



Barcelona, 13 de desembre de 2023

Dear Madam President Metsola,

As President of Plataforma per la Llengua, an NGO registered in the EU Transparency Register with ID 769898722182-72, with 30 years of experience in promoting and protecting the rights of Catalan speakers in all Catalan-speaking territories and more than 26000 members, making us the largest language NGO in Europe, and on behalf of the organisation, I would like to express, on behalf of our NGO, our concern regarding the biased and manipulative use of the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament in favour of the partisan interests of the Chair of the Committee and the Mission of this Committee, which will take place on the 18th, 19th and 20th of December.

This Committee is using public resources to actively go against the Catalan-speaking minority in the Spanish State, in contravention of the European values as stated in Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union.

It also chooses not to listen to the statements made by the European Commission concerning the open petitions, No. 0858/2017 and No. 0540/2020, on language education in Catalonia, which will be discussed in the following Mission. On both occasions, the EC has stated that “the situation at hand falls within the exclusive competence of Spain, the Commission cannot take action in this matter”¹ and that “the Commission is not competent to examine this case as requested by the petitioner”²,

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PETI-CM-626725_EN.pdf?redirect

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PETI-CM-696628_EN.pdf

respectively. However, that did not matter to the Committee, which debated the first petition not once, not twice, but three times. When, according to Spanish MEP, Javi López, the number of petitions debated by MEPs in the Committee since this petition was submitted is less than 10% of the petitions submitted by EU citizens.

The last time, on the 7th of February 2022, the representative of the European Commission, Rajka Lozo, intervened³ and reiterated the previous statements of the Commission, stating that the Commission would not intervene in the matters of language education in Catalonia, because this was a matter of Member State competence. The use of co-official languages in general, but also for educational purposes, was a competence of the Spanish State, as stated in Art. 165⁴ of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Further evidence of this biased behaviour is that petition 0058/2019, also on language education, was first sent by the Petitions Committee to the LIBE and CULT Committees. It was eventually closed⁵ because the EU Commission concluded that it “did not have further competence to intervene in this petition in the absence of any EU legal framework”.

The biased management of the Committee has a serious impact on the correct exercise of the right of petition, which is an integral right of UE citizens. It causes citizens to lose confidence in the role of the Parliament in guaranteeing the exercise of this right.

And despite the numerous reminders from the European Commission that the language of education is indeed an “internal matter”, that there is no common EU-level framework that could allow the EU to intervene and that the Legal and Policy Officer of the European

³ [Committee on Petitions | European Parliament Multimedia Centre \(europa.eu\)](#) (14:38 – 14:43:40)

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT:en:PDF>

⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PETI-PV-2022-07-13-1_EN.pdf



Commission saw no violation of EU law or the rule of law by the Spanish State; the Committee on Petitions continues to debate and raises, as if it were an issue, the use of a co-official language in education in the region which, according to the Spanish constitutional order, it is co-official. They organised a Public Hearing on behalf of the Committee on Petitions on this issue, where there was no pluralism among the speakers, on the 28th of February 2023. And now they are sending this Mission to Catalonia.

We want to report that the Mission is an absolute affront, and shows very little sign of pluralism, with most of the meetings of the Mission strictly following the political interests of the Chair, Dolors Montserrat. This Mission is being boycotted by the S&D, the Left and the Greens because of its outrageous political use and the lack of competence of the PETI Committee to carry it out.

Catalan is a minoritised language that finds itself in a state of linguistic emergency due to the continuous attacks it receives from people such as the Chair of the Committee on Petitions and those speaking at the Hearing. This has been reported⁶ by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, after his 2019 visit to Spain. He denounced that the Spanish State does not recognise the existence of its linguistic minorities, that it should monitor the hate speech against them on the internet more effectively, and fight against xenophobic intolerance among politicians.

The Rapporteur also called for a change in the judicial framework, which he considered to be discriminatory, as repeatedly stated by the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe, which assesses compliance with the ECRML.

⁶ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/063/88/PDF/G2006388.pdf?OpenElement>

In this same Report, the Rapporteur spoke about the Catalan language education system and stated that “the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and other international organisations have lauded the Catalan immersion approach”. And recommended that the Spanish authorities, including at the level of autonomous communities, “review any measure that might reduce the proportion of teaching that is carried out in the Catalan minority language in public schools”.

In a very recent letter to the Spanish Government⁷, the Special Rapporteur reiterated his “concern that the decisions of the High Court of Justice of Catalonia against the Catalan immersion model, which has been considered very successful by UNESCO and other international commentators, imply less exposure to the Catalan language. The data provided indicate that children in the Catalan immersion programme have the same proficiency in Spanish, mathematics and other academic subjects as children schooled in Spanish, in addition to achieving proficiency in the minority Catalan language”.

He also stated that “reducing the use of Catalan in the successful immersion programme in Catalonia, it is argued, would risk children and pupils from Spanish-speaking backgrounds from not learning Catalan well, as it is a minority language. Moreover, given that Spanish is the majority language in the country, its daily use and exposure are already guaranteed and privileged. It also appears that, in recent years, judicial interpretation and other developments have generally led to increased barriers to the use of minority languages in several public services”.

Ultimately, it shows that if there is an unequal and unfair legal framework and a culture of persecution, it is in the opposite direction to the premise of the Mission. The partisan

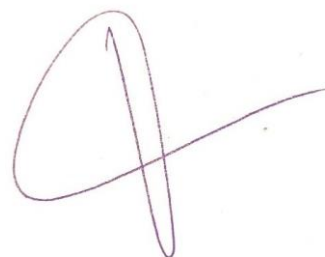
⁷ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28240>

and perverse use of the Committee on Petitions revives the positions of Spanish nationalism and its harassment of linguistic minorities.

In conclusion, it is clear that this Mission is a waste of public funds that belong to the European citizens, due to its lack of competence and its explicit political drive.

In view of all the above, we ask you, as President of the European Parliament, to intervene. Stop the biased and partisan actions of the Committee on Petitions and uphold the rights of linguistic minorities in accordance with the EU Treaties and values.

Yours sincerely,



Òscar Escuder
President of Plataforma per la Llengua