



Europeesk buro foar Lytse talen

EBLT Year Report 2014

The Europeesk Buro foar Lytse Talen (EBLT), since its foundation in 1984, provides promotion and protection of Frisian and Low Saxon in the Netherlands and in the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europa, and their institutions. For this, legal and political support is sought on European, national and provincial level. Furthermore, the EBLT is a member of the Network for the Promotion of Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) and also promotes cooperation with minorities in other places in Europe. Board member Froukje de Jong-Krap is a standby-member of the Steering Committee of NPLD.

The EBLT consists of representatives of 23 organisations, who strive for the position of Frisian, Low Saxon, Bildts and Papiamentu. Two of these four languages are languages to which the Netherlands has obligations to the international community, after the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe came into effect. In 2014, two new organisations became full-member of EBLT, i.e. SPLIKA (an organisation representing the Papiamentu language) and Folkshegeskoalle Skylgeralân (an educational organisation for the Frisian language and culture).

Since 2009, the EBLT and the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (Mercator Research Centre) of the Fryske Akademy established a cooperation agreement. The Mercator Research Centre is responsible for e.g. the secretariat and the website of EBLT. In addition, the partners organise different activities in cooperation.

In the year 2014 EBLT was quite active at both national and international level. At national level our efforts were directed at lobbying on behalf of the Frisian radio broadcaster Omrop Fryslân who is threatened, together with all regional broadcasters, with severe cutbacks. Further, the EBLT followed, observed and advised member organisation SONT in their efforts for recognition for Low Saxon in part III of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.

The Bildts language has requested a place in the Unesco Atlas of Endangered Languages, a process that started with a lobby of EBLT in 2013 when EBLT visited the municipality of Het Bildt and spoke with several council members. Municipality Het Bildt is striving for recognition for the Bildts language in part II of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Papiamentu strives towards full recognition of Papiamentu in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for National Minorities. On the 28th of March Papiamentu organisation SPLIKA organised a conference about this issue in The Hague/Den Haag. Onno Falkena, the president of EBLT, was one of the speakers at this conference.

EBLT welcomed the language law '*Wet gebruik Friese taal*', which came into effect in 2014. It is a first step towards a better protection of the Frisian language and culture. However, we remain critical because of the limited scope of the new law. According to the new law Frisian is protected in public administration and court, but the domains of education and media require further legislation. The EBLT has regularly contact with Dingtiid, the advising body on matters regarding Frisian of the ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations.

At international level EBLT closely followed the European Elections and keeps regularly contact with several Dutch EP-members. The EBLT was pleased that for the first time this century a Frisian speaker, Jan Huitema from Makkinga/Makkingea, managed to conquer a seat in the European Parliament. When in November it seemed that the Intergroup for multilingualism had little change of continuation the EBLT started a lobby amongst Dutch EP-members, explaining them the importance of this Intergroup. This lobby contributed to its continuation and Dutch EP-member Jan Huitema became a member of the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages of the European Parliament.

EBLT agenda in 2014

1. 21 January 2014: Oeds Westerhof addressed the January meeting of the general assembly of EBLT, about *Kulturele Haadstêd 2018*.
2. 21 February 2014: The EBLT presented together with Slieker Film and Mercator Research Centre the movie *Són bojós, aquests catalans!?! Nuvere lju dy Katalanen* in the movie theatre of Slieker Film in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden. The movie was provided with Frisian subtitles for the occasion of International Mother Tongue Day. The movie (with Frisian subtitles) is available on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7-8jwR9Cj68&feature=youtu.be>).
3. 7 March 2014: Letter to the minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations regarding the deadline of March 1st for the government of The Netherlands to provide the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe with a report on their accomplishments concerning the agreements in the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. In this letter the EBLT offered their help to the government, for example to provide input for the report.
4. 17 March 2014: Meeting with the new *Orgaan foar de Fryske Taal*, an organisation of the ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations that advises the ministry on matters concerning Frisian.
5. 28 March 2014: Conference of member organisation SPLIKA about the Dutch Antilles and the position of the Papiamentu language. Our president, Onno Falkena, gave a presentation about the EBLT and offered SPLIKA full-membership, which they gratefully accepted.
6. 11 April 2014: Meeting with Pieter Heerma, Member of the Dutch Parliament for CDA, about the position of Omrop Fryslân, Frisian, Low Saxon, and about the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages.
7. 8 May 2014: Debate of the European Elections with potential members of the European Parliament. The EBLT discussed with them about culture and the protection and promotion of regional and minority languages.
8. 14 May 2014: Klaas Sietse Spoelstra addressed the May/Spring meeting with the general assembly of EBLT, about the *Orgaan foar de Fryske Taal*.
9. 4 June 2014: EBLT provided information on bilingual language policies of municipalities in Fryslân to SPLIKA as examples of 'best practices' to be used in advising the government of Bonaire.
10. 4-6 June 2014: GA of the NPLD. During the General Meeting (June 5th) the EBLT offered NPLD-president Jannewietske de Vries a bilingual road sign, which refers to the EBLT's

ambition for more visibility of Frisian in the street. During that meeting Froukje de Jong-Krap became a standby-member of the Steering Committee.

11. 6 September 2014: Meeting with the general assembly of EBLT in the Low Saxon region, i.e. at the Erfgoedcentrum in Doetinchem. The Erfgoedcentrum informed the EBLT on their activities concerning the Low Saxon language.
12. 18 September 2014: Attendance of the presentation of the new *Orgaan foar de Fryske Taal*, from now on called *Dingtiid*.
13. 25 September 2014: European Language Day: EBLT organised in collaboration with Mercator Research Centre, Afûk, Arriva and Friesland Pop a Frisian/Dutch concert of Wiebe Kaspers and Florian den Hollander at the bus station in Leeuwarden and at secondary school CSG Liudger in Waskemar. This school got a certification for trilingual education this year.
14. 26 September 2014: Lysbeth Jongbloed addressed the Fall meeting of the general assembly of EBLT, on the use of Frisian in social media. During this meeting Onno Falkena resigned according to the regulations, Froukje de Jong-Krap became interim president of the EBLT.
15. 6 October 2014: Letter to the political parties in Fryslân with recommendations on multilingualism for their political programs for the provincial elections in 2015.
16. 22 October 2014: Letter to members of municipality council of Weststellingwerf to protest against cutbacks for our member organisation Stellingwarver Schrieversronte. At October 23th Onno Falkena informed the political parties in Weststellingwerf about the position of Low Saxon in the Netherlands and the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. This was not without effect. The decision about eventual cutbacks in the future on the language budget was postponed.
17. 29 October 2014: Letter to the Provincial Council and Provincial Executives of the province of Gelderland to protest against cutbacks for Erfgoedcentrum Achterhoek en Liemers in Doetinchem. This letter received a lot of attention in the media in Gelderland.
18. 5 November 2014: Letter to the members of the Dutch House of Representatives and to the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, Sander Dekker, to call for more independence for the Frisian broadcaster Omrop Fryslân and point them towards the special position of the Frisian language.
19. 19 November 2014: Letter to all Dutch members of the European Parliament asking them to vote for the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages of the European Parliament. Our lobby contributed to the continuation of this intergroup. Dutch EP-member Jan Huitema is now member of this Intergroup.

Attendances at several meetings, e.g. EU-Netwerk Noord-Nederland, Tresoar, NHL, RuG, SPLIKA, etc.

Contact, and several conversations, with both the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) and the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD), regarding future co-operation.

Invitations by the Mercator Research Centre were sent to members of EBLT for several of their conferences. Furthermore, the EBLT has regularly contact with EP-member Jan Huitema who is also a representative of the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages.

The general assembly of EBLT met three times in 2014; in Drachten (winter meeting), in Ljouwert/ Leeuwarden (spring meeting), and in Aldeberkeap/Oldeberkoop (fall meeting).

In January 2014 the Board of EBLT consisted of Onno Falkena (president), Ina Kuipers (treasurer), and Froukje de Jong-Krap, Henk Bloemhoff, Hein Jaap Hilarides, and Tryntsje van der Veer as general board members. In March Fokke Jagersma joined the board as general board member. In April Hein Jaap Hilarides (general board member) left the board. In September Onno Falkena (president) left the board. He remained involved as advisor. Froukje de Jong-Krap replaced him as interim-president. Jelske Dijkstra was the secretary of EBLT in 2014.