

Association Unis dans la Diversité Linguistique
Kevredigezh Unanet e Liesseurtet ar Yezhou

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Item 3: Public policy objectives for education in, and teaching of, minority languages

Contact person: Emmanuel Le Merlus; e-mail : udl.ulv@laposte.net

Dear Mr. President,
Dear Representatives,

My name is Emmanuel Le Merlus and I represent the NGO “Unis dans la Diversité Linguistique”, which is aimed at the promotion of the Breton language that is spoken in Brittany in France.

The Breton language was classified as seriously endangered by UNESCO in 2009. The teaching of a minority language is vital for ensuring its longevity. 20,000 Breton students are learning the language.

The needs of linguistic minorities can be identified by appropriate population censuses.

Linguistic minorities themselves must be able to manage education systems that respond to their needs. Thus, they could build, look after, and maintain new schools. They should also manage the recruitment and development of students. They should define and apply adapted pedagogical methods. Thus, they would be able to generalize the provision of education in minority languages.

Informational campaigns and campaigns to promote the minority language could be carried out to encourage parents or future parents to place their children in minority language schools. They would be based on the advantages of plurilingual education, which provides better intellectual development to children.

Linguistic minorities suffered from a generational rupture in the transmission of language. Thus, the parents of students do not speak the language. Attempts should be made so that parents can also learn the language and be able to converse with their children in the minority language in which they are schooled.

In order to do this, linguistic minorities must enjoy a degree of autonomy that would be funded through a portion of the taxes levied in their areas.

School exchanges between linguistic minorities could be organized. They would stimulate students and allow for the exchange of good practices.

In addition, governments of different countries could organize an exchange of teachers to facilitate a plurilingual model of education. Plurilingual youth are more open to the world than monolingual youth, which would contribute to peace and stability in the world.

The longevity of a minority language does not depend solely on its teaching, but also on the status it is accorded and the degree of autonomy given to the linguistic minority.

Furthermore, the situation of Bretons and other national minorities in France is difficult. France refuses to recognize them. It also refuses to sign or ratify international convention and charters related to linguistic minorities.

France, which is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, should nevertheless set an example in relation to the recognition and protection of national minorities.

In addition, a UN Special Rapporteur devoted specifically to national minorities could be created. National minorities have specific problems compared to the other two types of minorities.

Finally, the creation of an international agency under the auspices of the United Nations could be proposed, which would assess and rate member states on their linguistic minority policies.

Thank you for your attention.