



STATEMENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF CATALAN STUDIES ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CATALAN PEOPLE

The Institut d'Estudis Catalans

The Institute of Catalan Studies (I.E.C.), Academy of Sciences and Humanities, founded in 1907, is the top academic corporation of the lands of Catalan language and culture, and a full member of the International Academic Union since 1922.

The I.E.C. has 186 full or emeritus members from throughout the linguistic territory, and 70 corresponding members that represent our institution's relations with the international scientific community, and has 28 filial societies of all fields of knowledge, with about 10,000 members across the whole territory. 111 local research centres also belong to it, and this shows how well grounded the research community is, throughout our cultural territory.

The community of Catalan language and culture, a people with national rights

The Catalan-speaking community has made a substantial contribution throughout the history of the development of European civilization, in all aspects, from the very origins of the Romance peoples. Today, thanks both to its dimensions —millions of Catalan-speakers— and to the dynamism it has, it demands an egalitarian consideration among the languages and cultures of the world.

Its features match the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, that guarantees the equality of rights and the self-determination of peoples (article 1.2) and also, in the case of territories that have not attained full sovereignty, the acknowledgement of the interests of their inhabitants, the due respect for their culture and the progressive development of their self-government, in accordance with their political aspirations (chapter XI). Articles 1 of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) lay down that all peoples have the right of self-determination and, by virtue of that right, they can freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

The community of Catalan language and culture is without a doubt a nation that deserves egalitarian recognition in the framework of each of the states in which it is found, and also in the framework of the European Union and that of the United Nations. Each of the territories in which this nation is at present fragmented has the legitimate and inalienable right to decide to which state it wants to belong, both if it is the State in which it is now and if it aspires to build a different, specific state. No legitimate democratic action can contradict and far less criminalize this right of the Catalan citizens. Nobody, in a democratic political system, can decide which has to be the nation of others.

Despite the fact that ours is not the case of a national minority, but that of a minoritised nation, we call everyone’s attention to the insufficient protection of minorities in the international political system, that is incapable of preventing the serious contradiction of the fact that state majorities can decide the fate of minorities, strip them of their right to decide on their own resources and on the future of their languages, cultures and territories, and can thus annul the social primacy that every language and culture deserves to have in its own habitat. Too limited is the effectiveness of instruments such as the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992) or Recommendation 1735 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the concept of nation, of January 26 2006, paragraph 12 of which affirms the need to encourage a more tolerant approach to the issue of relations between the state and national minorities, culminating in genuine acceptance of the right of all individuals to belong to the nation which they feel they belong to, whether in terms of citizenship or in terms of language, culture, traditions and the will to belong.

Why now

We face an exceptional situation, in which the trends associated with the process of globalization coincide with the pressure of state majorities —and particularly so in the Kingdom of Spain—towards a linguistic and cultural homogenization which is totally contrary to the principles of sustainable cultural diversity that the general interest of the languages and cultures of all the world demands, and that is proclaimed in international treaties and statements of the European Union and the United Nations.

The political involution of the Spanish autonomic state displays trends which are increasingly adverse to equality, both in the political consideration of the nationalities and the respect for linguistic and cultural plurality, and in the regional funding system and in state investments. Numerous mass media foster hatred against the Catalans, and we have just witnessed how a Constitutional Court annulled dictates of a Statute of Autonomy not only adopted by the Parliament of Catalonia and the Parliament of Spain, but even approved in a plebiscite by the people of Catalonia.

This situation puts in danger our collective future and the efforts to achieve cohesiveness of all our society, and especially that of the educational system, with a view to integrate inclusively in Catalan and Spanish millions of people that have arrived from other lands of diverse languages and cultures. More than 40% of the foreigners in Spain live in the Catalan-speaking area.

Our appeal is far from any party political option, for this is quite inappropriate in an institution such as ours. It is born of the conviction that it is a responsible, legitimate intervention in public affairs, and not to defend any exclusive particularism but, quite the contrary, to affirm the most equitable, fair and democratic of universal principles for coexistence in diversity, as exemplified in the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights proclaimed in Barcelona in 1996.

We want to contribute to a favourable international context for all the languages and cultures of the world, in the knowledge that our community is an indicator of the credibility of policies for the respect of diversity.

To whom we appeal

We thus make our appeal, in the first place and especially, to our people, so that it knows with all certainty that the universal principles of justice are on its side, and so as not to hesitate to demand its rights of self-determination and self-government with all necessary energy and constancy, in the civic framework of democracy.

We appeal to our political representatives and to our institutions of self-government, to adopt and stick to these rights and to struggle to achieve an egalitarian status, within or without the current state framework and in the context of the international community.

We appeal to the European Union and the United Nations, to engage actively with the principles they proclaim as regards the egalitarian respect of linguistic, cultural and national diversity, and not just for the millions of Europeans for whom the Catalan language, culture and nationhood are their own.

And we appeal to all those who aim to build an equitable and sustainable European and global society, respectful of linguistic, cultural and national diversity, to understand that Catalan society is just an example of a process that affects humankind as a whole.

Barcelona, 3 February 2011