European Roadmap for Linguistic Diversity

1. **Objective and Context**

To reaffirm the European Union’s commitment to promoting the vitality of all languages used today in Europe and to the promotion of affirmative action to safeguard their future

* 1. Aims
* To develop a high level vision of a multilingual and linguistically diverse Europe
* to provide a roadmap which outlines future developments for all the languages of Europe, including state, regional, minority, lesser used and cross border languages and languages for mobility
* To outline the collective responsibility of the European Union and its members to preserve, promote and enhance the use and status of all the languages spoken in Europe today
* To promote the passing of language legislation at state level which is based on what is considered to be good practise at a European level.
  1. High Level group

In order to achieve this aim and to promote discussion and action, a high level group of World Leaders will be established with the task of formulating and presenting a European Roadmap for Languages in Europe which will highlight how languages in Europe should be given the necessary support and promotion over the next decade.

* 1. Partners
  + A high level group of Presidents, Prime Ministers and high profile public figures.
  + The European Commission
  + The EU Parliament Intergroup for National Minorities
  + The Irish State during its period as the President of the EU
  + Network To Promote Linguistic Diversity
  + Folktinget, The Swedish Assembly of Finland
  1. Working in Partnership

The Charter for Regional and Minority Languages would be used as a sound basis for much of this development and therefore working in partnership with the Council of Europe would be seen as a priority.

1. **EU POWER**

Europe's linguistic map has been drawn over many centuries and is much older that the present pattern of political entities which constitute the member states of Europe. Some languages have developed into strong powerful languages which have a vibrancy which at present means that they are highly self sustaining. Others are the languages of smaller states and have the backing of the state. Languages which don't have this backing find their continued existence to be permanently under threat and requiring continuous support and promotion.

* 1. Linguistic Diversity is one of the key elements of the European identity and linguistic diversity is promoted to preserve the European heritage as well as ensuring that multilingual citizens can take better advantage of the range of opportunities that are available within this linguistically diverse continent.
  2. During the past twelve years, since the turn of the millennium, the EU has started many initiatives to support multilingualism and linguistic diversity; initiatives such as the first ever communication on Multilingualism in 2005, called *A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism.* However the concept of Linguistic Diversity has not been promoted as actively as the support for multilingualism. And with both aspects it appears that the EU has run out of direction and initiatives.
  3. A new and fresh approach is required which includes all languages and gets to grips with the promotion and support for all the languages of Europe, and this includes state languages, regional and minority languages and all the other languages spoken in Europe today. Only when we face up to the challenges and opportunities posed by all the different languages will Europe be able to class itself as being proud of its linguistic diversity.
  4. Therefore the EU should view itself as an organisation that has a certain level of responsibility for setting down what should be the vital requirement for the maintenance and promotion of all the languages of Europe.
  5. It is proposed therefore to establish a high level group of well known people who have operated at the highest level of state to put forward a Roadmap for Languages in Europe which will outline the best way forward in order to preserve this wonderful European linguistic heritage which is an integral part of all our lives.

1. **European Roadmap for Languages**

The content of the initial report on the European Roadmap for languages

* A short overview of the situation of languages in Europe highlighting the present situation of state languages, regional languages, languages of migrants from within and without the EU
* Reference to the Language Rich Europe project
* Status given to some languages by some member states
* Lack of status of other languages which includes Minority/Regional languages and the languages of Migrants
* Reference to the Charter for Regional or Minority languages (Council of Europe) and other relevant documentation with international legal status
* EU' s responsibilities at present and also a description of how the EU acts at present
* Work already undertaken by the European Union and Commission over the past years in the context of promoting multilingualism and linguistic Diversity.
* What are the plans for the future and how robust or impactive these plans are or could be!
* Funding provided by the EU for the promotion of languages and how these fall into different categories such as the teaching and learning of English, majority languages, regional and minority languages and languages of economic migrants.
* Special emphasis on where little funding has been spent but where the need is great in terms of promoting language usage
* The importance of languages for Europe as a whole both at social, economic and cultural level and how keeping the diversity of languages as a living phenomenon within Europe.
* How can the diversity of languages be seen as unifying element across Europe and not be seen as a barrier between people.
* How the EU could stop languages from feeling inferior in the context of the world’s linguistic diversity, Europe has relatively few languages, why do many languages feel inferior to others and how could this trend be reversed?
  1. In this context the European Roadmap for Languages would set down the goals for the maintenance and promotion of languages in Europe and outline the advantages of multilingualism and linguistic diversity for all the citizens of Europe and would provide different models for ensuring that languages can be used and maintained in a variety of linguistic situations
  2. At a very practical level the Roadmap would provide evidence of good practise in the context of the following:
* Linguistic rights
* Official status for languages
* Language schemes or standards
* Use of language in the home
* Use of language in the public arena
* Education and Training in the mother tongue, through immersion and second language course provision
* The right to use or the promotion of the use of languages in the workplace
* The promotion of Language use within the Community
* Using languages in structures that support young people, within the service industries etc
* Complementing the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages
* Use of social media and new technology to support the promotion and retention of languages
* Using languages to promote economic development
* Languages and mobility
  1. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages provides an excellent development tool for ensuring that states take a responsible and mature attitude towards the development of a structured and realistic strategy for the promotion of minority languages and there are already some good examples of states performing well in this context. But there are also numerous examples of states underperforming.
  2. The Charter would be a good basis on which to develop a European Roadmap for Languages. The Roadmap would provide a practical toolkit which would complement the Charter, for example by introducing and promoting language management strategies which each state in Europe could endorse within their own particular linguistic context. As with the Charter there would be an element of external supervision and review based on strategic documents produced by the EU and EC. Linking the Charter and the Roadmap would also strengthen the relationship between the European Union and the Council of Europe within the context of language management at a European level which would also be a positive development.
  3. The Charter and the Roadmap could also be supplemented by a number of other European strategic plans which would highlight the advantages of planning the promotion of soundly based language strategies in the contexts of all languages.
  4. As a result of the Roadmap the expectation would be that legislation at a state level would be based on what is considered to be good practise at a European level.
  5. In comparison to other continents across the world, the range of languages that exist and are spoken in Europe is not a particularly long or complex list. Indeed there are comparatively few languages in Europe in comparison to many other areas in the world and the European Roadmap for Languages would preserve this interesting but relatively limited diversity.