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Motion

Advocating for linguistic diversity to make Europe stronger

Signed by: National Youth Council of Catalonia (CNJC)

Co-signed by: Spanish Youth Council (CJE), World Esperanto Youth Organisation (TEJO), Youth of European Nationalities (YEN)

Introduction

Europe is home to a rich and diverse linguistic landscape, encompassing languages belonging to different language families and spoken by communities of very different sizes and with different legal statuses. This diversity includes official, national, regional and minority languages, as well as languages that do not enjoy official recognition, including both spoken and sign languages. These languages are repositories of unique cultural identities, histories, knowledge and traditions and constitute an essential part of Europe's cultural heritage.

Linguistic diversity should not be seen as an obstacle to European cooperation or integration. On the contrary, respecting and promoting Europe's linguistic diversity strengthens democratic participation, social cohesion, cultural exchange and mutual understanding. A Europe that protects linguistic diversity is a Europe in which citizens can fully participate in social, cultural, educational and democratic life, regardless of the language they speak.

The European Union already recognises linguistic diversity as a fundamental value. Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union establishes that the Union shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights states that the Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. These commitments should be reflected not only in declarations, but also in concrete policies and resources.

However, the level of protection and recognition of Europe's languages varies considerably across countries and regions. Speakers of languages that are not among the 24 official languages of the European Union may face barriers when accessing public information, participating in European programmes or institutions, accessing cultural content, or making their voices heard in democratic processes. At the same time, some European languages face serious challenges to their intergenerational transmission and their use in education, public life, media and digital environments. These inequalities and challenges are particularly evident in the case of Catalan, a language with over ten million speakers and official status in its territory. Despite its demographic, political and cultural importance, Catalan still lacks full official status within EU institutions.

Young people have a particularly important role in the future of Europe's linguistic diversity. Language is closely connected to young people's participation in education, culture, mobility, democratic life and social interaction. Young people should be able to participate fully in European society without having to abandon or reduce the use of their own language. At the same time, youth exchanges and European cooperation can provide opportunities for young people to discover, learn and use other European languages.

Digitalisation is also transforming the way languages are used, learnt and transmitted. Social media, online platforms, video games, audiovisual content, artificial intelligence and digital language technologies increasingly shape young people's linguistic environments. For languages like Catalan, which struggle for visibility on global digital platforms and streaming services despite a strong creator community, ensuring their presence in these spaces is critical. Languages that lack sufficient digital resources, technological support or online content risk being further disadvantaged. Linguistic diversity must therefore also be protected and promoted in the digital sphere.

The protection of linguistic diversity is particularly important for languages whose transmission and use are declining. The European Parliament has previously highlighted that linguistic diversity encompasses not only official languages but also regional, national and non-officially recognised languages, and has called for proactive measures to support endangered languages, including through education, youth, culture, media and digital technologies.

Linguistic diversity is therefore not only a matter of cultural heritage. It is also a matter of equality, democratic participation, social cohesion, cultural expression and the ability of young people to fully participate in European society. The promotion of linguistic diversity should therefore also be understood as an important part of European identity, standing in contrast to the hostile stances towards

linguistic diversity found in other parts of the world.

Action taken in Europe

The Council of Europe has developed an important framework for the protection of Europe's linguistic diversity, notably through the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**, adopted in 1992. As of September 2026, 25 states have ratified the Charter. However, several Council of Europe member states have not yet done so, and the level of implementation and protection differs significantly between countries and languages.

The European Union has also supported linguistic diversity through its legal framework and through programmes such as Erasmus+ and Creative Europe. These programmes have supported language learning, mobility, cultural cooperation, translation and the creation and dissemination of cultural content. Furthermore, initiatives such as the EU Cultural Compass reinforce this commitment by explicitly reaffirming cultural and linguistic diversity and highlighting the protection of Europe's languages as core priorities.

The Conference on the Future of Europe also demonstrated the relevance of linguistic diversity to European citizens. Its final proposals included a call for additional protection for minority and regional languages, highlighting the need to strengthen their preservation and promotion.

There are also successful examples of language revitalisation and promotion across Europe. Language communities have developed innovative approaches in education, public administration, media, cultural production and digital environments. These experiences demonstrate that effective language policies can contribute to the vitality and visibility of languages and can provide valuable models for other communities.

However, important challenges remain. Existing European mechanisms do not provide the same level of protection to all languages, and many language communities continue to face difficulties in accessing funding, education, public services, cultural production and digital technologies in their language.

In particular, the development of artificial intelligence and other language technologies adds further complexity. Languages that are underrepresented in these technologies risk becoming further marginalised in an increasingly digital society. European policies should therefore ensure that the digital and technological transition contributes to linguistic diversity rather than reinforcing existing inequalities.

As representatives of young people across Europe, the members of the European Youth Forum are committed to maintaining, strengthening and promoting Europe's linguistic diversity and ensuring that young people can actively contribute to its future.

Call to action

With the aim of protecting and strengthening Europe's linguistic diversity and ensuring that all young people can participate fully in European society, the European Youth Forum calls on:

The Member States of the European Union and the Council of Europe

- To recognise and protect the linguistic diversity present within their territories and to ensure that speakers of regional, minority and less widely used languages can use their languages in education, culture, public life and access to public information.

- To sign, ratify and effectively implement the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**, where they have not yet done so, and to strengthen the implementation of the commitments already undertaken under the Charter.

- To develop, where appropriate, national, regional or local action plans for the protection and revitalisation of native languages whose intergenerational transmission or public use is declining.

- To support education systems that enable children and young people to acquire and use their languages, including through multilingual and mother-tongue education where appropriate.

- To ensure that language policies do not result in discrimination or unjustified barriers to participation in public, cultural, educational or democratic life.

- To support requests from other Member States for the increased use of additional languages within the institutions of the European Union, in accordance with the applicable institutional procedures, including languages such as Catalan.

The European Union institutions

- To strengthen the implementation of the commitments contained in the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights concerning cultural and linguistic diversity.

- To develop and fund concrete measures to support European languages that are underrepresented or at risk of losing speakers, including through existing EU programmes in the fields of education, youth, culture, media, research and digitalisation.

- To ensure that EU funding programmes are accessible to smaller language communities and that the administrative requirements of European programmes do not disproportionately disadvantage organisations working in less widely used languages.

- To strengthen opportunities for translation and interpretation and to improve access to European information and participation for citizens who use languages other than the official languages of the European Union.

The Council of Europe and the European Union

- To strengthen cooperation on linguistic diversity and to promote the exchange of good practices between language communities, public authorities and civil society organisations.

- To further promote the **European Day of Languages** as an opportunity to raise awareness of multilingualism, linguistic diversity and inclusion, while providing adequate resources for youth organisations, schools, cultural organisations and local communities to organise activities.

- To improve the collection and availability of comparable data on the situation of European languages, including their intergenerational transmission, presence in education, media and digital environments, and use in public life.

- To reopen discussions in the General Affairs Council and vote to amend Council Regulation No 1/1958, granting Catalan official language-status in the EU to guarantee equal linguistic rights for its millions of speakers.

National Youth Councils and International Non-Governmental Youth Organisations, of the European Youth Forum

- To assess their current language-use policies and consider how their communication and activities can better reflect Europe's linguistic diversity.

- To encourage the use of different languages in their activities and communications whenever possible, including regional and minority languages relevant to their communities.

- To create opportunities for young people to learn about, use and promote Europe's linguistic diversity through youth exchanges, educational activities, cultural events and other forms of participation.

- To support young people from linguistic minorities and communities whose languages are underrepresented in public and European spaces.

- To promote the inclusion of linguistic diversity in youth policy and youth participation processes.

Civil society organisations, educational and cultural institutions and European citizens

- To recognise linguistic diversity as a shared European asset and to promote positive attitudes towards Europe's different linguistic communities.

- To support initiatives that facilitate intergenerational transmission, language learning, cultural production and the use of less widely used languages.

- To encourage intercultural and interlinguistic exchange and to create spaces where young

people can discover and use Europe's diverse languages.

The European Youth Forum believes that linguistic diversity should be understood not as a barrier to European unity, but as one of the foundations of a democratic, inclusive and culturally diverse Europe. Protecting Europe's languages means protecting the communities, knowledge, cultures and identities that contribute to Europe's richness.

A stronger Europe does not require fewer languages. It requires that all Europeans, and particularly young people, can participate in European life while being able to maintain, use and develop their native languages.







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