

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 301 (2010)¹ Minority languages: an asset for regional development

1. Linguistic minorities are an asset for the economic and cultural development of a region. They represent an enormous potential that is often neglected. When this potential is properly harnessed, it can stimulate cultural and economic activities and make a strong contribution to the prosperity of a region.

2. Most speakers of regional or minority languages are plurilingual. All studies have shown that plurilingual speakers consistently out-perform their monolingual counterparts. This is both because of the cognitive skills that accompany language learning and also because language skills are increasingly in demand in many sectors.

3. Europe's border regions are home to many linguistic minorities. These minorities are often the key to developing transborder co-operation, which is an important component of European integration. Those regions which have promoted the minority languages in their territories have reaped benefits in terms of growth in their own and neighbouring regions.

4. Europe's regions need to recognise the added value that regional and minority languages represent. They have an important contribution to make to cultural tourism and heritage work.

5. Language is a key aspect of cultural identity. It is central to the collective memory of the population and the process in which complex cultural identities are transmitted. When linguistic minorities are accorded full recognition of their languages and are able to express themselves in the public sphere as in the private, the resulting self-confidence has a knock-on effect both in terms of economic activity and cultural creativity.

6. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157) and the

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) are valuable instruments for protecting and supporting Europe's minority populations and their languages, and they deserve to be better known and systematically implemented.

7. The health of its languages is a key indicator of a region's cultural development and vitality. It is a sign of a mature democracy that languages of all minority groups are given proper status, recognition and support.

8. In the light of the above, the Congress calls on local and regional authorities to:

a. ensure that regions have language policies that adequately protect and promote the autochthonous languages present in the region;

b. encourage greater use of regional and minority languages in education, administration, the media, the economy and social life;

c. encourage regional and minority language competency in public sector employment;

d. provide adequate financing to ensure the provision of regional or minority language education from pre-primary level upwards;

e. encourage plurilingual education which combines education in a national language with education in a regional or minority language;

f. support regional or minority language use in local and regional media and in social and economic life;

g. promote regional or minority languages through a broad range of cultural activities, such as theatre performances, exhibitions, literary festivals and song competitions;

h. encourage and promote transfrontier agreements on language teaching, as well as educational and cultural exchanges, with a view to increasing transborder economic co-operation.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 18 March 2010 and adopted by the Congress on 19 March 2010, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPR(18)3, explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: K.-H. Lambertz (Belgium, R, SOC) and F. Mukhametshin (Russian Federation, R, ILDG).