



ELEN ORAL STATEMENT TO THE 2024 UN FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES

Session 2

Minority Representation in Public Spaces.

Thank you Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies.

The European Language Equality Network is today the leading international organization working for the protection of European indigenous minoritised languages.

Every day we work with our members to help them in their efforts at effective language recovery and revitalisation. And every day we deal with attacks and discrimination against these languages, most of which are endangered.

Minoritized language representation in public spaces is vital in our efforts to ensure language recovery and maintenance. The aim of our organization is that we are able to live every aspect of our lives in our languages. However, these public spaces where we are able to use our languages are being constantly undermined in some States.

One example of this discrimination concerns a recent application to have a Breton language radio station. Something that you would think would be widely supported by a modern European state. Yet this was blocked last week by the French regulator Arcom. It means that there is not one single Breton language radio station on DAB in Brittany, meanwhile Arcom allowed for another French language radio station. In the same week the French President declared that “regional” languages have always caused divisions, a dangerous 19th century supremacist view that has led to long-term discrimination against minoritized and indigenous languages and peoples, and this despite France perceiving itself as central to the European project, a project where one of the founding European Values is to protect language diversity. And a few days ago it was announced that the Corsican Assembly would not be able to use their language in their Assembly as it was “against the Constitution”.

More widely we have seen the exponential rise in hate-speech on social media directed at all speakers of minoritized languages. This has had the effect of these speakers leaving these social media spaces, in effect silencing them and meaning we have even less presence and visibility in public spaces.

To remedy this we still need clear, unambiguous language rights and legislation that will act to ensure that our languages are represented in public spaces, from the media to signage.

Therefore, we urge the UN to draft a Convention, working with ELEN, that will work to ensure the long-term protection and development of endangered, minoritized and indigenous languages

I thank you.