

## Statement on the occasion of the European Day of Languages 2020

The **Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COMEX)** and the **Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD)** join all Europeans in celebrating this remarkable **European Day of Languages**, mindful of the difficult times through which we are currently living.

Especially now, it is crucial that governments communicate clearly with their populations in their whole linguistic diversity, both as a protective, public health response to the crisis, but also as a reflection of that diversity. To combat exclusion and isolation of communities or individuals, exacerbated during a time of emergency, governments must pursue inclusion all the more. Using regional or minority languages in the public sphere is central to this pursuit.

Across Europe, children are returning to the school following a most disrupted academic year. As they begin learning again, it is vital that the teaching of and in regional or minority languages is not overlooked as governments and schools plan their curricula and make special arrangements in light of the emergency.

These principles and rights are upheld in European institutions which have widely promoted the importance of preserving and promoting our linguistic diversity. The only legally binding instrument worldwide dedicated to the protection and promotion of the most vulnerable languages - the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** - was adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe. However, and whilst recognising the achievements to date, we note that the progress expected is still far from being reached and the tenets of the Charter are yet to be realised in several Member States. Ratification of the Charter should be given serious consideration in those States which have not yet done so.

On the seventieth anniversary of the **European Convention on Human Rights**, it is also opportune to recall its Article 14, expressly prohibiting any discrimination based on “language”.

*“The use of regional or minority languages in the public sphere is a way of foregrounding the diversity of society and promoting inclusion”*, stated **Sietske Poepjes**, Chair of the NPLD and **Vesna Crnić-Grotić**, Chair of the COMEX. Both called on the European institutions and national governments to work towards the fullest and utmost application of the objectives, principles and values of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

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