

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Recommendation 105 (2001)¹ on “Linguistic diversity: a challenge for European cities and regions” Conclusions of the Rovinj Conference, Croatia, 22 and 23 March 2001

The Congress,

1. Recalling its Recommendation 92 (2001)¹ of 31 May 2001 on follow-up action to be taken on the Conference “Cities and regions: cultural diversity – a precondition for a united Europe” (Innsbruck, 11 and 12 December 2000);

2. Taking account of:

– Recommendation 1043 (1986) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the linguistic and literary heritage of Europe and Recommendation 1539 (2001) on European Year of Languages 2001, adopted on 28 September 2001;

– Recommendation No. R (98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states concerning modern languages;

– the opinion of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union on the promotion and protection of regional and minority languages, adopted on 13 June 2001;

3. Considering the different activities organised as part of European Year of Languages 2001;

4. Drawing on the Final Declaration of the Rovinj Conference (22 and 23 March 2001), unanimously adopted by participants on 23 March 2001;

5. Considering:

a. that the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is helping protect the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of Europe by enhancing the importance of multilingualism, in the spirit of the Council of Europe’s Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms;

b. the importance of the Council of Europe’s work in facilitating international co-operation to promote linguistic diversity and defining national and international standards, including the “Common European Framework of Reference”, the “Threshold Levels” and the “European Language Portfolio”;

c. the message and the encouraging results of European Year of Languages 2001 – a joint initiative by the Council of Europe and the European Union – which is aimed at

“celebrating linguistic diversity, promoting multilingualism and encouraging lifelong language-learning”;

d. the work conducted by the Council of Europe’s European Centre for Modern Languages (Graz, Austria) geared to implementing language policies and innovative approaches to modern language learning and teaching;

6. Considers that:

a. the continuing process of globalisation is hampering, or indeed threatening many European languages, particularly regional or minority languages and less commonly spoken languages;

b. linguistic diversity is an essential part of the European cultural heritage and a key factor for its future;

c. multilingual education is vital for continued European co-operation and integration;

d. the linguistic skills and capacities of European citizens are very important in enabling them to participate actively in local, regional, national and international democratic life, and in providing an effective contribution to development of cross-border co-operation among local and regional authorities;

e. language learning serves the cause of peace by encouraging mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for different identities and for cultural diversity;

f. language learning opens up citizens’ minds, bringing them into contact with new cultures and ways of life;

g. knowledge of languages improves opportunities in terms of jobs and mobility in Europe;

h. all languages, whether national, regional, local, minority or immigration based, are equal in dignity;

7. Recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe:

a. invite the Council for Cultural Co-operation (CDCC) to co-operate with the other steering committees concerned (the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Authorities (CDLR) and the European Committee for Social Cohesion (CDCS)) in preparing and implementing programmes of activity to enable immigrants or foreign residents to learn the language of their host country and also to improve the host populations’ knowledge of the migrants’ and foreign residents’ languages;

b. invite the European Commission to:

i. fully implement the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, particularly Article 22, and take account of Opinion CdR 86-2001 adopted by the Committee of the Regions on 13 June 2001;

ii. reinforce its programmes concerning language learning (Socrates, Lingua, Comenius, Erasmus, Grundtvig, Leonardo, Da Vinci), and make its programmes more accessible to persons from non-member countries of the European Union;

iii. involve the CLRAE in its future programmes on the preservation and promotion of minority and regional languages, as well as in the work of any future working unit on minority and regional languages, as proposed by the Committee of the Regions;

c. invite the member states of the Council of Europe to:

i. ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages if they have not yet done so, and establish the legal framework and material and human resources required for protecting and promoting regional or minority languages as valuable components of the European cultural heritage;

ii. encourage the use of the Council of Europe's "Common European Framework of Reference for Languages" as a means of achieving diversified language learning;

iii. facilitate foreign, regional or minority language learning through the new information technologies;

iv. adopt overall policies to promote languages using a non-partisan approach, and treating access to language learning as a human rights issue, with a view to ensuring that speakers of a language other than that of the majority have access to public services using the language of their choice;

v. encourage the formulation of educational policies aimed at facilitating the learning of at least two foreign languages in ordinary schools, and provide for teaching specified subjects in various foreign languages;

vi. introduce programmes in border regions to teach the language of the neighbouring country with a view to promoting cross-border co-operation and in this context, to take into account CLRAE Resolution 259 (1994) on local and regional authorities and transfrontier or transnational school co-operation, and the three model agreements appended thereto;

vii. encourage television networks to broadcast programmes in the original language with subtitles, in order to familiarise viewers, particularly younger ones, with the sound of foreign languages and improve children's ability to read in their mother tongue.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 9 November 2001 (see Doc. CG (8) 24, draft recommendation, presented by Mr L. Roppe and Mr L. Kieres, rapporteurs).