



Dear President Roberta Metsola,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Somescola platform<sup>1</sup>, which groups over 60 representative educational, social, and cultural organisations in Catalonia. We wish to express our **deep concern and dissatisfaction regarding the developments of the mission carried out by the PETI Committee of the European Parliament, chaired by Mrs. Dolors Montserrat, regarding the situation of the Catalan language in schools.**

Specifically, we aim to highlight the **lack of neutrality and objectivity in the report and the evident partisanship in the recommendations adopted by this committee on March 19, 2024.**

We are profoundly disappointed to witness how a committee that should serve the public interest of all European citizens is being instrumentalized and distorted to serve the particular political agenda of certain Spanish parties. Rather than ensuring the neutrality and objectivity of the committee, Mrs. Dolors Montserrat exploits her position as chair of the PETI to turn it into a tool for national political propaganda. Despite only 10% of the petitions submitted by European citizens end up being discussed, 40% of the debates in this legislature at the PETI have revolved around internal affairs of the Spanish state. Particularly, the linguistic model of education in Catalonia has been debated not once, not twice, but three times, despite the committee repeatedly stating that it lacks competence in this area and sees no infringement of EU rule of law<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, Mrs. Dolors Montserrat continues bringing this issue up, to the extent of having forced a non-binding report with biased and irregular recommendations, with the sole intention of further influencing the Spanish media agenda.

The management of this issue has been conducted with a **shameful bias throughout the whole process**, which has been repeatedly denounced by different parliamentary groups and also by members of the mission itself. Perspectives and contributions different from those of the petitioners have been systematically excluded and ignored, adopting orientations that fully align with Mrs. Dolors Montserrat's ones.

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<sup>1</sup> The federations of family associations representing over 700,000 families, teachers' and students' unions, educational centres, professional associations, federations of childhood entities, leisure organisations, research and cultural institutions, language and migrant collectives and pedagogical renewal movements, among others. For more information, please visit: [www.somescola.cat](http://www.somescola.cat)

<sup>2</sup> Petition No 0858/2017 states that "The situation at hand falls within the exclusive competence of Spain, the Commission cannot take action in this matter" [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PETI-CM-626725\\_EN.pdf?](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PETI-CM-626725_EN.pdf?). Similarly, Petition No 0540/2020 declares that "The Commission is not competent to examine this case as requested by the petitioner." [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PETI-CM-696628\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PETI-CM-696628_EN.pdf) Regarding this specific petition, on February 28, 2023, the representative of the European Commission, Rajka Lozo, reiterated the Commission's previous statements and recalled that "With the limited competences that the European Union has regarding language policies and the organisation of education in member states, the Commission sees no reason to act in this case" in accordance with Article 1654 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

- The Hearing organized on February 28, 2023, chaired by Mrs. Dolors Montserrat herself, was already denounced and boycotted due to the lack of plurality among the speakers, all of whom were opposed to the normal use of Catalan in education in Catalonia.
- Similarly, the subsequent mission organized between December 18 and 20, 2023, mainly consisting of European Parliamentarians from the Renew, PPE, and ECR groups –who were previously opposed to the normalization of the Catalan language– was once again denounced by the rest of the groups for the lack of plurality among its members, its clear political agenda, and the lack of EU competence on this matter.
- Furthermore, the selection of organisations with whom they met also underscores their complete lack of willingness to understand the reality of our education system: for instance, they explicitly excluded families’ representative federations from both public and private schools such as AFFAC, which represents over 450,000 families. Instead, they met with non-representative parapolitical groups, that were chosen exclusively for their direct ties to the political parties involved in the mission: PP, Ciutadans, and VOX.
- Similarly, the mission only visited 1 high school and 1 special education school, where the supposedly targeted language immersion methodology is not actually applied.

**Despite the biased nature of the mission and its clear lack of representativeness, Somescola has remained open to meeting with the members of the mission, in order to provide objective evidence based on decades of reliable studies, and to address any doubts: the Catalan school model has nothing to hide, neither in terms of its principles and benefits nor regarding its language proficiency results, both in Catalan and Spanish languages.**

Therefore, two of the entities that the mission members met with (USTEC and the Bofill Foundation) provided the mission with a complete attached report prepared by Somescola, which outlines the main characteristics of the Catalan school system, extensive data on its results, and answers to frequently asked questions<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the characteristics of the Catalan school, we highlight the following: 1) The importance of not segregating students based on their origin or language to avoid dividing society into separate linguistic communities and to offer learning opportunities to all students. Many students would not have access to Catalan in their environment otherwise. 2) The Catalan school plays a compensatory and transformative role. Twenty percent of young people have no contact with Catalan outside of school. Additionally, most students cannot enjoy Catalan language in major socialisation areas such as audiovisual media, social networks, video games, leisure, etc. We emphasize that the Catalan school compensates for these inequalities by ensuring that all students can learn to fully communicate in Catalan, Spanish, and foreign languages, regardless of their background or family language, thereby enabling access to all social, work, and cultural opportunities. 3) The use of the most effective methodologies and strictly pedagogical criteria, guided by scientific evidence, results, and the degree of linguistic normalization. Evidence proves that language immersion is the most effective methodology: despite 50.4% of students don't have Catalan as their family language, the average results in basic competencies in 4th year of high school over the last 5 years are 74.9/100 in Catalan and 76.3/100 in Spanish, both high and similar results. In oral competence tests, 95% of students achieve 'sufficient, notable, or excellent' oral proficiency in Catalan and 98% in Spanish. 4) As previously mentioned, there is a widespread consensus across the country, which is absolutely pervasive at the educational, social, and political levels. We provide data on the support for immersion from the entire educational community, public opinion, and cross-party parliamentary support.

However, despite explaining and providing both paper and electronic fact-reports during the meeting, the final report of the mission overlooks key evidence provided in the meetings and formulates conclusions and recommendations that exclude all contributions and data supporting the normal use of Catalan in education, and give priority only to opinions against the model, most of them based in fake information refuted by the data provided in the meetings that have been omitted from the final report. In fact, the only MEP on the mission who is not affiliated with the European groups of PP, Ciutadans, and VOX, Maria Angela Danzi, expressed disagreement with the report's content due to its "lack of impartiality" and lamented the participation of individuals with "personal interests" in the debate.

**Given the conclusions and recommendations of the report, it is evident that these were already drafted before the mission began. We are facing a visit that, unfortunately, had no sincere intention of understanding the model but rather aimed to be an act of propaganda.**

**These biased conclusions and recommendations are useless and not-binding.** However, we are concerned about the instrumentalization of a committee of the European Parliament that should serve to uphold fundamental rights of all European citizens. Instead, the PETI Committee is being used for propagandistic purposes – using public resources contributed by all European taxpayers – supporting positions and falsehoods of entities blatantly opposed to the normalization of Catalan, opposed to the non-segregation of students based on their origin, and opposed to the right of all students to an education that guarantees a full acquisition of both official languages. In summary, we denounce that the actions of this mission run counter to the treaties and fundamental rights outlined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

It is worth noting that despite the opposition of Ms. Dolors Montserrat's party since the beginning, the language model of education in Catalonia has been the result of broad consensus at both political and social levels. It has operated successfully for decades without any issues for families, as evidenced by the educational results and full training of all students in both official languages. This model is fully legal and has been praised in all cycles of review by institutions such as the Council of Europe for fully guaranteeing compliance with the commitments adopted by the Spanish State in its ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), and for promoting equality among speakers of different familiar languages without any discrimination. For these reasons, there is a strong consensus among Catalan society, and it is supported by 85% of the elected representatives

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On the other hand, we provided objective data that refutes the main falsehoods said about the model. We emphasize that Catalan schools do not discriminate against Spanish-speaking or migrant students (evidence proves lack of significant differences by family language). Additionally, evidence proves that: 1) The model fully ensures the learning of Spanish, with even higher results obtained in Spanish than in Catalan. 2) Schools are not monolingual spaces. 3) The role of the school is not to reproduce the diglossia present in society but to transform it to achieve greater equality among all children. 4) The Catalan school model complies with all current legislation, and that, in fact, it has been repeatedly endorsed internationally, such as by the Council of Europe in the ECRML monitoring cycles, UNESCO, and other organisations, as indicated in the latest report by the UN minority rapporteur, which, by the way, calls for a review of the judgments imposing 25% of Spanish. Finally, we have provided data that refute the claim that immersion is responsible for the drop in the 2022 PISA tests. Rigorous studies throughout the different PISA cycles confirm that what generates inequalities in results is not language or origin, but primarily social and economic factors. It is a fact that schools achieving lower results tend to use Catalan less as a vehicular language. The degree of use of Catalan can be an indicator of the degree of fulfilment of the school's compensatory role towards the environment.

of the Parliament of Catalonia, the body that does have the competence to determine the language model for education in Catalonia.

Furthermore, it is important to remember that the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations (UN) on minorities, in a recent letter to the Spanish Government, reiterated his concern about initiatives driven by entities like the petitioner, that intend to force legislative changes through the courts, aiming to reduce the exposure to the Catalan language of students in Catalonia. He also emphasized that "the immersion model has been considered very successful by UNESCO and other international organisations" and that all available data "indicate that children in the Catalan immersion program have the same proficiency in Spanish, mathematics and other academic subjects as children schooled in Spanish, in addition to achieving proficiency in the minority Catalan language". He also warned that "reducing the use of Catalan in the successful immersion program in Catalonia would pose a risk that could result in children and pupils from Spanish-speaking backgrounds not learning Catalan well, as it is a minority language. Moreover, given that Spanish is the majority language in the country, its daily use and exposure are already guaranteed and privileged". For these reasons, the Special Rapporteur of the UN calls for a review of the judgments reducing the teaching of the Catalan language in the Catalan schools.

The conclusions of the PETI Committee do not aim to promote fundamental rights of the EU. Instead, they try to prevent the school system from achieving full learning of both languages. Thus, they promote non-compliance of the legal commitments of the Spanish state and the EU and they foster linguistic discrimination among students. The use of the PETI Committee for partisan purposes is concerning, but is even more worrying that this is being done with the aim of violating fundamental rights recognized in treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, such as the protection of linguistic diversity and non-discrimination.

**In summary, the PETI Committee is carrying out a mission that is not related to the legality of the EU but clearly constitutes an act of propaganda.** It is unacceptable for the organs and economic resources of all European citizens to be used to favour the interests of certain Spanish political forces. **We must recall that the partisan use of the committee undermines the right to petition of EU citizens and erodes confidence in the European Parliament, just months before the European Parliament elections.**

As President of the European Parliament, we kindly request you to take immediate action to correct this misuse and ensure the neutrality and transparency of the committee and its chair, in order to guarantee the credibility of European institutions and respect for taxpayers.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and await a response that upholds the standards of the European Parliament and transparency in the use of European funds.

Sincerely,

## Entities that are part of Somescola:

1. Association of Families of the Catalan School Grouping: 93 schools with 50,000 students
2. Federated Associations of Students' Families of Catalonia: 2,386 affiliated families' associations with 650,000 families
3. Catalan School Grouping: Includes 93 subsidized schools with almost 50,000 students
4. Association of Friends of La Bressola
5. Rosa Sensat Teachers Association
6. Diomira Association: NGO for the training of young people, adolescents, and children
7. Association of Directors of Public Education of Catalonia
8. CATESCO: Catalonia organisation for Education, Science, and Culture
9. Workers' Commissions of Catalonia: 144,000 members, 23,000 delegates, representing 41% of workers
10. CIEMEN: International Center for Ethnic and National Minorities
11. Official College of Doctors and Graduates in Philosophy, Letters, and Sciences of Catalonia (CdL): more than 6,000 members
12. Official College of Pedagogy of Catalonia: more than 1,300 members
13. Christian Confederation of Associations of Parents and Guardians of Students of Catalonia: Includes 263 families' associations
14. Youth Council of Barcelona: Includes more than 80 youth associations
15. National Youth Council of Catalonia: 100 youth associations
16. Coordinator of Associations for the Catalan Language
17. Coordinator of Senegalese Associations of Catalonia
18. Trade Union Workers' Coordinator: Education sector
19. Teachers for the Language
20. Catalan National Assembly: 46,000 members
21. Escola Valenciana: Federation of associations for the language of the Valencian Country
22. Esplais Catalans: Includes 100 leisure groups, 1,800 teachers, and 7,700 children
23. Federation of Families of Secondary School Students of Catalonia
24. Catalan Federation of UNESCO Associations and Clubs (FCACU): Includes 12 associations
25. Catalan Federation of Scouting and Guiding (FCEG): Includes 140 units and 20,000 members
26. Federation of Teaching Cooperatives of Catalonia: Includes 39 cooperative schools with more than 16,000 students
27. Federation of Entities for Child and Adolescent Care and Education: Includes 102 entities, 315,000 children, and 90,000 families
28. Federation of organisations for the Catalan Language: more than 60 entities
29. Federation of Independent Teaching Unions: Union for the subsidized sector and care for people with disabilities
30. National Federation of Students of Catalonia, founded in 1932.
31. Federation of Pedagogical Renewal Movements of Catalonia: Includes 11 pedagogical entities
32. Jaume Bofill Foundation: Educational transformation for creating opportunities and reducing social inequalities
33. Catalan Foundation for Leisure: Includes 133 leisure groups and 327,000 children
34. Christian School Foundation of Catalonia: Includes 388 schools
35. Ibn Battuta Foundation: Cultural and social dissemination between Arab countries and Europe
36. Carulla Foundation: Promotion of transformative educational, cultural, and artistic projects
37. Marta Mata Foundation: Promotion of relationships between education, culture, work, and leisure
38. Paco Candel Foundation: Foundation working on migration issues in Catalonia
39. Pere Tarrés Foundation: Includes 3,500 workers, 4,800 volunteers, and 450,000 children
40. Knowledge and Culture Foundation: Includes 500 professionals and more than 5,000 students
41. Institute of Catalan Studies (IEC): Includes 5 sections and 30 societies
42. Intersindical - CSC: more than 5,700 members and 1,200 union delegates
43. La Bressola: Association including 9 immersive schools in Northern Catalonia
44. Linguapax: NGO for the protection of global linguistic diversity
45. Minyons, Escoltes i Guies de Catalunya (MEG): Includes 150 groups, 3,000 volunteers, and 15,000 members
46. Lay and Progressive Movement
47. Òmnium Cultural: Civil and cultural organisation with 190,000 members
48. PEN Català: Freedom of expression and linguistic rights, part of PEN International, with more than 150 centers
49. Platform for the Right to Decide
50. Platform for the Language: NGO with 27,000 members
51. Students Union of the Catalan Countries: Main union of secondary and university students
52. Acció Jove Youth Union
53. Avalot Youth Union
54. Catalan Pedagogy Society: Society member of the IEC
55. Language Workshops: Association promoting workshops for adopting linguistically responsible behaviors that contribute to the vitality of Catalan
56. Table for Childhood and Adolescence in Catalonia: Includes 23 entities
57. General Union of Workers of Catalonia: More than 100,000 members, 20,537 delegates, representing 36.78%
58. Workers' Union of Catalonia: 2,689 union delegates
59. USTEC - STEs: 12,000 votes, 162 delegates, representing 43% in public education
60. Network of Civic and Cultural Entities of the Catalan Countries: Includes 70 entities
61. Network of Schools Associated with UNESCO (XEAUC)