

OUR “LANGUAGE DIVERSITY” CAMPAIGN

# LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND MULTILINGUALISM IN EUROPE



**LANGUAGE DIVERSITY**

*It's never too late...*



[www.language-diversity.eu](http://www.language-diversity.eu)

Language Diversity – a European campaign to raise awareness for multilingualism and linguistic diversity in Europe.

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### A European project of the

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[www.fuen.org](http://www.fuen.org)



### In cooperation with



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Federico Fellini

## “A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE IS A DIFFERENT VISION OF LIFE“

Language diversity is a universal human right.

To protect autochthonous languages and preserve them is part of the universal human rights. Every human being has the right to use his or her own language. Language is the basis of your own identity and a means of communication and also a part of the cultural heritage of mankind.

For that reason the preservation of linguistic diversity is a universal and European objective. This objective has been enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and in the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union and also in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and in the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe. On the world level the international treaties and declarations of the United

Nations protect the use of languages. In this context, we should highlight the concept of endangered languages by UNESCO.

Multilingualism and linguistic diversity are fundamental principles of the European Union. This was laid down in Article 22 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. It holds: “The Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.”

**Did you know,** that for learning a second language the starting age is more important than the duration of learning?

## Linguistic diversity

# UNESCO ATLAS OF THE WORLD'S LANGUAGES IN DANGER

### Facts and figures

According to estimates of UNESCO half of the 6 000 languages that are being spoken today will disappear before the end of this century, if nothing is done to prevent that from occurring. If the unwritten and not documented languages will disappear, this means that not only will mankind lose its cultural richness, but it will also lose important knowledge of its ancestors, especially in the regional and minority languages and the languages of indigenous people.

Every language represents a world of thoughts with its own metaphors, proverbs and mentalities, with its own vocabulary, sound system and grammar. The extent to which a language is endangered, is classified by the publishers of the UNESCO Atlas according to nine criteria. The most important criteria are the number of speakers and the type and quality of documentation. Another criterion: the speakers

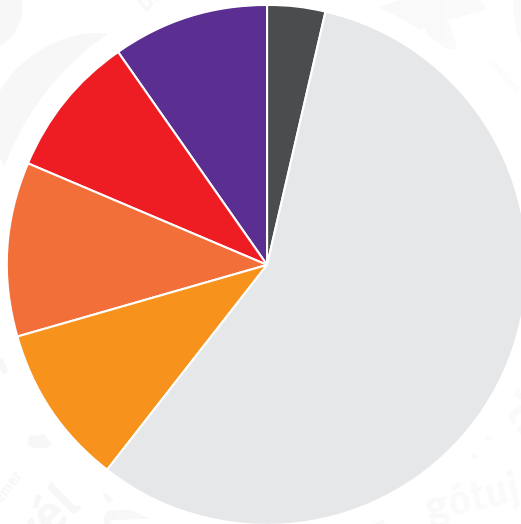
have to value their own language. Another relevant element is in which spheres the language is being used: in the family, in free time, on the internet, in school, at work, in the media. In 2010, the latest edition of the “UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger” was published.

The Atlas has information about more than 2 500 endangered languages worldwide. 200 languages have gone extinct over the last three generations, about 1 700 languages are seriously endangered, more than 600 languages are hardly used anymore. Half of all languages are minority and regional languages spoken by less than 10 000 people.

For Germany, the Language Atlas mentions 13 endangered languages. Sater-Frisian, North-Frisian, Lower and Upper Sorbian are regarded as “severely endangered”.

Low Saxon in Germany and Denmark is regarded as “vulnerable”, and South Jutish is regarded as “definitively endangered”.

- 56,98 % Safe or data-deficient
- 10% Vulnerable
- 10,77 % Definitively endangered
- 8,78 % Severely endangered
- 9,62 % Critically endangered
- 3,85 % Extinct since 1950



Overview of how severely the worlds' languages are endangered.

For Belgium, the Atlas mentions 8 endangered languages: Champenois, Lorrain and Picard are “severely endangered”. Walloon and Jiddish are “definitively endangered”. West Flemish, Limburgian and Luxemburgish/ Moselle-Franconian are “endangered”.

For Poland, the Atlas mentions 9 endangered languages: Kashubian and Vilamovian are “severely endangered”, Belorussian, Polesian, Rusyn and Romanes are “endangered”, Slovincian has gone extinct.

The Atlas of Languages in Danger does not only present negative developments. A targeted policy led to an increase in the number of speakers of indigenous languages, for example in South America, Mexico, Canada and the USA. In Europe, the only positive example that is mentioned is the Cornish language (Cornwall), which in the editions of 1996 and 2001 was regarded as extinct.

If you want to read information about other countries: Moseley, Christopher: Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. UNESCO Publishing 3rd edn. Paris 2010. Online: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangered-languages/atlas>

## Map of Minorities & Regional and Minority Languages of Europe

[www.map.language-diversity.eu](http://www.map.language-diversity.eu)

**Did you know**, that there are on average circa three minorities in every European country with more than 1 million inhabitants, but that they are not always officially recognised as such?

In contrast to Hungary, which has 13 officially recognised minorities, France and Greece do not recognise their own minorities.

In Germany there are 4 officially recognised minorities: Danes in Southern Schleswig, German Sinti and Roma, Frisians and Lusatian Sorbs.



**Did you know,** that according to the Council of Europe – an organisation of 47 European states – there are 225 autochthonous languages in Europe?

Russia, with over 150 autochthonous nationalities and languages contributes significantly to this great linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe.

**Did you know,** that there are at least 60 languages that are spoken in the European Union (EU), but that there are only 24 official EU languages?

**Did you know,** that the number of speakers of regional or minority languages in the EU is estimated at 40 million citizens?

Among the large languages without a state are Catalan (Spain, Italy, Andorra, France) and Occitan (France, Spain, Italy), each with around 6 million people. But also Welsh (Wales / Great Britain), Basque (Spain, France), Frisian (Netherlands, Germany), Breton (France) and Sorbian (Germany) are languages without a state.

**Did you know**, that Basque is among the oldest languages of Europe and that it is not related to any other language known today?

The slogan "It's never too late ... Monolingualism is easy to cure!" of the European campaign on awareness raising for multilingualism and linguistic diversity – in Basque.

**Inoiz ez da beranduegi ...  
elebakartasuna  
sendatu daiteke!**

**Did you know**, that every seventh European is part of an ethnic, national minority?

**Did you know**, that the critical threshold for the vitality of a language is estimated at 300,000 speakers?

This means that almost 80% of the European minority languages are endangered. Below the language vitality threshold are the large majority of the regional and minority languages, like Ladin, Romansh, Upper and Lower Sorbian, North Frisian and Kashubian.



# Multilingualism from the perspective of language sciences

## **IMPORTANT CONCEPTS ...**

... in multilingualism.

In this section we want to introduce you to six important concepts that we think you should know about in the context of our language diversity campaign.

It is a selection from the “Small Compendium of Linguistic Terminology Relevant for Minorities” by Jeroen Darquennes,

Professor for German and General Linguistics at Namur University in Belgium. This compendium explains in an easy understandable way some concepts that are used in language sciences in relation to autochthonous European linguistic minorities.

The complete Compendium on Linguistic Planning is accessible at:

<http://language-diversity.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Sprachplanung-Kompendium.pdf> (available in German only)

### **Multilingualism**

... is a concept with an open meaning. With the word multilingualism (here a synonym for “bilingualism”) very “different realities” can be described. In order to systemise these reali-

ties, the linguistic literature normally divides multilingualism into individual multilingualism, social multilingualism, and (occasionally also) institutional multilingualism.

## Individual Multilingualism

... is related to the multilingualism of human beings. They are multilingual, once they are proficient in more than one language.

The literature speaks of a “narrow” and a “broad” definition of “individual multilingualism.”

In the “narrow” understanding, the person is only then multilingual when he acquired his languages in his early childhood and if he commands these languages perfectly (both orally and in written form).

According to the “broad” definition a person is multilingual, when he uses two (or more) languages regularly in his daily life, at some point of his life. In the “broad” definition nothing is said about the time of language acquisition or language proficiency. Those aspects play a role (as are the way of acquisition, the cognitive organisation of language, etcetera) once distinctions are made between

types of individual multilingualism, like e.g. successive and simultaneous individual multilingualism related to the time of acquisition or the symmetrical and asymmetrical individual multilingualism that is related to the degree of language proficiency.



## The meaning of individual multilingualism for language minorities

It is of great importance to take account of the different types of individual multilingualism, especially in regard to language minorities. In the acquisition of language in many cases the autonomous, uncontrolled intergenerational transfer of the minority language in the family is floundering because of the process of language shift in society. This

„Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.“ Flora Lewis

## Social Multilingualism

... refers to the coexistence of several languages in one society. Social multilingualism has a geographic-policy dimension and a social-psychological dimension.

The **geographic-policy dimension** refers to the manifestation of multilingualism within a certain geographic area (e.g. a city, a region or a country) and to the policy-

fact makes it necessary for language minorities to develop strategies for the further transfer of the minorities to the younger generations, also outside the family.

In many cases people try to counteract or compensate for a faulty uncontrolled intergenerational transfer of the minority language by offering controlled acquisition of the minority language in schools.

arrangements for influencing the status, its institutionalisation and legitimisation of the languages that are spoken in a particular area.

The **social-psychological dimension** refers to the distribution, the function, the status, vitality, etcetera of the individual languages in (specific language communities

within) a multilingual society. For language minorities, people try to counteract or compensate the low status and the limited degree of institutionalisation and legitimisation of

the minority language compared to the majority language, by enacting measures in the field of status planning.

### **Institutional Multilingualism**

... refers to the coexistence of several languages within institutions.

In a narrow sense these institutions are public or private, local, regional, national or supranational administrations that offer their services in different languages. In a broad sense the concept of institutional multilingualism also encompasses schools and even families.

In literature institutional multilingualism is often considered as a form of social multilingualism.

### **Mother Tongue ...**

... (“mother language” or also “native language”) is generally understood as the language in which a person was socialised from his birth on in the bosom of the family.



If the word “mother tongue” relates to persons who are raised in a monolingual family, then it means almost the same as the word “first language”. In that case we can also assume that the mother tongue is the language that such a person is most proficient in, and which he uses most (at least in the family), that he identifies with and which he is identified with.

It is different when the concept is related to persons who grow up or are raised in a multilingual environment. In those cases it is a question whether the mother tongue is the same as the language that someone acquired first, that he is most proficient in, and if it is that language he identifies with or which he is identified with.

The impreciseness of the concept of “mother tongue” to describe individual and social languages in practice in a multilingual environment is the main reason why this concept has long been considered as suspect in the field of sociolinguistics and contact-linguistics.

Postkarte – Nutze deine Zunge nicht nur zum Küssen!

*Brug din tung ikke  
kun til at kysse  
med!*

*Use your tongue,  
not just for kissing!*



*E tung as ai bloot toocht  
deerfor än mak!*

*Nutze deine Zunge  
nicht nur zum Küssen!*

### Minority Language ...

... is the language of a an autochthonous language minority (in case of the language of an allochthonous minority the literature normally used the word “immigrant language”).

**Autochthonous means long-established, indigenous, (from old Greek αὐτός autós “self” and χθών chthōn “earth”; in a figurative sense “native”, “aboriginal”).**

The fact that the language of an autochthonous minority is called a minority language does not say anything about the intrinsic value of the language as such. No language has a higher or a lower value than other languages just because of its internal linguistic characteristics. The concept of “minority language” does reflect the social position of the minority language community vis-à-vis the language community it is surrounded by (i.e. the majority).



### The relationship between minority and majority language

The minority language community (short: the language minority) has a lower social status and less (political) power than the majority that surrounds it.

These status and power differences are reflected in the minority language. In comparison with the majority language the minority language is characterised by a lower status and a lower degree of institutionalisation and legitimisation.



# Multilingualism

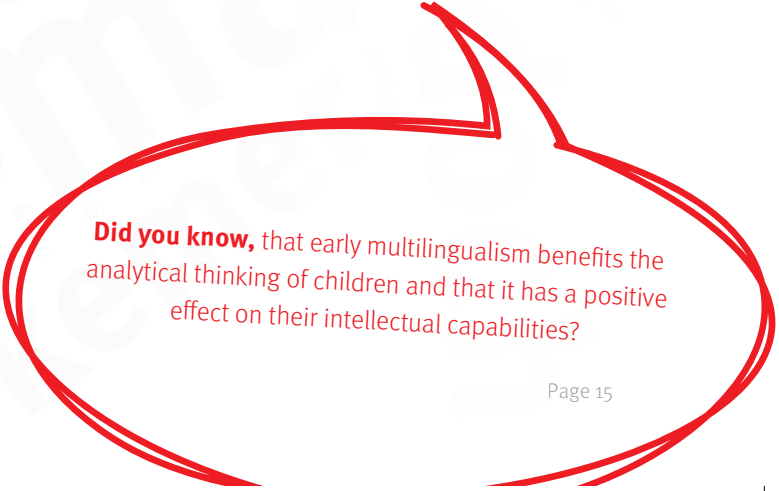
## EXCERPTS FROM THE 2012 EUROBAROMETER

### Facts and figures

From the 2012 Eurobarometer survey “Europeans and their languages” it becomes clear that the number of bilingual and multilingual European citizens has decreased in comparison to the year 2006: **Just above half of the European citizens (54%) (-2% since 2006) is able to have a conversation in at least one other language, one quarter (-3% since 2006) speaks at least two additional languages** and one out of ten citizens can express him- or herself in at least three languages.

The Eurobarometer is a periodic public opinion survey in the countries of the EU, ordered by the European Commission, aimed at monitoring the development of public opinion among the European population.

In view of the objective of the EU that each citizen should, next to his mother tongue, be able to speak two additional languages, this implies that it is necessary **to support multilingualism and to promote linguistic diversity more strongly**. The “language diversity” campaign is promoting this objective and works on the integration of the regional and minority languages within this objective.



**Did you know**, that early multilingualism benefits the analytical thinking of children and that it has a positive effect on their intellectual capabilities?

There are, however, few statements in the Eurobarometer 2012 about this specific aspect. Overall, the survey showed that Europeans have a very positive perspective on multilingualism: almost all Europeans (98%) think that knowledge of foreign languages is useful for the future of their children. 88% of the people find their own foreign language skills useful. Furthermore, the **majority of the European citizens (81%) is of the opinion that all the languages spoken in the EU should be treated equally.**

Almost three quarters of the people who were interviewed are in favour of the objective set by the EU that everyone should learn at least two foreign languages. According to 77%, the promotion of language skills should be politically prioritised.

**Commanding languages has a lot of advantages – such as:**

- » the opportunity to work abroad or study in another country,
- » to get to know people from other countries,
- » to understand people from other cultures,
- » more chance to find a better job in your own country,
- » it is easier to study abroad and find a job there,
- » learning a foreign language helps you to understand people from other cultures,
- » many people learn a language to gain knowledge of a language that is being spoken in their family.

Multilingualism within the European Union is mainly seen as a key skill for economic competitiveness and workers' mobility. But the preservation of linguistic diversity also

forms an important contribution to maintaining the irreplaceable cultural heritage of Europe.



**Did you know**, that regional and minority language and their natural bilingualism form an important resource for multilingualism, cross-border cooperation and regional identity?

**Did you know**, that multilingualism is the prerequisite for intercultural dialogue and for understanding of European values ... and therefore promotes tolerance?

**Did you know**, that school students enrolled in bilingual education have a steeper learning curve, that they learn faster to read and write, that they are more closely integrated in the language community and that they overtake their majority peers in mathematics (early) and even in the majority language (from the age of four)?

## Multilingualism studies

# INTERESTING FACTS FROM MULTILINGUALISM STUDIES

Excerpts from studies.

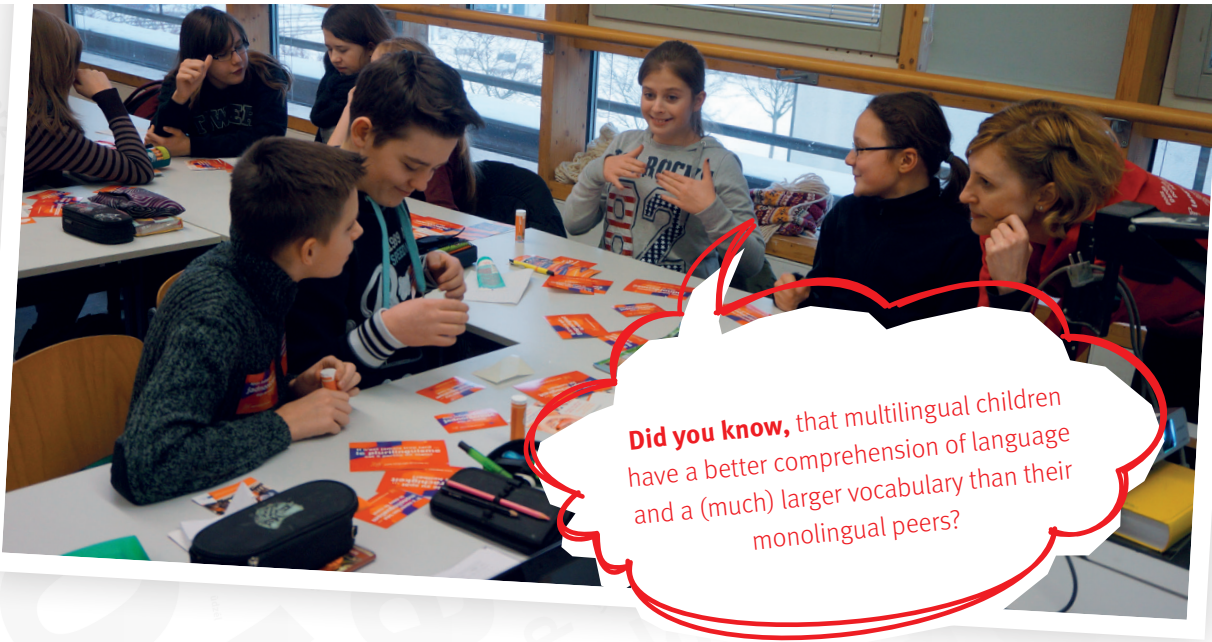
A study from the University of Granada and the University of York in Toronto, Canada, found that in comparison with monolingual children, bilingual children develop a better “working memory”, which saves, controls and updates information for a short time period. The “working memory” plays an important role in a wide variety of activities, like mental calculation (remembering numbers and working with them) or reading comprehension (association ability, processing successive pieces of information).

In the article “Sprachen Ik snack platt, du ok?” in the online newspaper ZEIT Online, Andreas Bieberstedt from Rostock University gives a summary: “Studies of Sorbian or Frisian in kindergartens have shown that bilingually raised children are performing better at school than monolingual children. A survey of kindergarten teachers in Mecklenburg, Germa-

ny, also found that children were able to concentrate better due to the Low German-project and that they in general developed a better comprehension for languages (...)”.

In the 2009 study by the European Commission on the Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity the latest scientific correlations about the positive effects of multilingualism were summarised:

Multilingualism and practical linguistic skills are a condition for **intercultural dialogue, participation in society and mobility** and for the understanding of European values and cultural heritage.



**Did you know,** that multilingual children have a better comprehension of language and a (much) larger vocabulary than their monolingual peers?

**Multilingualism** is an asset for **acquiring cross-sectoral key skills**, for improvement of performance in thinking, learning, problem-solving and communicating and a resource for creative and innovative thinking.

**Creativity and innovation** are conditions for employability, competitiveness and the development of an entrepreneurial spirit.

It is key to explain the complex added value of multilingualism and its positive effects on individual, social and economic developments – making use of existing regional resources – and to use them as a motivation for language learning.

## Benefits of multilingualism

### **OUR AMBASSADORS**

What our ambassadors say about our “language diversity” campaign.

We have been asking people from many different walks of life to support our language diversity campaign and to tell us how they think about multilingualism and linguistic diversity. They come from the media, academia, education, politics and administration, art and culture and also from the sports. Our ambassadors from all over Europe are part of a minority themselves or are actively promoting regional and minority languages and linguistic diversity in Europe.

They support us as ambassadors with their appearance and their words, when we are visiting places or through our social media channels.

Therefore: thank you very much for your support and your continuous efforts!

What is the opinion of our ambassadors about languages and multilingualism? How important is this subject in their own life?

Below you can read some of their statements.



All the ambassadors of our “language diversity” campaign can be found at [www.language-diversity.eu](http://www.language-diversity.eu)  
From some of them you can also view their video-messages.

Johan Häggman (Swede from Finland)  
**European Commission, Directorate-General for Translation, Brussels / Belgium**

“I can express myself in ten languages, but I would say I speak seven or eight of them quite well.

Languages are important: Studies of the European Commission proved that it's easier to find and change a job and it's easier to be promoted in your job, if you speak several languages. So at a personal level there is an added value. In order to be successful and in order to be able to conquer new markets, companies need staff that speaks several languages, that has the knowledge of several languages. Minorities are like bridges between cultures and between countries and in minority regions several languages are spoken. Normally the standard of living in minority regions is also higher.”



Johan Häggman



Ursina Giger

Ursina Giger (Romansh)  
**Singer-songwriter from the canton of Graubünden in Switzerland, who writes songs in Romansh and English.**

Music is language, language is culture, culture is identity and identity strengthens. The more languages are spoken in Europe, the more diverse and vivid are the cultures and their exchange. This exchange, which I especially experience within the Youth of European Nationalities (YEN), is incredibly inspiring and it influences my music deeply.”





Herbert Dorfmann (German South Tyrolean)  
**Member of the European Parliament,  
South Tyrol / Italy**

“For sure it would be easier to have only one language – also for us in the European Parliament it would be easier to speak in one language only. But I am convinced that our mother tongue is part of our identity and if we want to be successful with this big Europe, it works only if we respect the diversity of culture, of languages, the diversity of different people living inside of Europe. I am convinced that if we are not able to solve this question Europe will never be united.”

Luis Durnwalder (German South Tyrolean)  
**Former Prime Minister of South Tyrol / Italy**

“Europe has brought us many economic advantages and what is more, we never lived before in such a long time of peace. But Europe has to understand, that it can only be nice and lovely and that it can only mean home to all of us, if it takes seriously all the small homes it includes: its diverse identities, its unique regions, its minorities.

In Europe the strong should not put himself over the weakest, but the strong should appreciate and help the weaker. We will only find long-lasting peace in Europe, if also the languages and identities of the small groups will be taken seriously, and if the regions get their problems solved within their regions. The small minorities and the small languages have to be preserved.”



**Did you know**, that multilingual children are earlier in developing the ability of abstraction and that elderly multilingual people retain their ability to concentrate longer?



Zsuzsanna Gerner

Dr. Zsuzsanna Gerner (German from Hungary)

**Leader of the Institute of German Studies; Vice Dean of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pécs;  
Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Pécs / Hungary**

“When looking at my own linguistic biography I have always considered it to be an advantage that I was raised multilingually. That is why I also gave my daughter the present of multilingualism.

In any case multilingualism enriches, because it gives you direct access to different people, to different cultures and you can much more easily find your own place in the world.

Chinghiz Aitmatov once said that it does matter in which language you say “I love you” to someone. Therefore language that has an emotional-affective meaning for you shall as far as possible be passed on.“

Bogna Koreng/Korjeńkowa  
(Lusatian Sorb)

**Sorbian journalist, moderator and choir leader,  
Bautzen/Budyšin / Germany**

Because I was raised bilingually, in both Sorbian and German, and sometimes used a third language during holidays, foreign languages were more easily accessible for me. My life would be much poorer – both my private and professional life – if I had not been able to juggle with Slavic and Germanic languages. Yes, globalisation and multilingualism go together. Monolingualism can lead to one-sidedness and may present a danger of exclusion. If you do not know a second, or third, or fourth language, or at least understand them, you do not have access to the thoughts of the people, nor to a part of their life and way of living.



Despite globalisation, the special, your own identity, becomes more important. Minority languages are harbouring rich cultural assets, a source of heritage and hence a indispensable home, sometimes also a refuge.

Without multilingualism a human being cannot move freely nowadays, he does not have the chance to taste cultural diversity in Europe. The minority languages are the icing on the language cake. And so let us take a portion: the bigger, the better.”



Csaba Sándor Tabajdi  
**Member of the European Parliament / Chair of the  
Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National  
Communities and Languages in the European  
Parliament, Hungary**

“The European Union consists of 28 countries, but even more peoples and folks: 40 million people – 8 % – in Europe belong to a minority group, to a minority community or are peoples without states. I think this is a big value for the whole EU.

In the EU-Parliament as the President of the Intergroup I am trying to learn “hello” in 22 languages: “servus”, “hi”, “hello”, “szia”, and so on. When there is a big event like Christmas day, I wish “Merry Christmas” in 22 different languages in the elevator. I think it is very important to make this gesture, because it shows that I am open to other



people, to other cultures, to other languages. At the present stage in Europe, when we are becoming more and more egoist and more and more nationalist, it is important to learn languages, even if it only are some words, because like this we show that we are ready for being informed about European culture, traditions, identity and European languages.”



Reinhold Messner  
**Mountaineer, adventurer and author,  
South Tyrol/Italy**

“If you look at humanity in detail, you will find out that each of us is part of a minority and each of us has the right to be respected as a minority with the same rights as everybody else.

I personally had the opportunity in my live to see and visit many people worldwide. Especially in the mountains there are hundreds of different peoples speaking different languages, living different cultures. I am very lucky that I could learn from all of them. I feel part of them. I hope that maybe in 100 or 1000 years we will finally have peace on the earth, because all the minorities are respecting each other.”

Martha Stocker (German South Tyrolean)  
**Member of the Government of the Autonomous  
Region Trentino-South Tyrol (Italy), Vice President of  
the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN)**

“Only few people know that only in the European Union people do not just speak 24 official languages, but also 60 regional and minority languages; often the minorities themselves are not aware about the added value and the benefits related to this diversity. We have to enhance the visibility of the benefits of regional and minority languages and use the resource of existing bilingualism and trilingualism. Only so we contribute in the best way to the preservation of linguistic diversity.”



Isabelle Barth O'Neill

**Isabelle Barth O'Neill, Professor of “Arts, Culture & Communications” at Bordeaux University, Founder of the Multilingual Cafe and Expat Lang (a consultation centre for multilingualism, multilingual education and language learning)**

“Language diversity is an open door to others. A door which stays open to discover and enjoy the culture of others and who they are. Language diversity is making every single language live and be active in creating new words and concepts. Language diversity is allowing people to think, work and live in the language of their ancestors and respecting who they were.”

The Youth of European Nationalities (YEN) is a network of 40 youth organisations of the autochthonous national minorities from all over Europe. ([www.yeni.org](http://www.yeni.org))

The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) is the umbrella organisation of the European autochthonous minorities. FUEN was founded in 1949 and represents more than 90 organisations of European minorities from more than 30 European countries. ([www.fuen.org](http://www.fuen.org))

## Resources

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[www.language-diversity.eu](http://www.language-diversity.eu)

# IT'S NEVER TOO LATE ...

