

Resolution adopted by the EPP Congress, Bonn, 9-10 December 2009

Autochthonous, national minority rights – the European respect for culture, national and regional traditions

The European model is based on values, culture, and history; the national minorities, their language and culture, are part of our European values. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail. With 10 percent of the European population, the European autochthonous, national minorities are an important cultural, intellectual, economic and social added value to the European Union. The establishment of a European cultural area centred on respect for and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity contributes to the ideal of the European Union, namely to unite the citizens and peoples of Europe in respect for their culture and their national and regional traditions.

The European People's Party,

1. Recalling the established legal instruments, in particular the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities of 1st February 1995 and the European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages of 5 November 1992;
2. Reaffirms its recommendation for updating, revitalising and modernising of inherent values, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as well as the promotion of best practices in the field of minority rights;
3. Recommends governments to permanent dialogue with and ensuring effective participation of traditional national minorities in the democratic process and the public life on the local, regional and national level, furthermore with civil society in order to anchor and strengthen the acknowledgement of the significance of the European minorities as guarantors of a diverse Europe, as positive contribution to the development of new Europe;
4. Points out that a set of legally binding community standards and norms for the protection of persons belonging to minorities can be gradually developed at the level of the EU, having regard the Lisbon Treaty which explicitly refers to the rights of persons belonging to minorities as a founding value;
5. Reaffirms that the state's main responsibility in the case of traditional minorities and regional linguistic groups is helping in the protection and development of their identities, cultures and languages. Positive measures and policy-tools implemented for the purpose of protecting minority persons and groups shall not be considered as discrimination, while reevaluation of existing rights and practices discredits the European sense of solidarity and common values;
6. Reiterates that every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to learn his/her mother tongue and to receive an education in his/her mother tongue at an appropriate number of schools and of state educational and training establishments on all levels;
7. Welcomes the EU Commission President intention to create the position of an EU-commissioner with a mandate comprising minority issues, whereas the free choice of identity, the pluralism of identities and multilingualism are cornerstones of the modern European democracy in the 21st century.