

# 'Catalan language, an ongoing political battlefield'

*The awareness of a Catalan language that is differentiated from Latin reaches from around the 8th century, when with the attempt to normalise the cultured Latin among the population, an autochthonous, own and differentiated speech becomes evident. The annotations in Catalan in different writings of the 9th century serve as a prelude to the first feudal documents in Catalan such as the 'Greuges de ard Isarn, lord of Caboet (1080-1095)' or religious texts such as the 'Homilies of Organya' of the c.XII.*



Kaart van de Catalaanse landen.

## A medieval world language

Political events will take Catalan far beyond its Pyrenean cradle, where Catalan, Occitan and Limousin are the same language. Over the next few centuries, the Catalan language becomes part of all areas of knowledge.

It became consolidated as a cultured language with leading figures such as Ramon Llull and gets established throughout the Mediterranean, because of the geographical implementation of the Catalan-Aragonese crown that reaches Greek lands, and beyond, because of

its international preeminence as it was the language of important international codes. These included the Book of the Consulate of the Sea - a code of laws that regulated maritime trade in the Mediterranean and was a forerunner of the legislation of the commonwealth of nations Britannica or of all the maritime international law. A context of literary splendour with high levels of political power as indicated by the fact that there were two Catalan-speaking Holy Fathers: Calixte III (1455) and Roderic de Borja (1671).

## Het probleem ligt niet alleen in Madrid, ook in Barcelona.

In simple terms, the Catalan nation was well structured as a federation of territories of common language with Parliamentary Chambers and Constitutions. Catalonia, collected taxes and legislated in a sovereign and independent manner. This with an intense reciprocity of commercial, artistic and scientific interests, tastes and benefits shared by all the Catalan-speaking territory that beat with the pulse of the cities of Perpinya, Mallorca, Valencia, Lleida, Barcelona. The Catalan countries were already a reality.

## A strong headwind

But so was the imperialism of 'conquest and booty' of Castile and France, and they would soon be noticed. On April 1st of 1700, an edict of Louis XIV forbade the use of Catalan: 'The use of Catalan is repugnant and contrary to the honour of the French nation'. The Castilians did not lag behind and from 1714 with the military and administrative occupation of Catalonia and the whole Catalan nation, the persecution of the Catalan language would be bloodied.

The grievances inferred by French and Spaniards, against all material or immaterial assets that conforms Catalan nation: the life of Catalans, the language, and all their cultural and economic expressions, are well documented and would not be a topic for today.

# CATALAN IS **NOT** OFFICIAL IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

There are 11 official EU languages with less speakers than Catalan in Europe.  
Nevertheless Catalan does not hold official status in the EU



*Van toen de Engelsen nog bij de EU waren.*

## The repression continues

But it is important to make it very clear that the will to annihilate 'the Catalan fact' is not an authoritarian mood or mania of a bygone era but a systemic dynamic that became official in the eighteenth century, continues without shame in the nineteenth, with obvious peaks in the twentieth century: two fascist dictatorships, that of Primo de Rivera and that of Franco, and continues after the alleged establishment of democracy with the regime of 78, in the twenty and twenty first centuries. Monarchs, republicans, fascists (liberals and communists), conservatives, anarcho-syndicalists, progressives, Spanish and French, have all kicked off against the promotion of the Catalan language.

It is only necessary to see the repeated willingness of Spanish political parties to block Catalan from being an official EU language, last time in 2015 with the opposite votes of Spanish MEPs -despite being an UN official language and the language of a state: Andorra- or the Jacobin commitment of the modern French Republic when in 2021 the French Constitutional Court ruled against the Law of Linguistic Immersion (known as Molac Law) previously approved by the legislative power of the French chamber of representatives.

Being aware of all this, it is very difficult to explain how there are still Catalan MEPs using Spanish or French in the parliamentary chamber of the European Union.

## Despite all, Catalan is alive more than ever

The force used by the states in which the Catalan nation is still subdued today has been commendable. Now, I invite you to think for a moment how monumental the strength of the people must have been to make today the Catalan language not only official and alive in a territory of almost 15 million people, more than Sweden or Portugal, but

also positioned itself as the seventh most studied language and ninth most spoken in Europe, and the eighth with the most reaching on the internet. This year, a Catalan film in Catalan language won the prestigious cinema prize of the Berlinale with: 'Alcarras' and the Rosalia phenomenon continues to top the Latin music market, letting Catalan language to fly inside houses and imaginaries of distant worlds whenever she decides to share it.

**Prou!**

Tenim dret a viure en català

**Concentracions simultànies, 2 d'abril**

- 📍 **Perpinyà**, Passeig Torcatis, jornada per la llengua de 10 a 22h
- 📍 **Palma**, Plaça del Tub, 12h
- 📍 **València**, Tribunal Superior de Justícia (Jardins de la Glorieta), 13h
- 📍 **Barcelona**, Pl. Sant Jaume, 18h

**ENLLACATS PER LA LLENGUA**

**amb el suport de les entitats de la**

**Genoeg. We hebben het recht om in het Catalaans te leven.**

However, there are data that show a panorama that anguishes a Catalan society too accustomed to considering its administrations as defenceless victims of state designations and, therefore, little accustomed to demanding them to be the spearhead of an onslaught that if we do not face, we'll be sentenced to a perpetual state of alarm.

**Consensus: Catalan is and must remain the only vehicular educational**

In the 1980s/90s, the struggle of Catalans in favour of their identity and independence, found in the defence of the language a space where overwhelming majorities created consensus in favour of linguistic immersion in schools. The Catalan administration wanted to prevent the strong Spanish immigration arriving by the war and the Franco regime from being left out of an education in Catalan and linguistic political legislation was approved. Catalan was established as the vehicular language in the educational centres guaranteeing the good command of all students in two of the three co-official languages, the Catalan and the Spanish, adding the Occitan to the Aran valley.

This measure was accompanied by a whole deployment of resources in favour of written press communication media, radio and national television, public and in Catalan, where professionals were proud of their task on normalizing quality Catalan - a sentiment that today is neither seen nor transmitted to the viewer.

As well as an appropriate public investment - which does not exist today - in audiovisual products for children and young people that made Catalan, not only the language of study but also the language of leisure.

**Spanish coercive laws want to destroy Catalan**

Today, 24 years after the Llei 1/1998 de política lingüística, find the Spanish judicial machinery full on with sentences that charge against Catalan as the preferred and vehicular language, recommending quotas of 25% of the educational content in Spanish.

The response of the parties of the Catalan independence government is to agree with the PSC and Commons a proposal to amend the current law to adapt these new demands, avoiding an open confrontation with the state.

The social reaction had no delay, 80% of Catalan society supports the current law of 'immersio linguistica', and numerous demonstrations have been called, showing the rejection of the teaching, student, union and family community to any change that means a retreat from Catalan in the school system.

The problem is not only in Madrid, also in Barcelona

Important to pin point that the problem today, for an increasingly important number of Catalans, is no longer identified in the permanent Spanish attack, not even in the Catalanophobia that distils all the seams of the state.



*Wij beslissen, een Catalaanse school.*

The problem is identified in the Catalan institutional response. Catalans have their hands tied with 'autonomous' formulas that so-called independent parties offer as solutions.

There is an administrative relaxation that forces numerous social initiatives to take part meanwhile the official voice goes back 50 years when asking for: 'self-determination, amnesty and... school in Catalan'. This is how a growing citizen militancy has decided to join the Catalans who in their social, labour interrelationships etc always maintain the Catalan. The percentage of Catalans who no longer change their language has increased from 11'8% to 40%. Bearing in mind the diglossia induced during decades, these are undoubtedly very good news.

**Independence is the solution**

From this civil militancy fed up with aspirations and short-cuts that do not face fully sovereign solutions, political alternatives will emerge determined to make effective the victory of the democratic mandate of independence of the 1st Oct because, among other reasons, the Spanish monarchy and the French republic attacks would become an illegal international interference and our voice would return to be the sovereign voice of an independent state that acknowledge no peace with no Justice.



**Anna Arqué**