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Letter of Support for the NFDI-initiative Text+: Language- and text-based Research Data Infrastructure

Dear Professor Hinrichs,

The Association of Low German Language Research (German: “Verein für niederdeutsche Sprachforschung”, VndS) explicitly supports the initiative “Text+”, whose focus and goals correspond to a great extent with the scientific focus and competences of our members. The VndS currently has about 350 members from Germany and from several European and non-European countries. The linguists and literary scholars who make up the association work from different angles on the structure, dialectal segmentation and history of the Low German language as well as on historical and current Low German literature. A language and text-based data infrastructure, such as the one which is supposed to be built up in “Text+”, is of central relevance to the work of the VndS. The key areas of data preparation defined by the consortium – digital text collections, editions and dictionaries – have long been a central focus of our members’ research activities. Digitalisation thus plays a central role in our research areas.

In the area of *Dictionaries*, a first step has already been taken with the creation of the “Plattdeutsch-Hochdeutsches Wörterbuch für Ostfriesland” (<https://www.platt-wb.de>); a further digital dictionary (“SASS Plattdeutsches Wörterbuch”) is about to be completed. A crucial desideratum is, however, the digitalisation of the traditional dialect dictionaries of Low German, which are fundamental for dialectological work. For this, an infrastructure such as “Text+” would be of great help, and, vice versa, the respective working groups within “Text+” could profit from the longstanding experience and expertise of the members working within the Northern German dictionary offices. This also applies to

the project of an etymological dictionary of Low German in the form of a databank, which is currently being discussed about within the association.

Many members of the VndS, moreover, possess substantial expertise in the area of *Edition Philology*, from which the project "Text+" could profit. Members of the association are and have been editing numerous historical sources in the book series "Niederdeutsche Studien", "Beiträge zur niederdeutschen Philologie" and the newly-founded series „Mittelniederdeutsche Bibliothek“, with which – after their appropriate preparation – the already existing "Referenzkorpus Mittelniederdeutsch/Niederrheinisch (1200-1650)" could be expanded step by step. Further corpora are being built up at the moment, for instance the "Corpus of Historical Low German" (University of Gent) as well as the Middle Low German corpus in the project "Interaktive Grammatikanalyse historischer Texte" (University of Paderborn).

A comprehensive collection of current *Language Recordings* from Northern Germany has been compiled in the large-scale research project "Sprachvariation in Norddeutschland" of the German Research Foundation (DFG). The corpus has only partially been made public (in the FOLK corpus of the "Datenbank gesprochenes Deutsch" and in the "Korpus norddeutscher Tischgespräche" which was prepared at the University of Münster). A new data environment would facilitate expanding those corpora and making them available for researchers from the areas dialectology, lexicology, onomastics, interactional grammar research or conversational linguistics. Furthermore, first steps have been taken for the development of an annotated corpus of Low German contemporary texts (pilot project "Korpusanalytische Studien zur niederdeutschen Grammatik" at the University of Kiel), which could be expanded in a similar manner and made available for the scientific community.

For the research activities of the VndS and its members, it will become more and more important to resort to comprehensive digitalised corpora of written and spoken Low German. For this reason, we very much welcome the efforts of the initiative "Text+" and would be glad to pass on our special expertise in these areas in corresponding working groups or in the form of training for junior scientists (e.g. as part of the annual specialist conference of the VndS).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Elmentaler', written in a cursive style.

M. Elmentaler