



## **Declaration in relation to the political offensive against the use of Catalan by the authorities of the Kingdom of Spain.**

The SOCS is a scientific society that brings together scholars in sociolinguistics from the Catalan-speaking territories. As such, we have felt that it is our duty to inform the scientific community that the Kingdom of Spain is in breach of several international treaties that concern the protection and respect of cultural and linguistic diversity as well as minority language rights, especially in relation to the Catalan language.

This statement is sent for informative purposes to international scientific societies and journals so that they contribute to disseminate the information and also manifest their concern to international organizations and bodies devoted to the safeguard of human rights and cultural heritage.

### **1. New linguistic persecution in Spain**

Several public institutions of the Kingdom of Spain have launched a political offensive against the Catalan language. The offensive is led by the central government, the regional governments of Aragon, the Balearic Islands and Valencia, as well as some municipalities. In all cases, these policies and the various legislative and administrative initiatives are carried out by the Popular Party, which is one of Spains' two major parties in both the central government and in most autonomous regions and local authorities.

In the Balearic Islands and Valencia, where the Catalan language is compulsory in education, the regional governments now promote a Catalan-Spanish-English trilingual model intended to disrupt the use of Catalan as a medium of instruction in many schools. The Balearic government is exerting pressure on teachers and parents to increase the use of Spanish in the classroom. It has also recently eliminated the requirement of proficiency in Catalan to work in the regional administration. The Valencian regional government pursues the same objective through passive resistance: it presently dispenses only 25% of the demand by families who demand an education in Catalan to which they are entitled to by law.

However, the aspect that displays more blatantly the political intention to undermine the teaching and use of Catalan is the concerted strategy to promote divergent linguistic varieties. In Valencia, the regional government has for years treated "Valencian" as a separate language to the point of banning the use of the term "Catalan" in different contexts and not recognizing university degrees in "Catalan Philology" awarded by Valencian universities or certificates of knowledge of the Catalan language issued by other authorities and schools. On 19 June 2013, the parliamentary Popular group in the Valencian Parliament presented a proposal urging the *Real Academia Española* to change the definition of "*valenciano*" in its dictionary, arguing that it is a language separate from Catalan. In the Balearic Islands, the regional government has declared the intention to scrutinize textbooks to include "Balearic" colloquialisms. In Aragon, the parliament has just passed a language law that proposes a new name for the Catalan



"*Lengua Aragonesa Propia del Área Oriental*" 'Eastern Aragonese Language'. This initiative has resulted in concerted protests among linguists and scholars from around the world<sup>1</sup>.

In 2007, the regional government of Valencia illegally decreed the closure of the broadcasts of TV3, the most widely watched Catalan television channel, in its territory.

Currently, the Spanish Parliament is processing a state-wide educational reform bill that aims to marginalize Catalan from the curriculum in the regions where it is currently on an equal official footing with Spanish (in Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic Islands)<sup>2</sup>.

In Valencia and Aragon, right-wing agitation groups have a long tradition of sabotages to local cultural and political organizations, and assaults and threats to writers and Catalan activists. In recent years reports of police harassment by citizens who claim false accusations and threats for speaking Catalan have increased. In none of these cases policemen have been sanctioned by the Spanish judicial authorities, which extends amongst the population an impression of having no effective legal protection.

## 2. The international community on the situation

The international **academic community** knows that Catalan is the language spoken in the Pyrenees Orientales in France, in the state of Andorra, in the Principality of Catalonia, in the Eastern Aragon Strip, in Valencia, in the Balearic Islands and in the enclaves of Alghero (Italy) and el Carxe (Spain).

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages commits authorities (Articles 7.b and 7.1.e) to respect the geographical area of each language and the relations between the regions in which it is spoken. The Committee of Ministers of the **Council of Europe** (2005<sup>3</sup> and 2008<sup>4</sup>) has recommended Spain to apply a specific legal framework to protect the Catalan and Aragonese languages spoken in Aragon, using exactly these names. In the third report of the Expert Committee (24 October 2012), it called on authorities to maintain the current level of legal protection for Catalan and Aragonese before the current law was passed. In particular, given that Spain must deliver its fourth report on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to the Council of Europe in July 2013, we ask that the Board and its Committee of experts carry out a thorough investigation over the policies undertaken by regional governments regarding the Catalan language. The aforesaid actions also contravene the spirit of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>5</sup>.

We believe that the Kingdom of Spain operates in contravention to the spirit of the fundamental rights to cultural diversity contained in the international legal order. In particular, the Kingdom of Spain operates contrary to **UNESCO's** mission to "create the conditions for dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples, based upon respect for commonly shared values" and "contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information." At the same time, it ignores the



recommendations emanating from the **Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe**, mainly from the Oslo Recommendations<sup>6</sup> and the Recommendations of The Hague<sup>7</sup>.

### 3. Actions

We believe it is necessary that the international community takes a stance in the face of the fact that the Spanish authorities flagrantly pursue the weakening of the linguistic vitality of the Catalan-speaking community through the implementation of policy measures that impede communication between users and the diffusion of cultural production and media in Catalan. At the same time, the existence of groups causing unrest and sabotage in complicity with these policies should be cause for concern.

In view of these developments, we ask scientific bodies and scientific societies of the world to send their requests to **UNESCO** and the **Council of Europe** so that they investigate and, where appropriate, formally condemn the policies that clearly seek to harm the Catalan-speaking community.

Barcelona, 14th July 2013

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Manifiesto de la comunidad científica internacional a favor del reconocimiento y dignificación de las lenguas minoritarias de Aragón. <http://www.roldeestudiosaragoneses.org/manifiesto-de-la-comunidad-cientifica-internacional-a-favor-del-reconocimiento-y-dignificacion-de-las-lenguas-minoritarias-de-aragon-93/>

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.mecd.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/participacion-publica/lomce.html>

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML1\\_es.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML1_es.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML2\\_es.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML2_es.pdf), and also Recommendation 5 of the 3rd Report ([http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML3\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/SpainECRML3_en.pdf), 24 October 2012, ref. ECRML (2012) 5, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> The Oslo Recommendations regarding the Linguistic Rights of National Minorities, <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/67531>

<sup>7</sup> The Hague Recommendations regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities, <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/32180>