

## **Europe's Languages - Our Precious European Heritage**

### **The Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages on the European Day of Languages**

Languages define Europe. Languages define who we are, they shape our development and bind us to the countries and regions we live in. Each language carries a unique historical, social and cultural knowledge, as well as a unique human experience and worldview. They are our precious heritage. 26 September, is the European Day of Languages. This is a moment to celebrate the cultural richness and diversity of Europe, a key value on which the European project is built. It highlights the advantages of learning other European languages, of discovering new cultures encapsulated in them and of gaining new perspectives on the world. There is nothing like multilingualism to foster better mutual understanding and inclusion and to unleash creativity and innovation.

The European day is also the occasion to put the spotlight on the often fragile and precarious situation of minority and lesser-used languages in Europe, on the need to recognize, safeguard and nourish them.

The coronavirus pandemic has proven to be very revealing in this regard as well, as it posed additional challenges to speakers of such languages. Research shows that at least half of the traditional national and linguistic minority communities did not have access to basic health information in their mother tongue. Children belonging to such minority or language groups also faced additional difficulties in accessing mother tongue education in comparison with children belonging to the majority. In addition, due to their smaller size, media and cultural activities in minority languages have also been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. These inequalities prove that there is still a lot to do on both the level of the European Union, as well as on national levels in order to ensure that minority languages and cultures are protected and promoted.

We, Members of the European Parliament's Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages stress the importance of ensuring mother tongue use despite challenging times. We are certain that the use of the languages of traditional minority communities and language groups in relation with public authorities, in education and in cultural life should be guaranteed in each Member State of the European Union, both in normal and extraordinary circumstances. Only then can we say that European languages are given the respect they all deserve.