

Resolution on Tibet: plans to make Chinese the main language of instruction

2010/2965(RSP) - 25/11/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 23 November 2010, the European Parliament adopted by 66 votes to 0, with 3 abstentions, a resolution on Tibet – plans to make Chinese the main language of instruction.

The resolution had been tabled by the EFD, S&D, ALDE, ECR, Greens/ALE, and EPP groups. It notes that on 19 October 2010 approximately 1 000 ethnic Tibetan students marched through Tongren, also known as Rebkong, peacefully opposing a plan to establish Mandarin Chinese as the main language of instruction in schools in the region. Parliament condemns the increased crackdown on the exercise of the cultural, linguistic, religious and other fundamental freedoms of Tibetans, and stresses the need to preserve and protect the distinct cultural, religious and national identity of the six million Tibetan people and to address concerns about the repression and marginalisation of the Tibetan language, which underpins Tibetan identity. It notes the concerns about the attempts to devalue the Tibetan language, and stresses the fact that if there is to be successful bilingual education, Tibetan must be the domestic language. It calls on the Chinese authorities to implement Article 4 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China's and Article 10 of the Law on Regional National autonomy which guarantee 'the freedom of all nationalities to use and develop their own spoken and written languages'.

The resolution calls on the European Commission, the HR/VP and the Member States to urge the Chinese Government to ensure, firstly, that the right of peaceful expression by students is respected and that the relevant authorities address their grievances substantively and appropriately, and, secondly, that the 2002 'Regulations on the Study, Use and Development of the Tibetan Language' are properly implemented, in accordance with the Law of Regional Ethnic Autonomy. It asks the Commission to report on the use of the fund requested for the support of Tibetan civil society in China and in exile in the framework of the 2009 budget (EUR 1 million), and stresses the need to preserve Tibetan culture, particularly in exile. Members call once again on China to ratify the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, and they deplore the often discriminatory treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in China. They ask the Chinese authorities to provide foreign media access to Tibet, including the Tibetan areas outside the Tibet Autonomous Region, and to abolish the system of special permits being required. EU diplomatic representatives in Beijing are asked to visit the region and to report back to the Council and the HR/VP on the current situation with regard to the education and language issue.

Noting that mother-tongue bilingual education is the most effective path to successful bilingualism for Tibetans, and that this 'model 1 bilingual education policy' has consistently led to the highest college placement rates for Tibetan high school students across the Tibetan region, Parliament urges the Chinese authorities to support a genuine policy of bilingualism, whereby all subjects, including maths and science, are permitted to be taught in the Tibetan language, teaching of the Chinese language is strengthened, and local authorities and communities are empowered to make decisions on the language of instruction. It takes the view that a fair bilingual education system will contribute to better cooperation and understanding when Tibetan people learn Chinese, with Han people living in Tibetan areas at the same time being encouraged to learn the Tibetan language. Lastly, Parliament notes that owing to the dominance of the Chinese language, there is growing anxiety over job prospects among graduate students in Tibetan areas as, according to the petition signed by teachers and students, most Tibetan students have never been in a Chinese-language environment and therefore are not able to communicate in Chinese. It

calls on the Chinese authorities to make every effort to lessen the linguistic and cultural disadvantages faced by Tibetans in urban employment, albeit in ways that do not undermine Tibetan language and culture.