



ELEN ORAL STATEMENT TO 2022 UN FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES

Thank you Mr President, your Excellencies.

The European Language Equality Network is the leading organization working for the protection of European minoritized languages. Every day we deal with discrimination against these languages, many of which are endangered.

The EU has the respect for linguistic diversity as a European Value, but we don't see much respect.

In France we witnessed the censuring of new pro-language legislation by elements in the French Government that has had the effect of making all regional language immersion education "unconstitutional". ELEN issued an appeal to the UN, and the Special Rapporteurs for Minorities, Right to Education and Cultural Rights issued an official communication in May 2022 which France is yet to respond to.

In Spain, we've seen a politically-driven campaign using the courts to overturn decades of best practice by ruling against the successful Catalan immersion model, despite education being a reserved matter for the Catalan Government alone.

In addition, the EU has done little over 20 years to move forward on the issue.

There remains the need for clear, unambiguous language legislation that protects our languages.

Therefore, taking into consideration the many excellent proposals made in the regional forums, we recommend that:

- 1) The EU starts the procedure for a European Directive that protects minoritized languages.

- 2) That work commences on upgrading the UN Declaration on Minorities into a binding UN Convention.
- 3) That the UN Forum be extended in duration and that a Permanent Forum on Minorities is established, with a Voluntary Fund.
- 4) That States empower each language community or group in their jurisdiction with the powers and funding to manage their own language maintenance and recovery policies.
- 5) Finally, that France responds to the Special Rapporteurs Communication, ends centuries of systemic discrimination, and acts to protect its so called “regional” languages.

I thank you.

