



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL JUSTICE

Directorate C: Fundamental Rights and Union Citizenship
Unit C1: Fundamental Rights and Rights of the Child
Head of Unit



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Institut Culturel de Bretagne
6, rue Porte Poterne
56000 Vannes
FRANCE

Dear Ms Jacq and Messrs Delhayé, Louarn and Loret,

Thank you for your letter addressed to President Barroso and Vice President Reding signed by the Breton organisations and institutions that you are presiding over.

The respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities is one of the values on which the European Union is founded. With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, this is explicitly mentioned in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union. However, the European Commission can only act in this context if an issue is related to the application of European Union law.

Issues related to the recognition of the status of a minority fall under the responsibility of the Member States, which must use all legal instruments available to them in order to guarantee that fundamental rights are effectively protected in accordance with their constitutional order and international law obligations.

There is no EU law regulating the use of languages in Member States. The right to use a regional or minority language is an issue for the authorities of the Member States. The Commission ensures that Member States, when implementing EU law, respect the principle of non discrimination provided in article 21 of the Charter which prohibits any discrimination. Outside the scope of EU law, the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities provide the relevant legal framework of international law for those Member States that have signed and ratified these agreements.

The Commission has also developed a strategy to promote multilingualism in the EU. This strategy covers official, national, regional, minority and migrant languages. The Communication of September 2008, "Multilingualism: an asset for Europe and a shared commitment"¹, confirms the Commission's support for all languages spoken in the European Union, including the languages spoken by minorities.

Yours sincerely,

Ernesto BIANCHI

¹ COM(2008) 566 final