



**Forum for Minorities: Education, Language and the Human
Rights of Minorities**

European Parliament May 2019

***Public policy objectives and practices for education in
minority languages***

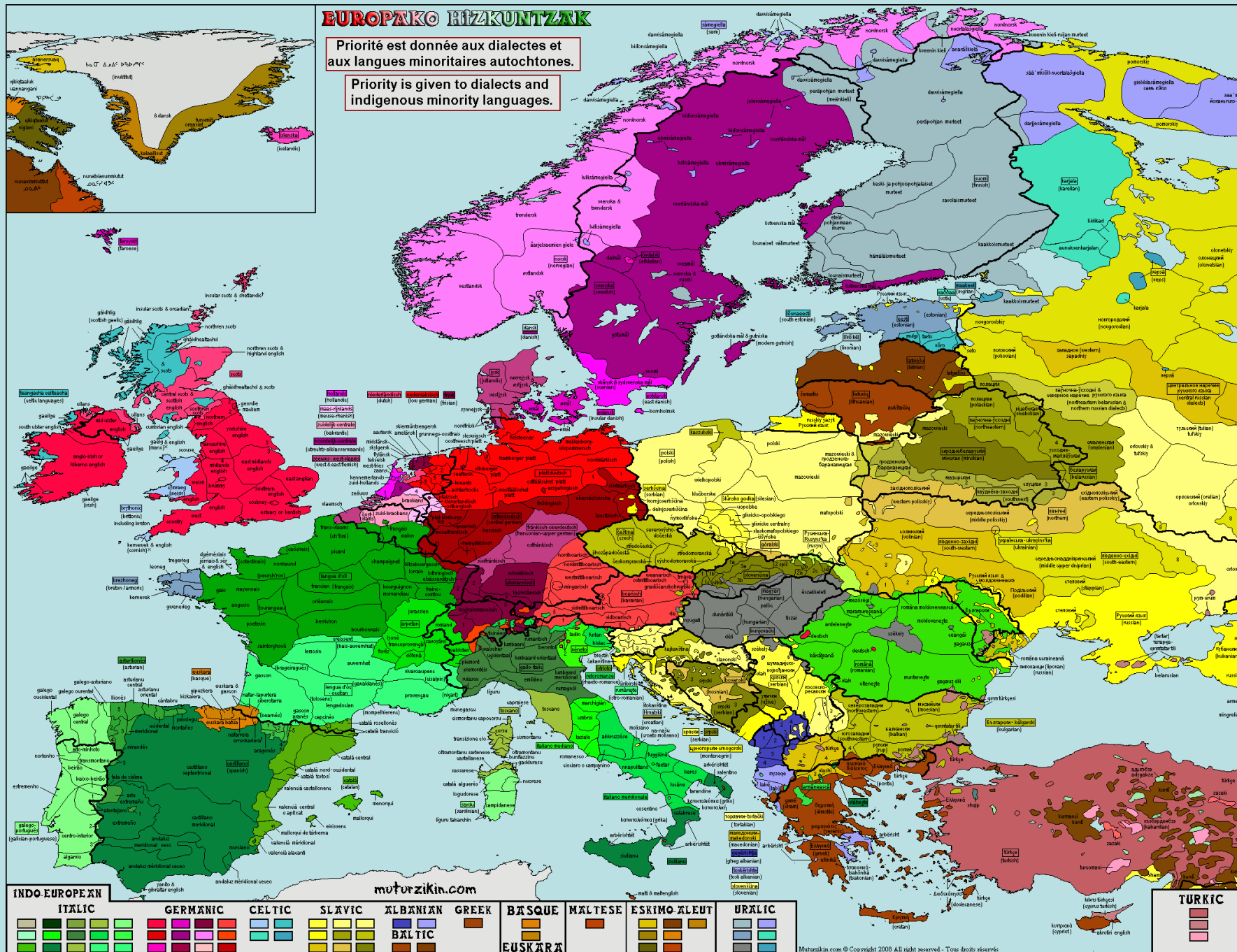
**Dr. Davyth Hicks
ELEN Secretary-General**

- **European Language Equality Network.**
- **Existing standards, ECRML, FCNM.**
- **Donostia Protocol, NGO standard setting.**
- **Domestic legislation.**
- **Successes, Welsh, Catalan.**
- **Challenges, Breton.**
- **Best practices and benefits.**
- **ELEN proposals.**

EUROPAKO HIZKUNTZAK

Priorité est donnée aux dialectes et aux langues minoritaires autochtones.

Priority is given to dialects and indigenous minority languages.



OVERVIEW

- There are around 60 'regional' or minoritised languages (RMLs) in Europe (CoE ECRML figure).
- Around **50 million people, 10%**, in the European Union speak one of these languages.
- RMLs are spoken in nearly all European countries.

ELEN

- Set up in 2012 replacing EBLUL.
- ELEN represent **45 languages with 164 member organisations in 23 European states.**
- ELEN members comprise most of Europe's civil society lesser-used language organisations.
- ELEN provides a direct connection between grass-roots organisations and the European and international institutions.

ELEN's work comprises two main areas

- 1) **Advocacy** work for the protection and promotion of RMLs with a particular focus on linguistic rights.
 - 2) **Project work** where ELEN works with partners on EU funded language projects that act to develop our languages.
- A developing role is to act as a bridge to link civil society with academia as well as governments.

Three pillars for successful language maintenance:

- **Family and community**
- **Educational system**
- **The local state**

“When all three act in concert to reinforce the lesser-used language there is obviously a much greater chance of strengthening that language over the long term..

“When one or more of these supporting pillars is weak it can threaten the long-term vitality of the language.”
(Colin Williams 2012)

Human rights and linguistic minorities, the legal base for RML education

Domestic legislation

Catalan, Welsh, Gaelic, Basque, Galician.

International instruments

Council of Europe ECRML, FCNM, European
Convention on Human Rights;

UN Universal Declaration Human Rights, International
Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International
Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

EU Charter of Fundamental Rights;

OSCE Recommendations.

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Donostia Protocol to Ensure Language Rights

- The new standard-setting tool compiled by European civil society and based on their experiences.
- Protocol recommends a general standard where all RMLs have language immersion education and language maintenance infrastructure in place.



- **Welsh Language Acts (1967,1993)** and the subsequent **2011 Welsh Language Measure**, ensure official status for Welsh, equal status with English, the right to use Welsh with public sector services, and a Language Commissioner to ensure language rights.
- **Section 9 of the Education Act 1996** states that local authorities must “have regard to the principle that pupils are to be educated according to the wishes of their parents,” (including Welsh-medium in Wales).
- **The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013**, places a statutory duty on local authorities to assess the demand for Welsh-medium education in their area through their ‘Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.’(WESPS)
- Note importance of **1988 Education Reform Act**, making Welsh core to the curriculum,
- Welsh becomes a mandatory subject for all in 1990. All schools in Wales which are not teaching through the medium of Welsh (c.75%) must teach Welsh as a subject, now with more emphasis on Welsh usage.

- The 2005 **Gaelic Language Act** enshrines Gaelic as one of the official languages of Scotland, “commanding equal respect” with English, and established Bòrd na Gàidhlig.
- The Act also provides a framework for the creation of Gaelic language plans nationally by Scottish public authorities.
- Backed by the **Education Scotland Act 2016**, which grants “right to request” Gaelic-medium primary education.

Catalan legislation

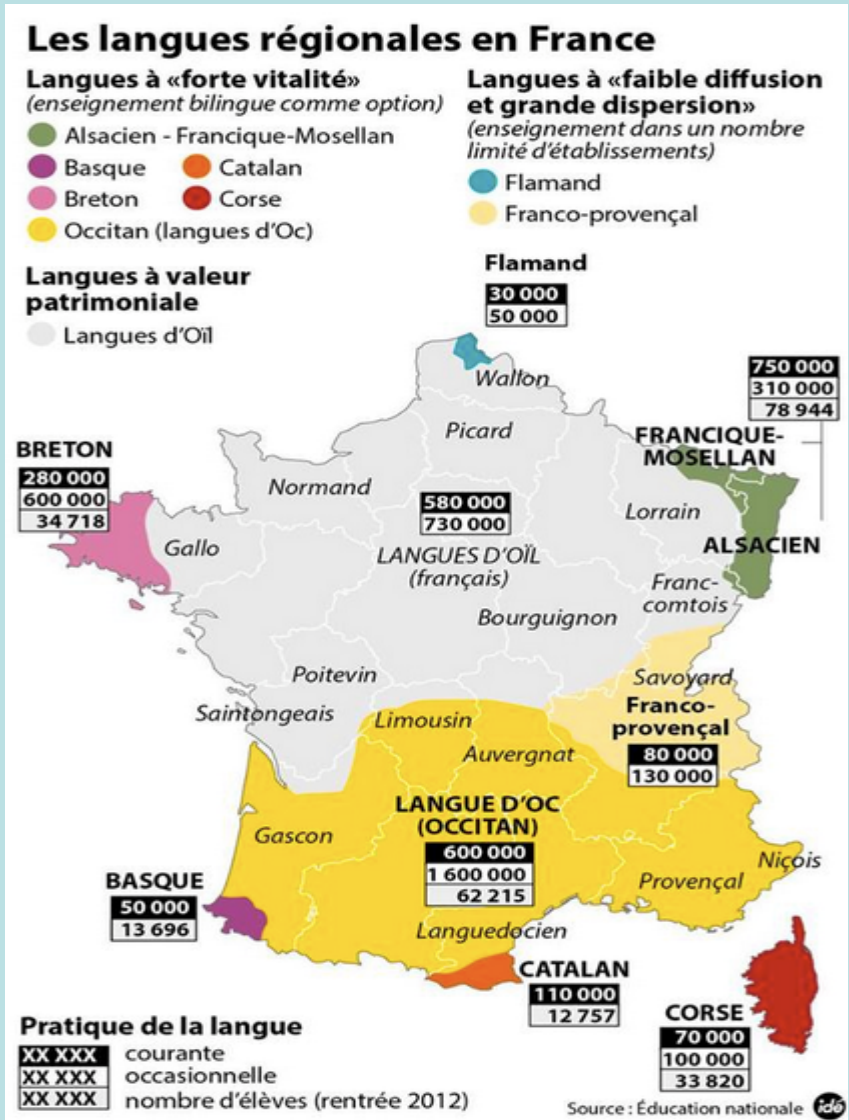
- Gradual introduction of Catalan-medium for all since 1980s.
- **Language Planning Law 1983**, lays foundations for Catalan-medium.
- **Language Planning Law 1998**, Catalan must be used normally as a vehicular language and for learning in non-university education.
- **Education Law 2009**, Catalan is the language normally used as the vehicular and learning language in the educational system.

Languages with or without legislation for education.

- The languages with legislation for education are recovering to various degrees - Welsh, Catalan, Basque, Galician.
- Languages without domestic legislation for education or guaranteeing rights face difficulties, e.g. RMLs in the French state: Breton, Occitan, Alsacian, Corsican, Catalan, Basque, Flemish, indigenous languages.

France, 'regional' languages without legislation

- France has enacted language policies designed to undermine 'regional' languages on its territories.
- France has not ratified ECRML or FCNM, Treaties that must be ratified by new EU Member-States in order to join the EU under the Copenhagen criteria.
- Domestic legislation for French makes it the sole language of the State which acts to exclude other languages from various official domains.



- While Diwan has been successful in offering Breton-medium immersion, the lack of legislation and state support means that it is constantly under threat, despite providing a public service.
- The same is true for other 'regional' language immersion schools in the French state.
- Constant threats undermine revitalization efforts as well as parental and pupil confidence.
- In France there is a need for language legislation that ensures co-official status for each language in its territory as well as legislation for immersion education.

Best Practices and Benefits

- Catalan, Basque, Galician legislation has acted to aid regeneration, and ensure language use.
- Note the Catalan practice of ‘active offer.’
- Note success of Model D Basque-medium.
- Note how legislation, with language AND education acts, underpins their different educational models.

Benefits and added-value from language revitalization

- Cognitive benefits of bilingual education.
- Bilingual schoolchildren have higher grades, lower drop-out rates.
- Health benefits.
- Improved career prospects.
- Regional/ minoritised languages are a unique selling point and act to boost the local economy.
- Social, psychological and spiritual well-being.

Best Practices

Catalan model

Everyone is educated in Catalan-medium in Catalonia. Children learn Catalan and Spanish, resulting in bilingual children and social cohesion.

Note Catalonia's groundbreaking work on integrating migrants.

Welsh model

Everyone obliged to learn Welsh in Wales either through Welsh-medium or as a subject (noting increased emphasis on Welsh since 2013 Report).

Parental choice for Welsh medium.

Welsh-medium pupils are fluent bilinguals.

Best practices – the future

- New proposals (**Deddf Addysg Gymraeg i Bawb**), from Welsh NGO Cymdeithas i'r Iaith Gymraeg, call for Welsh education, in order to reach the government target of 1 million speakers by 2050, to follow the Catalan model where everyone attends Welsh-medium.
- Cymraeg 2050 strategy - national target of increasing each school year group receiving Welsh-medium education from 22% (2015) to 40% by 2050.
- Welsh language impact assessments, 2011 Measure.
- Ensuring language use outside of the classroom, e.g. Basque playground monitors.

ELEN Proposals

Protecting and promoting European linguistic diversity

- Endangered Languages EU Directive, to ensure that all states act to protect their autochthonous languages and ensure RML immersion education. If the EU can protect fish and trees why not European languages?
- Lack of implementation of ECRML/FCNM triggers EU infringement procedure.
- Language discrimination triggers EU infringement proceedings under Charter of Fundamental Rights.
- European Languages Commissioner and linguistic observatory.

ELEN Proposals

EU to support programmes for:

- Comprehensive information to parents on benefits of RML immersion education in all states and their rights to that.
- Comprehensive information to parents on importance of maintaining intergenerational transmission for all European RMLs.

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- <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Eurolang/174907085047>

Eurolang on Twitter

- <http://twitter.com/eurolang>





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The Donostia Protocol to ensure linguistic rights launched in December 2016, <http://protokoloa.eus/>

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