

WRITTEN QUESTION P-6204/08  
by Iles Braghetto (PPE-DE)  
to the Commission

Subject: European recognition of Venetian as a regional language

With 23 official languages, three alphabets and some 60 other languages spoken daily, the European Union is today one of the world's most linguistically complex communities. It is reckoned that some 40 million European Union citizens regularly use a regional or minority language handed down from one generation to the next, alongside the official language(s) of the state in which they live. The usual definition of a regional or minority language is the one set forth in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), an international treaty which was drawn up under the auspices of the Council of Europe and opened for signature on 5 November 1992. It entered into force on 1 March 1998 and has been adopted by many EU Member States. According to the Charter, a minority language is first and foremost one which clearly differs from the other languages spoken by the rest of the population in a state. The Charter outlines the concept of 'languages that are traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population and (...) different from the official language(s) of that State.' In 2006, the European Parliament adopted a report by Bernat Joan i Mari which pointed out that respect for linguistic and cultural diversity was a fundamental principle of the EU, as recognised also in Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which states that: 'The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity'. Venetian is the language widely and currently spoken in the Veneto region, which has four million inhabitants, as well as in countries of large-scale emigration such as Brazil and Argentina, to the point where it has been included as a language worthy of promotion and protection under Regional Law No 8 of 23 April 2007. It is a language imbued with history and culture, which uses words and expressions of its own handed down from one generation to the next. A number of dictionaries of the language have also been compiled (Venetian-Italian, Venetian-English, Venetian-Romanian).

1. What procedure should be followed to enable Venetian to be recognised by the European Union as a regional language, and as such to be promoted and protected?
2. Does the Commission think that the considerations outlined above meet the basic criteria for such a procedure to be launched?
3. How long does it take on average from the beginning of the recognition procedure until the final decision is taken?