

No to linguistic discrimination in North Catalonia

Catalan Countries: a nation without a State.

The Catalan Regions have a population of approximately 12 million in a territorial block which occupies an area of 70,000km². They follow the arc of the Mediterranean along 800km of coastline.

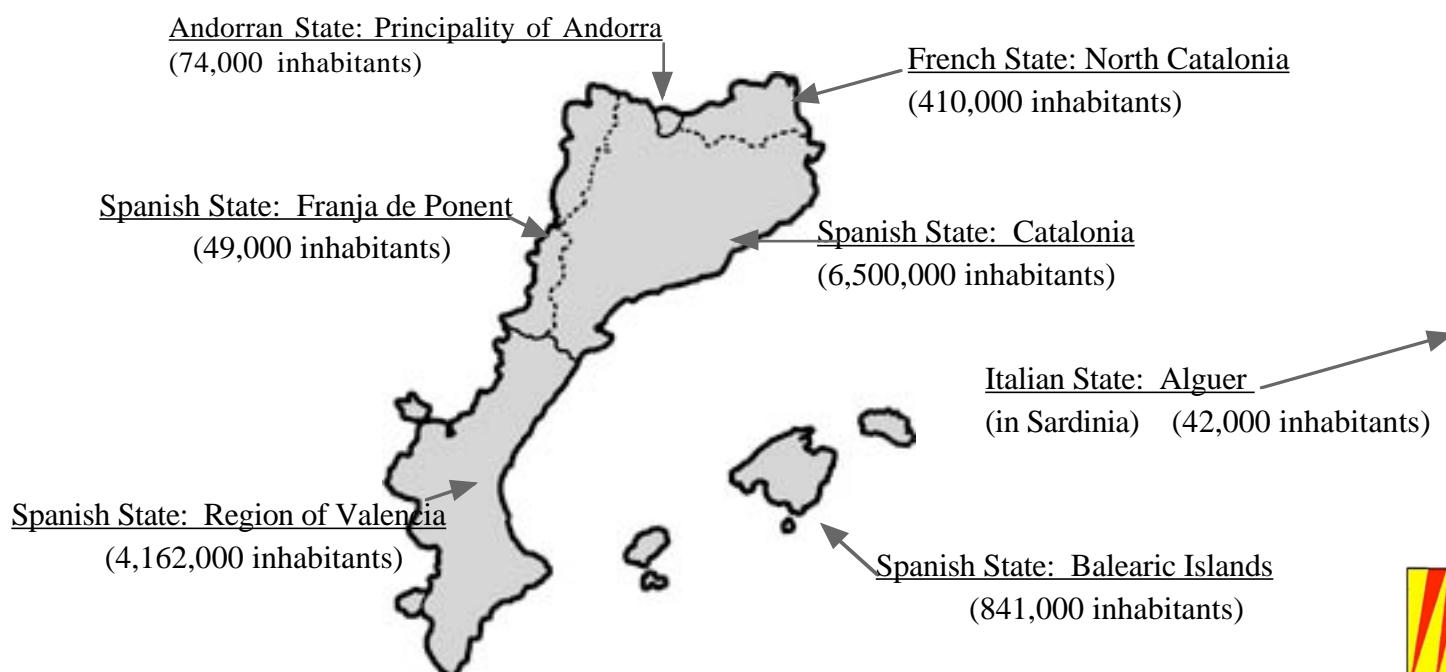
In 1988 the various governments of the autonomous communities and the General Council of the Pyrénées-Orientales celebrated the millennium of the Catalan nation which, for 700 years, had its own state structures.

It lost its administration and its freedom following the annexation of North Catalonia by Louis XIV in 1659 (The Treaty of the Pyrenees) and the conquest of the remaining Catalan territories by his grandson Philippe V from 1709 to 1714. As early as 1700 Louis XIV published an edict which banished the Catalan language from all official use in favour of the French language. It was the beginning of linguistic repression.



Today, the Catalan Countries are dispersed over several states

At the dawn of the 21st Century, some Catalan Countries have re-established either state structures, such as Andorra, or autonomous status where the language is co-official. Apart from Franja de Ponent, only **North Catalonia does not have the right to legal recognition and therefore to any official status.** This situation leads to an **absence of linguistic policy** and leads to a constant fall in the number of Catalan speakers in both absolute and percentage terms.



27 d'abril de 2006 la **FEDERACIÓ** al Parlament Europeu



North Catalonia: An identity denied

For centuries, the linguistic policy of the French State has been the cause of the clear and progressive dwindling of all languages in France, with the exception of French. With a policy of brutal assimilation, the gallicisation of this region, as was the case for all other regions in France, has taken place through the installation of the French language in all institutions: education, the Church, administration, politics and the legal system, mass media, culture and in all forms of social and economic activity. Thus, French has gradually established itself in daily life, to the detriment of Catalan.

The disappearance of Catalan in such essential sectors has limited its use to private and family life, which has resulted in its near extinction. All this gives Catalan an image of backwardness which used to be associated with "cultureless" country folk. Thus, the pathetic situation of the Catalan language in North Catalonia is mainly due to the persecution to which it has been subjected.

Education was one of the principal means of depersonalisation and colonisation of the region. The North Catalan people were prevented from gaining knowledge about their origins because schools never gave them the opportunity to learn the language, history and culture of the region. For example, the transmission of the language from parents to children stops in order to avoid the punishments and humiliation meted out in schools to those who don't speak French.

In North Catalonia, after over three hundred years of belonging to France, institutional support is almost inexistent, demographic influence is minute and the status of Catalan very low. Everything seems to have caused a profound and irreversible process of alienation and transculturation leading to the disappearance of Catalan language and culture. But in recent years, this process seems to have taken a different direction.

The present

The all-pervading power of central government, the influx of civil servants and pensioners from the north of the country, the exodus of a young and educated population in search of better jobs in Paris and other more developed northern regions of France, as well as the desire for assimilation into French culture have not been sufficient to remove Catalan language and culture from North Catalonia.

Various studies have been undertaken over the last few years and the facts and figures show that there is hope. On the one hand there would still seem to be a general and profound feeling of "Catalanity". On the other hand, in spite of all the French State's measures against regional languages, there are still Northern Catalans who have spoken and continue to speak Catalan.

Extracts from Albert Gineste Llobart in www.web.fu-berlin.de/phin - 28/2004)

Facts to react to

Taken from the 1998 Média Pluriel survey
(in bold, figures for 1997, the others are for 1993)

The current situation shows that use and knowledge of the Catalan language has stabilised. Just over one person in two **55%** (64%) says they understand Catalan, but only **24%** (37%) say they understand it perfectly, because most North Catalan people are bilingual, with French being the dominant language. Thus, one person in three **34%** (48%) says they can speak Catalan (70% in the villages but still 40% in Perpignan), but only **17%** say they can speak it fluently because most speakers are subject to linguistic interference and practise code-switching, i.e. they alternate between the



two languages. Furthermore, out of the entire North Catalan population, **39%** (46%) say they can read Catalan (even with difficulty), but only **16%** (23%) with ease. In the population as a whole, only **11%** (10%) say they can write Catalan. nterférences linguistiques et pratiquent le code-switching



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Clear discrimination against the Catalan Language

The Catalan language has no place in the public service domain...

(% presence of the Catalan language with regard to French)

- Motorways: 0%
 - Major roads: 0%
 - Minor roads: 0%
 - Railways: trains 0%
 - Passenger buildings 0%
 - Spoken and written information: 0%
 - Airport: 0%
 - Ports: 0%
 - Hospitals and treatment centres: <2%
 - State administration: 0%
 - Local and Regional administration: 0%
 - Municipal administration: varies from 0% to 35%
- 68% of the population would like bilingual material in French/Catalan to be developed (Média Pluriel)*
More than 50% of municipalities are asking the local and regional administration for the presence of Catalan in the public service domain.



Al nord tenim la república però ens nega la veu pública.

Schools are not responding to the wishes of parents

(% presence of Catalan in schools with regard to the total population concerned)

- State primary schools: bilingual classes 3%
 - Associative schools: 1.2%
 - Secondary education: bilingual classes: <1%
 - Pupils receiving an introduction or initiation to the Catalan language: <15%
- 37% to 63% of parents are asking for bilingual teaching (depending on the survey.)*

The mass media (public service or not) disregard Catalan

(% with regard to hours broadcast or pages printed)

- Television channels TF1/A2: 0% FR3: <1%
- Radio <1% except one associative station broadcasting in Catalan
- Daily Newspapers: <1%
 - Weeklies <5% except one limited circulation weekly in Catalan
- Public service communication magazine : <3%



The Federation for the defence of catalan language and culture

La Federació is a body which federates dozens of associations endeavouring to promote Catalan language and culture in North Catalonia.

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F-66 000 Perpinyà Catalunya-Nord

We want our written and spoken Catalan language

- to be visible in all public service areas in our region
- to be fully recognised, known and taught.

We want to share it with the thousands of people who move to our region every year.

We want to introduce it to the thousands of tourists who visit our region.

We want our language, vouched for by a thousand years of literature, to be present in society today and to morrow in order to avoid enforced marginalisation.



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We ask the European Parliament and MEPs...

The UNESCO Universal Declaration (2001) and the Agenda 21 for Culture adopted in Barcelona (2004) consider cultural diversity, in particular the plurality of languages, to be the main common heritage of humanity.

At a reception in honour of the Amerindian peoples President Chirac bemoaned the “silent tragedy still occurring before our eyes on all the continents: the slow disappearance of minority cultures and languages, wiped out by dominant movements.”

And yet the number of Catalan speakers is constantly falling in North Catalonia. After 350 years of cultural and linguistic discrimination, the survival of our language and culture is at stake.

We ask the European Parliament and MEPs to let it be known that the members of a European nation, the Catalans of North Catalonia, are in the same situation as the Amerindian population.

The French constitution only recognises the existence of the French language on its territory, (article 2 of the French Constitution) and it does not even allow for the concept of “national minority”. Catalan history is not taught. The Catalan language is reduced to the level of “regional language” and has no legal status guaranteeing its protection and development. The declaration of a former French Education Minister a few years ago, according to which “regional languages do not deserve to be considered among the cultural imperatives of the future” aptly illustrates this discriminatory policy.

We ask the European Parliament and MEPs to bring pressure to bear on the French government so that it recognises collective cultural rights.

France which claims to be “the birthplace of the rights of man” has signed but never ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages or Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. And yet France has demanded that all countries who apply to join the European union compulsorily sign and ratify the two documents.

We ask the European Parliament and MEPs to denounce French State doublespeak at every opportunity in the different European Assemblies.

In November 2001, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights roundly condemned “the lack of recognition of minorities in France”. It pointed out that “equality before the law is not always adequate to ensure the equal enjoyment of human rights, and in particular economic, social and cultural rights, by certain minority groups in a country.”

France was requested to ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (She is the only country in Europe along with Turkey not to have signed it), the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages and article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) which maintains that in States where linguistic minorities exist “persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture”

Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognises this same right for children of indigenous origin in article 30, article for which France emitted reserves. .

We ask the European Parliament and MEPs to call on the French government to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the other documents mentioned herein.



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