in Cornwall, Doris Ansari, was asked why local authorities implemented an ‘imposed, wholly insensitive, mono-cultured educational programme’, referring to the complete lack of a separate curriculum for the Cornish. Ansari answered that to do anything else would be dangerous and set Cornwall on the road to the Balkans (Angarrack, 2002, p. 16). After the Council of Europe received complaints about Ansari’s remarks, the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe noted that ‘a number of persons living in Cornwall consider themselves to be a national minority’ despite the fact that, at the time, the Government did not consider the people of Cornwall to constitute a national minority (CoE, 2002, art. 3, comment 16). Following the Council of Europe’s report, the government’s representative in Cornwall, Candy Atherton, made it clear that she would still not support to make the Cornish language part of the school curriculum.

Despite this initial resistance, Cornish gained protection under Part II of the Charter in November 2002 following a seven-year campaign by Cornish organisations and authorities. This campaign was spearheaded by MP Andrew George. Under the terms of the Charter, the government recognises the Cornish language as an expression of Cornwall’s cultural wealth. The existence and recognition of the Cornish language has been an important factor in demonstrating Cornwall’s regional distinctiveness. On the basis of this regional distinctiveness, Cornwall was granted European funding as a less developed region. This funding, in turn, allowed for initiatives supporting the Cornish language to be funded⁷.

The campaign to gain recognition under the Charter for the Cornish language teaches several lessons. One is that it initially consisted of a grassroots movement. This movement was later picked up by a Member of Parliament. Campaigners for the Bildts language may want to organise similarly, and find a figure in local or national government to spearhead the case on a national level. This case mirrors Low German and North Frisian.

Another lesson is that when Cornish gained recognition within the Charter, it had only a few hundred fluent speakers. The amount of people sympathetic to the issue did not constitute a

⁷ It should be noted that the European Union has not had any specific budget for minority languages since 2006.

large majority either. The Cornish example shows that a linguistic avant-garde movement can generate enough momentum to gain recognition within the Charter. Similarly, Bildts is a minority language when counted by native speakers even in its heartland. Nevertheless, it may look for recognition even if those who propose this do not constitute an absolute majority even locally. After all, the Charter serves to protect minority languages, not majority languages.

Thirdly, the matter of ethnic identity is not something anyone can decide for anyone else. A significant part of the Cornish population feels it has a Cornish identity rather than English, and the Council of Europe has noted this as a point of concern⁸. Similarly, it is not up to the Dutch national government to deny recognition of a separate identity or language when this group itself feels it constitutes a different ethnicity, or considers its local language a separate language.

3.1.2 *The formation of the Cornish Language Partnership*

In order to implement the Council of Europe Charter, a strategy for the Cornish language was adopted by the Cornwall County Council. In a document laying out this strategy, six visions and targets for the development of the Cornish language were drawn up. These targets were as follows:

- Create opportunity for all who wish to learn Cornish at all levels of education.
- Have the learning of Cornish valued in the same way as the learning of other languages.
- Have the Cornish language recognised in public life as a valued and visible part of Cornwall's distinct culture and heritage
- Have the Cornish language recognised as contributing positively to the Cornish economy
- Have the Cornish language respected alongside the other regional and minority languages in the UK such that its standing is enhanced.
- Develop a strong support infrastructure which will enable the other targets to be realised (Cornwall County Council, 2004)

The formulation of these visions has allowed *Maga Kernow* 'Nurturing Cornwall', the Cornish Language Partnership, to be formed. The Cornish Language Partnership (CLP) is responsible for driving forward these proposals. This partnership comprises representatives from Cornish language organisations, local councils and foundations promoting the celebration and study of Cornish culture. This project was funded in the initial phase by the

⁸ This case mirrors Elfdalian, where the Council of Europe noted that Elfdalian speakers consider Elfdalian a language.

Cornwall County Council, the UK Department for Communities and Local Government, and by the European Union through the Objective One programme. In 2008, the Maga project was evaluated by independent experts. The evaluation report highlighted several issues (Evans & Lacoste, 2008). The most relevant will be mentioned below, along with the experts' recommendations.

An important issue in supporting the language is building capacity. Increasing interest in the language needs to be matched by an increase in support. A source for building capacity is Cornish speakers in voluntary organisations. Not every speaker is a good teacher or translator, but may be trained as such. The experts recommended up-skilling these people. Similarly, capacity may be increased by non-speakers of the language with a background in sectors such as education and youth work. People with these skills may be supported in learning the language, and the language may add value to their core activities.

Another issue is maintaining links with local government and statutory organisations. The CLP should work with these organisations in order to implement the requirements of the Charter. These organisations may collaborate with the CLP on matters such as signage.

In education, the Cornish emphasise the importance of developing spoken Cornish among pre-school Children and support for their teachers. In adult education carried out by voluntary organisations, the need for a social context for the language was emphasised i.e. a club where Cornish may be spoken freely rather than a class for Cornish. A strategy to gain support for the language among young people may be to link the language with areas of interest to young people, ensuring a sense of ownership.

The Cornish example highlights the effectiveness of bundling pre-existing volunteer organisations under a single flag. This is similar to the development of *t Bildts Aigene* by Het Bildt. Under the terms of the Charter and with the infrastructure provided by pre-existing organisations, volunteers may effectively foster the language with a supportive stance from the government. In expanding these organisations, Het Bildt should take heed of the lessons learnt in Cornwall.

Institutional support for Cornish language education does not necessarily mean mandatory classes. The Cornish example shows an efficient way of applying limited teaching capacity by supporting voluntary classes and daycare for pre-school children, ensuring the language is principally only taught to those most motivated to learn and small children who may pick up the language naturally. Cornish and Bildts have in common that there is a large group of people who cannot speak it, but only because they cannot, not because they do not want to.

The Cornish example shows that reaching out to this group may help in bolstering the number of speakers.

3.1.3 Governmental support for Cornish

In 2013, a Cornish Language Policy was agreed to by the Cornwall County Council in order to comply with the terms of the Charter. This policy sets out several principles the County Council aims to base its future policy on. Most importantly, the County Council ‘recognises the importance of the Cornish language as a unique asset which has been central to the defining of Cornwall’s distinct heritage and culture’, ‘celebrates the Cornish language as a vital part of Cornwall’s contemporary culture and accepts its responsibility under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages’, and will ‘source advice through the [Cornish Language] Partnership’ (Cornwall County Council, 2013). In other words, this policy is the practical implementation of the terms of the Charter. Gemeente Het Bildt may learn from the Cornwall County Council in developing such a vision for its own language.

So far, a Cornish Language Plan has not been published. It should be noted, however, that the Cornwall County Council is not a devolved administration. As such, continued support depends on the goodwill of the central government. In light of the need to reduce the central government’s budget deficit, funding for the Cornish language has decreased. In its 2014 report on the application of the Charter, the Committee of Experts has expressed its concern. The end result of these austerity measures remains to be seen (Committee of Experts, 2014a).

3.1.4 Visibility of Cornish in the public domain

Road markings and signs are not generally written in Cornish. The Cornwall County Council manual on direction signing states:

Consideration of the requirements to recognise, respect and promote the Cornish language under Article 7 of the European Charter has been given.

The policy allows for the inclusion of the local place name in Cornish on the signs erected on the edge of towns and villages if it is the desire of the local Parish Council. This has been included as the legislation allows the inclusion of ‘an item of local geographical or historical interest’ on these signs. The Statutory Instrument controlling the design of traffic signs on roads, the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002, does not permit the use of Cornish on road signs generally and therefore, this represents the only possibility of including the Cornish language legally.

It should be noted that including Cornish on road signs would be detrimental to road safety as signs containing more information, and information in terms not readily understood by visiting motorists, will cause indecision and confusion to drivers. In addition, bilingual direction signs will be generally almost twice as high as those used presently, as twice the number of lines of information are required. (Cornwall County Council, 2005, p. 2)

As can be read from the text above, the Charter provides legal facilitation for inclusion of the local place name in Cornish on signs on the edge of towns and villages. Article 7.1d of the Charter may also facilitate active encouragement. In Cornwall, inclusion of the place name in Cornish by the local parishes is only facilitated; not made mandatory. It is up to local parishes to implement or not implement Cornish place name signs.

Road signs never include Cornish. The reasoning behind this is that inclusion would clutter signs and jeopardise road safety. Nevertheless, road signs are fully bilingual in Welsh or Scottish Gaelic in their respective territories. It should be noted that those languages are also covered under Part III of the Charter, but road safety is apparently not a concern when consistently erecting bilingual signs there.

Street signs are not consistently in Cornish, but a policy mandating bilingual street signage is in place.

Bilingual street signage on a replacement basis has been extended to the whole of Cornwall. Advice has also been extended to developers and commercial firms with mixed results. The CLP has been proactive in including signage in its discussions with other public bodies where possible. (United Kingdom, 2013, p. 14)

Moreover, visibility of the Cornish language on road signs is recognised as an opportunity to encourage public awareness of the Cornish identity and its value for tourism. This is evidenced by the following quote on the Charter on the website of the CLP:

[I]n the fields of the arts and tourism promotion of the language may be used to give added economic and cultural value.

These could include signage or closer links between tourism and the language to encourage the sense of Cornwall being 'different'. (Cornish Language Partnership, 2015a)

In the fourth periodical report from the United Kingdom on the Charter, the UK government states:

The Council has extended bilingual street signage to the whole of Cornwall which has helped the understanding of linguistic heritage in the environment and has included Cornish in council documents. The policy encourages further expansion in council use, including signage in buildings which has yet to be addressed. As other bodies look to the council for a lead, it is important that the full implementation of the policy be addressed. (United Kingdom, 2013, p. 9)

In other words: a trickle-down effect is expected. Through the Cornwall County Council, the UK government aims to implement the Charter by normalising inclusion of Cornish on signs and documents, leading by example. Local parishes are then expected to follow the Council's lead.

The Cornish policy on place name signs is similar to the degree of protection appropriate for Het Bildt. The Charter holds the Government responsible for the facilitation of road signs in the minority language. The Government, in turn, allows for bilingual place name signs while leaving it up to locals to decide on whether to use this right. In this manner, signs may be placed in such a way that they meet the wishes of speakers effectively. The Cornish example also shows how Cornish may be included on place name signs even without a majority of the population speaking Cornish and without broad support of a majority of the population.

The Cornish example also shows that the Charter does not mandate inclusion of the minority language on all road signs. Recognition of Bildts within the Charter would therefore not mean that any changes would need to be made to the existing practice of monolingual road signs throughout the Netherlands.

In Cornwall, the value of bilingual place name signs for towns and villages is also recognised as an identity marker for the purpose of tourism. Het Bildt may employ public visibility of the Bildts language as a means to build an image for tourism separate from the Frisian or Dutch image.

In Cornwall, the Cornwall County Council has adopted a policy of setting the right example. This policy could also work for the new Westergo municipality. This new municipality could include Bildts on all of its signage in and around its buildings. Local villages would be free to display Bildts place names and to include Bildts on local signage. Significantly, this right could not be challenged by any higher layer of government, because the Charter protects it. To deny this could be construed as discrimination against the local minority language.

Another way to improve visibility for Cornish is through television and radio broadcasts. For Cornish, some short films have been produced with MyCornwallTV, a web-based television channel. A similar web-based radio service is Radio an Gernewegva, which produces half an

hour of programming per week. Production of these media depend largely on volunteer efforts, although the CLP finances some of the costs (United Kingdom, 2013, p. 25). In terms of quantity, Cornish has a similar output to Bildts in these media. They differ in the manner these languages are broadcast. The threshold to develop a web-based radio or television station rather than a regular one may be lower, but Het Bildt may also use existing infrastructures such as *Radio Eenhoorn*.

3.1.5 Cornish and education

Prior to the Charter, Cornish education was the responsibility of volunteers. Although it was these volunteers who brought Cornish from being a dead language into a language with several hundred fluent speakers, Hicks (2005, p. 17) notes that 'in an education-led regeneration strategy it is essential to have an infrastructure. It requires teaching materials, teacher training, courses in Cornish as a second language, and Cornish-medium classes and schools.'

The 2001 report on Cornish by Mercator-Education gives an overview of Cornish language education before it was recognised within the Charter (Hut, 2001). At the time, there were no legal provisions either for or against Cornish as a school subject. In order to finance Cornish language classes, funding had to be drawn from a school's general budget. On top of that, the County Council reserved £5.000 for the Cornish language which could also be used for non-educational activities. Inclusion of Cornish in the curriculum was difficult because of the lack of special qualification for teachers of Cornish. Notably, this point of departure for Cornish language education prior to the Charter was much worse than the position Bildts is in at present.

Since then, Cornish is covered under Part II of the Charter. This means that the Government is responsible for providing 'appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study' of the language (*Charter*, 1992, Article 7, para. 1f). What it does not do, however, is mandate inclusion in the curriculum of pre-school education, primary or secondary education. In practice, this means that the scope of the CLP is to provide material, expertise and financial backing where people voluntarily choose to learn Cornish, but not to push for a curriculum of Cornish language classes.

Nowadays, Cornish can be learned in a number of different ways. Firstly, the CLP has developed the website 'Learn Cornish Now', which provides resources to learn the language online, such as courses, children's books and dictionaries. Moreover, this website catalogues all Cornish classes (Learn Cornish Now, 2014). Notably, the CLP co-produced 'Say Something in Cornish'. This is a free online Cornish audio course allowing adults to learn the

basics of the language (Saysomethingin Cyf, 2015). The CLP supports intensive weekend-long immersion classes as well as evening classes.

In 2014, the *Skol Veythrin Karenza* (Nursery School of Karenza) was opened in Redruth. This volunteer-based nursery school aims to provide an environment of immersion in Cornish for pre-school children (Movyans Skolyow Meythrin, 2014). In order to increase the position of Cornish as a language of the home, a combination of pre-school education for small children in combination with adult education for their parents is encouraged. In this manner, children may learn alongside with their parents. As such, this nursery not only aims to familiarise children with the Cornish language, but it also provides the means for Cornish to spread as a language of a household. This initiative has proved to be popular under parents, and there is sufficient demand for the CLP to look into expansion of this initiative to other centres (United Kingdom, 2013, pp. 22-23). The Cornish example demonstrates what type of education best stimulates natural mother tongue transmission. If increasing the number of mother tongue speakers is an issue for Bildts, then the example set by Cornish might prove effective.

In primary and secondary schools, the learning of Cornish is commonly based on activities, such as organising plays in Cornish. The CLP supports such initiatives. The CLP also offers sessions in schools, familiarising students with Cornish. The demand for these one-off sessions is increasing. The UK government recognises that few schools have incorporated Cornish into their curriculum (Cornish Language Partnership, 2015b)

Beyond this, there is the Association of Cornish Language Teachers. This association aims to provide resources and representation for Cornish language teachers (Teach Cornish, 2014). *Kesva an Taves Kernewek*, the Cornish Language Board, is responsible for providing examinations and educational materials in Cornish.

For adult education, the Cornish Language Partnership gives support to the teachers, but it has also paid for venues for Cornish classes to be held. In addition, the CLP provides teacher training. Its weak point, the Committee of Experts has pointed out, is that the teaching of Cornish in these classes is still heavily dependent on volunteer efforts (Committee of Experts, 2014a, p. 13).

Both Cornish and Bildts have a well-developed volunteer infrastructure for the teaching of their respective languages. The reliance of volunteers in education is a double-edged sword. On one hand, volunteers have been invaluable in providing Cornish-language education at minimal cost. On the other hand, reliance on volunteers makes efforts in language teaching vulnerable. A volunteer cannot be asked to commit to the same degree as a paid teacher

can. Despite the fickle nature of relying on volunteers, the Cornish Language Partnership managed to effectively reach out to non-speakers using volunteers. Nevertheless, Het Bildt may do well to use its existing network of volunteers upon admission to the Charter.

3.2 Elfdalian

Elfdalian is a language spoken in the municipality of Älvdalen in Western Sweden. Elfdalian is traditionally considered a dialect of Standard Swedish. Elfdalian has between 2000 and 8000 speakers, a standard orthography, and it is not taught in schools. In these respects, Elfdalian is in a position similar to Bildts. Elfdalian speakers are represented by *Ulum Dalska* 'We do speak Elfdalian', an association which promotes the use and learning of the Elfdalian language.

Like Bildts, Elfdalian is not presently protected by the Charter, nor does it receive any protection from the national government. Elfdalian is also similar to Bildts in that both languages presently seek recognition under the Charter. Elfdalian speakers seek to gain recognition in the Charter so that Swedish authorities must take action to promote Elfdalian. Specifically, speakers expressed the wish that children whose parents do not speak Elfdalian gain the opportunity to learn it in pre-school and primary education.

Elfdalian speakers have been trying to gain recognition for a while now, and these attempts have generated some comments from the Swedish government and the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts monitoring application of the Charter. The Elfdalian people's efforts in gaining recognition will be discussed here.

3.2.1 *Elfdalian and the Charter*

On several occasions, motions have been submitted to the Swedish Parliament that Elfdalian be recognised as a regional minority language. For some time now, Sweden has refused to include Elfdalian on the grounds that its language or dialect status was not clear. In absence of a clear consensus, the Swedish government continues to regard Elfdalian as a dialect.

The Swedish government made the following statements regarding Elfdalian:

There is no absolute consensus among linguists on whether Elfdalian is a language or a dialect. The general view in Sweden, however, is that Elfdalian is a dialect. [...] A recognition of Elfdalian as a minority language would probably mean that demands would emerge from groups speaking other dialects for these to be designated minority languages as well. In all probability, this could lead to the purpose of the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages being undermined.

All in all, the Government finds no reason to review its previous position with regard to Elfdalian. As mentioned in previous reports, however, the Government considers that

there is great value in preserving Elfdalian as part of the Swedish cultural heritage and that it is desirable for Elfdalian to be passed on to new generations. (Sweden, 2013, pp. 17-18)

This line of reasoning corresponds closely to the response of *De Raad voor de Nederlandse Taal en Letteren* regarding Zeelandic. The government bars admission to the Charter on the basis that it does not consider the regional minority language a language. Nevertheless, the Swedish government did express in non-binding terms that it considers the State's Elfdalian heritage valuable. The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts commented the following in its subsequent recommendations to Sweden's report:

In its previous evaluation reports, the Committee of Experts commented on Elfdalian and the desire of its speakers to obtain protection for Elfdalian under Part II of the Charter in accordance with Article 2.1. While acknowledging the ongoing dialogue between the Swedish authorities and representatives of the municipality of Älvdalen and speakers of Elfdalian, the Committee of Experts urged the Swedish authorities to clarify the status of Elfdalian in co-operation with the speakers.

The Swedish authorities stated in their fifth periodical report (p. 17) that after discussions with the speakers and the municipality of Älvdalen, the question of the status of Elfdalian was addressed in the Government Bill 2008/09:158. The government does not recognise Elfdalian as a language to receive protection under the Charter. The Swedish authorities nevertheless consider that Elfdalian should be preserved as part of the Swedish cultural heritage and should be passed on to the younger generation, for which the Swedish Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research [...] and the municipality of Älvdalen would be competent. [...]

According to the fifth periodical report, there is no consensus among linguists on whether Elfdalian is a language or a dialect. The general view in Sweden has been that Elfdalian is a dialect. However, the view that Elfdalian is a language is increasingly gaining support. (Committee of Experts, 2015, p. 8)

These comments show three different results of the Elfdalian speakers' efforts to accede to the Charter. The first is that the Council of Europe states that a state should not decide unilaterally what is a dialect and what is a language. Rather, it should be decided in co-operation with speakers⁹. Another point is that the Elfdalian language's ambition to be included in the Charter has led to the Swedish government advocating the promotion of

⁹ This case mirrors Cornish. Where the United Kingdom did not consider Cornish an ethnic identity separate from English, the Council of Europe responded that a significant amount of Cornish people consider their ethnic identity separate.

Elfdalian, looking towards local authorities and institutes for a more concrete realisation of this ambition. Finally, the view that Elfdalian is a language is gaining support. This shift in public opinion is the direct result of recent efforts to be included in the Charter. Elfdalian shows that a minority language may appear on the political agenda of its own speakers when it is in the middle of the process of looking for recognition. As such, the process of looking for recognition of Bildts may serve to further increase linguistic consciousness of Bildts speakers.

The Council of Europe considers the judgment of speakers as well as governments relevant in defining what is a language and what is a dialect, although it is the government that must submit languages to the Charter. The Elfdalians do not expect Elfdalian to be recognised within the Charter in the next few years due to this impasse. This matter of who judges what is a language and what is a dialect may become relevant for Bildts in the future if government, speakers, and the scientific community fail to come to a consensus on the matter. As has may be inferred from Part I of this report, a significant amount of Bildts speakers consider Bildts a language, and have a right to be heard in this judgment.

In the process of looking for recognition under the Charter, Elfdalian came to the attention of the Swedish government. Whether or not this attention led to concrete measures to Elfdalian's benefit is a different matter, but the first step is there. Nevertheless, the only concessions Elfdalian gained were some initiatives promoting its study.

3.3 Low German

Low German and Bildts are similar languages politically in the sense that their language status is not obvious. Despite linguistic and sociolinguistic arguments arguing for their language status, the case needs to be made for these languages to be considered languages rather than dialects. Low German did just this, and with success. This success has led to recognition within the Charter in 1998 and even official status locally. This successful effort will be discussed here. Low German is not similar to Bildts in terms of its present language vitality: it has several million speakers spread over most of Northern Germany. For this reason, the legal, administrative, and educational infrastructure are not held to be relevant examples for Bildts and will therefore not be discussed.

Low German was held to be a dialect of High German for a long time, but the roots of Low German lay in Old Saxon which is a North Sea Germanic dialect. High German, an Elbe Germanic dialect, stems from a different strand of the West Germanic language. Concerning the recognition of Low German in the Charter, the application was backed by an argument that argued on linguistic grounds that Low German cannot be seen as a dialect, but must be considered a language. The Low German example shows that a linguistic argument for the

local language to be recognised as such could be important for Bildts as well, So Het Bildt should refer to its own linguistic character as described in Part I of this report when applying for recognition.

Of course, Low German did not get recognition under the Charter just for a professor's sake. The most important role in the process of recognition played the people's movement for their language. So an important step to take is to show the authorities that the language speakers are willing to act and to protect their language. Bildts speakers' organisations should follow this example. The Bildts speakers and their organisations have to undertake the first steps by demonstrating how serious recognition is for them. In this process, it is advantageous to have an advocate from public life or a politician, like the Cornish and North Frisians did.

3.4 Mirandese

Bildts and Mirandese are languages in a similar situation. Mirandese is spoken in a region in the northeasternmost portion of Portugal called Miranda do Douro. Like Het Bildt, it is a sparsely populated region at the very border of the country. Mirandese has about 8000 speakers, but it is a quickly declining number due to emigration of speakers and erosion of the landscape. It was an exclusively oral language until 1884, when the first book in Mirandese was published. In 1999, a standard orthography was published, which was improved upon in 2000. Like Bildts, the status of Mirandese as a language or a dialect has been subject to debate, with Asturians from Spain claiming it as one of their dialects, even though it has diverged from Asturian considerably due to its isolated position. It is also similar to Bildts in that it is popularly held to be a mix or intermediate dialect between Spanish and Portuguese, even though it is neither.

3.4.1 Support for Mirandese by the government

Mirandese has not been recognised as a minority language under the Charter, because Portugal has not signed the Charter. Instead, Portugal recognised Mirandese as a co-official language locally. Mirandese, therefore, may serve as a case demonstrating the effectiveness of national legislation rather than recognition within the Charter.

In 1999, a law (Lei n.º 7/99, 1999) meant to promote and recognize Mirandese was introduced. In it, the Portuguese government recognizes the right for the Mirandese people to cultivate and promote their language as well as cultural heritage. It furthermore recognizes the right for children to learn Mirandese. It also gives the local municipal council, Miranda do Douro, the right to publish its documents accompanied by a Mirandese translation. Finally, it recognizes that the Mirandese language has right to scientific and educational support in order to train teachers of the Mirandese language and culture.

A later legislative order (Despacho Normativo n.º 35/99, 1999) was dispatched in order to regulate the right to learn Mirandese. It allows for students in primary and secondary education to receive Mirandese classes beside the official curriculum. It also allows for subsidies to projects for Mirandese education. These projects are to be approved by the local educational authorities and a regional director of education. These projects may also be developed together with the municipality and local cultural associations. The relevant offices of the ministry of education provide necessary logistical, technical and scientific support, the legislative order states.

These laws fail to provide a legal basis for the use of Mirandese in correspondence with local authorities or the use of Mirandese in the judicial system. In practice, interpreters are normally available, however. In this, laws for Mirandese differ with provisions given by Part II of the Charter.

What none of these laws provide is any obligation to any layer of government to elevate the use of these laws in practice. While the Mirandese people have the right to education and public visibility for their language, such support is completely dependent on the financial support and goodwill of local governments and schools. This situation has caused Mirandese to be in a vulnerable position.

3.4.2 *Institutes supporting Mirandese*

The municipal government co-financed a centre for Mirandese studies (*Centro de Estudos António Maria Mourinho*). Among others, it aimed to document oral literature, develop pedagogical materials, and to make research material accessible. It could also be financed by research assignments, helping out in community projects, and by detachment towards other institutions. It was part of a local hub of the University of Trás-os-Montes. When this hub closed, there was not enough political will to maintain this institute.

Moreover, there is a website called *mirandes.no.sapo* ‘Mirandese within SAPO’ within the Institute of Linguistics at the University of Lisbon. The project behind this website had the task of designing a Mirandese standard orthography following recognition of Mirandese as an official language. After completing this task, it promoted the Mirandese language and continued the linguistic research that stemmed from designing a standard orthography. It is not active nowadays.

Officially, the *Anstituto de Lhéngua I Cultura Mirandesa* ‘Institute of the Mirandese language and culture’ regulated the language, but has never been effective in properly supporting the language because personal and political interests played a bigger role than concern for the language among its members.

An *Associação de Língua e Cultura Mirandesa* 'Association of the Mirandese language and culture' has recently been formed. It lobbied for accession of Portugal to the Charter, but has not succeeded since Portugal is not currently signatory to the Charter (Correio da Manhã, 2014). Its effectiveness is limited, again due to personal and political interests.

3.4.3 *Visibility of Mirandese in the public domain*

The same law that recognises Mirandese as a co-official language allows for it to be used along with Portuguese in government publications and in the public space. Mirandese is publicly visible on all street name signs in Miranda do Douro as well as on boards giving information on monuments and notable places. The parish council of Miranda do Douro states that various Mirandese language signs are placed at the edge of town, as well as within the historical centre. In principle, all streets, buildings and the like of historical or religious significance have signs in Mirandese (Freguesia de Miranda do Douro, 2015). Obviously, then, the use of Mirandese in the public domain is limited to its function as a token of the local heritage. They do not seem to play a role in redefining Mirandese as a present-day language. There is no legal framework for inclusion of Mirandese on public signage, so its use is ultimately haphazard.

Mirandese is not used at all in the mass media, apart from a handful of articles that have appeared in the local press (Institut de Sociolingüística Catalana, 2006).

3.4.4 *Education in Mirandese*

As of 2011, the Portuguese ministry of education has contracted three teachers to teach Mirandese in the local school compound. The teachers responsible for Mirandese language education do not have a homogenized curriculum. Moreover, there is no institute that monitors quality of mirandese language education, nor any that develops teaching material or provides teacher training. A legal framework is lacking for this purpose. Instead, teachers are to develop their own curriculum and their own teaching material.

In practice, it has been shown that the education provided for by the laws adopted in 1999 is inadequate. It is only taught at secondary schools (Institut de Sociolingüística Catalana, 2006). The amount of classes provided is inadequate (now only one hour a week), and there is a lack of proper teacher training infrastructure and of proper course material. Moreover, there is no independent inspection of these courses.

More importantly, inclusion of Mirandese in education has not helped to reverse the stigma of Mirandese. Ethnologue states:

Outside the town of Miranda do Douro itself, it seems that the vast majority of parents continue to pass on Mirandese to their children. As far as the social use of the

language is concerned, the fact that Mirandese speakers are perceived as somewhat backward by comparison with Portuguese speakers does constitute an obstacle to the extension of the language. For that reason the inhabitants of the area are quite pessimistic about the prospects for the survival of Mirandese and believe that their only hope lies in securing the active support of the public authorities and motivating young people to speak Mirandese. (Institut de Sociolingüística Catalana, 2006)

This statement is contrasted by the statistic that over half of the students attending school in Miranda do Douro have chosen to follow the elective course of Mirandese. The fact that over half of the students have decided to include Mirandese in their curriculum despite the fact that it is not obligatory shows that infrastructure for Mirandese education is insufficient for the needs of the community of Mirandese speakers.

3.4.5 *Mirandese and Bildts*

Mirandese may teach Bildts a valuable lesson: laws by themselves do not elevate a language. There needs to be a mechanism which ensures execution of these laws. Recognition is only valuable if it leads to active support. The fact that Portugal is not signatory to the Charter undoubtedly plays a role in the continued lack of infrastructure for Mirandese. In 1999, the Portuguese government decreed that Mirandese education may be given in addition to the regular school curriculum. Lack of a proper infrastructure supporting this education has led to a substandard quality.

Support for Bildts education has never been enshrined in a national law of the same calibre as that for Mirandese, yet the *Kemissy Meertalighyd* provides assistance in teaching training and develops teaching material. This puts into perspective the advances made in supporting Bildts: the fact that the *Kemissy Meertalighyd* currently develops educational material despite there being less Bildts speakers than Mirandese speakers, and despite Mirandese having official status, is impressive. The legal framework Mirandese received for its promotion has not succeeded in making Mirandese language infrastructure resistant to a changing political landscape. Undoubtedly, the austerity programme adopted by Portugal all but wiped out any institutional support for the language other than what the local municipality managed to provide.

3.5 North Frisian

North Frisian is a small language in the northwest of Germany, between Husum and the Danish border. Several main dialects exist, but almost every single village has its own dialect. This phenomenon is called dialect splintering, and it has caused a huge number of different dialects to exist in a dialect continuum on the mainland, and as discrete dialects on the islands. The Island North Frisian dialects are: Söl'ring on Sylt, Halunder on Heligoland,

Fering on Föhr, Öömrang on Amrum. The Mainland North Frisian dialects are: Hallig Freesk on the Halligen-Islets (near-extinct), and from Husum to the Danish border: Südergoesharder Friesisch (extinct), Mittelgoesharder Friesisch (possibly extinct), Nordergoesharder Friesisch (possibly extinct), Karrharder Friesisch (possibly extinct), Böckingharder Friesisch, and Wiedingharder Friesisch. In the area where North Frisian is spoken, two more minority languages are spoken: Danish and Low German.

On the mainland, there are no discrete dialect borders. The most southerly Frisian variety, Südergoesharder Friesisch, has many Low German loanwords and the most northerly Frisian varieties, Wiedingharder Friesisch and Söl'ring on the island of Sylt, have a great deal of Danish loanwords. Today, only 5 viable North Frisian varieties are left: Söl'ring, Fering-Öömrang, Halunder, Mooring and Wiedingharder Friesisch. There is a trend to teach only the Mooring variety in schools on the mainland. Mooring and Fering-Öömrang are the varieties with the most speakers and Mooring is getting more and more the standard variety on the mainland. North Frisia did not have a cultural centre for centuries, which is one of the main reasons why no North Frisian variety had a higher status that could grow into the standard language. A bad infrastructure and the isolated location of the villages and the islands are the reason why even every village has its own variety.

3.5.1 *North Frisian and Bildts*

The case of North Frisian shows the role a politician may play in efforts of looking for recognition: MP Manfred Opel from Husum took up the case for recognition of North Frisian under the Charter in 1993. For the Frisian law from 2004, MP Lars Harms spearheaded the first draft. A person of public interest may prove invaluable to promote the minority language in a public debate.

Furthermore, the case of North Frisian shows that minority protection and an education system in a minority language is applied even in a dialectally splintered area. For Bildts it would be a lot easier to establish an education system because it is spoken in a continuous area and suffers nearly no dialect splintering. Therefore, a level of protection for Bildts similar to North Frisian should yield even better results. Even though the different North Frisian dialects have a lower total number of speakers, it would be easier in the Bildts language to gain a similar level of institutional support.

3.5.2 *Judicial protection prior to the Charter*

The first steps of a judicial protection for minorities in Schleswig-Holstein go back to 1949 with the *Kieler Erklärung* 'Declaration of Kiel'. The Frisian and Danish minorities gained recognition as a minority with the same rights as the majority. In 1955 the *Bonn-Kopenhagener Erklärung* 'Declaration between Bonn and Copenhagen' managed the judicial

status of the German and Danish minority groups in Denmark and Germany, respectively, but also the right to minority language schools. The Frisians are not mentioned in it and it took more than 40 years after the *Kieler Erklärung* before the Frisian minority gained more protection by the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. In 1990, the minority groups of the Frisians, the Danes and the Sinti and Roma received recognition and were mentioned under Article 6 in the constitution of the federal state Schleswig-Holstein (*Verfassung des Landes Schleswig-Holstein*, 2014). They were mentioned as groups which enjoy protection and advancement.

3.5.3 North Frisian and the Charter

Later on, after Germany signed and ratified the European Charter of Regional or Minority languages, the Frisian language got full protection. But there was a struggle for recognition in the 1990s. The German government which had to decide which steps to take, the levels of protection and even the minority languages which should be protected. Initially, Danish and Sorbian were included, but Frisian was not mentioned. The motivation was that the Frisian people were categorized as a *Volksgruppe*, which means a group of people strongly connected to the majority and therefore it is not necessary to protect their language. After this decision, a movement of the North Frisians in North Frisia was formed and the group published a resolution. This bottom-up movement of the Frisian-speaking minority was supported by the *Friesen Rat* 'Frisian council' and the *Friisk Foriining* 'Frisian association', in the area of North Frisia.

They were supported by the *Fryske Rie* for Westerland Frisian and the *Domowina* Association for Sorbian through letters of support. In 1993, there were negotiations with the Sorbian people as to which status they should receive in the Charter, so the minorities acted in solidarity with each other's case. The Frisians were supported by MP Manfred Opel from Husum who utilised his political position. In August 1993, the Schleswig-Holsteinian government made a statement that North Frisian would gain recognition under Part II of the Charter. Some years later in 1999, North Frisian received full protection with more than 35 undertakings under Part III of the Charter. The state chancellery signed the Charter in the end and their biggest misgivings were not political concessions, but the financial costs of realising the project.

At this point, recognition in the Charter has a lot to do with support from other minority language associations. The Bildts association *'t Bildts Aigene* should try to connect with other minority and regional language associations in Europe to demonstrate a bigger network of solidarity. This can put pressure on the Dutch government, and it shows that the principle of small languages in need of protection by the state is way more common in Europe than

expected at first glance. North Frisian also shows the importance of finding a figurehead for the movement, and a politician who will support the cause.

3.5.4 *The Frisian law*

The *Friisk Gesäts* 'Frisian law' was adopted in 2004, which manages the use of Frisian symbols, coat of arms, flag and Frisian place-name signs (*Friesisch-Gesetz*, 2004). It also named the freedom of denomination for the Frisian people, which means that every single person living in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein has the right to call himself a member of the Frisian ethnic group without having to prove it¹⁰. Official documents have to be translated to Frisian and the authorities have to use bilingual signs and the employees should have basic knowledge of the Frisian language. These are the theoretical bases of the law, but because there are five varieties which differ strongly from each other, it is complicated to translate documents into North Frisian¹¹. MP Lars Harms and the Danish minority party SSW initiated this legislative proposal in 2004, to be reviewed after 10 years. In 2014, the Frisian law was renewed. This law served to implement the terms of the Charter, but goes beyond it in that official documents have to be translated pre-emptively.

In 2015, Frisian gained recognition as an official language of Schleswig-Holstein. The goal of this step was to further enshrine its position in education and to bring it on equal footing with German as a language of administration. A practical outcome of this recognition is that the costs of translating documents no longer have to be paid by citizens. This change follows a reprimand by the Council of Europe (Christen, 2015).

The Frisian law is a good example of a how easy it can be to give equal rights to a minority language group. Furthermore, the laws supporting Frisian did not cost much money, but helped to raise the feeling of identity. Furthermore, a similar law may be expected to similarly help raise the prestige of Bildts and bring a more expanded acceptance by the inhabitants to use Bildts in public life. Nevertheless, Het Bildt should decide for itself whether it finds publishing official documents in Bildts to be the best use of public funds. Other initiatives for Bildts may be more cost-effective in elevating the language. At any rate, the single standard variety of Bildts as opposed to the dialectally splintered North Frisian would not make it difficult to develop such a provision.

3.5.5 *Education in North Frisian*

At the pre-school level, North Frisian is used in 16 institutions as of 2014. It was first introduced as the result of a project initiated by the parliament of Schleswig-Holstein in 1993-

¹⁰ The freedom of denomination is in effect for the Danish minority as well.

¹¹ Nowadays there is a practice in place that on the mainland, Mooring serves as the North Frisian standard dialect, and on the islands their own respective varieties.

1996. The amount of time spent using North Frisian varies greatly between institutions, ranging from 30 minutes a week to full-time. Problems facing North Frisian are the lack of a specific legal framework for its organisation. Moreover, provision of North Frisian pre-school education is not available systematically in all places where it is desired. There is no central coordination for these initiatives (Walker, 2014, p. 17).

On some spots, it is possible to get adequate education in North Frisian from primary school to higher level of education. In the *Eilun Feer Skuul*, the secondary school on the island of Föhr, it is possible to have Fering (the island's dialect) as a subject for secondary school examination. Fering is ranked equivalent to a modern foreign language. In Risum-Lindholm, there are two schools of interest: the *Nis-Albrecht-Johannsen Schule*, which turned from a primary and secondary school to a primary school in 2011 and the *Risem schölj* 'Risum school' which is trilingual in Danish, Frisian and German. Here, it is possible to get *Hauptschulabschluss* 'examination after the 8th grade'. In the whole municipality of North Frisia, around 20-25 schools exist with a provision for learning North Frisian. Most of the schools are primary schools with Frisian education of about one or two hours a week (Jürgensen, 2011, pp. 58-66).

Teacher training in Schleswig-Holstein is provided by the IQSH (*Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung an Schulen Schleswig-Holstein*). This institute has appointed a director responsible for training teachers in Frisian. Frisian language training for nursery school teachers is not available at schools that train these teachers. Teacher training for primary and secondary schools is available as some courses within the universities of Kiel and Flensburg (Walker, 2014, p. 30-31).

North Frisian courses for adults are organised by North Frisian associations, schools and private individuals. In addition, a Frisian Autumn High School is organised yearly. This course aims to familiarise students with Frisian through immersion (Walker, 2014, p. 36).

In primary education, the present situation of North Frisian is similar to that of Bildts. In both language communities, education in the language amounts to about one or two hours a week. The North Frisian language community has made some tentative steps towards the inclusion of North Frisian in secondary education. In this, it is ahead of Bildts. Gemeente Het Bildt may look towards North Frisian if it is interested in taking these first steps. North Frisian also seems to have a comparatively well-developed infrastructure for teacher training. Het Bildt may do well to learn from their North Frisian colleagues in developing such a provision further.

3.5.6 *Public visibility of North Frisian*

In the county of *Nordfriesland* it is common to have bilingual place names and place signs. Furthermore, authorities have bilingual signs at their buildings. At some spots in the county Nordfriesland, information signs have been raised with a short presentation on the Frisian language. These information signs are often raised at railway stations and ferry piers to teach the tourists some background information on the Frisian language and history. Many tourists think that Frisian is the same language as Low German, since Low German is more commonly spoken in Germany. Such initiatives may effectively stress the North Frisian language area's unique identity.

If Het Bildt wants to further present itself as a unique linguistic community within Friesland, it may learn from the North Frisian initiative of strategically placing tourist signs giving a short introduction to the local language. Both minority language communities are surrounded by a somewhat larger minority language community, i.e. Frisian and Low German surround Bildts and North Frisian, respectively. Raising public visibility through bilingual signage as well as by including Bildts on information boards may help tourists in identifying the Bildts identity through language.

3.6 **Sorbian**

Sorbian is a language spoken in parts of the states of Saxony and Brandenburg in the east of Germany. The main dialects are the Bautzen, Kamenz and Cottbus dialects. The number of speakers is in decline. It is now thought to have some 20.000 speakers (Research Centre of Multilingualism, 2006). Lower Sorbian dialects are vanishing due to the major role of German in all aspects of society. In central parts of Upper Lusatia, villages where Upper Sorbian is the primary language of all generations continue to exist. In Lower Lusatia, the language is rarely passed on to the next generation through native transmission. Sorbian enjoyed ample institutional support in the former GDR, leading to an image of Sorbians as a pampered minority. Support during this period has not halted the decline in the number of Sorbian speakers. Currently, one of the largest threats facing the Sorbian language is the coal mining industry: Sorbs have been forced to relocate for coal mine expansion, and not necessarily towards a Sorbian-speaking heartland (Committee of Experts, 2014b, p. 3). This displacement of speakers may prove fatal to the Sorbian language.

It has been protected under the Charter since Germany's ratification in 1998. Because of its inclusion in the Charter, the prolonged existence is now a responsibility of the German government. When Sorbian gained protection under the Charter, however, it was already amply protected by laws in its Bundesländer. The role of these laws and the Charter and in halting the decline of Sorbian will be explored here.

The Sorbian example demonstrates the role the Charter may play in promoting the visibility and vitality of a minority language. The Sorbian example may also serve to demonstrate the language vitality of Bildts by contrasting its challenges to the Bildts situation. The Sorbian example may also demonstrate that recognition or even funding for a minority language may not halt its decline. Sorbian is covered by parts of Part III of the Charter, so the Sorbian example may tell us what ways of supporting a minority language may flow from this layer of protection.

3.6.1 *Sorbian and the Charter*

As a Slavic language in Germany, the language or dialect status has never been called into question for Sorbian. Prior to Germany's ratification of the Charter, the German government's attitude towards Sorbian changed several times. During the Nazi period, the Sorbian language was repressed, while it gained a more positive treatment during the GDR period. When Germany ratified the Charter, Sorbian automatically gained protection under Part II and Part III. In general, the provisions of Part III that apply to Sorbian are the measures meant to insure the free use of Sorbian in education, judicial authorities and the like based on initiatives from citizens. For Sorbian, inclusion in the Charter initially confirmed its protected status. The Charter has proven useful in expanding upon this status. Independent review of laws and practices by an independent Committee of Experts has proved helpful in this also.

3.6.2 *Judicial protection of Sorbian*

Although the German Government is formally responsible for implementing the aims of the Charter, minority language policy is devolved to the Bundesländer. The fact that the Sorbian language area is divided over two Bundesländer makes its protection inconsistent between the Upper Sorbian language area and the Lower Sorbian language area.

In the Bundesland of Brandenburg, the Sorbian language is enshrined in the constitution (*Verfassung des Landes Brandenburg*, 1992). Article 25 of the constitution guarantees the protection, preservation and care for the Sorbian identity in its traditional area. The Sorbian language is protected in schools, nursery schools and public life.

In Saxony, the Sorbian identity is also enshrined in the constitution (*Verfassung des Freistaates Sachsen*, 1992). Article 6 of the Saxon constitution guarantees equal treatment of and care for the Sorbian language and culture. The Bundesland is responsible for the continued existence of the Sorbian language in its traditional areas.

3.6.3 Sorbian in Brandenburg

In addition to the above, Sorbian is protected in the *Sorben/Wenden-Gesetz* (1994). The law stems from 1994, some years before Germany ratified the Charter. However, its provisions have expanded in 2008 and 2014 in order to meet the provisions of the Charter. The following paragraphs concern the Sorbian language, education and public signage:

Paragraph 8 recognises the Sorbian language as an integral part of the cultural heritage of Brandenburg. It guarantees its freedom of use. The paragraph also gives every inhabitant of the Sorbian language area the right to use the Sorbian language when dealing with the local governments or organisations. The use of Sorbian in this way has the same status as if it were in German.

In Paragraph 10, the use and teaching of Sorbian are guaranteed in education and nurseries where this is requested by students or their parents. The Bundesland is responsible for teacher training and certification in cooperation with Saxony. The Bundesland also promotes adult education in Sorbian.

Paragraph 11 stipulates mandatory bilingual signage on public buildings, streets, roads, squares, bridges, direction signs and place name signs in traditionally Sorbian-speaking areas. The Bundesland also promotes bilingual signage in other buildings in this area, if these buildings have a public function.

This law often refers to traditionally Sorbian-speaking areas, but it does not define this area. The Committee of Experts reviewing application of the Charter notes that local authorities resist delimiting its borders (Committee of Experts, 2014b, p. 4). This unsolved issue presents a challenge for the application of this law.

3.6.4 Sorbian in Saxony

In 1999, the first law to protect and support the Sorbian people came into force. The *Gesetz über die Rechte der Sorben im Freistaat Sachsen* (1999) covers the areas of language, the right of free use of the Sorbian language in public, bilingual school education, and bilingual street and road signs, among others.

Paragraph 8 of this law recognises the freedom to use Sorbian, its function in expressing Sorbian identity, and states that its use in the public domain should be protected and promoted.

Paragraph 9 recognises the right for citizens in the Sorbian language area to use Sorbian when dealing with public authorities or in a court of law. They also have the right to receive correspondence in Sorbian. Any extra costs should not be incurred by these citizens. The

Saxon authorities must also encourage the use of Sorbian in private and federal law in its traditional settlement area. The fifth report by the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe notes that Sorbian is practically not used before courts, even though authorities state they do attempt to raise awareness of the possibility to use Sorbian. In contrast to Brandenburg, the Sorbian language area is clearly defined, having allowed the Saxon authorities define which courts of law should implement the law above. The Sorbian language shows that a language whose area where it is traditionally spoken is not defined has trouble in properly implementing the provisions of the Charter and its resultant laws. Het Bildt has no such problem, which should lead to a more evidently positive effect of the Charter.

Paragraph 10 concerns itself with bilingual signage. It stipulates that signs on public buildings, facilities, streets, roads, squares and bridges owned by the Saxon authorities in the Sorbian language area should be bilingual. Saxon authorities also promote bilingual signage in institutions, foundations and the like under its supervision.

3.6.5 *Sorbian and Bildts*

For Bildts, these laws are mostly out of reach. Nevertheless, these laws on Sorbian demonstrate that a far-reaching degree of support for a language with barely more speakers than Bildts is not unheard of. As such, the Sorbian language may serve to demonstrate the other end of the spectrum: Bildts currently has next to no protection while Sorbian enjoys ample protection. This puts into perspective the perceived political infeasibility of gaining protection for Bildts under just Part II of the Charter.

Both Saxony and Brandenburg are not wholly traditionally Sorbian-speaking. Nevertheless, the Charter has allowed for the Sorbian language to be supported by these states. Similarly, the municipal reorganisation towards Westergo would not be expected to pose a threat to the continued existence of Het Bildt under the Charter, even though Bildts speakers would also constitute a numerical minority in this municipality. The traditionally Sorbian-speaking area is found in two states: Saxony and Brandenburg. Sorbian in each state is covered by different laws and different policies have been put into place in order to ensure its vitality. A minority language spread over different administrative area will face more challenges in being protected by law in the entirety of its settlement area and it will face a greater challenge in carrying out a uniform language policy¹².

¹² Although this is partly justified given the *Dialektzersplitterung* between Upper and Lower Sorbian and their differing threat levels with respect to their language vitality.

3.6.6 *Domowina: The Sorbian language organisation*

The non-profit organisation *Domowina*, 'Home', is an umbrella organisation for all Sorbian organisations and represents the economic and political interests of the Sorbs. Its members include local cultural and historical societies, but also school organisations.

The activities and experience of *Domowina* may be a fruitful partner for *'t Bildts Aigene*. It has a similar portfolio, but has existed for some time and it may provide *'t Bildts Aigene* with more good and bad practices.

3.6.7 *A Sorbian language plan*

In Saxony, an action plan was created to stimulate the Sorbian language in 2012 (Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft und Kunst, 2012). In the same year, this plan came into force. The plan identifies three main topics for the Sorbian language in Saxony and their traditional area of settlement, Upper Lusatia:

1. Acquisition of the Sorbian language and improving language skills;
2. Use of the Sorbian language in public life within the Sorbian settlement area;
3. Knowledge of the Sorbian language, culture and tradition.

Issue one concerns who should be the targets when promoting the learning of Sorbian. For each of the different target groups, the plan proposes the most effective groups to teach the language to. Primary targets are:

- Employees and future employees of governmental institutions. Civil servants in the relevant areas will be presented with the opportunity to learn Sorbian. Hiring policy for future civil servants will favour Sorbian speakers. Due to this, Sorbian may come to be seen as a professional skill.
- Children in day care centres. The Saxon government subsidises the use of Sorbian in day care centres.
- Students and educators. By training educators, the government fulfils its obligation to provide Sorbian-language education where this is requested by the local population.
- People interested in learning the language. It is obvious that people in the area who are actually willing to learn the language are a good target for education. The Saxon government subsidises Sorbian adult education so that classes may be given even where this would not otherwise be economically feasible.

The measures of Issue 2 pertain to public life, language visibility in public space and the promotion of the Sorbian language in this area to inhabitants and visitors. In practice, it calls for translation of documents so that they may be developed into educational material in

Sorbian. It also initiates Sorbian translation of road signs. It moreover promotes bilingual advertising by commercial parties, and bilingual public transport tables. It also contains measures to make sure mail addressed in Sorbian is handled well and measures to facilitate simultaneous translation. Finally, it calls for an enquiry into how to set up a campaign to promote the language.

The red line in this language plan is to ensure Sorbian finds its use in many linguistic domains. In order to thrive, Sorbian must be useful in administration, commerce, education as well as familiar matters. This lends value to learning Sorbian. Moreover, it promotes the image of Sorbian as an asset for the image of Upper Lusatia in tourism. It should be noted that part of the measures to promote Sorbian reach further than what may be expected from Part II of the Charter. Nevertheless, the Sorbian example provides a glimpse of what may be expected from a similarly sized language covered under parts of Part III.

Any language plan, irrespectively of its ambition and expected impact, should focus on expanding its use to new domains. Languages are the most vital when their domains of use are as unrestricted as possible. In such cases, language learning becomes useful and therefore desirable. Although this language plan may not itself reverse the dire situation Sorbian is in due to the displacement of its speakers, the theory behind this plan is sound.

3.6.8 *The Witaj-project*

To reverse language shift away from Sorbian, Sorbian institutions and associations developed *Witaj* 'Welcome' and *Konzept 2plus* in the educational field. The *Witaj*-programme allows children in Brandenburg and Saxony to learn Sorbian in early childhood through immersion. The programmes *Witaj* and *2plus* are promoted by the Free State of Saxony, by the Land Brandenburg and by *Domowina*.

Day care centres often include an after-school club for pupils from the first to the fourth grade (in Brandenburg to the sixth grade). This type of education in Sorbian nursery schools or groups does not cost more than a typical day care centre. In Brandenburg and in Saxony approximately 46% of all children under the age of three years are cared for in publicly funded day-care facilities, which also include private offers from childminders for this age group. In the age of three to six years approximately 95% of all children attend nursery schools (Statistisches Landesamt Sachsen, 2014). Altogether 38 nursery schools and day-care centres in Brandenburg and Saxony educate children in the Sorbian language more or less intensively. Children are surrounded by the Sorbian language the whole time in these nursery schools by the principle of one person for one language. Based on that model, nursery schools in Lower and Upper Lusatia developed their individual *Witaj*-model. Most

children who are educated in day-care centres in Upper or Lower Sorbian come from German-speaking families.

The *Witaj*-project is interesting for Bildts. It shows that pre-school education may be instrumental in maintaining vitality for minority languages. It does not require the development of educational materials, because the language is not formally taught in a classroom setting at these child nurseries. Rather, it is acquired in a way similar to native language transmission in the household.

3.7 Ulster Scots

One situation similar to Bildts is that of Ulster Scots, a regional language spoken mainly in Northern Ireland, although it is also spoken in the northernmost part of the Republic of Ireland. Political interest in this language was first formed in the 1980's as a counterbalance to the increasing political function of Irish as a political statement. Estimates of the amount of speakers vary wildly, depending on the total area covered and the criteria used. Estimates range between 30.000 speakers and 100.000 speakers on the island of Ireland. It moreover has speakers in former colonies of the United Kingdom. It has only recently started to be regarded as its own language. The legal status of Ulster Scots as a language was agreed upon by the government as part of the Good Friday Agreement of 1999. In 2001, it was declared to be a language for the purposes of the Charter, and it would be covered under Part II of the agreement. In practice, the Northern Irish local government is responsible for carrying out the terms of the Charter, as language policy has been devolved to this level of government.

Although the political context of Ulster Scots' recognition as a language and its subsequent inclusion within the Charter is incomparable to that of Bildts, Ulster Scots is one more example of a language that has only recently had its language status confirmed. It is also comparable to Bildts in that the linguistic consciousness required to be considered a language is a recent phenomenon.

One similarity between Ulster Scots and Bildts is that both minority languages must hold their place not only in relation to the national language, but also to another, more widely-used minority language with a better-developed infrastructure. In the case of Ulster Scots, this other minority language is Irish. In the case of Bildts, it is Frisian. As minority languages in this similar position, it may be worthwhile for respective language organisations to exchange best practices in positioning themselves towards these larger minority languages.

3.7.1 *Use of Ulster Scots in government and institutions*

As part of the Good Friday agreement, Ulster Scots is promoted and supported by the Northern Irish government to a degree similar to the Irish language. It is not, however, an official language of Northern Ireland. Government agencies accept correspondence in Ulster Scots as part of their obligations under the Charter, and must correspond back in the same language if a speaker so desires. The government has developed a guide book on how to handle communication received in these languages when the public servants do not themselves speak the language. I have not been able to find any language plan promoting the use of Ulster Scots in internal communication, although local councils may adopt measures to promote the language in this domain.

Since signing the Charter, an Inter-departmental Charter Implementation Group (ICIG) of the Northern Irish government has been working to help the public administration in Northern Ireland meet its Charter obligations. It also hosted the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe when it did an on-the-spot visit to monitor the implementation of the Charter (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, 2015). The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure has developed a language strategy aimed at developing the learning and understanding of the language and its associated culture as a means of implementing the Charter. In particular, it aims to:

- Make more opportunities to learn the Ulster Scots language and learn about the heritage and culture.
- Give people more ways to find out about the Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture – including on-line.
- Show people that the Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture can help bring more money into Northern Ireland.
- Encourage research on the Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture. (Language Strategies Team, 2012)

It aims to fulfil these goals through the Ulster-Scots Agency, which was formed in 1998. This agency aims to promote the study, conservation, development of Ulster Scots as a living language. In addition, it promotes the culture of its speakers and knowledge of its history. It does so through events, as well as by providing information on-line. Beyond its role as an agency promoting local initiatives for Ulster Scots, it serves as a network organisation, reaching out to Ulster Scots speakers overseas. It is financed by the government of the United Kingdom as well as the government of the Republic of Ireland.

Beyond this, there is the Ulster-Scots Language Society. It encourages the use of Ulster-Scots in both speech and writing in all areas of life. It does so mainly by publishing material in or on Ulster Scots. Its daughter organisation, the Ulster-Scots Academy is tasked with providing public access to recording, collecting, conserving, studying, promoting and disseminating written and spoken Ulster-Scots. It was ‘formed in the early 1990s within the Ulster-Scots Language Society as a community-based, independent Academy envisaged on the model of the Frisian Academy’ (Ulster-Scots Academy, 2015).

Currently, the position of Ulster Scots in local government does not differ much from Bildts. Both Het Bildt and the Northern Irish government support organisations promoting their respective minority languages. When local governments receive communication in these languages, a formal guideline is in place to ensure speakers of minority languages are able to speak their language of choice. Due to its small scale and solid grounding in its area of speakers, such a policy may be redundant for the municipality of Het Bildt. However, this issue may become a point of concern in the larger future municipality of Westergo. Het Bildt may learn from the Ulster Scots in how to handle these matters.

The organisational structure of the Ulster-Scots Agency is quite professionalised. Its workforce consists of a professional staff. This staff carries out the agency’s strategic priorities based on aims formulated in a business plan (Ulster-Scots Agency, 2015a). This structure differs significantly from Bildts, whose supporting organisations are mostly staffed by volunteers. As a result, supporting Ulster Scots is more expensive than supporting Bildts¹³. Although it is obvious that a more professional organisation supporting more speakers will have higher costs, the example of Ulster Scots may put into perspective the value of the volunteers who allow similar aims to be fulfilled for Bildts at a much lower cost.

3.7.2 Visibility of Ulster Scots in the public domain

The use of Ulster Scots on town or village welcome signs is allowed under current policy, but only one language beside English may be used. This may turn out to be problematic where there is a call from both Irish and Ulster Scots language communities to include their language on such a sign. The choice to erect such a bilingual sign is up to local councils (Allister, 2006). The matter of multilingual signage is subject to much debate due to continuously brewing sectarian sensitivities in Northern Ireland. This situation is somewhat comparable to Bildts, which also has two minority languages and one national language. The emotional component of public signage in minority languages is not unique to Het Bildt.

¹³ The Ulster-Scots Agency’s proposed budget for 2015 is almost £2,5 million.

The Ulster-Scots agency has undertaken to produce several publications as well as a bi-monthly magazine and an Internet-based bulletin. In addition, it aims to place plaques detailing parts of Ulster Scots history in the public space.

A separate broadcasting fund for Ulster Scots has been established in 2010, with £1m per annum funding until 2016 provided by the then UK Government (United Kingdom, 2013, p. 15). The purpose of this fund is to produce programming in Ulster Scots, preferably in genres conducive to education on heritage, culture and language (Northern Ireland Screen, 2015). In Northern Ireland, such funds are often the result of a carefully balanced approach of the government towards Irish and Ulster Scots. The Bildts people may learn from the Northern Irish people due to their experience in balancing the support of different minority languages against each other, and the political manoeuvring that goes with this.

Obviously, Ulster Scots has more funds available for its promotion than Bildts does. Nevertheless, Bildts has some pre-existing local media which may increase the amount of Bildts-language broadcasting by means of a modest municipal subsidy¹⁴. Such initiatives may serve to emancipate Bildts through its use in local media.

3.7.3 *Education in Ulster Scots*

The Ulster-Scots Agency has not supported Ulster Scots in pre-school education so far. Moreover, Ulster Scots is not part of the educational curriculum, so implementation of Ulster Scots classes is up to schools. However, the educational curriculum does stipulate that students' cultural or linguistic background should be taken into account when developing a curriculum. For both primary and secondary schools, the Ulster-Scots Agency makes funds available for projects disseminating knowledge of and about Ulster Scots. Initiatives being funded include plays and workshops (Ulster-Scots Agency, 2015b). Adult education in Ulster Scots is available through summer schools and workshops. Festivals are organised in order to promote Ulster Scots as a language.

Bildts seems to be ahead of Ulster Scots as far as curricular education is concerned, but the efforts the Ulster-Scots agency has made to include Ulster Scots in workshops, festivals and summer schools may be of interest to Het Bildt.

¹⁴ i. e. *De Bildtse Post*, *Radio Eenhoorn*, and to a lesser extent *Omrop Fryslân*

4 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the findings of Part I on the position of Bildts in Bildts society and on the linguistic relationship of Bildts towards its majority languages. The findings of Part II are presented as an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of Bildts in comparison to other languages.

4.1 Position of Bildts in Het Bildt

A literature review of the present situation of Bildts has led to several conclusions: one is that Bildts is stable as to its number of speakers. This stability is partly due to the strong will of speakers to pass on the language to the next generation: almost all of them still living in Het Bildt have stated that they speak Bildts to their children. Even non-speakers have demonstrated some language will: they generally cite their inability rather than lack of interest when asked why they do not speak it. Another conclusion is that the use of Bildts in different domains is strong. The maintenance of Bildts in its current societal position has led to increased consciousness of the language status of Bildts. This has, in turn, led to the increased use of Bildts in writing and in the public domain. These developments are welcomed by speaker communities.

Samples taken from *De Bildtse Post* lead to believe that this turning point in language consciousness was around the year 2000, when the use of Bildts in articles and advertisements increased greatly. Significantly, this turning point took place after accession of the Netherlands to the Charter. Over the past few decades, the function of Bildts as a defining feature of Bildts identity has increased, leading to extensive efforts to support the language from the bottom up. An example of such an effort is the use of the Bildts language in poetry to reach out towards Malta. Such initiatives have allowed Het Bildt to gain a distinct identity through the use of language.

Presently, Bildts is already used within the municipal government. Development of the Bildts language in all domains receives some subsidies from the municipality and the provincial government, and due to volunteer efforts, these subsidies have proven cost-effective. These volunteer efforts have made available a great deal of support for education of both children and adults.

In education, Bildts is mainly used in pre-school education and in primary schools. One child nursery has a trilingual language policy which includes Bildts. In primary schools, these activities have been professionalised through the work of *Kemissy Meertalighyd*. Adult education has remained vital despite as well as because of its dependence on volunteer efforts.

The recent increase in institutional support for Bildts and its growing use in the public domain are related phenomena. This growing enthusiasm for the Bildts language has solidified its position as a language in its own right.

4.2 Linguistic position of Bildts

Since its inception in the early sixteenth century, Bildts has continuously developed on its own course. From this moment onwards, Bildts became separated from the Hollandic dialects it stems from. When Standard Dutch gained footing as the *cultuurtaal* over its dialects, it did not spread to the Bildts language area due to the geographic isolation of Bildts. Instead, Frisian served as the standardising language. This role of Frisian as a majority language for Bildts has thoroughly changed Bildts. Frisian, however, could not serve as a standard register for Bildts due to their comparative lack of a phylogenetic relationship. The result of this is that Bildts gradually developed its own unique linguistic character.

Notably, this unique linguistic character has been codified into a standard language from the 19th century onwards. Writers such as Waling Dykstra have set a standard for the Bildts language which may be said to function as a *cultuurtaal*. This standard variety has been further codified in the 20th and 21st centuries through linguistic study and the creation of an authoritative dictionary. Due to these developments, speakers must make a fundamental choice between either Bildts or Dutch/Frisian, and there are no intermediate dialects between these three languages because they do not share a *cultuurtaal*.

4.3 Planned initiatives for Bildts

It is found that the Charter would constitute a valuable step towards the elevation of Bildts. More specifically, Bildts could be effectively protected under Part II of the Charter only. The language status of Bildts required for admission may be argued for on both linguistic and sociolinguistic grounds. Review of these arguments will be a matter for the Dutch government and the Nederlandse Taalunie. Inclusion within the Charter holds up favourably to alternatives, although those measures may be taken in conjunction.

4.4 Assessment of Bildts in comparison with other minority languages

Comparison between Bildts and other minority languages have laid bare its strengths and weaknesses as a community language. Comparison to other minority languages also allows to assess the chances Bildts has to be recognised as a minority language under the Charter. These strengths and weaknesses will be listed below.

4.4.1 Strengths of the Bildts language

- Bildts is easily codifiable because of its lack of dialectal splintering, and it has been codified already through e.g. standard spelling, dictionary, and educational materials.

- Figures show that its maintenance as community language is good despite its strong links to the outside world.
- It continues to have a high degree of intergenerational transmission.
- The Bildts-speaking area is geographically continuous, in contrast to North Frisian.
- Volunteer infrastructure supporting Bildts is cheap, in contrast to Ulster Scots (but also fickle, which is a weak point).
- Organisations supporting Bildts have had some degree of continuity. This is in contrast to Mirandese, whose institutions are generally short-lived due to lack of organisational professionalism.
- There is no threat to Bildts due to population displacement or ecological factors, in contrast to Sorbian and Mirandese.

4.4.2 *Weaknesses of the Bildts language*

- Support for Bildts is largely dependent on volunteers, which makes institutes ran by them inherently fickle, although this has not harmed these institutes as far as known.
- Lack of public visibility as a written language. Although Bildts is being written more commonly in the public space since the beginning of the 21st century, there is still a long way to go.
- Currently, financial support for Bildts is dependent on the goodwill of the municipality and the province. This continued goodwill may not be guaranteed when Het Bildt will constitute merely a small part of the future municipality of Westergo. Mirandese demonstrates how devastating dependence on merely goodwill may be.
- Support for Bildts is not independently monitored. Whereas languages covered under the Charter will have their support measured by an independent Committee of Experts, no such infrastructure exists for Bildts as of yet. The Mirandese example demonstrates how fickle such a support infrastructure may be.

4.4.3 *Strengths of Bildts for recognition*

- German and even Dutch examples show that new languages may be added to the Charter as linguistic consciousness for minority languages increases even several years after a country accedes to the Charter.
- When linguistic insights change on whether a language should be considered a language or a dialect, newly recognised languages may be recognised within the Charter. This is demonstrated by Low German and may be demonstrated by Elfdalian in the future.
- Bildts does not stand in a dialect continuum with either Standard Dutch or Standard Frisian, making it easier to oversee linguistic consequences of the Charter due to the

hard language border. This is in contrast with Low German, which blends into High German, or Sorbian, whose traditional area of settlement is not clearly defined.

- When counted by its amount of native speakers, Bildts is a minority language even in Het Bildt. However, the Cornish language has shown that a minority language which is a minority language even in its own heartland may still gain recognition when there is a linguistic avant-garde to campaign for it.
- The Council of Europe has noted that it considers the position of local communities as well as the government in defining what constitutes a separate ethnicity or language. This is demonstrated by Elfdalian and Cornish. In both cases, the Council of Europe voiced the position of these communities.
- Financially, recognition for Bildts under the Charter should not be a large issue, because it is already being invested into through subsidies for *'t Bildts Aigene* and its daughter organisations. This makes recognition politically feasible.
- The end goals of rules formulated in Part II of the chapter are mostly fulfilled, so admission would not oblige the government of the Netherlands to extreme measures in the short term. Rather, it would give a stronger basis for existing practices.
- *Stichting Ons Bildt* already maintains contacts with other minority languages through EBLT. Other organisations in this network may provide support in gaining recognition.
- The need for a speakers' organisation to consult after admission to the Charter may easily be met. *Stichting Ons Bildt* has already served as such informally, and it has already been bundled with similar organisations through *'t Bildts Aigene*. This step is similar to the step Cornish organisations took after gaining recognition.

4.4.4 *Threats to recognition of Bildts*

- The fact that the German government recognised the linguistic argument that Low German is a language separate from High German does not provide a guarantee on the possible position of the Dutch government on Bildts. In other words, the linguistic arguments presented in this report may not be decisive in acknowledging Bildts as a minority language for the purposes of the Charter.
- Similarly, the Council of Europe notes that speakers may play a role in deciding whether their language variety is a language or a dialect, but it is still the Dutch government which has the final say on whether it will submit Bildts to the Charter.

5 Recommendations

5.1 What to do

- Look for protection under Part II of the Charter initially, and then look to gain recognition under Part III based on pre-existing infrastructure. In other words, primarily look to gain legislation that legalises existing habits or infrastructure, thus gaining protection as a symbolic move. This symbolic move of looking for recognition may then be repeated as necessary after the infrastructure for Bildts improves.
- Mirandese and Zeelandic show that recognition within the Charter holds up well compared to the alternatives. Mirandese shows that laws by themselves mean nothing if there is no mechanism guaranteeing their execution. Zeelandic has shown that Bildts has come about as far as it possibly could without admission to the Charter. The Charter provides a control mechanism in the form of monitoring by a Committee of Experts.
- Whether Bildts will gain recognition in the the Charter or not, the municipality should develop a language policy in cooperation with the province of Fryslân and *'t Bildts Aigene*. It should cover the areas of public authorities, education, media and cultural and social life. The Sorbian language plan may serve as an example.
- The second part of this report gives some examples of how the municipality's ambition to expand the teaching of Bildts in secondary education may be implemented. North Frisian and Sorbian show how local secondary schools may include their respective minority languages in their curriculum, while Cornish and Ulster Scots may demonstrate how teaching of Bildts may be done through extracurricular activities. Their best practices may serve as inspiration irrespectively of whether Bildts will gain recognition within the Charter.
- When developing *'t Bildts Aigene*, the Cornish Language Partnership may serve as a valuable example of how an umbrella organisation of various existing organisations may serve as a platform for the minority language. As such, the Cornish Language Partnership may provide best practices in bundling pre-existing organisations representing the language.

5.2 Why do it

- Currently, initiatives for the protection and promotion of Bildts exist mainly by the grace of the municipal and provincial government. Long-term continuity of these efforts is unclear in the municipality-to-be of Westergo if Bildts does not end up being recognised under the Charter. The Charter is expected to ensure continuity with existing policies of the municipality.

- One way of defining a language as opposed to a dialect is by language will. Looking for recognition may serve well to increase the role of language as a marker of identity and to increase consciousness for Bildts as a language. The Low German example shows that even the process of looking for recognition will generate the necessary language will required to be recognised as a language. In turn, the momentum generated in this process may serve to implement the terms of the Charter locally.
- Even if recognition within the Charter itself fails to be achieved, the process of campaigning for recognition may itself generate a great deal of momentum for change. Such a development may be compared to the efforts to include Elfdalian in the Charter, which itself failed so far, but managed to generate much new support for the Elfdalian language. The Charter may serve as a means to further increase linguistic consciousness of Bildts and its language status. This may ensure language vitality and continued support for initiatives promoting Bildts.
- Recognition within Part II of the Charter should mainly affirm existing practices. However, these practices may come under pressure as a result of the municipal reorganisation. What may seem a symbolic move now may later become the legal basis for the continued development of Bildts language infrastructure.

5.3 How to do it

- Have a public figure to represent the language and find a politician to spearhead the politics of recognition. Charismatic local politicians may serve well for this cause, but a grassroots campaign featuring local celebrities may also be effective. This figure does not have to be a career politician, but a well-known person could promote the minority language in a public debate. A second step would then be to find a sympathetic ear of a politician who may further spearhead the case in the Parliament.
- Organise a bottom-up movement stemming from speakers and speakers' organisations showing that the wish for recognition stems from will of speakers rather than being the result of a political quid pro quo game. Examples that demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach are North Frisian, Cornish, and Low German.
- Present arguments that confirm language status of Bildts to the Dutch government. Argue that Bildts is in a good position to receive support from the Charter partly through its standardisation and lack of dialectal splintering.
- Look for allies in other minority languages. In this way, you can learn from them and they may support your cause. This should pressure the Dutch government somewhat. Interesting parties are: the CLP, Domowina, NPLD, and Ulum Dalska. Ulum Dalska has even expressed its interest in forming a connection

5.4 Other recommendations

- After admission, do not look for an absolute majority of support for specific measures among all inhabitants of the present or future municipality, but do look for a majority for these measures among speakers of Bildts. After all, the Charter is meant to protect minority languages, not majority languages, so protecting natives who do not constitute a majority is exactly the point of the Charter. This point is demonstrated by the Cornish, where only several hundred speakers have managed to secure protection and promotion for their language.
- Appoint an advisory body on matters that concern Bildts speakers within the new municipality. This is a requirement for execution of the Charter, but can be carried out anyhow. A body representing Bildts speakers already exists in the form of *'t Bildts Aigene*, and may easily come to fulfil the role of an advisory body.
- Make sure the financial costs of recognition will not cause a serious hindrance towards recognition. As it stands, this aim seems fulfilled, as Bildts is already being invested into through municipal and provincial subsidies for organisations under *'t Bildts Aigene*. The Charter would provide an independent safeguard for this practice.
- As a language revitalisation strategy, a combination of support for adult education in Bildts (especially young parents) and immersion for children at the pre-school level may prove to be effective in ensuring intergeneration transmission of Bildts. Both Sorbian and Cornish may provide good practices in implementing such measures. Non-users of Bildts tend to cite lack of ability rather than lack of interest when asked why they do not use Bildts. This implies that there may be a significantly sized target demographic for adult education in Bildts.
- Minority language education depends greatly on the availability of proper teacher training. Other languages show both what happens when this training is properly organised, and what happens when it is not. The *Kemissy Meertalighyd* presently currently provides this infrastructure. The CLP may provide best practices of how to offer teacher training and certification using volunteers. The North Frisian educational system shows how teachers may be trained by adding courses to university curricula.
- Keep increasing the public visibility of Bildts, both through measures such as bilingual street signs and by speaking Bildts in official contexts and at public events. This reaffirms the language status of Bildts through language will and it emancipates this practice. In this manner, the language may continue to have a function in many domains, ensuring its vitality.

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