



Dear Madam President Metsola,

As President of Plataforma per la Llengua, an NGO registered in the transparency register of the EU with ID 769898722182-72, and on behalf of the organisation, we would like to express our concern about 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.

This Committee uses public resources to actively go against the Catalan-speaking minority in the Spanish State and, thus, against European values, as stated in Art. 2 of the Treaty of the European Union.

It also chooses not to listen to the statements made by the European Commission in relation to the open petitions No 0858/2017 and No 0540/2020, on language education in Catalonia. 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, respectively. However, this did not matter to the Committee that debated the first petition not once, not twice, but three times. When, according to the Spanish MEP, Javi López, the number of petitions debated by MEPs in the Committee, since this petition was turned in, is less than 10% of the petitions turned in by EU citizens.

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



In the last occasion, on the 7th of February 2022, the representative of the European Commission, Rajka Lozo, intervened³ and reiterated the Commission's previous statements and reminded that the Commission was not going to intervene in matters of language instruction in Catalonia, as this was a matter for the member states and that the use of co-official languages in general, but also in educational purposes, was a competence of the Spanish State, as stated in Art. 165⁴ of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The biased management of the Committee profoundly affects the proper exercise of the right of petition, which is an integral right of EU citizens, causing citizens to lose confidence in the Parliament's role in guaranteeing the exercise of this right.

And despite numerous reminders from the European Commission that the language of instruction is indeed an "internal matter", that there is no common EU-level framework that would allow the EU to intervene and that the Legal and Policy Officer of the European Commission saw no infraction by the Spanish State of the EU law or the rule of law; the Petitions Committee keeps debating and bringing it up as if it were an issue, the use of a co-official language in education in the region where it is co-official in accordance with the Spanish constitutional order. This time by organising a Public Hearing on behalf of the Petitions Committee on Tuesday 28th of February 2023.

We would like to denounce that this Hearing, chaired by the President of the Committee, is an absolute affront that shows no sign of pluralism with all the speakers, following strictly the political interests of the Chair. We have been following the development of the Hearing, and the whole selection procedure of the "experts" has been carried out with a markedly irregular procedure, as the EPP, CR and ID initially

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>

imposed four experts against linguistic immersion against only one in favour; this caused the Greens, the Left and S&D to not recognise the legitimacy of the Hearing.

Just by reviewing their interventions uploaded to the event's web page, we can see that some things that were said in the Hearing are false and manipulative. For example, in his intervention⁵, Jorge Calero assures that *“Primary education: only 7.7% of schools include in their curriculum subjects taught in Spanish, except for the specific Spanish language class. Secondary education: only 0.2% of schools include in their curriculum subjects taught in Spanish, except for the specific class of Spanish as a foreign language.”* However, the study⁶ carried out by the Regional Ombudsman assures that Spanish is the language used in 22% of the teaching hours in Primary Education and 28.2% in Secondary Education, meaning that this obviously goes beyond that of a simple subject. If all interactions are considered, Spanish is the vehicular language for 33.1% of the school day. Furthermore, in Figure 1, he also uses the tactic explained by Darrell Huff (1954) in “How to lie in statistics” of cutting the Y-axis.

Another example of false information that will be spread thanks to this event is the speech made by Jesús Rul⁷. In it, he states that *“Citizens who are familiar or usual speakers of Spanish have no obligation to know and use other co-official languages.”* however, this does not apply to the field of education, as stated in FJ 14.b of the Constitutional Court Judgment 31/2010⁸, which declares it constitutional for the *Estatut* (the highest law of Catalonia, which shapes its status as an Autonomous Community) oblige people to know Catalan, even though this right only applies to education and the civil service. He also clearly shows his partisan views by saying *“This is the ideological, political, and educational framework that explains the so-called ‘Catalan linguistic immersion model’”*, when there are political parties at the Spanish State level that oppose the independence of Catalonia but defend the immersion

⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/265297/Jorge_Calero_Notes_EN.pdf

⁶ https://www.sindic.cat/site/unitFiles/8512/Resum%20executiu%20drets%20linguistics_catala_ok.pdf

⁷ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/265226/JE_Intervencion_JRG_EN.pdf

⁸ <https://www.parlament.cat/document/intrade/218218>

model. At the end of the speech, he also adds petitions on which, as we stated at the beginning, the Commission has no competency to act, therefore, there is no point in making them if not to promote his partisan views. However, the senselessness of his speech reaches its peak when he states that “*apartheid is being forced upon the Spanish*”. This is not only absolutely false, but it is also malicious to accuse a minority to impose segregation against a majority, going against European values and doing so under the umbrella of the European Parliament, which is supposed to defend them.

The partisan views of the speakers are obvious when you review their interventions, but the Committee has not even tried to conceal it and brings to the table Manuel Acosta Elías, an MP for VOX (Spanish party member of ECR) in the Parliament of Catalonia.

As we have said earlier in the text, the Catalan Language is a minoritised language living in a situation of linguistic emergency due to the continuous attacks received by people such as the speakers at the Hearing as well as the Chair of the Committee on Petitions. This was reported⁹ by the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority issues, Fernand de Varennes, after his 2020 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 xenophobic intolerance among politicians, modify school textbooks to emphasise the state’s cultural diversity and promote campaigns that recognise different languages, cultures, and religions as integral elements of Spain. This behaviour is not difficult to recognise after reading Mr. Rul’s speech at the Hearing, which participates in the demonisation of the minority which he accuses of practising “linguistic apartheid” and of being “ethnicist, supremacist and exclusionary”.

⁹ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G20/063/88/PDF/G2006388.pdf?OpenElement>

The Rapporteur also called for the judicial framework to be changed because he considered it discriminatory, a fact that has been repeatedly stated by the Experts Committee of the Council of Europe that assesses the compliance with the ECRML.

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 that expressed by the speakers of the Hearing. The partisan and perverse use of the Committee on Petitions revives the positions of Spanish nationalism and its harassment of linguistic minorities.

We, therefore, call on you, as President of the European Parliament, to intervene to put an end to the biased and partisan actions of the Committee on Petitions and to safeguard the rights of linguistic minorities in accordance with the EU treaties and values.

Yours sincerely,



Òscar Escuder

President of Plataforma per la Llengua