

Press Release

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10th Anniversary of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Statement by Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Strasbourg, 14.05.2008 – We are marking the 10th anniversary of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This Charter is designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a key aspect of cultural heritage in Europe and to allow people who speak a regional or minority language to use it in private and public life.

The underlying philosophy of the Charter is that minorities are not an accident of history or an exotic and suspicious group of people, but an integral and essential part of Europe's mosaic.

The existence of a minority is a question of fact - not definition. We must not only tolerate a minority, we must respect it. The extent to which the majority protects and promotes the rights of the minority – and that includes the opportunity to use their language - is a measure of the level of democratic development in a particular country.

10^e anniversaire de la Charte européenne des langues régionales ou minoritaires

Déclaration de Terry Davis, Secrétaire Général du Conseil de l'Europe

Strasbourg, 14.05.2008 – Nous célébrerons le 10^e anniversaire de la Charte européenne des langues régionales ou minoritaires. Cet instrument vise à protéger et promouvoir les langues régionales et minoritaires, en tant qu'aspect essentiel du patrimoine culturel de l'Europe, et à permettre à leurs locuteurs de les utiliser dans leur vie privée et publique.

La Charte repose sur la conviction que les minorités ne sont pas des péripéties de l'histoire, ni des communautés exotiques et suspectes, mais bien des éléments essentiels de la mosaïque européenne.

L'existence d'une minorité est une question de fait, non de définition. Il faut non seulement tolérer les minorités, mais encore les respecter. Le niveau de développement démocratique d'un pays se mesure aussi à la manière dont la majorité protège et promeut les droits des minorités, et notamment celui d'utiliser leurs langues.

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