

## Third and Final ECCA report

### **The ECCA project: closing conference, assessment and conclusions**

**Abstract:** In this last report, I summarize the tools that the ECCA project has been able to develop since the 2019-2020 academic year in order to contribute to the dissemination of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and to raise awareness among European citizens of the value of linguistic diversity through education. In addition, I report on the closing conference that took place on October 1, 2021 in Trento. Next, I reflect on the role of Catalan and the Xarxa Vives d'Universitats in projects such as ECCA. Finally, I draw conclusions from the project and propose some personal considerations for future projects.

**Keywords:** European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, language diversity, regional languages, minority languages, education, language policy, ECCA project, youth, school activities.

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## Summary of the closing conference and overall assessment of the ECCA project

### **Overview of the ECCA project**

The closing ceremony of the European Charter Classroom Activities (ECCA) project<sup>1</sup> took place on October 1, 2021 in the city of Trento. This pilot project, promoted by 7 members<sup>2</sup> of the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD), which represent five different language communities (Catalan, Frisian, Friulian, Ladin and Hungarian in Romania), and created in 2019, with its kick-off meeting on 15 November 2019 in Brussels, aimed to promote linguistic diversity, disseminate the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereinafter, the ECRML) of the Council of Europe (1992) – the only legally binding international treaty created exclusively for the protection and promotion of European linguistic diversity –, and to promote its values.

The first pillar of the ECCA project was the translation into the languages of the project and the didactic adaptation of the educational guide *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Classroom activities* (Brohy et al., 2019), published by the Council of Europe to facilitate the application and dissemination of the ECRML and its values in the field of education.

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<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with the European Climate Change Adaptation Conference, also known as ECCA.

<sup>2</sup> These are the University of Udine – CIRF (Centri pal Disvilup de Lenghe e de Culture dal Friûl), the Comun General de Fascia, the province of Fryslân, the Regional Agency for the Friulian Language - ARLeF (Agjenzie Regjonâl pe Lenghe Furlane), the Partium Christian University, Afûk and the Xarxa Vives d'Universitats.

It is clear that the context of each language and school is different, so this part was essential to test and put into practice the educational proposals of the guide and provide us with a number of experiences and teaching units for the future.

The other key pillar of the project was student mobility. In addition to acquiring sociolinguistic knowledge, reflecting and valuing one's own language<sup>3</sup>, as well as linguistic diversity, and breaking down prejudices, this European project aimed to bring together young speakers of regional or minority languages; in short, to weave a network and to show that we are not alone and that we are stronger united. In order to decide which people and schools would participate in this school exchange, a video contest was organised around the question "What does your language mean to you, now and in the future?", which got fascinating and diverse answers and videos, both personal and universal, which looked at the future and the past of the language.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the second half of the 2019-20 school year was characterised by the COVID-19 pandemic, which cut off school mobility; after postponing it, the mobility eventually had to be suspended altogether, despite the fact that the competition had been held and the winners to take part in the exchange had been selected, and the new academic year 2020-21 did not show any promise of returning to normal in this regard.

### **Closing conference of the ECCA project**

Thus, it was decided to close the project at the end of the academic year, by holding the closing conference on October 1, 2021. In addition to greetings and a welcoming speech by the political authorities of the Comun General de Fascia – the province of Trento, hosts of the event and partners of the project –, who highlighted the importance of such European projects and the promotion of linguistic diversity, and opening words by the Procurador of the Comun General de Fascia, Giuseppe Detomas, and the president of the NPLD, Agustina Villaret, the conference had various presentations and activities.<sup>5</sup>

First the ECCA project coordinators, Ypie Boersma and Dra. Sabrina Rasom, reviewed the objectives, evolution and activities proposed and carried out. Besides the already mentioned

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<sup>3</sup> In the Catalan sociolinguistic tradition, this term, *llengua pròpia* (roughly one's 'own language'), is used (even in legal contexts) to refer to the autochthonous and historical language of a territory and a people. In the Catalan, Valencian and Balearic statutes of autonomy, this term is used to differentiate Catalan, as not just an official but our *own* language, from Castilian, official language (of the Spanish State).

<sup>4</sup> In the second report (Lutze, 2020b), you will find more information about these three activities as well as others that were proposed in the framework of the ECCA project.

<sup>5</sup> The whole event was broadcast live via videoconference.

activities, the project also created posters with health instructions against the spread of COVID-19 in the project languages, masks and a language map of Europe. Furthermore, the project was presented at the webinar “Languages as Cultural Heritage”, organised by the School Education Gateway together with the European Commission.<sup>6</sup> As for the objectives, Dr. Rasom stressed that it was necessary to raise awareness of not only language professionals, but the entire population, of “normal people”, which is what makes education so important. All citizens need to be made aware, everyone ought to know and exercise their rights; essentially, we want to be able to speak our language and live and survive in it.

In fact, the students and teachers involved in the project also highlighted this fact in the second part of this conference section, in which they were given the floor. Thus, the Ladino student Mattia Valentini stated that “I cannot be without my language” and that “it is a part of me” and also called for seeing the language as an “opportunity”. Student Noemi Zatyko, a member of the Hungarian minority in Romania, projected a powerful video she had submitted for the project’s video contest, about her love for her mother tongue, but also the discrimination she had suffered for speaking it, and she spoke of “the undeserved hatred”, but also the good that our languages bring us. In this sense, her teacher emphasised the importance of projects like this one to increase visibility of the language and the rights granted by the ECRML and asked for the continuance of the project ECCA. Friulian speaker Marco Torresin also emphasised its importance, given that “together we are stronger” than alone. In addition to native speakers, there were also examples of students who were not regular speakers of the regional or minority language, such as Ladin student Sara Sommariva or Valencian student Lara Oliver Marco who shared live at the conference their experience with the project: Sara explained in her video that it had helped her feel that Ladin belonged to her and that she is proud of the language and wants to speak it more and preserve it; Lara, who interviewed her Catalan-speaking grandmothers for the competition, recounted how the project had made her feel closer and more connected to her grandmothers, and also that it was necessary to fight so that the language would not be lost. Frisian teacher Aant Jelle Soepboer reinforced the message concerning the emotional and identity dimension of languages by highlighting that “we love our language very much”, that mother tongues are “the language of our heart” and that the project had served to raise “[students’] awareness of their language, their identity, and their

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<sup>6</sup> You can still watch this webinar and the project presentation on <https://youtu.be/AOZcCU3UbtA>.

rights”. He added that the problem went beyond language and that history also needed to be approached from the point of view of the language community<sup>7</sup>. Finally, he concluded that the fact that so many people and languages across Europe shared a similar situation could be a reason for cohesion and mutual strengthening. His colleague Stephan Berger also made it clear that projects such as ECCA make it easier for students to learn about their own language while learning about others.

Professor Marco Stolfo of the University of Udine then presented the multidisciplinary and modular course he designed and implemented for law students at the same University. This course combines theory and awareness raising in order to overcome prejudices and stereotypes, and consists of different levels: a theoretical-conceptual framework, a historical-institutional framework and, finally, a geopolitical framework: Europe, the European Union (with its motto “United in Diversity”) and the Council of Europe (with the ECRML and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as flagship documents) and, more specifically, Italy and the case of Friulian. In conclusion, Prof. Stolfo remarked that the course was a success that was to be offered to other students as well.

The next section of the conference had two keynote speeches. First, Kristina Cunningham, Senior Specialist in the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Education and Culture, reviewed the ECCA project’s fit into the European Union’s multilingualism recommendations. After stressing the importance of multilingualism for the European Union, she explained that 9% of fifteen-year-old Europeans speak a different language at home than at school. Taking into account the correlation between mother tongue and well-being and health of students at school, on the one hand, and the relevance the mother tongue has in preventing school failure or dropout, on the other, a Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages (see Council of the European Union, 2019) was approved in May 2019. Although education policy previously focused on the official languages of the EU, according to Cunningham, the paradigm has now changed as three different languages are taken into account: 1. the language of schooling, 2. another European language (English, in

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<sup>7</sup> The Valencian historian Vicent Baydal states the same thing (“learning universal, European, Hispanic and Valencian history from our own experience” [the translation is mine; note the use of *own*, or *pròpia* in the original]) in an interview reproduced in unit 17 of the Catalan textbook *Punt per punt C2* published by the University of Alacant (Martínez Amorós *et al.*, 2019: 141). I would also like to reiterate that “the teaching of the history and the culture which is reflected by the regional or minority language” (ECRML, art. 8.1.g) is one of the commitments included in the ECRML (and that Spain and the Netherlands have entered into).

97% of the cases) and 3. a third language. Moreover, Cunningham emphasised mobility as a basis for language learning and outlined the changes introduced in the Erasmus+ program in order to strengthen its digital, green and inclusive approach.

Vesna Crnić-Grotić, Chair of the Committee of Experts of the ECRML, who had already participated in the kick-off meeting of the ECCA project in Brussels, then spoke about the role all stakeholders, civil society and political and educational actors, play in the ratification (and implementation) of the ECRML. She reported on new signatures (Portugal)<sup>8</sup>, as well as new language protections (in Germany, the United Kingdom or Norway, among others) of the ECRML, while warning that “too ambitious” ratifications had often proved less effective than realistic ratifications suited for the possibilities and intentions of all parties involved. In this sense, she pointed out that “discriminating is also treating the same those who are different”, for example, when governments try to apply the same measures to all regional or minority languages regardless of the sociolinguistic circumstances and context of each case. Finally, she also noted that the global pandemic had once again shown how regional or minority languages and speakers of these languages’ right of access to (in this case health-related) information are sometimes forgotten.

After these two speeches, the future of the ECCA project was briefly discussed. As I mentioned earlier, everyone agreed on the importance of promoting linguistic diversity and the ECRML in the education system, as well as the value of a project like ECCA, among other reasons because of its ability of networking and facilitating action research, and expressed interest in continuity through similar European projects. In the last section of this report, I will provide some personal ideas that I hope will be of interest for future development. The conference concluded with a scenic and linguistically fascinating visit to Luserna and the Cimbrian language community, one of the smallest communities in Europe.

### **Global assessment of the ECCA project**

In the first report, I conveyed the hope of one of the author of Brohy *et al.* (2019)’s educational guide, Vicent Climent-Ferrando, who was also present at the kick-off meeting in Brussels, that the guide shall not be “left ‘on the shelf’”, but that it will be used to raise awareness among

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<sup>8</sup> We would also like to thank Elena Testor, a member of the Italian Senate, for her speech on the subject of the ratification of ECRML in Italy. A few weeks after this speech, the Senate Committees on Constitutional Affairs and on Foreign Affairs began a joint consideration of bills aimed at ratifying the ECRML. However, to my knowledge, the ratification has not yet taken place. Italy signed the ECRML in the year 2000, but has not ratified it since.

young people of the ECRML, such a unique instrument, of its values and the rights that it grants and that we, as speakers of a regional or minority language, have. In this sense, there is no doubt about the success of this project. ECCA has disseminated the ECRML among secondary school students from all over Europe, has promoted the development by teachers of teaching units based on the educational guide and has contributed to student reflection concerning their own language, and European regional or minority languages and linguistic diversity in general.

I think that the schools' or, in other words, teachers' commitment to the project should be especially celebrated. If we look, for example, at the case of Catalan, we see that five Valencian schools signed up for the pilot project although the academic year had already begun and despite the lack of time they had to get to know the guide and to adapt it to their classes. This commitment is also reflected in how they have motivated students to participate in the video contest, in how they have convinced the school administration to let both teachers and students participate in the kick-off conference organised by the Vives Network at the Universitat Jaume I in Castelló de la Plana, as well as in the quality of the teaching units. This involvement and enthusiasm characterises all participants in the ECCA project.

As for the teaching units to which I have had access, it must be said that they take advantage of many of the proposals in the educational guide by Brohy *et al.* (2019), which were: 1. What is a minority language?; 2. Language prejudices; 3. Biography of a famous minority speaker; 4. Minority language day(s) or week; 5. Toponymy linguistic landscape and signage in minority languages; 6. Edit-a-thon in a minority language, the activity of editing Wikipedia; 7. New speakers of minority languages; 8. Variety of writing systems of minority languages; 9. Non-territorial languages; 10. Sign languages. Of these proposals, the teachers relied mainly on activities No. 1, 2, 3 and 5, but also, to a lesser degree, activities No. 4 and 7. In addition, completely new activities were also developed around topics such as language rights, literature, music or, in general, sociolinguistics. Some didactic proposals that have particularly caught my attention are: the very sequencing of the activities that were prepared by Afûk and Cedin for Frisian students (from "I" in the first, to "them" in the middle, and "we" in the last unit, that is, an intercultural progression that takes the self and the other as a whole, highlighting commonalities between different language communities)<sup>9</sup>, how they took

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<sup>9</sup> You can consult these teaching units (in Frisian, Dutch and English) at: <https://ecca.edufrysk.nl/>

advantage of videos in other languages that had been submitted to the ECCA video contest to make students think about regional and minority languages and also their activities about the recognition of the project's languages through songs; but also the use of music in Catalan, the increase of linguistic self-esteem and assertiveness, the sociolinguistic research activities in class and among the students' families, the challenge of being a new speaker for a day or the publication of a whole book on the toponymy of a town (the *Onomasticon Aielonae*) through a transdisciplinary teaching unit, in the case of Valencian teachers; or the use of poetry, games or well-known individuals, in the case of Ladin teaching units.<sup>10</sup>

However, it must be said that the pandemic prevented a number of activities planned under the project.<sup>11</sup> Most importantly, the school exchange that was supposed "to bring together young people and teachers from different linguistic regions", in the words of Dr. Sabrina Rasom during the kick-off meeting in Brussels. Also, conducting surveys and other research and project evaluation work with students and teachers, as well as publishing the three reports prior to this final report. For all these limitations, this can only be a partial assessment of the project.

## The Catalan language and the Vives Network of Universities in ECCA

### What is the Vives Network of Universities?

The Vives Network of Universities (*Xarxa Vives d'Universitats*, in Catalan) is the network of Catalan-speaking universities in the *catalanofonia*, the Catalan language community or region. Rather than grouping universities from Southern Europe or the Western Mediterranean or a specific Euroregion, the factor that unites this network is the language itself. Therefore, we should not be surprised that the normalisation<sup>12</sup> of Catalan is one of the Network's main objectives and fundamental and founding principles. Indeed, the Vives Network is the only institution in a linguistic territory made up of 4 states with its own common language policy for its universities. Thus, the Vives Network represents and coordinates the joint action of 22 universities, all of which have common geographical, historical and cultural (in addition to linguistic) ties, through its governing bodies, the Executive Secretariat and different working

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the Valencian and Ladin teaching units are posted on the project website: [www.thisismylanguage.eu](http://www.thisismylanguage.eu)

<sup>11</sup> See the second report (Lutze, 2020b) for more information on the activities initially proposed.

<sup>12</sup> Concept of the Catalan sociolinguistic tradition for a language policy that aims at reversing the language shift and at the minorised language's recovery and maintenance of all language use domains, both formal and informal ones; that it may become a "normal language", after all.

groups and commissions. The Vives Network also collaborates with other organisations in the area, such as the Acadèmia Valenciana de la Llengua, and represents the Catalan language community in organisations such as the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD).

### **The case of Catalan among other European regional or minority languages**

The specific case of Catalan among Europe's regional or minority languages is, without a doubt, a bit peculiar. With more than 5.000.000 native speakers, approximately 10.000.000 people who can speak it, and more than 13.000.000 people who claim to understand it, it is not exactly a small language community or a language that few people speak; instead, it would fall into the category of medium-sized language communities, such as Danish, Finnish, Czech, Norwegian, Slovenian, Lithuanian, Estonian or Dutch (Bastardas, 2019: 1). In fact, it is one of the few "academic languages" in the world (of which there are about seventy, close to 1% of the world's languages), that is, a language used as the medium of instruction at university for subjects other than language or literature teaching (Vila, 2018: 18).

However, both demographically and politically, the situation of Catalan is different from these linguistic communities: "An important differentiating fact, however, is that these native speakers of Catalan live in their territories with more than 8.000.000 people whose initial language is one of the world's most widespread languages, Spanish"<sup>13</sup> (Bastardas, 2019: 4), one the one hand; "[t]he key to understanding the power of language communities is the state. It is this state that legitimises and empowers a linguistic community to the fullest" (Bastardas *et al.*, 2018: 12). And these states, in the Catalan case, go against the empowerment of languages other than their state languages:

Catalan in Spain (and overwhelmingly more so in France), however, is under threat. Firstly, the state almost always goes against Catalan. The central organs of the state rarely use Catalan and occasionally follow castilianisation practices. [...] The central government is the highest defender of the hegemony of Spanish, seen as a common language that can be insisted on everywhere [...]. Not surprisingly, the very same sacrosanct Spanish Constitution privileges Castilian and relegates the other nameless Spanish languages to a *de iure* and *de facto* subordinate, opaque, secondary position,<sup>14</sup> alienating inescapably activist members of minorities loyal to the Catalan, Galician or

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<sup>13</sup> All quotes originally in a language other than English have been translated by the author of this report.

<sup>14</sup> See Tasa Fuster (2019) concerning asymmetric official statuses in the case of Castilian and Catalan, and the linguistic hierarchy in Spain.



Basque language, who feel not given enough respect regarding a fundamental feature of their culture.

(Bastardas *et al.*, 2018: 15)

Therefore, Catalan is not a small language, but it can be considered a *minorised* language and, in fact, it has the characteristics of a *regional or minority* language in the sense of the ECRML, as it is a language other than the official language of the states where it is spoken (except Andorra, where it cannot be considered covered by the ECRML), on the one hand; and a language spoken by a group that is numerically inferior to the rest of the population of the state, on the other hand. In the same vein, the Catalan linguistic community must also be considered a linguistic minority, since it constitutes less than half of the population of the State, as the UN defines this concept<sup>15</sup>, both in Spain and in France and Italy, with all that entails in terms of international minority protection treaties. What is more, today Catalan is even a minority in parts of the linguistic territory itself, practically all Catalan speakers also speak the official, and dominant, language of their respective states and live there together with others who may not know Catalan or decide not to speak it. Added to this is the perception that Catalan-speakers themselves have of their language:

The subjective ethnolinguistic vitality (VES) (Giles, 2001) of Catalan, that is, the perception of the status and usefulness of a language by its speakers, is pretty limited. Many speakers of the Catalan Mediterranean, to use Pierre Deffontaines' fortunate phrase, see their language as a capital that is not much use for the state or the market, because they compare it with the gigantic languages of their neighbours, such as Spanish, French, or even more so with the inevitable English. The picture darkens when we look at this ethnolinguistic vitality more microscopically. In certain areas of the Catalan language domain (especially in the Valencian Country and, to a lesser extent, in the Balearic Islands), particularism is powerful: Mallorcan or Valencian are seen as completely separate codes from Catalan. This territorial disintegration lessens the sense of belonging to the ethnolinguistic group. The unity of the language is not seen or lived, so that its social and symbolic space and therefore its usefulness are still further reduced, even more shrunk.

(Bastardas *et al.*, 2018: 14)

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<sup>15</sup> The Spanish State does not accept this definition; see United Nations Human Rights Council (2020b).

As it happens, beyond the overall (quite positive, in general) vision, we can recognise in the seven areas that make up the linguistic territory (Catalonia, the Valencian Country, the Balearic Islands, Northern Catalonia, the Aragonese or Western *Franja* and the city of L'Alguer) all sorts of different sociolinguistic situations, as well as even different stages of language shift.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it is clear that both the number of speakers (initial and L2) as well as the degree of self-government and the extent of codification, standardisation, use and (literary) prestige can turn the Catalan language into an example for other regional or minority languages. Example, I would emphasise, not only in the positive sense of the word, but also in terms of pitfalls, obstacles, mistakes, and discourses and tendencies contrary to the normalisation of one's own language and of linguistic diversity.

For all these reasons, I consider it important that Catalan, through the Vives Network, shall continue to be involved and to participate in projects such as this one and to strengthen the other regional or minority languages at the same time as it strengthens its own language.

### **Some experiences in the normalisation of Catalan**

Without any pretensions to being exhaustive, I will offer below some notes, some possible lessons, that we draw from the experiences of Catalan:

- Various challenges for a language community. Branchadell (2003) compiles six challenges for the Catalan linguistic community, to which Boix-Fuster (2012: 71) adds a seventh (here, number 6): 1. disintegration (loss of unity and dialectalisation), 2. division (internal confrontations and atomization), 3. dissolution (convergence to the majority language), 4. devaluation (loss of use and social projection), 5. disappearance (end of intergenerational transmission), 6. domination (lack of sovereignty and agency, also concerning language issues) i 7. demobilisation (loss of interest in maintaining one's language and reacting to previous challenges). Boix-Fuster (2012: 90), on the other hand, points to cooperation as the only way out we have as a language community; according to him, one should aspire to the five ideals of Pons (2005), to which he adds the last: 1. cooperation, 2. mutual convenience, 3. shared benefit, 4. equality, 5 reciprocity, 6. generosity.

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<sup>16</sup> Boix-Fuster (2008: 12) says: "The drama is that this abandonment of the language is not a hypothetical future: most Catalan speakers in Northern Catalonia (precisely in one of the places where Catalan was born, Catalan is dying) and in L'Alguer have stopped learning it from their parents' lips and the same can be said to varying degrees in the city of Alacant, València or even Palma de Mallorca."

- Status as an official language. As Professor Carme Junyent said at the commemoration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights on July 15, 2021 in Oliva, for a time it was thought that achieving the status as an official language was the solution to ensure the survival of the language, but it has been seen that this is not the case. Not only is it insufficient because in the case of Catalan in Spain there is an asymmetric (incomplete, false) officiality between Catalan and Castilian, but also because officiality alone does not guarantee the actual use or social presence of the language nor does it ensure the recovery or maintenance of domains of language use. That is not to say that the status as an official language does not matter, but that it must be accompanied by the necessary measures, an effective language policy, in short.<sup>17</sup> The evolution of institutional language policy in the different territories of the Catalan language allows us to see both the limitations, inefficiencies and positive effects as well as the need to constantly adapt to new challenges.<sup>18</sup>
- Self-rule. Speaking of language hierarchies and asymmetric status, it must be said that the “limits” of self-governance (that is, what we are “allowed to do” and what not) and the violation of our linguistic rights by the state we are citizens of could also be perceived.<sup>19</sup> Without going into more detail, we can mention as examples the rulings of the Spanish courts against Decree 9/2017 on the Plurilingual School or against the Office of Linguistic Rights in the Valencian Country or the latest ruling that imposes 25% of Spanish in Catalan schools.
- Teaching of and in the language. In the case of Catalan, different experiences have been accumulated (in different territories and at different stages) both with language immersion education systems for the whole population (both Catalan speakers and allophones) as well as language segregation systems and mixed systems. Research has also been done on content and language integrated learning so that students learn the language not only in

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<sup>17</sup> In 2016, Linguapax International organised the international symposium “Languages and status. Does officiality matter?”. More information [in Catalan]: <https://www.linguapax.org/publicacions/conferencies-i-simposis/simposi-llengues-i-estatus/>

<sup>18</sup> We can use Catalan legislation as an example, as it expanded the areas covered by language policy in time: from the Catalan administration, school and media in the first Language Normalisation Act of 1983; to the State administration located in Catalonia, the cultural industries, the socio-economic sector and the external projection of the language, as well as the explicit recognition of linguistic rights, in the new Language Policy Act of 1998; to the Reception of Immigrants Act of 2010, which prioritised the learning of Catalan.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, the recommendations of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (2019) or the report coordinated by the NGO Plataforma per la Llengua (2018).

language classes, but also have it as medium of instruction for non-linguistic subjects; so they will see that it can be used in all areas. This also necessitates the elaboration of terminology, in which universities (through their language services) play a key role, together with other institutions, such as the TERMCAT (the Catalan terminology centre) in the Catalan case. Finally, in the Catalan-speaking territories research has also been conducted concerning Romance intercomprehension methods, although the Catalan-speaking universities do not yet apply it systematically (see Flors-Mas i Vila, 2020).

- Language use. While teaching (and therefore the acquisition of language skills by the whole population) is essential<sup>20</sup> and the phenomenon of new speakers is, actually, one of the most encouraging for the future of the language community, it has also been found that language competence on its own is not enough, seeing that it does not equate to the use and social presence of the language. This is why it is so important that the language use, not just communicative competence or sociolinguistic awareness, is also actively promoted. In this sense, discourses prevalent in society have to be taken into consideration, both those against one's own language and linguistic diversity, as well as those that are favourable to it, if we want to counter them and campaign effectively in favour of our language.
- Change in viewing habits and emergence of information and communication technologies, social networks and artificial intelligence-based applications. Even if we have a public (radio and television) broadcasting system in our language, nowadays social media and streaming series and films via Internet have burst into our lives, especially of young people, and have completely changed our audiovisual consume behaviour. This content is often not available in our language, neither in the traditional cinema nor on online streaming platforms. As Vicent Climent-Ferrando said at the kick-off meeting in Brussels, it is important that we link language symbolically to usefulness and the future, not just to identity and the past. In this sense, progress is also being made to contribute to the presence of Catalan on social networks (both individual and cooperative projects as well as institutional initiatives), in the world of the Internet (mention should be made of the activity of Wikipedian volunteers) or the world of artificial intelligence, such as voice recognition, so that people do not have to change their language (to the dominant one) in

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<sup>20</sup> For this reason, I consider it important that the training in Catalan carried out by the universities of the Vives Network should be taken into account in the language policy indicators of the Vives Network of Universities.

order to have GoogleMaps or Alexa understand them or so that WhatsApp can write dictated messages correctly, for instance.

- Universities, volunteerism and associations. There are universities in the Vives Network (as well as other non-university organisations) that have language volunteer services that play an important role in improving the sociocultural integration of new speakers, facilitating language acquisition and promoting the use of the language. In addition, the Vives Network can provide expertise in areas such as language rights (for example, the UV Chair in Linguistic Rights or the UIB diploma on the same topic), language ideologies and discourses (the university diploma organised by the CUSC-UB comes to mind), linguistic diversity (the UNESCO Chair in Linguistic Diversity at the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, the UB's Endangered Languages Study Group or the UAB's "Linguistic Diversity, What For?"-MOOC, designed by Linguapax International) or sociolinguistics (such as the UIB Sociolinguistics Research Group or the UB's Centre de Recerca en Sociolingüística i Comunicació), among many others. Outside the academia, it is important to highlight volunteer services that promote linguistic integration, but also others that further the presence of Catalan in the digital world (such as Softcatalà volunteers, who translate software into Catalan and develop digital tools and resources for the language, or Amical Wikimedia, the Catalan-language volunteers on Wikipedia) or that defend the linguistic rights of Catalan speakers (such as the NGO Plataforma per la Llengua).

## Final considerations

I am convinced of the desirability of collaborating on such projects. ECCA has borne fruit that should now be generalised to more schools in our regions<sup>21</sup> and expanded to other language communities, including regions without a regional or minority language<sup>22</sup>, in addition to the university sector, which is yet to be explored. The dissemination of the ECRML is still a necessity

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<sup>21</sup> In fact, I think it would be interesting to also encourage school exchanges between schools in the same region and even to create a kind of internal Erasmus+ inside the Vives Network in order to promote the use of Catalan and the recognition of its unity and language territory.

<sup>22</sup> I would like to point out that Part II (of mandatory ratification) of the ECRML entails a commitment to "promote [...] mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country and in particular the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to regional or minority languages among the objectives of education and training provided within their countries and encouragement of the mass media to pursue the same objective" (ECRML, art. 7.3). In the same vein, the UN Rapporteur on minority issues recommended to the Spanish state "awareness-raising campaigns and other activities for the general public celebrating the country's rich association with many cultures, languages and religions and acknowledging them as integral parts of modern Spanish society" (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2020: 16).

ECCA would be a good starting point for this.

and ought to be of interest to all regional or minority languages in Europe. That said, I will briefly outline some personal recommendations and considerations:

1. Projects such as ECCA should also include basic learning materials for the languages they represent. During the closing conference, there was a need to use hegemonic languages such as English, Italian or Spanish for communication between participants, and it is possible that the same would have happened in the case of school exchanges. The use of lingua francas is understandable,<sup>23</sup> as long as we do not lose sight of the aim of the project and the principle of linguistic subsidiarity: that everything that can be done in the local language should not be done in the global language. What is the implicit message we give to our Valencian, Ladin, Friulian, Frisian or Hungarian students when they receive exchange students who switch to the dominant language, who speak to them in Spanish in the Valencian Country, in Italian in the Fascia Valley or in Friuli, for example? Instead of breaking down prejudices, we could be reinforcing the view that our languages are actually quite useless.<sup>24</sup> I must say that I disagree with the idea of mobility as a basis for language acquisition that Kristina Cunningham raised during the closing conference. It is possible that this may work for dominant languages, although I would generally say that it is necessary to start from a certain level (such as the CECR's B1 level<sup>25</sup>) in order for language immersion to really take place. Otherwise, one uses the dominant languages one already knows to communicate and, in the case of regional or minority languages, which are always in a situation of contact with another more dominant language, it is possible that one does not even realise the existence of the other language. In the case of university Erasmus+ and school mobility, it should be added that it is supposed to be an intercultural and academic experience and that the classes may be in the regional or minority language.

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<sup>23</sup> In question 35 of the *Vademecum* of the European MIME project, Marác (2018) concludes that the challenges of multilingual and transnational communication should be approached through the use of toolkit. Among the different tools, one is the lingua franca (English), but others can be intercomprehension, alternatives to English such as Esperanto, translation and interpretation, and foreign language learning.

<sup>24</sup> Not only that, but we could actually hinder intercultural learning. In question 49 of the MIME *Vademecum*, Iannàcaro (2018: 132) says: "our qualitative study on European university students enrolled in summer programmes in various countries shows that they tend to agree that English as a lingua franca did not foster cultural understanding and immersion; while they valued their command of English, they were also in favour of learning and using additional languages". Iannàcaro (2018) then emphasises the importance of showing and establishing linguistic plurality as a desirable result of mobility and of "integrat[ing] the teaching of regional language, history, and culture (including neighbouring cross-border regions) for both school-aged and adult learners, in formal, non-formal and informal settings" in educational policy (133).

<sup>25</sup> This is, in fact, the level of English, French or German the Universitat Jaume I requires of its students for them to do an Erasmus+ semester or year in a English, French or German-speaking country.

Therefore, the commitment of the Catalan, Valencian and Balearic governments to promote the inclusion of the Catalan language in the Online Linguistic Support platform for the Erasmus+ 2021-2027 program is to be commended. This online language support should be accompanied by linguistic welcoming plans, volunteer services and (summer or propaedeutic) face-to-face courses such as those held a few years ago, as well as initial online courses such as the University of Groningen's Frisian MOOC.

2. In this sense, in addition to providing basic training in the other language, it might be interesting to take into account the concept of *collateral languages* and previous experiences such as the European EBP-ICI project. The starting point of this project was as follows:

These works have shown, among other things, in bilingual or immersion schools in the regional language, favorable provisions for education in plurilingualism from collateral languages or languages of the same family (French / Corsican / Occitan / Catalan; French / Corsican / Italian), whose linguistic proximity deserved to be further exploited. The notion of "collateral languages" (Eloy, 2001) seemed to us particularly suited to minority languages which have a relationship of linguistic proximity with the dominant language of the State where they are spoken. It makes it possible to speak of a "bridge language", first towards genetically close languages (Romance languages, Germanic languages), but also geographically (languages of neighboring countries) and more broadly towards "other languages" (McPake *et al.*, 2007).

(Cortier i Cavalli, 2013: 7)

If we take advantage of the intercomprehension between languages of the same family and combine it with the teaching of the other language, it will not only be easier not to have to resort to a lingua franca and there can be real immersion into the language and the culture of the other, but we could showcase our languages as *bridge* languages to others<sup>26</sup>, which would reinforce a perception of their usefulness. Practiced by both sides, mutual understanding would allow everyone to continue speaking their own language, without the need to move towards any (dominant) language. It would therefore be a sustainable and respectful approach. In fact, the Council of Europe's *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Beacco *et al.*, 2016) recommends that in secondary school the concept of language

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<sup>26</sup> The Catalan textbook *Punt per punt C1* (Martínez Amorós *et al.*, 2018) does this.

families be deepened in order to increase students' sociolinguistic awareness, especially in the case of regional or minority languages (Beacco *et al.*, 2016: 113)<sup>27</sup>. Also in the presentation of learning methods that facilitate multilingual and intercultural education, this guide (Beacco *et al.*, 2016) includes intercomprehension (159) and considers that the languages involved in exchanges and carrying out joint activities ("Encounter Pedagogy") and virtual mobility are either languages taught in school or close languages that belong to the same language family (160). Therefore, rather than randomly matching participants in exchanges, consideration might be given to bringing together speakers of languages from the same language family.

3. Similar to the final publication of the EBP-ICI project (Cortier i Cavalli, 2013), I consider it appropriate that future projects along the lines of ECCA publish experiences and especially teaching units developed by teachers in a (digital and paper) book. Not only is it a recognition of their work, but it will help to disseminate and ease access to the good practice and the knowledge accumulated by the project. To this end, it would be necessary to standardise the criteria and specify well the characteristics that the teaching units or, at least, the final reports of the collaborators should have. Finally, it might be interesting to take into consideration the Council of Europe's *Framework of Reference for Pluralistic Approaches to Languages and Cultures* (FREPA; Candelier, 2012).
4. During the closing conference I realised that there was no activity prepared or aimed at young people or dynamics for them to know or teach each other some bits of their languages. In fact, the conversations that arose spontaneously between young people began and ended up being, as in the case of adults mostly, in English, Italian or Spanish. In the development of the teaching units, some teachers had prepared games (card games and memory games), reading poetry<sup>28</sup> and using literature, among other fun and educational activities. There was also a quiz with songs in the project languages and students had to recognise in which language the songs were sung. In fact, music is one of the most present socio-cultural elements, a common denominator of the teaching units of very different languages. Music is attractive and universal, but at the same time it

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<sup>27</sup> In order to increase sociolinguistic awareness (and facilitate research) before, during and after the project or exchange, it might be interesting to use the European Language Portfolio.

<sup>28</sup> I think it would be interesting to take advantage of projects such as "Multiple Versions", which I have been a collaborator of for many years, as it is about literary authors and translators in minority languages translating each other mutually, often through bridge languages.



expresses the past, the identity and the history of each community; at the same time, it implies and has a future. That is why I think that we should take advantage of music more and might organise more fun and cultural activities in case students are to participate in the event: recommend each other music in different languages, create music, make contests, even organise a kind of Eurovision for regional or minority languages<sup>29</sup>, etc. In addition, whether or not a face-to-face exchange can take place, virtual exchanges could be organised, either by (e-)mail or by audio, video or social network. Linked to a basic learning of the other's language (added to the strengthening of intercomprehension), this would reinforce language learning, the significance of learning and the perception of the usefulness of the language and facilitate future immersion in case of a face-to-face exchange.

5. I think it would be interesting to extend the ECCA pilot experience to the university sector. As explained by Dr. Avel·lí Flors Mas at the opening conference held by the Vives Network in Castelló de la Plana, on the one hand, it is easier for a person to change their habits when changing from one vital stage to another, for example, from primary to secondary school, from secondary school to university or when they start working, as it is at this point that they change their environment, context, social relationships, etc.; on the other hand, during adolescence, a speaker of a regional or minority language may not show their language because they do not want to stand out, in order to be just like the others, to camouflage themselves. Therefore, in these two vital stage changes (the transition to university and to the first work experiences, which are often still linked to university in the form of internships), it might be interesting to raise awareness and show that our languages are also suitable for adult life, that they are useful and that they can help you make friends and build new social circles. In the Vives Network, some university volunteer services are trying to do just that. In addition, projects such as ECCA should also be carried out in universities because here is where future professionals are trained and prepared, especially in public areas (or areas of public interest) such as education, health, justice, the media or translation, areas that are also reflected in the ECRML after all. All these professionals must also be made aware of the rights that speakers have and the obligations

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<sup>29</sup> The fact that the group Tanxugueiras, that sings in Galician the song "Terra" ('Earth') and with the phrase "There are no frontiers" in different Spanish minority languages, got voted the most both by the audience and by a demographic vote representative of the Spanish population during the preselection of a candidate for the Eurovision Song Contest might be a good indicator for the general interest in organising something like that.

that this entails for the state (and for the companies that provide services and for the university students as professional and competent employees), because there can only be “true linguistic security” if the rights are linked to obligations, as Professor Rafael Castelló pointed out at the opening conference in Castelló de la Plana. It is therefore necessary to raise awareness among university students especially. Undoubtedly, it would be very interesting to hold meetings of language volunteers, with a high degree of sociolinguistic awareness, from different regions with a regional or minority language. Finally, I consider that universities are an ideal place for this kind of project because they already have all the necessary infrastructure to connect social actors from different fields and at the same time accompany everything with the necessary cutting-edge research capabilities.

6. In relation to point 1, I would like to remind the readers that, in order to make ourselves visible, to show all the European linguistic diversity and to change the mental frameworks of the people, we must first show ourselves. Without this being at all an exhaustive or representative study, I took a look at some memoirs from German students who had spent an Erasmus+ semester at the Universitat Jaume I and the Universitat de València, and they did not even mention the fact that we speak our own language here. I think it would be interesting to do a study in the Vives Network as well as the universities of other language communities to see if they really see us or if we go unnoticed or camouflaged among the dominant state languages. I would also question what kind of cultural and linguistic immersion, what kind of Erasmus+ indeed, students had if they had not even noticed or been surprised by the existence of a subordinate language during their stay. While being noticed might be scary, not just in adolescence, it is a prerequisite for reflection, awareness raising and a change in mental frameworks, habits, attitudes, and the eradication of prejudice. As Stefano Riz said at the kick-off meeting in Brussels, our languages are “a new way [our own] to feel European”; we shall not hide our way of being European.

I started the first report talking about the Year of Indigenous Languages (2019), at the time of publishing this final report we have just entered the United Nations’ Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032). In Catalan, we use the term *llengua pròpia* (loosely, our ‘own language’) and speaking about *llengües indígenes* (‘indigenous languages’, of course) might make us think that this doesn’t concern us, it might even be counterproductive to use this term for possible prejudices, as it makes us think of the past rather than the future and modernity. However, the name given to this decade in French, the decade of autochthonous languages,

might be that much closer to our own term than the terms used in English and Spanish. In any case, what the Decade aims to put into focus is the world's linguistic diversity and the current language crisis or emergency: the loss, death or replacement of most of the world's languages. In addition, we are at a crossroads where we will have to decide our future in many ways, be it in terms of the environment, diversity (linguistic and otherwise) or democracy, among many others, which is shown clearly by the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN's 2030 Agenda and also the Conference on the Future of Europe, which will end this year 2022. Accordingly, I think it worth calling for an 18<sup>th</sup> sustainable development goal for languages, as Xavier Mir i Oliveras does [in Catalan] through his Twitter account @SDGforLanguages, and to call for continued and redoubled efforts to promote and normalise linguistic diversity, starting with our own languages, through broad and at the same time close networks between both regional or minority language communities and aware majority language communities, and through ambitious projects like ECCA.

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