Regional and less-used languages in Europe in the context of the enlargement and cultural diversity

2003/2057(INL) - 04/09/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report with 431 votes in favour, 30 against, and 23 abstentions, criticising the lack of EU legislation on regional and less widely-used languages. The rapporteur was by Michl EBNER (EPP-ED, Italy) on European regional and lesser-used languages. (Please see the summary of 08/07/03.) Parliament pointed out that despite the very considerable differences that sometimes exist between the social, economic and political factors involved in their use, Europe's regional and minority languages have many features in common throughout the EU and a European dimension. This makes them a matter of interest for the whole of Europe. In some communities regional or minority languages straddle the frontiers of Member States, and there is a tradition of long-standing cultural and historical links between other such communities. These links are important and continue to be promoted at interregional level, almost all these regional and minority language communities share a strong interest in the survival and development of their language and culture, as well as in making full use of their potential in the EU. Regional and minority languages are a major cultural treasure trove and support to foster them should be improved constantly and at every level. Parliament therefore called on the Commission, to submit to it by 31 March 2004 legislative proposals on language diversity and language learning. It also asked the Commission to provide scientifically based criteria for a definition of a minority or regional language for the purposes of the possible programme for linguistic diversity.