

**Association for the Promotion of the French Language in Flanders (APFF)  
Intervention by Edgar FONCK in the 16th Forum on Minorities  
of the UN Human Rights Council**

Minorities and cohesive societies: equality, social inclusion and socio-economic participation

*3. Legal and structural approaches for more inclusive societies*

**Geneva, 30 November and 1 December 2023**

Mr. President,

Our association, which is also mandated by the Association of the Promotion of Human and Minority Rights (ADHUM), would like to draw attention to the situation of the 310,000 French speakers who live in Flanders.

Twenty-two years after signing the framework agreement on the protection of national minorities, Belgium has still not ratified it.

In fact, Flanders does not want to hear about the French-speaking minority in its territory.

Maintaining linguistic facilities for French-speakers in the Flemish communes with a special language regime is not to the liking of Flanders. Just like in Ronse where the communal authorities have initiated proceedings against the Belgian State in order to repeal them.

However, the Standing Commission for Linguistic Supervision (CPCL) is very clear: *"Ronse must write notices and messages directed to the public in French and Dutch, with authority being given to Dutch"*

With the communal authorities remaining deaf to the Commission's notices, the Bilingual Ronse movement has brought proceedings against the town of Ronse for not respecting linguistic legislation.

In Ronse, significant PFAS pollution has been recorded and it can cause cancer. Apart from a partial translation into French, which is difficult to access, all the prevention measures are displayed in Dutch. Consequently, it is not shocking that a significant number of the people affected by the pollution are French speakers.

There are other examples which demonstrate the lack of consideration for the French-speaking minority in Flanders!

During the re-sanding works at Coq Beach (De Haan), the signs warning about the risk of moving sand were in Dutch only.

During the recent storms and floods, the prevention messages by the Governor of Western Flanders were issued in Dutch only.

Let's also point out the deplorable attitude from a leader of the Flemish Movement who claimed that even in the event of a nuclear disaster, Flanders would only communicate in Dutch!

Faced with these situations, the APFF and the ADHUM appeal to the political officials so that the alert messages and safety instructions are disseminated in the three national languages (French, Dutch and German) and in English, all over Belgium.

Thank you,

(continued on the other side)

## **For more information**

Refer to our website (<http://www.francophonie.be/ndf>).

## **About the APFF**

The Association for the Promotion of the French Language in Flanders (APFF) simply wishes that French, one of the official languages of Belgium, has its rightful place in Flanders just like any other language.

The APFF promotes the French language in particular by publishing the « Nouvelles de Flandre » (*Flanders News*) magazine on its website (<http://www.francophonie.be/ndf>). There, in addition to the agenda of the activities in French, you can also find the addresses of the French language resources in Flanders and articles and information on the French language in general. A bulletin (paper version of the magazine) is also published every three months.

Anyone who is interested in the APFF can become a member. The annual contribution amounts to 20 euros for Belgium and 40 euros for abroad. To be paid into the APFF's account 210-0433429-85 (IBAN: BE89 2100 4334 2985 - BIC: GEBABEBB). Members and donors receive the « Nouvelles de Flandre » magazine every three months.

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