

Omnium Cultural

Thank you very much for offering the civil society organization, Omnium Cultural, from Catalonia, the opportunity to speak at the United Nations. We work to defend the Catalan language and culture, the right to self-determination and social cohesion. And we do so in the language of our nation, Catalan. Catalan is spoken by more than 10 million people, and yet it remains a paradox. The 13th most spoken language in Europe, but still a minoritized language. Historically it has been prohibited, relegated, or subjected to assimilation by both Spain and France. And today, it continues to be marginal in essential areas, such as justice, healthcare, digital media, and digital platforms. And despite having more speakers than many official EU languages, Catalan still does not have any official recognition in the European Union. Catalans are not a national minority, we are a plural and open society with migration as a structural reality. In a country where only one-third of the population has Catalan as their home language, public institutions must guarantee that everyone can learn and use it equally, because Catalan is not only cultural, it is an instrument of social inclusion, equal opportunities, and civic participation. It allows people from diverse regions to access jobs, take part in community life, and contribute fully to society. Yet, today, Catalan faces serious threats. Its social use has declined by around 30% in the last 20 years. Social cohesion is being affected. Schools are essential to reverse this trend. The Catalan educational model based on social and linguistic criteria is a system of linguistic immersion that does not separate pupils by language, and ensures full proficiency in both Catalan and Spanish for all children, wherever they come from. But this broad social and pedagogical consensus is under attack. Several judicial decisions, criticized by the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, are imposing changes with no educational basis [cut off by Chair].