

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

Session document

11 December 2001

B5-0815/2001

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Oral Question B5-0537/2001

pursuant to Rule 42(5) of the Rules of Procedure

by Barbara O'Toole and Eluned Morgan

on behalf of the PSE Group

on minority languages

European Parliament resolution on minority languages

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the oral question to the Commission tabled on 6 December 2001 by Eluned Morgan and Barbara O'Toole on behalf of the PSE Group (B5-0537/2001),
- A. recognising the good work the European Commission has done since 1982 for regional and minority languages, despite this being limited due to the lack of a legal basis,
- B. congratulating the Council and the Commission on a successful year in promoting the European Year of Languages, and particularly pleased with the active participation of the regional or minority language communities across the European Union,
- C. congratulating the Belgian Presidency on the Council Resolution on linguistic diversity and language learning, but disappointed at the absence of references in that resolution to regional or minority languages, whilst noting, however, that the resolution does not exclude regional or minority languages,
- D. recognising the important contribution lesser-used language communities will be able to make in the context of the debate on the future of Europe,
- E. endorsing previous European Parliament resolutions on regional or minority languages, including those on:
 - * a Community charter of rights of ethnic minorities (Arfe, 1981)
 - * measures in favour of minority languages and cultures (Arfe, 1983)
 - * languages and cultures of regional and ethnic minorities in the European Community (Kuijpers, 1987)
 - * the situation of languages in the Community and the Catalan language (Reding, 1991)
 - * linguistic minorities in the European Community (Killilea, 1994),
- F. disappointed at the Council's lack of interest in the 40 million citizens - representing approximately 60 language groups in the European Union - who speak regional or minority languages,
- G. disappointed at the lack of progress in ensuring that culture in the European Union is dealt with on a majority voting basis, and taking the view that it should be moved from Article 251 to Article 252, which requires a qualified majority,
- H. lamenting the fact that Court of Justice judgment C-106/96 of 12 May 1998 meant that the budget line for minority languages, which had been in existence for around 20 years, had to be suspended,
- I. disappointed that the Commission has failed to present a programme for minority languages,

- J. whereas digital technology has major implications for minority and regional languages – in terms of technology being used to facilitate language choice,
- K. whereas research has shown there to be a close link between tourism, inward migration and language decline,
- L. whereas the Committee of the Regions, in its the opinion on the 'Promotion and Protection of Regional and Minority Languages' (June 2001), believes that 'any action of the European Union in the domain of language policy should be guided by the aims of conservation, intergenerational transmission, use, promotion and quality of regional and minority languages' and deems that 'language permeates all aspects of people's lives. Linguistic issues are of a comprehensive and all embracing nature and as such should be present in all areas of policy formulation and implementation',
 - 1. Demands a direct legal basis for the use of regional or minority languages, with a view, in the long term, to securing a multi-annual programme for regional or minority languages;
 - 2. Demands that the European Union supplement and initiate action in Member States, wherever the protection of autochthonous regional or minority languages is inadequate or non-existent;
 - 3. Demands a review of national and regional provisions and practices that discriminate against regional or minority languages;
 - 4. Encourages Member States to sign, ratify and comply with Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
 - 5. Encourages the Commission to make language a cross-cutting theme and to ring-fence money for regional or minority languages within relevant mainstream programmes, and calls on Directorates-General to keep data showing how much money is spent on regional or minority languages, in particular in relation to the Structural Funds, and to report on how effective this money is;
 - 6. Requests that, with reference to enlargement of the European Union, the Council and the Commission require accession countries to respect regional or minority languages and cultures and fully comply with Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and also to adhere to paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 of the Annual Reports on Progress Towards Accession;
 - 7. Insists that the Commission spend the money allocated to regional or minority languages in the 2002 budget in the context of the agreement on preparatory actions that was reached in 1998, and that it ensure that it is put to good use;
 - 8. Calls on the Commission to build on the work done as part of the European Year of Languages (2001) and to present a multi-annual programme on languages before the end of 2002, including ring-fenced money for regional or minority languages;

9. Calls on the Council to ensure that implementation of Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is on the agenda of the next Intergovernmental Conference;
10. Calls on the Commission, along with the European Parliament, to provide information direct to the citizens of the European Union in regional and minority languages;
11. Calls on the Commission and Council to encourage the use of regional and minority languages in the private sector in terms of marketing, advertising and branding, and in terms of enhanced employment opportunities, normalising the use of such languages in this domain;
12. Calls on the Commission and Council to encourage niche marketing, targeting specific audience segments in a way intended to demonstrate cultural awareness and support for regional and minority languages, and going for the 'feel good factor';
13. Calls on the Commission to ensure that minority languages are included fully in all Commission new technologies programmes, such as eContent;
14. Calls on the Council and Commission to take note of the Committee of the Regions' opinion on the 'Promotion and Protection of Regional and Minority Languages' (June 2001), in particular the points mentioned in recital L above;
15. Calls on the Commission to encourage equality of opportunity for regional and minority languages in the use of technology which is widely used for majority languages (such as language translation software), in order to enable the transfer of good practice;
16. Calls on the Commission and Council to encourage language initiatives and community ownership of regional or minority languages at a local level, and to be a catalyst for linguistic self-sufficiency;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the Committee of the Regions.