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on endangered European languages and linguistic diversity in the European
Union
(2013/2007(INI))

Committee on Culture and Education

Rapporteur: François Alfonsi

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United in diversity

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on endangered European languages and linguistic diversity in the European Union (2013/2007(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to the Commission’s Euromosaic study, which establishes that European languages are dying out because the measures in force cannot protect them,
- having regard to the UNESCO Convention of 17 October 2003 for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which covers oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage,
- having regard to UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger,
- having regard to the resolution of the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of 18 March 2010 entitled ‘Minority languages – an asset for regional development’ (301/2010)¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 September 2008 entitled ‘Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment’ (COM(2008)0566),
- having regard to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning²,
- having regard to the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on protecting and developing historical linguistic minorities under the Lisbon Treaty³,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 21 November 2008 on a European strategy for multilingualism⁴,
- having regard to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (148/1992),
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996),
- having regard to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995),
- having regard to its resolution of 14 January 2004 on preserving and promoting cultural diversity: the role of the European regions and international organisations such as

¹ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1671947&Site=DC>

² OJ L 394, 30.12.2006, p. 10.

³ OJ C 259, 2.9.2011, p. 31.

⁴ OJ C 320, 16.12.2008, p. 1.

UNESCO and the Council of Europe⁵,

- having regard to its resolution of 14 January 2003 on the role of regional and local authorities in European integration⁶, which refers to linguistic diversity in Europe,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A7-0000/2013),
- A. whereas the objective of safeguarding each and every facet of the European Union’s cultural and linguistic heritage has been bolstered under the Lisbon Treaty;
- B. whereas linguistic and cultural diversity is one of the fundamental principles of the European Union, as enshrined in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which reads: ‘The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity’;
- C. whereas all of Europe’s languages are equal in value and worthiness, form an integral part of its cultures and civilisations and contribute to the enrichment of humanity;
- D. whereas all languages, including those which are endangered, reflect historical, social, cultural and ecological knowledge and skills that form part of the richness of the European Union;
- E. whereas UNESCO, in its Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, points out that a language is endangered if it fails to fulfil or scores poorly in relation to one or more of the following scientifically-identified criteria: intergenerational language transmission; absolute number of speakers; proportion of speakers within the total population; usage in various public and private contexts; response to new media; availability of materials for language learning and teaching; governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use; community members’ attitudes towards their own language; type and quality of documentation;
- F. whereas there are therefore many traditional European languages throughout the EU that should be regarded as being endangered: in the High North, in Atlantic areas in northern and southern Europe, in the Alps, in the Pyrenees, in the Mediterranean, in northern Europe, in central Europe and in European territories overseas;
- G. whereas, just like biodiversity in nature, the diversity of European languages and cultures is part of the living heritage that is vital for the sustainable development of our societies, and whereas they should therefore be safeguarded and protected against any risks of extinction;
- H. whereas linguistic diversity makes a positive contribution to social cohesion by boosting self-esteem, and whereas linguistic diversity fosters access to culture and contributes to creativity and to the acquisition of intercultural skills, especially in border areas;
- I. whereas the notion of linguistic diversity in the European Union embraces not only

⁵ OJ C 92 E, 16.4.2004, p. 322.

⁶ OJ C 38 E, 12.2.2004, p. 167.

official languages, but also co-official languages and languages that are not officially recognised within the Member States;

- J. whereas, where European languages are concerned, special attention ought to be paid to those that are in danger of dying out, given the urgent nature of the situation they are facing;
 - K. whereas children who are bilingual from the start have a natural skill that they can use to learn more languages later on, and whereas linguistic pluralism is an advantage for young Europeans;
 - L. whereas, over the last two multiannual financial framework periods (2000-2007 and 2007-2013), European funding for these languages has been cut drastically, and whereas this has added to their problems;
1. Calls on the European Union and the Member States to pay more attention to the extreme danger that many European languages are in, and to commit wholeheartedly to a policy of protection and promotion that is up to the job of preserving the diversity of the Union's linguistic and cultural heritage by supporting ambitious protection policies within the language communities concerned;
 2. Calls on the Commission and the Council to adapt EU policies and programmes so as to support endangered languages and linguistic diversity using EU financial support tools for the period between 2014 and 2020, including: programmes on education and training, youth and sport, the culture and media programme, the structural funds (cohesion fund, ERDF, ESF, European territorial cooperation, EARDF) and all instruments designed to promote new technologies and multimedia platforms;
 3. Takes the view that the European Union should support a language policy that enables children to acquire two mother tongues from the very earliest age; points out that such a programme would, as all linguists maintain, help children learn additional languages later on, and that it would offer speakers of traditional languages practical support in revitalising intergenerational language transmission in areas in which it is dwindling;
 4. Notes the Commission's multilingualism programmes; takes the view that promoters of projects connected with minority languages must be able to take advantage of the opportunities they offer, and, given that language communities fighting for the survival of endangered languages often consist of small groups of people, urges the Commission not to deem programmes involving these communities ineligible for funding on the grounds of low levels of financial commitment;
 5. Takes the view that a language revitalisation policy is a long-term effort that must be based on a diverse, coordinated schedule of activities in various fields such as the media, the arts, education (including pre-school education) and in all areas of public life; takes the view that support should be provided for the drawing-up of such schedules, for exchanges of good practice among language communities, and for the introduction of assessment procedures;
 6. Calls on the Commission to provide constant support, via its various programmes, for

transnational networks and European-level initiatives and activities that are designed to promote endangered languages, and emphasises that active participation is needed in order to ensure that UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger remains a permanent fixture;

7. Calls on the Commission to support both pilot projects that help promote endangered languages and action plans drawn up by the language communities themselves;
8. Draws attention to the useful 'adum.info' website that provides information on EU programmes under which funding is available for projects that promote minority and endangered languages, and calls on the Commission to issue another call to update the website to include the new programmes for the period between 2014 and 2020, and to provide more information on this subject, especially for the attention of the language communities concerned;
9. Calls on the Commission to open up the literary translation strand of the Creative Europe programme to all languages, including those that are not recognised in the Member States;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.