
Preserving Endangered Languages In Andorra

Background Information on the Topics

Principality of Andorra is the only country being governed by a co-monarchy, called the co-princes who are the president of France and the Bishop of Urgell. As its second inimitableness, the main language can be shown since Andorra is again the only country to have Catalan as the sole official language. Spanish, French and Portuguese are also publicly spoken, popular auxiliary languages. Catalan, a Romance language, is used by the government and the media of Andorra. 38% of the Andorran population has Catalan as their native language. To make it clear, all the citizens from Andorran nationality speak Catalan, besides, 25% of the Spanish immigrants in the country who constitute 43% of the total population also speak Catalan as their first language. In order to speak of all the foreign languages spoken in Andorra, one must find out the diversity of nationalities such as Spanish immigrants representing 23%, Portuguese 21%, French 17%, Arabs (North African Immigrants) 3%, Other 3% (including Britons and Italians) of the population. After the arrival of the Spanish immigrants to the country in 1955, Spanish became one of the popular languages which can also be selected as a medium of instruction by the parents and is spoken by 35.4% of the population in Andorra. On the other hand, Portuguese is commonly spoken by 15% of the Andorran population and became popular after the large-scale influx of the Portuguese people immigrated from Northern Portugal between 1960 and 1980 to the country. Apart from citizens of Portuguese origin, a minority group of Brazilians also do speak the language. There's another foreign language except for Spanish which can be taught in schools by the choice and request of parents, French. The Andorran population consists of 7% French nationals, by the way of majority immigrants from Francophone Africa.

Contrary to common belief, Catalan is not a dialect of Spanish, but a language that developed independently in a compelling historical background. It is spoken by 11 million people in Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Isles, Andorra and the town of Alghero in Sardinia. Attempts to suppress the Catalan language and culture have deep historical roots however were intense throughout the age of Francisco Franco. The dictator banned the Catalan language from public spaces and made Spanish the sole language of public life until his death in 1975, and once democratic freedoms had been recovered, the 1978 constitution recognized linguistic plurality and established that Spanish languages aside from Castilian may well be official languages of the state. Catalan is now compulsory in Catalanian schools and also the sole official language of Andorra. In order to avoid the possibility of these auxiliary languages becoming predominant in the region, the Andorran Government provides Catalan education to its foreign citizens, mainly Spanish immigrants.

Destruction of Cultural World Heritage Sites in Violent Conflict Zones

“Cultural heritage is one of the main testaments to the history, identity and creativity of a country.” (Art. 34, Constitution of the Principality of Andorra).

The Principality of Andorra provides high-quality life standards in the fields of the security environment, tolerance, natural beauties and eco-habitat to its endemic species and the citizens. The Madriu-Perfita-Claror Valley located in south-east part of the country which constitutes more than 9% of the total territory that the country is situated, can be shown as the best component that forms the environmental identity of the Principality since it's been inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004 because of reverberating the ancient communal system of land administration, glacial landform, economy, social features, agricultural uniqueness within the pastoralist lifestyle and the dominant mountain culture. The Valley has witnessed how humankind accommodated itself to nature and how nature balanced itself to the progress of humankind which brought agriculture within the management of the land and also the communal life. This integration between the humankind and nature become the relation between the habitant and the habitat in the Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley even though the land contains mostly steep cliffs, glacial formed land, rock and lake glaciers. This may seem as a contra to lead a life however it is one of the main reasons that the Principality of Andorra never faced the risk of a huge threat or an attack which may have been continued as conflict. The Valley was historically maintained for the duration due to being distant from the urban settlements. If the citizens of Andorra had wished to have an urban infrastructure in the territory, the availability of construction materials etc. may cause the deterioration of the cultural identity which the Valley preserves.

“The Committee approved the proposal of Andorra to make a minor extension to its first site on the World Heritage List, inscribed in 2004. Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley, which offers a microcosmic perspective of the way people have harvested the resources of the high Pyrenees over millennia, now has a larger buffer zone. This improves the protection awarded to this cultural landscape with its dramatic glacial landscapes of craggy cliffs and glaciers, with high open pastures and steep wooded valleys covering an area of 4,247 hectares, 9% of the total area of Andorra.” (UNESCO, Culture, World Heritage Centre, News&Events, World Heritage Committee puts Medieval Monuments in Kosovo on Danger List and extends a site in Andorra, ending this year's inscriptions, Thursday, 13 July 2006)

Country Policy

The Andorran Government past through a difficult period in an effort to be known as a “tax haven” and “tourist attraction” in which every year 10.2 Million tourists visit this tourist accepting country. Nowadays Andorra hosts the most tourists per capita in the world. By achieving this, tourism becomes one of the main sources of income in the Andorran economy. This economic development and the financial adjustment caused another progress in cultural activities since the tourists visiting the country will learn the Catalan culture in the first place. People visiting the country from the contiguous countries aim to buy especially fuel for cheaper prices and shop. Even though Andorra is not a member of EU, it reconstructs its economics actions and buoyancy. As a matter of fact, the World Bank located Andorra among the top 15 countries with the highest GDP per capita.

In order to introduce the official language, with the target that each one of the immigrants learns Catalan, since 1988 the Servei First State Política Lingüística of the Andorran Government has taken charge of this introduction through the subsequent resources:

- Free telephone assessment.

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- Linguistic promotion campaigns and publicity of Catalan (Voluntaris per la Llengua-Volunteers for the Language).
 - The publication of vocabularies.
 - Promulgation of legislation regulating the use of the official language.
 - The establishment of Catalan self-learning centres wherever users will notice a wealth of methods and materials for learning the language. Users select the day and time they need to devote to their studies. Catalan self-learning centres are free and remain open almost all year round with the aim of being a matter of public record and to be assimilated by the community.

To supplement these public resources, “Inlingua” (Inlingua: International Language Schools of the Principality of Andorra) offers Catalan courses in Andorra to the residents of the country, and teachers who teach other languages working at “Inlingua”.

In addition to cluster and individual courses command throughout the year, “Inlingua” offers intensive Catalan courses throughout the summer.

Destruction of Cultural World Heritage Sites in Violent Conflict Zones

According to Law 9/2003, the cultural heritage of Andorra, a cultural landscape is a ' joint work of man and nature, which forms a coherent unit for their aesthetic, historical or cultural'.

With this definition set forward, the Andorran Government aims to research the biodiversity and the eco-habitat of its natural beauties especially Madriu-Perafita-Claror Valley in cooperation with the CENMA (National Centre of the Environment) and funds territorial researches such as the MPCV Project. The Andorran Government also works with Massachusetts Technical University (MIT) in order to develop and conduct researches in such topics:

- Tourism,
- Innovation,
- Energy & Environment,
- Mobility,
- Dynamic urban planning.

CENMA organizes free workshops on the Valley in order to introduce the endemic flora and fauna of the Valley to the kids in an attempt to familiarize the biodiversity which creates the cultural identity of the country they are present at. On the other hand, the MPCV (Madriu-Perafita-Claror-Valley) Project conduct microregional landscape researches with intent to ferret out the lifestyle of the human groups such as gathering, hunting, agriculture and animal husbandry during the Middle/late Neolithic which may have caused sedentism that we are acquainted nowadays.

Proposed Solutions

Andorra requests all UN member states to conclude an agreement that will touch upon giving fellowships in the academic years of the undergraduate and graduate students from the other member states who wish to apply for Foreign Language and Area Studies in foreign countries

so that they can receive college education and use the educational resources of the foreign countries freely.

All over the world, there are plenty of organizations which aim to preserve the language with lots of methods such as the Rosetta Disk, formed under the Rosetta Project, is a digital library which contains information about 1,500 human languages. On the other hand, the Endangered Language Fund is located in the USA, which also conducts researches concentrated on the documentation and resurrection of the endangered languages or the Enduring Voices Project by National Geographic. These efforts made by different countries, groups do not suffice to create a coalition or provide cooperation between all member states, in consequence of being incomprehensive and staying on a regional basis at general without being able to reach every member state and more languages on the verge of extinction. So, what the Principality of Andorra suggests is, the establishment of a commission -International Commission for Endangered Languages (ICEL)- that every member state will send its experts in Philology, Linguistics, Foreign Languages, etc. funded and regulated by UNESCO in order to concentrate on the extensification, revitalization, promotion and documentation of languages rank among UNESCO's interactive atlas of world languages in danger. To add more, the experts will be put on the payroll since these researches require fulltime employment. Every six months, a meeting will be assembled to discuss the previous achievements, the next step and a press release towards the progress that has been made.

Cultural activities have always been the most effective ways to achieve acculturation between foreign countries. Therefore, Andorra will further request the film producers and film studios from every member state to volunteer in cooperation with the experts from the ICEL with the intent of translating well-known films to endangered languages and shoot newsreels in these languages. In addition with the cinema sector, present radio stations can host the experts from the commission or new radio channels can be established by the member states to inform the citizens about the progress of the ICEL and the endangered languages.

Culture forms the identity and secures the past of a country. "There is no culture without people, and no society without culture,"

said Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO. Therefore, culture has always been the first to be attacked by the opponent. To destroy one's culture and history means destroying the roots of civilization. With the aim of avoiding the attacks towards the cultural structure of a country, UNESCO can send trained soldiers, guards under the name of UNESCO Cultural World Heritage Site Guards to conflict zones during warfare or threat. The countries will be informed and asked for their permission in such conflict situations.

The Principality of Andorra further demands to conclude an agreement between the member states in order to guarantee the safety and inviolableness of the cultural heritage -that belongs to a country- during a conflict and if the member states object to the verdict then, the appropriate punishment decided by the newly formed justice commission will be given.

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