

N E T H E R L A N D S

SECTION A

Capital

Amsterdam 724,096 (1994 est.)

The Hague is the seat of government

Area

41,532 sq km (16,033 sq mi)

Form of government

Constitutional Monarchy

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$23,100 (1999 est.)

Population

15,807,641 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic composition

Dutch	94%
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Other	6%
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Moroccans, Turks, Surinamers, Cape Verdians

Official language

Dutch

Minority languages

Frisian, Low-Saxon varieties, Limburgish, Yiddish, Romany, Turkish, other

West Frisian is spoken in the province of Fryslan/Friesland, and in a few border villages in the neighboring province of Groningen. About 450,000

out of 600,000 Friesland inhabitants are able to speak Frisian. The number of Frisian speakers in the relevant part of Groningen may be about 3,000.

An estimated 1.8 million people in the Netherlands speak a variety of Low Saxon. These speakers live mostly in the provinces of Groningen, Drenthe, Overijssel and Gelderland.

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The Minority Language Teaching Act (OALT) enacted on August 1, 1998

The General Act on Administrative Law (Algemene Wet Bestuursrecht) provides that anybody can use the Frisian language for communication with authorities in the province of Friesland.

The Act on the Use of the Frisian language in Legal Affairs (Wet Gebruik Friese Taal in het Rechtsverkeer) contains the provision that anybody can use the Frisian language during lawsuits in Friesland province.

Background notes

The Netherlands is one of the world's most densely populated countries. The Dutch make up the great majority of the population and they are mostly descended from Franks, Frisians, and Saxons. Fearing overpopulation, the government encouraged Dutch emigration after World War II, and some 500,000 people left. But even larger numbers of people entered the Netherlands (Europeans and Asians from the former Netherlands Indies dependency (now part of Indonesia); industrial workers from Turkey, Morocco, and other Mediterranean countries; and, more recently, residents of Suriname, also a former Dutch dependency, and the Netherlands Antilles). Consequently, the country's population, particularly in the large cities, now includes several ethnic minorities.

People of Turkish origin are the largest foreign non-western population category in the Netherlands, and most were born in Turkey. The Surinamese are the second largest group, and Moroccans the third. All three groups have a short history in the Netherlands. In 1960 estimates indicated a few thousand of each group at the most. The recruitment of Turkish and Moroccan workers contributed significantly to the growth of these population groups. The independence of Suriname and the subsequent reuniting of family have created new immigration pressures.

SECTION B

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

Ethnic minorities appear to face a stubborn problem in unfair opportunity. Research shows that many among the five major ethnic groups in the Netherlands - the Turks, Moroccans, Surinamers, Antilleans and Cape Verdians - continue to suffer deprivation in education and work even through the second generation.

Attempts are being made to balance the differences against a number of factors, including language, which cause the ethnic population to differ from the native population. This process of "matching" has not been successful to date. Interviews with youngsters from minority ethnic groups indicate that they do want to find a place within Dutch society, but equally show that their socio-economic integration is as yet too poor to permit any significant opportunity. A lack of fluency in the host language, caused by educational deficiencies, is one of the roots of the deprivation spiral.

Another may be in the reunification of the families of those who have immigrated in advance, alone to the Netherlands. The newly arrived dependants, particularly in the Turkish and Moroccan communities are often especially isolated. They speak no Dutch, have few contacts outside the family circle, and cannot find employment. The children start life in the same restricted sphere.

This new generation, on the other hand, grows up much more in contact with the Dutch language and culture, primarily through school, than their parents. This can lead the second generation, and more often the third, born in the Netherlands, to have only a poor command of their parents' language and to tend to feel more at home in the Dutch culture than that of their parents'. This not only can give rise to internecine conflict, but also tends to create further resentment in their parents.

Some parts of the bigger cities in the Netherlands were - and still are - characterized by a high percentage of long-term unemployment and a relatively high level of crime, often drug-related. This trend is easily perceived to result from the presence of a large proportion of ethnic minorities, often with large families. The emergence of "black schools" is one expression of the problems that arise in these neighborhoods, and an unfortunate expression, for its long-term deprivation effect.

LOW-SAXON

Low Saxon speakers in the Netherlands have called on the Council of Europe to pressurize the Dutch government into granting further recognition to their language. This followed an on-the-spot mission by the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Minority Languages to the Netherlands in February 2000. Until now the Dutch government has refused to recognize Low Saxon in Chapter III of the Charter, because there are no legal arrangements for the use of Low Saxon in public administration or courts of justice. The government is opposed to such regulations, and therefore Low Saxon is "caught in a vicious circle", according to Bloemhoff, the spokesman of the Federation of Low Saxon Language Organizations (SONT). "It appears to me that the government wants to restrict the recognition in Chapter III just to Frisian, because the Frisians give them enough trouble already", Bloemhoff claimed. SONT also claims that staff levels at the department for Low Saxon studies at the University of Groningen have been reduced due to cuts of 50% in its already limited annual budget. Various applications for publications in Low Saxon at national cultural funds have been denied with the argument that Low Saxon is not recognized in Chapter III of the Charter. The exclusion of Low Saxon from Chapter III provisions has often been used to refuse applications for funding of publications in the language.

FRISIAN

The Dutch government has been warned to improve urgently the position of the Frisian language in education. The warning came from a member of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts from the Charter for Minority or Regional Languages, which was visiting the Netherlands in February of 2000. Committee member and former MEP, Piet Dankert, told Eurolang that there are "important gaps" between the Charter provisions, which the Dutch government signed, and the actual situation, especially in the field of education. Although the Dutch government ratified the provision that 'a substantial part of pre-primary education should be offered in Frisian', there are no legal or financial arrangements to provide for this. Furthermore, vocational education of teachers for kindergarten or children's day-care centers does not pay attention to the minority language or to bilingualism, nor does the law regarding educational training oblige them to do so. In secondary education most schools limit the hours for Frisian to one hour in the first grade only and nearly three-quarters of Frisian teachers do not have the necessary qualifications. Few schools offer Frisian as a subject for the final examinations. The organization responsible for Frisian teaching material and educational advice, GCO-Fryslân, works with a limited budget of one million guilders (454,000 Euros), which was frozen ten

years ago. In order to improve the situation, the provincial authorities of Friesland want to improve the legal and financial position of Frisian through a new language covenant with the Dutch government, to replace the existing agreement dating from 1993.

Supporters of Frisian-language playgroups and kindergartens have expressed concern at the lack of a language policy for that level of education. This follows the publication of a report by the Frisian Academy (Fryske Akademy), which shows that Frisian is far less used than Dutch in-group activities like reading, conversation and singing. Frisian is widely spoken in over 200 playgroups and kindergartens around the province especially in those areas where most staff members and children speak the language. On average some 80% of staff members speak and read Frisian with ease. But on the other hand most playgroups, kindergartens and the county councils who pay for these facilities, do not have a language policy. A major cause of concern for supporters of this level of education is that the new curriculum, which started last September under the supervision of the Dutch Ministry of Education, overlooks Frisian and bilingualism. The Frisian Educational Centers hope to resolve this situation by introducing modules on both Frisian and bilingualism as soon as possible in centers run by Stifting Pjutteboartersplak (Foundation for Kindergartens).

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

The unemployment rate in the Netherlands is highest among low-skilled and unskilled workers. Migrants are over-represented in these two groups. The employment prospects for ethnic minorities and people with a low level of education remained poor, despite the sharp drop in unemployment. Language is a barrier to education, training and to workplace communications.

Consequently it is only the most menial work, for which no native employees can be found, that is available to the migrant worker. Often it is hard, dirty and monotonous work, such as in the steel industry and the cleaning sector, and at unsocial or irregular hours.

What does it cost in terms of money, time and government resources to police the country's language restrictions?

Unemployment in the Netherlands is falling and the economy is again on the rise. The problems and consequences of deprivation seem to have become exclusive to the big cities. A possible split in society is now of increasing concern as a result of ghetto-formation in certain neighborhoods in the big cities.

The economic consequences of structural unemployment in the unskilled sectors are giving rise to most deprivation in big cities. The resultant accumulation of problems has a negative impact on health and safety and consequently on the State budget. It further affects neighborhood environment.

The cities of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht (the G4) agreed to the creation of an integrated policy program for the necessary revitalization of the big cities on July 12, 1995. The agreement covered: safety, social services, education and "livability" (neighborhood environment).

A compensation policy is directed at schools in areas where 75% or more of pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds. These may be children from the lower social classes or from ethnic minorities. Schools in such areas may be allocated extra resources. In addition, all secondary schools, including those not in educational high priority areas, can obtain extra resources for pupils from ethnic minorities.

In Rotterdam, for example, new migrants and those with refugee status must register with the Integration of Newcomers Project (PIN). This project offers an acclimatization program through the study of Dutch society and language. Immigrants are acclimatized in phases. In the initial phase they take Dutch lessons and are allowed some work in order to acquire practical experience. In the second phase an opportunity for vocational training is granted. In the third and final phase they may enter the normal labor market.

They immediately receive official refugee status and they are entitled to all social provisions, including their own home. These measures are a drain on State resources, but are generally regarded as an investment.

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

The Minority Language Teaching Act (OALT) came into force on August 1, 1998. Minority language teaching is provided as an extra educational opportunity for children from ethnic minorities so that they can learn their native language and thus keep in touch with their own culture. By learning about their own cultural background, children will be able to integrate and participate in Dutch society with greater self-awareness. Lessons can be provided for all language groups. Attendance is voluntary.

Minority language teaching is the responsibility of the individual municipalities. Classes must be held outside normal school hours. Transitional arrangements were made for the 1998/99 school year

during which up to fifty hours of teaching could take place during school hours. As with other aspects of education, the quality of minority language teaching is monitored by the Education Inspectorate.

Lessons in minority languages such as Turkish and Moroccan can be provided by schools, but should take place outside normal school hours, for instance as part of an extended school day. Since 1986 English has been a compulsory subject in the last two years of primary school.

The municipal authorities must draw up a plan for minority language instruction (OALT) covering four-year period. The number of classes provided and the languages taught depends on local demand. Minority language teaching is part of the local education policy. The plan may, if preferred, be incorporated into the municipal compensatory plan. Criteria will be laid down by the central government for determining whether a municipality is eligible for a four-year specific-purpose grant for minority language teaching.

FRISIAN

In general, Frisian speakers can use their own language in contact with public authorities. The provincial administration and a number of other bodies have made this a matter of policy. Documents issued by public authorities generally are in Dutch only. Frisian or bilingual documents are a rare exception. In courts of justice all parties, including defendants and witnesses, are allowed to speak Frisian. If need be, the court can employ the services of an interpreter. Courts of justice in Friesland accept civil actions brought in Frisian, but this can cause problems in the case of an appeal to a higher court. Documents published in Frisian only are not legally binding. Public signs can be Frisian, Dutch or bilingual, depending on the choice of the municipality concerned.

The Dutch postal service (PTT) has decided to accept Frisian place names in its sorting operations, ending an 11-year campaign in Friesland. Starting September 1, 2000, PTT will use a total of 76 official Frisian place names in all of its databases. The decision means that mail bearing Frisian names will now be sorted automatically and should therefore be guaranteed faster delivery; in the past, such post had to be sorted by hand.

The Frisian language is taught at the primary, secondary and university levels and in teacher training. As far as the primary, secondary and teacher training are concerned, this is limited to Friesland province. For receiving Frisian language education at the primary and secondary levels the criterion is that one must be living in Friesland province. For teacher training the criterion is the demand of the education sector for teachers

proficient in the Frisian language and the interest of established teachers for training in the Frisian language. Frisian training exists at "Halbertsma-akademy". The University of Groningen and the University of Amsterdam have training in Frisian linguistics and literature and in Leeuwarden there is the "Fryske Akademy" which also teaches Frisian.

Trilingual Primary Education is a relatively new concept in Friesland. On the initiative of the Frisian Center for Educational Advice, GCO-Fryslân, and the Fryske Akademy, five schools went trilingual in 1997. In 1999 two more schools joined the project. The multilingual project is based on the principle of linguistic interdependence, encouraging the transfer of language proficiency between the related Germanic languages Frisian, Dutch and English. The Fryske Akademy is monitoring the participating schools and is comparing results with those of trilingual schools in Finland (Finnish-Swedish-English) and the Basque Region (Basque-Spanish-English).

Since February 1994 the Fryslân broadcasting company provides regional TV programs in the Frisian language for five days per week. Apart from these a so-called TV journal is being broadcast. There are no daily, weekly or monthly publications totally in the Frisian language. Only in some articles is Frisian used. Just a few (literary) periodicals are published completely in Frisian. There is a relatively large literary community. About 100 Frisian books of various kinds are published each year.

The Frisian public broadcasting organization Omrop Fryslân is currently working under new guidelines and will be one of the first organizations to benefit from the opportunity to register officially in Frisian. This positive step forward for the Frisian language comes as the Dutch Government and Friesland (Provinsje Fryslân) negotiate a new Covenant for the Frisian language, which will be largely based upon the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe

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

The Framework Convention for the Protection National Minorities signed on February 1, 1995.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority languages signed on November 5, 1992, ratified on May 2, 1996 and enacted on March 1, 1998.

What else can be found about languages and minorities?

Up until the end of World War II there was limited diversity among nationalities of the Netherlands. Nine out of every ten immigrants were from neighbouring countries of Belgium and Germany, and the majority were women who had married Dutch men. There were limited numbers from the former colonies such as; the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), Suriname and the Dutch Antilles in the Caribbean. Other foreign citizens were rare. Jews and the French Protestant descendents (the Huguenots) had been living in the country for a number of generations and they could neither by citizenship nor country of birth be identified as foreigners. More importantly, they were seldom, if ever, regarded as such by other people in the Netherlands.

Currently, 2.7 million people of non-Dutch origin live in the Netherlands. Half come from non-western countries, and their number has grown much faster than that of immigrants from western countries. This growth results from the combined effect of immigration and procreation.

SECTION C

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

Updated (January 2001)

FRISIAN

The Dutch Government and the Province of Friesland have agreed to sign a new language covenant for the coming ten years on June 5, 2001 in The Hague. The covenant is largely based on the Charter for Minority or Regional Languages of the Council of Europe and took five years of negotiations.

Updated (June 2001)

“The new covenant on the Frisian language and culture in the Netherlands could set an example for the former communist states in Eastern Europe. A government can avoid a lot of trouble if it deals respectfully with its minorities, “ said De Vries, the Dutch Secretary of State. In order to present the Dutch/Frisian covenant internationally De Vries will organize a joint conference with the Council of Europe on minority languages in the Netherlands at the end of this year. The new covenant includes some 100 agreements with the ministries of Education, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Health Care.

The covenant has been set out for the first decade of this century and will be evaluated regularly by representatives of Friesland and the Dutch government. This agreement is practical and solid with obligations on both sides. The province plans to present its new policy for the teaching of Frisian in September 2001.

Updated (October 2001)

The Lower Chamber of the Parliament has adopted an act according to which the use of Frisian will be allowed in the statutes of associations, organizations, etc., within the Province of Friesland. The enforcement of this act will take place as soon as the Senate ratifies it.

Updated (February 2002)

FRISIAN

For the first time the Frisian foundations and organizations could sign and register their new legal statutes in the Frisian language.

The Frisian association Eftrije has been an “illegal” organization until now, because their board always refused to register itself in Dutch. The Frisian organizations feel challenged and thrilled by the new law that allows monolingual Frisian statutes. The law comes into force on February 1st. President reverend Liuwe Westra of Douwe Kalmastifting is convinced that in due course dozens of Frisian organizations will follow the example and officially register themselves monolingually in Frisian at the national Dutch registers. “This is an important step towards legal equality of the Frisian language,” Westra comments. “Until now Frisian was accepted only as an irrelevant annex with the Dutch original. The philosophy behind the new law is that people who live and work in Friesland should be able to understand and read Frisian, which is a totally different perspective.”

Westra, who is former president of the Frisian movement, believes that the Frisians might be one of the very first minorities in the European Union with the right to register their foundations and associations in the minority language only. The right is however limited to foundations and associations, which operate in Friesland. As soon as an organization has interests outside Friesland, the statutes should be deposited in Dutch as well.

Updated (December 2002)

FRISIAN

Currently, Frisian has an official status in the Netherlands. Its spelling has been standardized and Frisian, apart from domains such as the judiciary, public administration, radio and television, is also used in education.

National recognition is not expressed by any special law. Frisian language policy started with the “*Van Ommen Committee*” (1970), which produced a report specifying the responsibility of the national government with regard to Frisian and recognizing Friesland as a bilingual province. The report added that neither the existence of the Frisian language as an independent language still in use, nor the fact that the province of Friesland is considered to be bilingual, justifies the conclusion that the Netherlands as a whole is a bilingual country.

The use of the Frisian language in certain domains is restricted clearly to the province of Friesland. The committee stated that the central government should focus on safeguarding the identity of the Frisian language and culture, in collaboration with the provincial and municipal authorities. According to the report, this means that the national government has the function of resolving specific problems caused by bilingualism in the Frisian culture.

An immediate result of the report was a small sum of money in the national budget that was dedicated to support the organizations maintaining the Frisian language and culture. Unfortunately, the results of the language policy after 30 years are rather disappointing. Things only tend to change after pressure from the regional authorities and the population.

Current language policy regarding the Frisian language is based on *the Frisian Language and Culture Covenant*, an agreement between the provincial and the central government. It was drawn up in 1989, renewed in 1993 and redrafted in 2001 on the basis of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (BFTK - Bestjoersôfspraak Fryske Taal en Kultuer 2001-2010). The covenant ensures the possibility to express themselves in Frisian for citizens, local authorities, organizations and institutions. It also states that both the provincial and the central government are responsible for preserving and reinforcing the Frisian language and culture. Lastly, resources are considered necessary in order to create suitable conditions for this purpose.

This means that:

- The state determines the general education, culture and media policy and, as far as Frisian is concerned, it has to respect the European Charter
- The province of Friesland determines the policy for Frisian and ensures the execution of this policy
- The state provides the province with the means to execute its policy as regards Frisian
- The provincial policy concerning Frisian and the national policy concerning general education, culture and media has to reinforce each other where possible

On several occasions, Friesland and its government have insisted on the necessity for a language law but to date this has not resulted in any success.

EDUCATION

The role of Frisian in primary education dates back to 1907 when the provincial government offered a grant to support Frisian lessons after regular school hours. Frisian was then taught as an extra-curricular subject.

Legislative provisions for Frisian only began in 1937, with alterations to *the Education Act of 1920*, which made it possible to teach Frisian as a regional language in higher grades during Dutch lessons. However, nothing was arranged for the use of Frisian as a medium of instruction. In 1950, nine primary schools began to experiment with bilingual education and in 1955 bilingual schools obtained a legal basis. Frisian became an optional subject at primary school level and the use of Frisian as a medium of instruction was allowed in the lower grades. By 1959, the number of bilingual schools had risen to forty-seven. Starting from 1959, the Dutch state financed the Paedagogysk Advysburo of the Fryske Akademy, an institution that offered educational advice and guidance to early bilingual schools. At the time these had risen to eighty-four, i.e. 25 percent of all primary schools in the province.

A further legislative improvement with regard to Frisian was established in 1974 when *the Primary Education Act* was modified again. Frisian became an approved teaching medium in all grades and an obligatory school subject throughout primary education as of 1980. To implement this act the following extensive activities had to be arranged: the in-

service training of 3,000 teachers; special parents' evenings at all schools; the development of new learning material; the re-working of television and radio for schools and, finally, the introduction of Frisian as a subject at teacher training colleges.

In 1985, the Primary Education Act was replaced by a completely new *Act for Primary Education in the Netherlands* introducing the creation of new primary schools. In 1998, the Education Act was changed again. Except for some textual changes, the legal arrangements for Frisian in primary education remained the same.

MAIN OFFICIAL TEXTS REGULATING THE TEACHING OF FRISIAN

- ***1937 Amendment to the Primary Education Act of 1920***

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1937, 323) Frisian is permitted as an optional subject in primary education under the classification of a vernacular language (Frisian was not yet explicitly mentioned in the Act)

- ***1948 Amendment to the Secondary Education Act***

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1948, 127) Secondary schools are given the opportunity, after obtaining the consent of the Minister, to provide tuition in subjects other than those listed in the Act (Frisian was not yet explicitly mentioned in the Act). In 1948, the Minister of Education provided financial support for Frisian as an optional subject at secondary schools.

- ***1952 Royal Decree to amend the University Statute***

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1952, 635) Frisian can be chosen as a main subject in higher education (introduction of the “doctoraal” (first degree) examination in Frisian).

- ***1955 Amendment to the Primary Education Act 1920***

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1955, 225) Frisian is explicitly mentioned as an optional subject in primary education. Frisian is also permitted as a medium of instruction in the first forms of primary schools.

- ***1967 Amendment to the Secondary Education Act 1963***

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1967, 386) Frisian is allowed as an optional subject in secondary education from 1968 onwards. In the first form of secondary schools Frisian can be included within the number of teaching hours permitted by the law.

- **1970 Royal Decree**

This Act regulates the leaving examinations in pre-university education (VWO), senior general secondary education (HAVO) and junior general secondary education (MAVO) (Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1970, 151). Frisian is permitted to be an optional leaving examination subject at the higher levels of secondary education (VWO, HAVO and MAVO schools).

- **1974 Amendment to the Primary Education Act**

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1974, 271) Frisian is taught as an ordinary subject in all primary schools in the province of Friesland from 1980 onwards. (Provincial Executive of Friesland given the power to grant exemptions) Frisian is also permitted as a medium of instruction in all classes of primary education.

- **1982 Interim Act on special education and special secondary education (ISOVS0)**

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1982, 730) Frisian is introduced as a teaching language in special secondary education.

- **1988 Amendment to ISOVS0 of 1982**

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1988, 559) The Frisian language and culture is a compulsory subject in schools for special education and special secondary education.

- **1992 Amendment to the Secondary Education Act**

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1992, 270) Frisian becomes an ordinary subject in basic education at all secondary schools in the province of Friesland from 1/8/1993 onwards.

- **1993 Primary Education Key Objectives Order**

(Bulletin of Acts and Orders 1993, 264) Order in Council adopting key objectives for all subjects in primary education; key objectives also adopted for the subject of Frisian.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, the Frisian Language in Education in the Netherlands,
http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/frisian_nl.htm

Background notes

Updated (December 2002)

FRISIAN

Frisian, or Frysk, is an autochthonous minority language currently spoken in Friesland (Fryslân), one of the 12 provinces of the Netherlands. It is a western Germanic language closely related to Dutch, which was widely used in the area much larger than that of the current province until the 15th Century.

From the 16th Century onwards Frisian became an oral language in mainly rural areas. Only in the course of the 19th Century the Frisian language gradually gained an access into other areas of life. Only in the 20th Century the Frisian language regained its position in government, jurisdiction and education.

In 1995, 94 percent of 620,000 provincial inhabitants could understand Frisian, 74 percent could speak it, 65 percent was able to read it and 17 percent could write in it. More than half of the population (55 percent) declared Frisian as their mother tongue. Moreover, 76 percent of the population considered themselves to be Frisian.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, the Frisian Language in Education in the Netherlands,
http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/frisian_nl.htm

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

Updated (November 2001)

LOW SAXON

The federation of Low Saxon organization "SONT" demands further recognition of the Low Saxon language (Nedersaksisch) which is spoken in the north-eastern provinces of the Netherlands and in the north of Germany. Representatives of SONST want to see their language recognized in the third chapter of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. "Now, this language is recognized under the second chapter of the charter and the access to many funds for further developing of the language is very difficult or even impossible", claims Albert -Jan Maat, Christ democrat MEP.

Unlike the Frisian language, there is a very little Low Saxon in media and at school. In the recent report on the Netherlands, the Council of Europe urges the Dutch government to formulate a language policy for Low

Saxon. Jan Kristen, the Deputy for Culture of Overijssel Province, wants to create a consultative body on the implementation of the Charter for Low Saxon, as a joint effort with the other Low Saxon provinces, comparable to the body that the Dutch government installed for Frisian a few years ago. "If the government thinks that Low Saxon can do without it, we will pay for it and start such a committee ourselves."

Updated (February 2002)

Frisian organizations have responded furiously to the advice of the Dutch Advisory Council for Education (Onderwijsraad) to leave decision up to the schools if and how much time they will devote to the Frisian language. The Minister of Education, Loek Hermans - who also lives in Friesland - wants to deregulate the Dutch educational system and give the schools more autonomy. Following his new policy, the Onderwijsraad has suggested that Frisian, which has been an obligatory subject in primary education since 1980, should be made an optional subject instead.

"Making Frisian optional means that we lose what we have achieved after 100 years of language battle," comments the situation Jan van der Baan, leader of the Frisian National Party.

Both the Frisian Nationalist Party and the Frisian Movement have pointed out that the new proposal is completely contradictory to the Dutch ratification of the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which states that "an important part of primary education is offered in the minority language".

Frisian has been an obligatory subject in all Frisian primary schools since 1980. Last year however, the school inspection warned in an official report that only 25% of the schools teach Frisian at an acceptable level. Then, Minister Hermans already warned that he might change the position of Frisian.

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

Updated (December 2002)

EDUCATION

In 1999 and 2000, a study was carried out on the use of Frisian in Friesland as a teaching language at primary schools in connection with the performance of children. Frisian children had lower scores in core subjects (Dutch, Arithmetic) compared to children from other parts of the country.

The research also revealed that only a few schools in Friesland have a language policy for Frisian. With the exception of the 1st and 2nd grades, Frisian is not frequently used. The research showed that Frisian used as a teaching language slightly improved the scores of Frisian-speaking children while the scores of Dutch-speaking children were slightly worse as a result.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, the Frisian Language in Education in the Netherlands,
http://www1.f.a.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/frisian_nl.htm

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

Updated (January 2001)

FRISIAN

The first official bilingual daycare center for children will be opened in the Frisian capital in September 2001. The opening of the second and the third location are foreseen for October and January 2002. A joint venture of the Frisian foundation Stifting Pjutteboartersplak and the Dutch enterprise Catalpa plans to host there 250 children. At present 55% of the teachers in children's daycare centers have Frisian as their first language. Even if the majority of children are Frisian-speaking the teachers remain reluctant to use the language in the group, simply because there is no language policy. This new initiative fills a gap to stimulate the use of Frisian.

Updated (June 2001)

In June, for the first time since its first publishing in 1752 Friesland's main newspaper "Leeuwarder Courant" appeared in Frisian as "Ljouwerter Krante". The appearance of the paper in Frisian was prepared to mark the European Year of Languages. In order to make the bilingual edition possible the newspaper invested over 100,000 Guilders (45,000 Euro) in new software to ensure the grammatically correct "breaking-down" of Frisian words.

The "Leeuwarder Courant" is one of the larger regional newspapers of the Netherlands with a daily circulation of over 110,000 copies. According to research the paper normally carries only 3 to 5% of written Frisian. The "Leeuwarder Courant" publishes a weekly Frisian page on cultural matters every Friday and the Frisian language institute AFUK produces other material with financial support from the province. Apart from that other articles regularly carry quotations in Frisian, a practice which gives some articles almost a bilingual nature. In September the Leeuwarder

Courant will publish a supplement entirely devoted to European minority languages.

Updated (December 2002)

FRISIAN

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

	<i>Age (years)</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Financing</i>
PLAYGROUPS	2,5 -4	Three part-days in a week (max.)	10 - 30 1 official leader and 1 or more others on a voluntary basis	Municipality
DAY-CARE	0 - 4	Five days a week	More than 50 No volunteers, subsidies received	Tripartite: authorities, parents and companies

Both institutions come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports and they are not a part of compulsory education in the Netherlands.

Frisian playgroups are set up by the Stifting Pjutteboartersplak, which has a written explicit language policy. It was founded in 1989 to establish a Frisian-speaking environment for young children. Both Frisian and Dutch-speaking children are welcome.

In 2001, the association ran five Frisian playgroups while two others in Leeuwarden were taken over by the municipality. Together, they catered to a total of 200 children. The intention of the Stifting Pjutteboartersplak is to establish one new Frisian-medium playgroup every year.

In September 2001, two day-care groups were started with a maximum capacity of 128 children. Both groups are bilingual and the children are classed according to their mother tongue but they are also in contact with each other for special activities. In December 1999, the Provincial Government issued a four year-grant to promote the use of Frisian in all playgroups and to upgrade the work of the Stifting Pjutteboartersplak to a professional level.

Supervisors, or pre-school teachers, are expected at least to understand Frisian since they have to take care of both Frisian-speaking and Dutch-speaking children. It can be assumed that the degree to which Frisian is

actually used in playgroups depends on the linguistic background of the population because a child is free to use its first language.

The attitude towards Frisian can be considered more positive than before. However, it does not mean that a possibility exists to choose Frisian in activities/events, which involve people with different language backgrounds. Frisian is hardly used in urban playgroups whereas rural playgroups can be regarded as bilingual. The research also revealed that Dutch is used far more often than Frisian in group activities, like reading and singing. Frisian is mainly used in individual contacts with children and parents.

In 2000, there were about 225 playgroups and 25 to 30 day-care centers in the province of Friesland. In the day-care centers there were about 2,550 children. The number of children in the playgroups was between 4,500 and 6,750, as the majority of them take care for 20 to 30 children.¹

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossiers, the Frisian Language in Education in the Netherlands,
http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/frisian_nl.htm

PRIMARY EDUCATION

In the school year 2000-2001, 24 percent of the primary schools in Friesland had fewer than 60 pupils. Only 3 percent of schools educated more than 300 pupils.

The current *Primary Education Act* (Wetophet Primair Onderwijs, 1998) lists a number of subjects that all primary schools have to teach without prescribing how many hours and what in fact schools should teach.

In 1993, the Minister of Education defined attainment targets (kerndoelen) for the individual subjects. These targets were modified to some extent in 1998. Fully identical goals have been developed for both the Dutch and Frisian language, indicating which skills have to be attained in Dutch and Frisian by the end of primary education.

A study by the inspectorate in Friesland (Inspectorate report, April 2001) showed that the majority of primary schools spend 30 to 60 minutes on one lesson in Frisian per week. Therefore, time devoted to Frisian is limited. This situation has been the same for the last decade and it is a result of the gradual process that has been underway since the legislation of 1955.

¹ It is not possible to mention the exact quantity, as there is no coordinating body.

In 1985, five years after the introduction of Frisian as an obligatory subject, over 70 percent of primary schools reported using Frisian as a medium of instruction. The 2001 survey showed that 56 percent of the schools used Frisian as a medium of instruction, albeit to a varying degree. For instance, only 16 percent of primary schools used Frisian insofar as “world studies” were concerned (in grades 3 to 8).

A TRILINGUAL SCHOOL MODEL

In the school year 1997-98, five primary schools in Friesland started an experiment with a trilingual school model. Two other schools were added to the project in the following school year. All schools were small and rural with approximately 400 children in total.

The general aim of this project, initiated by the Fryske Akademy and GCO Fryslân, is to establish trilingualism among the pupils. The ultimate goal is to achieve full bilingualism as far as Frisian and Dutch are concerned and the ability to communicate in English.

To attain these goals, all three languages are not taught only as subjects, but they are also used as instruction media. In the first six grades, 50 percent of teaching time is in Frisian and 50 percent in Dutch. In grades 7 and 8, Frisian gets 40 percent, Dutch 40 percent and English 20 percent. The latter means that for two afternoons every week, all teaching is in the foreign language.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

With the introduction of *the Basic Education Act* in 1993 (Wetophet Voortgezet Onderwijs), Frisian has become an obligatory subject in the lower grades of secondary education (Article 11). Frisian is also an optional subject in the higher grades of pre-university education and general secondary education. However, not all secondary schools have as yet implemented Frisian into their curriculum and the attainment targets for this language have not been officially determined in educational legislation.

Although the Dutch State supported the implementation of Frisian financially and a Frisian curriculum model and learning materials were developed for the lower grades, the survey conducted by the Inspectorate in 1999 showed that five years after the introduction of Frisian into basic education, the language had been developed only poorly.

More than a third of secondary schools in the province do not offer Frisian lessons to their students. The schools that do offer Frisian lessons mostly do so only in the 1st grade. In practice this means that pupils attend forty Frisian lessons in the first year of their secondary

education. As far as Frisian in the higher grades is concerned, only a small percentage of pupils choose it and few of them take a final exam in it.²

To teach in Frisian in all types of secondary schools is permitted; however, the use of Frisian as a language of instruction is rare. In 1999, 69 percent of all secondary schools did not use it, 30 percent of schools did so incidentally and only 1 percent reported using Frisian as a medium of instruction on a regular basis. From the above, it is obvious that the position of Frisian at secondary school level is minimal and that there is no monolingual Frisian secondary education in Friesland.

In 2000/01, in the province of Friesland, 25 schools provided pre-university, general secondary and/or pre-vocational education in 73 locations, involving about 37,000 pupils.

HIGHER EDUCATION

There is no university in Friesland.

Dutch educational legislation declares Dutch to be the teaching medium in higher education. Frisian is only used in teacher training. In other courses, the teaching medium is either Dutch or, on some occasions, a foreign language. Nevertheless, students in most disciplines are allowed to write theses in Frisian, although this rarely happens.

The Frisian language and literature can be studied at three universities in the Netherlands: the University of Amsterdam, the University of Groningen and the University of Leiden. The first two offer Frisian as the main subject while Frisian can be taken as a subsidiary subject at the University of Leiden. The University of Groningen has also a Frisian teacher-training course. The number of students of Frisian enrolled in these three universities is quite small.

Updated (January 2003)

RIGHT TO SPEAK FRISIAN IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT RAISED TURMOIL IN DUTCH PRESS

The proposal to add Frisian to the legal requirement for railway workers is one of ten proposals that the advisory council “Berie foar it Frysk” has prepared in order to fill the gaps in Dutch legislation, which might have a negative effect on the position of Frisian.

² In the school year 1999, eighty-six students took a final examination in Frisian.

The province of Friesland, by confirming current practice into legislation, wants to ensure that Frisians are able to use their own language while traveling.

According to Alex Riemersma, a spokesman of the advisory council, there is no problem with the regional lines in Friesland. The train company Noordned, responsible for the service between Friesland and Groningen, has rejected to confirm legally the linguistic skills of their staff. "We do have Frisian speaking staff. However, some of our employees do not speak Frisian. This is not a problem, because Frisian travelers are quite capable of expressing themselves in Dutch," spokeswoman of Noordned S. Krikke stated.

In the Dutch press the proposal caused some turmoil. According to the largest Dutch daily "*De Telegraaf*," the province of Friesland is heading for separatism by enforcing the Frisian language upon railway workers.

Source: Eurolang News, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, December 20, 2002, by Onno P. Falkena,
<http://217.136.252.147/webpub/eurolang/pajenn.asp?ID=4020>

NEW LANGUAGE STATUTE AIMED AT PROMOTING FRISIAN IN COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Council of the Frisian Movement, an umbrella organization with some 10,000 members, prepares a language statute for Frisian companies. The language statute will confirm that workers and customers may speak Frisian wherever they want and that Frisian letters should be answered in Frisian.

Companies with such a language policy will be rewarded with a special certificate informing the public that this company is bilingual and they can speak the minority language without problems.

The language statute is inspired by the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; however, it deals both with public and private organizations and companies.

The initiative of the Council of the Frisian Movement is not limited only to Frisian, but it also includes Bildts, a much smaller language which is spoken in the north of Friesland.

The Council will discuss the language statute for companies with its members in February. Later this year the statute will be presented to the companies and to provincial authorities.

Source: Eurolang News, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, January 7, 2003, by
Onno P. Falkena,
<http://217.136.252.147/webpub/eurolang/pajenn.asp?ID=4023>

Updated (February 2003)

**NEW LANGUAGE POLICY AIMS AT CREATING SITUATION WHERE
“SPEAKING FRISIAN GOES WITHOUT SAYING”**

The Frisian language policy for the next four years should focus more on Frisian-speaking groups in kindergartens and day-care centers and should pursue the use of Frisian in health care institutions.

Frisian material will be developed at short notice for a speech therapy because currently, Frisians with speech problems are often tested and helped in Dutch.

An important part of the Frisian population prefers to speak Frisian. However, if they are dependant on health care workers, they will not protest to be addressed in Dutch. According to the Frisian Deputy for Culture, Bertus Mulder, the quality of health care had been better if it would have been given in the language of people. Therefore he asked the health care institutions to develop a language policy. Mentally ill elderly people, for instance, understand only the language of their childhood. It is a matter of decency to address them in Frisian.

Apart from the health care institutions the Province also aims at education in the Frisian language. Approximately €357,000 will be invested in a new method for the teaching of Frisian in primary schools. Groups of primary schools will get language coordinators who will monitor the use of Frisian. For younger children the capacity of Frisian kindergartens and children's day-care centers should grow by 10 percent every year. For this goal the province allotted the sum of €48,000 a year.

This new language policy of Friesland is based upon the language covenant, signed in June 2001 by the national government and also on the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe. The province itself also intends to use more Frisian, both in a written and spoken form.

In the past the province prepared proposals and documents either in Frisian or in Dutch. In practice it meant, that only ten percent of all documents and proposals were written in Frisian. In the future more documents will be made available in both languages.

Source: Eurolang News, Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, January 31, 2003, by Onno Falkena,
<http://217.136.252.147/webpub/eurolang/pajenn.asp?ID=4069>

What else can be found about languages and minorities?

Updated (January 2001)

FRISIAN

The University of Amsterdam has withdrawn its controversial plan to end Frisian studies after the Student Council and the Central Employer's Council vetoed the decision of the Dean to swap Frisian in Amsterdam for Modern Greek in Groningen. Students and staff of the University were arguing about the importance of Frisian as the second state language. Both the Province of Friesland and Frisian Academy expressed disappointment at the Court of Amsterdam decision. The Court claimed that ending the Frisian studies is not contrary either to the Charter for Minority and Regional Languages or to the Language Covenant between the Dutch Government and Friesland.

The leading Frisian language cultural organization "Eftrije" expects a positive attitude towards Frisian and minority languages from the next royal couple King Willem Alexander and Queen Maxima Zorreguieta.

LOW-SAXON AND FRISIAN

According to a survey of three Dutch regional public broadcasting stations, the preservation of the regional languages is important for 85% of the inhabitants of the provinces Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe.

The Low-Saxon language organization SONT welcomes results of the survey and it will use them as a new argument to ask responsible politicians for Low Saxon lessons as a part of curriculum. Low Saxon enjoys certain recognition in Netherlands according to the second chapter of the European Charter for Minority and Regional Languages; however, there are no laws or regulations for the use of the language in education, public administration or in courts.

In Friesland, 58% of the questioned people answered that schools should make a better effort in teaching Frisian.

Frisian became an obligatory subject in 1980. However, only one out of four primary schools teaches Frisian at good level in Friesland. Despite the law which states that both languages should be taught at equal level, the amount of time dedicated to Dutch is much higher.

Frisian lessons are often too easy for Frisian-speaking pupils and too difficult for Dutch-speaking pupils. Most schools simply lack a language policy. The provincial authority is now considering developing instruments to promote an educational language policy and bilingual education.

The Frisian Department of the Association of Teachers of Living Languages plans to warn primary schools, which pay very little attention to Frisian and confront them with the consequences.

Updated (March 2002)

THE LIMBURGER LANGUAGE

The provincial parliament of the southernmost Dutch province of Limburg is expected to adopt its first program on language policy. This program is a result of the Limburger language recognition by the Dutch Government, according to chapter two of the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages of the Council of Europe.

For the first time, language policy will get an annual budget of €230,000. After the adoption of the program the language promoter Pierre Bakkes can move ahead with the production of schoolbooks in the Limburger language, and do a course for teachers to help them teach Limburger. Bakkes was appointed last year with the assignment to develop a language policy for Limburg. The aim of the policy is to develop a certificate for teaching of Limburger similar to the certificate for Frisian except that Limburger will be a subject of choice not an obligatory subject.

The schoolbooks for primary schools will be made available in five different dialects. According to Bakkes this is necessary, because the Limburger spoken around the city of Venlo in the North is very different from the Limburger spoken in the former mining town of Kerkrade in the South of Limburg.

Paul Prikken, a member of the working group for a unified written Limburger (Algemeen Geschreven Limburger), disapproves strongly with the intention to publish schoolbooks in five different dialects. "One edition in a unified orthography can be used all over Limburg. Editions in different dialects complicate matters, because it requires for instance that the schoolteacher speaks the same variety, which is not always the case. It is expensive and above all it teaches children different orthographies." Last year the working group of Prikken published a unified dictionary of Limburger, based on the variety spoken alongside river Maas in central Limburg. This dictionary was compiled without any subsidy.

The Limburger language is spoken in both the Dutch and the Belgian province of Limburg. Belgium, however, decided not to recognize the Limburger language, which means that for the time being no language policy whatsoever is being developed in Belgian Limburg. Cross border collaboration is limited to a Belgian representative in the new Council for Limburger (Road veur't Limburgs). In order to develop language policy further, the province of Limburg has widely advertised a public inquiry on Internet, on the Limburger language and on language attitudes in Limburg. The results of this inquiry will be presented on a conference on language revitalization in Maastricht in May.

In spite of the publishing of varieties, Prikken is still positive on the intention of the province. "We have been asking for a policy for 14 years. Nowadays at least we have a policy, a budget and a language promoter. If this is sufficient to save the language remains to be seen, because in the North the language is losing ground rapidly."

Bakkes estimates that the language is currently losing 20 percent of its speakers with every new generation. At present Limburger is still spoken by an estimated 2 million people in the provinces of Limburg in the Netherlands and Belgium. An overwhelming majority of them are illiterate in their own language. According to the Limburger language association Veldeke, the language counts as many as 500 different dialects.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF THE NETHERLANDS



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