

25 September 2018

CALRE Working Group on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Presentation of the Decalogue for Linguistic Diversity

Brussels, 26 September 2018

Closing session

Speaking notes for Andrew DAWSON

5 minutes, 600 words.

Fastyr Mie

Ta Andrew Dawson yn ennym orrym

Ta mee cummal yns Frodsham, har aynshen ayns Sostyn

Ta poost yn ben Frodsham as haink mee nyn oltey yn choonseil

mais je parle mieux Francais que Manx.

[Translation:

Good afternoon

I'm Andrew Dawson

I live in Frodsham, over there in England.

I married a Frodsham girl and now I'm a member of the council!

But I speak better French than Manx]

And I don't speak much French!

I am pleased to be here as we discuss and celebrate the European Day of Languages and the presentation of the new CALRE Decalogue on Linguistic Diversity.

The European Day of Languages is a Council of Europe initiative, that has been celebrated every year since 2001 on 26 September in almost all of the 47 Council of Europe member states.

I'm here on behalf of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which has its own special interest in languages. The Congress was the inspiration behind the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, which we heard about earlier.

As I hail from the Isle of Man, I am very much aware of these issues, especially as someone who struggles to speak anything of the language of my forebears. I am very aware how important that can be to your sense of self. Your sense of who you are.

I am delighted that, since 23 April 2003, Manx Gaelic is one of the languages protected by the European Charter by the UK - although as the Isle of Man is not part of the UK it is a Crown dependency by the way - that protection amounts to letting the Manx Government continue with their good work! The

Manx language is reviving after having ‘officially died out in the 1970s’ thanks to the renewed interest in it.

I’m delighted that the UK mostly celebrates and supports its minority languages. That said Welsh is the only language in the UK that must be used or available to be used. And you may know that the issue of the Irish Language and the Ulster Scots language in Northern Ireland is highly contentious and is one of many reasons why the Northern Ireland Assembly has now broken Belgium’s previous record for the number of days without a government.

In the midst of all of this stands the European Charter pointing the way forward.

I’m also here as rapporteur of a report that the Congress has just begun to prepare on “The use of languages by local and regional authorities”.

We often find, in the course of the Congress’s work overseeing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, that languages and their use lie at the heart of conflicts between communities and between different levels of government.

Our report will look at some of these conflicts and also at some good examples of the application of Article 10 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which concerns the use of these languages by “Administrative authorities and public services”, notably in the work of local and regional authorities. However we are very conscious that everyone’s experience of language is different, it is very personal and the core of many people’s identities.

That said this is all about democracy too. I'm sure we all want fully engaged citizens fully participating in their democracies at all levels of government. That takes communication and that means languages.

Democracy is impoverished if citizens cannot participate fully because of language barriers.

This Decalogue is timely **ambitious and challenging**, as we celebrate 20 years of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. **We are pushing in the same direction, it remains to be seen which of us is more ambitious.**

Last year we produced a report and recommendation, entitled "Regional and minority languages in Europe today".

In that report we underlined that local and regional authorities should recognise that diversity enriches society, and that the protection of historical regional or minority languages is part of protecting this diversity.

And **it is also** likely to enhance communities from both an economic and cultural perspective.

We invited **those authorities** to take measures, where and when possible, to consolidate and develop regional or minority language teaching and education in these languages in their regions.

This is an encouraging and renewed call to arms, with the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages as a foundation.

Europe's cultural landscape is changing and may I say very much from a UK perspective! One of the ironies of Brexit is that it will make institutions like the Council of Europe and

it's various charters more evident and potentially more important in national and local life in the UK.

We **all** need to be at the forefront of these changes **in Europe**, promoting our shared **inclusive** values, **celebrating and supporting each and every citizen and encouraging their active participation in their and our democracies**. Ensuring **fuller and better use** of the language Charter **would be a good start!**

As a Councillor I cannot finish without asking us all to reaffirm the role that local and regional authorities can and **must** play in protecting, developing and promoting linguistic diversity. I am confident that the activities of this Working Group will make an important contribution to this objective.

Gura mie eu

Slane lhiat

[Thank you

Goodbye]