



Dear Mr. Matt Steinglass, Europe editor of The Economist.

I write to you in the name of Plataforma per la Llengua, an NGO made up of 11,500 members that is recognized by several intellectuals and personalities of the Catalan society which brings together a range of organizations and individuals with the common goal of achieving linguistic normalization of the Catalan language. Among its activities there are the drafting of sociolinguistic studies and a constant follow-up on the situation of Catalan, in collaboration with other organizations, foundations and public agencies.

We contact you to show our disagreement with the publication of your article "[*In Barcelona do it in Catalan—or pay the fine*](#)". We believe that the exposition made in the article is clearly biased in terms of the information that is omitted and the sources presented (several private witnesses who are against the use of Catalan). We think that a journal of your good name should submit the full picture to show the reality and inform millions of readers all over the world who do not necessarily know the sociolinguistic reality of Catalonia and Spain.

With the information presented in the article, it is transmitted to the reader that there is a legal framework favorable to Catalan with regards to legislation affecting businesses, which is well away from the Spanish legal reality. In fact, [companies in Catalonia support 340 regulations forcing them to use Spanish and only 24 obliging to use Catalan](#). The impositions of Spanish in Catalonia are very diverse: any company who wants to register a trademark or patent must translate all the supporting documentation into Spanish, food products must be compulsorily labelled in Spanish but not in Catalan, private security agents are required to speak in Spanish to exercise, betting companies must inform users compulsorily in Spanish (Catalan is optional) and must submit the documentation relating to software mandatorily in Spanish. These are just a few examples, there are many more.

From a qualitative point of view the difference is also very noticeable: while many of the regulations that favor Catalan are not implemented or do so after several warnings are sent to the companies, rules imposing Spanish can mean the withdrawal of products until language deficiencies are amended or penalties up to 1,200,000 € (\$ 1,358,513.96). An example of these sanctions is the one [suffered by the multinational company Ikea](#) , which was fined in 2010 with 8,000 € (\$ 9,057.22) for not labelling various industrial, food and textile products in Spanish. It is also important to note that pharmaceutical companies are required to submit the instructions of their products in Spanish, and if they want to do so in Catalan they must pay a sworn translation so that the prospectus can be approved in Madrid.

Despite the imposing situation of Spanish, the tendency of many companies to use Catalan is good. Currently, 6 out of the 10 most visited websites in the world according to Alexa (Google, Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, Twitter and Live) have their website available in Catalan without any legislation requiring them to do so.

Catalan not only suffers from inequality in the field of companies, but Spain relegates it to a unique situation of marginalization in Europe and in the countries of democratic tradition. Catalan is the only language spoken by more than five million speakers and by more than 10%

of the population of a State that is not official nor in the State or in the European Union. The legislation protecting Catalan is continuously violated without consequences and the Consumption Code, whose linguistic area has not been implemented for the last five years, approved by the Parliament of Catalonia that you mention in your article is an example. Our organization has collected, since 2007, 82 cases of grave linguistic discrimination in the Spanish Public Administration. You can find them on the report [“If you adress me in Catalan I'll suspend the proceedings” Castrated language rights in Europe](#) that was presented on March 17th in the European Parliament. This document describes cases of aggravated and even physical assaults committed by police officers, judges, doctors and other public servants of the Spanish Government because of speaking Catalan.

The problem of the treatment to Catalan has been denounced not only in Catalonia. The Council of Europe has continuously reported several breaches of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Spain as evidenced by the latest [recommendations](#) of the Council of Ministers or the latest [report](#) of the Committee of Experts.

Therefore, we ask the prestigious newspaper The Economist to publish this letter or the information that we provide in order to contrast the partial information that was offered in the mentioned article.

Best regards,



Òscar Escuder i de la Torre,

President of Plataforma per la Llengua