



**European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages
European Language Equality Network
Réseau Européen pour l'Égalité des Langues
EBLUL/ELEN-France**

Consultative status by the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations

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FRANCE'S LANGUAGES IN DANGER

**37th General Conference of UNESCO - November 2013
Presentation file**

Focus on a policy threatening regional languages with extinction

The synthesis of research conducted by representatives of associative coordinations, working actively for the recognition of linguistic diversity and language reappropriation by the inhabitants of the territories in which they are historically located, aims to establish **a vitality state of the regional languages of the French Republic**. At this stage of the survey by associations defending these languages, the file deals with the following languages: **Basque, Breton, Burgundian-Morvan, Catalan, Corsican, Franco-Provençal, Gallo, German, Occitan, Picard, Poitou-Saintonge**.

Due to the lack of a coherent policy on sociolinguistic survey by the services of the French authorities, the figures, according to the nine vitality criterias defined by UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger** are accessible only very partially, and in a disparate manner. However, they corroborate the findings of the Atlas, that **all languages are, to a higher or lesser vulnerability degree, threatened and endangered**.

This observation is also valid for the Roussillon Catalan language, although Catalan has "officially" been removed from the list of endangered languages in the last Atlas.

The denomination of languages in this file sometimes differs from the one mentioned in UNESCO's Atlas. Limousin, Auvergnat, Languedocian, Alpine Provençal and Gascon are presented as separate languages, when they only are variants of one single Occitan language (also called language of oc). These variants are here gathered together in the "Occitan" index card. So it goes for Alemannic and Franconian, gathered together in the "German" index card, which is the official denomination of the territorial language spoken in Alsace-Moselle.

Associative willingness facing lack of political commitment

Since the study led by an international group of more than thirty linguists in 2002 and 2003, **the UNESCO has been listing 26 losing vitality and endangered languages in France**, in its third edition of 2010, **according to the following nine vitality criterias***:

- Absolute number of speakers
- Proportion of speakers within the total population
- Intergenerational language transmission
- **Community member's attitudes towards their own language**
- Shifts in domains of language use
- Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use
- **Type and quality of documentation**
- Response to new domains and media
- **Availability of materials for language education and literacy**

For three of these criteria, the situation is promising, **thanks to the collective and community will to maintain the vitality of languages, by the research and creation work by thousands of volunteers :**

- **Community member's attitudes towards their own language :**

An IFOP survey showed In 2000 (**) that 82% (90% among 18/34 year-old people) of the French population supported the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (77% in 1994 ***). All polls show that the French population is overwhelmingly positive (over 75%) for the preservation and protection of regional languages.

- **Type and quality of documentation :**

These languages are all written, have dictionaries and grammars, and sometimes a rich past and present literary tradition.

- **Availability of materials for language education and literacy**

For the other seven criteria, **the situation is on the other hand quite critical, noting the lack of official recognition of regional languages in France, and a global language policy fundamentally run against them.** Apart from a few scattered references in some legislation, most often related to the fields of education and the media, and an entry in the French Constitution (Article 75-1) impacting in practice nor their presence, nor their transmission (****), there is no legal framework for territorial languages, unlike the other countries of the European Union : lack of status, non-ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and non-application of dispositions signed by France in 1999.

The French exception, in severe contrast with European democratic progress

This lack of language policy continues to plunge **the regional languages of France in the spiral of danger of extinction**, as evidenced by the alarming figures on the following pages. How long will France persevere in its position of denial of linguistic diversity, and its linguicide policy ? Why should language policies' development for revitalization of local and/or lesser-used languages be possible in most European Union countries, and not in France ? **When will the French Republic cease to distinguish itself with its grand statements in favor of cultural diversity in other countries, denying genuine support policy in its territory ?**

Whereas organizations members of the European Language Equality Network (ELEN) and regional associative representations welcomed the adoption of the report of MEP François Alfonsi by the European Parliament on 11th September 2013, by an overwhelming majority of 645 votes (26 votes "against"), in favor of a policy to support linguistic diversity in Europe and endangered languages, they note with concern that half of the 26 votes "against" come from French parliamentarians, thus placing France last among European democracies in terms of recognition of diversity, and respect for universal human rights.

It is urgent that the French Republic oversteps this linguistic exception, and implements without delay all legal, human and financial means, to enable the future of languages in its territory. **The respect of their speakers' dignity is at stake. And so is the preservation of European and world linguistic and cultural heritage.**

* Source : <http://www.unesco.org/new/fr/culture/themes/endangered-languages/language-vitality/>

Moseley, Christopher (ed.). 2010. Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, 3rd edn. Paris, UNESCO Publishing. Online version: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas>

(**) IFOP Survey April 2000, Alsace Moselle Committee of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages

(***) IFOP Survey March-April 1994, High National Council of regional languages in France

(****) By decision of 20th May 2011 the Constitutional Council considers that Article 75-1 adopted in July 2008 ("regional languages belong to the heritage of France") "does not establish a right or a freedom guaranteed by the Constitution."

BASQUE LANGUAGE SITUATION IN NORTHERN BASQUE COUNTRY

Listed as **vulnerable language** by UNESCO's Atlas

Population : 300,000 inhabitants

Number of speakers (over 16 years old)

	1991	2011	Evolution
Bilingual	28 %	21.4 %	- 23.57 %
Bilingual receptive	9 %	9.1 %	+ 1.11 %
Non-basque speakers	63 %	69.4 %	+ 10.16 %

Source : Fifth sociolinguistic survey by Public Office of the Basque language / Government Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (2011)

Schooling (school year 2012/2013)

	Primary	Secondary
Immersive system (ikastola)	8.46 %	4.12 %
Bilingual (schedule parity or initiation), public + private	27.39 %	8.57 %

Source : Statistical Service of National Education and the Academic Committee of the regional languages, Local Education Authority

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2011
Television	2 hours / year
Radio	348 hours / year

Source : Caron Report 2013 (appendice V)

BRETON LANGUAGE SITUATION IN HISTORICAL BRITTANY

Listed as *severely endangered language* by UNESCO's Atlas

Population : **4.4 million inhabitants** (3.175 m. in historical Brittany + 1.226 m. in Loire-Atlantique) in 2009

Number of speakers :

	1900	1997	2007	Evolution 1900-2007	Evolution 1997-2007
Number	over 1 million	240,000	206,000	-80%	-16.5%
Percentage	over 30 %	6 %	5%	-83.33%	-16.67%

Loss of 80% of speakers in 60 years

Sources : Wikipedia and TMO survey by Fañch Broudic run in [2007](#)

Schooling

Primary and secondary in the 5 departements of historical Brittany :

	Autumn 2012	Autumn 2013	Evolution
Immersive education – Diwan Schools	3,678	3,732	+1.41 %
Bilingual public education (Div Yezh)	6,260	6,754	+7.89 %
Catholic bilingual education (Dihun)	4,840	4,989	+3.08 %
Total number of pupils	14,778	15,475	+ 4.72 %

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2011
Television	65 hours / year
Radio	828 hours / year

Source : Caron Report 2013 (appendice V)

Editorial in breton language :

A hundred of titles each year, or 7% of the editorial Breton production.

Several magazines and periodicals, for adults and children, one weekly newspaper, and a weekly page in the newspaper *Le Télégramme*.

Intergenerational transmission :

The familial transmission of Breton almost stopped in the 1950's.

School does not replace parents, but enables family transmission to restart : In 1999, 27% of Breton-speaking parents transmitted their language to their children (INSEE), they are in 2007 between 35 and 40% (F. Broudic), but the number of Breton-speaking parents is quite low.

BURGURDIAN-MORVAN and FRANCO-PROVENCAL SITUATION IN BURGUNDY

Listed as *definitely and severely endangered languages* by UNESCO's Atlas

Population :

Departments of Nièvre / Yonne / Côte d'Or and Sône-et-Loire

Total for Region of Burgundy in 2013 : **1,650,000 inhabitants.**

I.e. a total population almost identical to the one in 1900

Number of speakers :

No INSEE figures available. The maintain of language varies depending on the sectors of the country. Many active speakers in Bresse, Morvan, Auxois and Charollais. Rare in Northern Yonne. The figures below are only approximate.

	1900	2013	Evolution
Number	700,000	200,000	-71.43%
Percentage of the population	42 %	12 %	-71.43%

Schooling :

None by National Education / Sporadic awareness experiences

Around twenty local workshops on language practice run by associations.

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2013
Television	none
Radio Morvan / Radio Bresse / Radio Auxois FM	1 or 2 hours per week

Edition in burguignon-morvan :

Many glossaries. Collection of short stories and poems. CD / videos

Intergenerationnal transmission :

	2013
Percentage of parents transmitting the language to their children	Impossible to estimate

CATALAN LANGUAGE SITUATION IN NORTHERN CATALONIA

The Roussillon Catalan is just as *endangered*, although removed from UNESCO's census

Population : 438,461 inhabitants

Percentage of speakers

	1999	2013	Evolution
Bilingual	44.01 %	25.08 %	-43.13 %

Source : Official report of the Commission headed by State Councilor CARON (July 2013)

Schooling (school year 2009/2010)

	Primary and secondary
Immersive system	1.6 %
Bilingual (schedule parity or initiation), public + private	5.9 %

Source : FLAREP for bilingual, la Bressola Association for the immersive

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2011
Television	17h08
Public radio	0
Private radio (Arrels)	2496 hours

Source : Caron Report 2013 (appendice V) for television and Arrels for radio (live sending)

CORSICAN LANGUAGE SITUATION

Listed as *definitely endangered language* by UNESCO's Atlas

Population : 310,000 inhabitants

Number of speakers (over 18 years old)

	2013
Number of Corsican-speakers	28 %

Source :

Sociolinguistic survey on the Corsican language / Territorial Collectivity of Corsica, 2013

Schooling (school year 2012/2013)

	Primary
Immersive system	0 %
Bilingual education	28 %

Source :

Sociolinguistic survey on the Corsican language / Territorial Collectivity of Corsica, 2013

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2011
Television	95 hours / year
Radio	1 505 hours / year

Source : Caron Report 2013 (appendice V)

GALLO LANGUAGE SITUATION IN HISTORICAL BRITTANY
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Listed as *severely endangered language* by UNESCO's Atlas

Population :

Ille-et-Vilaine, Eastern Morbihan and Côtes-d'Armor, Loire-Atlantique

Number of speakers :

	around 1900	2004/2005	Evolution
Number	around 1,300,000	200,000	- 85%
Percentage of the population	around 40 %	5%	-87.5%

Schooling :

Number of pupils receiving education (regular courses or timely interventions or during one term) in primary education (cycle 1, 2 and 3):

	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Number of pupils / private education	1700	725	1350	775	1034
Number of pupils / public teaching (language and culture courses)	abt. 1400	abt. 1400	abt. 1400	abt. 1400	1488
Total number of pupils	abt. 3100	abt. 2125	abt. 2750	abt. 2175	2522
Percentage of total number of pupils	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0.8 %

- Numbers of students following the Gallo option in secondary and higher education :

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of pupils	432	431	484	433	510

Presence in public medias

	2012
Television	0
Radio / Plum FM + RCF Clarté (associatives radios)	648 h / year

Edition in gallo language :

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of titles	8	4	5	3	4	5

GERMAN LANGUAGE SITUATION / regional language (dialectal German : Alemannic and Franconian, standard German) IN ALSACE-MOSELLE

Listed as **vulnerable languages** by UNESCO's Atlas

Population :

1.85 million inhabitants in Alsace + 450,000 in German-speaking Moselle

Number of speakers : based on estimations

	Alsace Year 2012	Moselle Year 2012
Dialectal German	320,000	50,000
Using Hochdeutsch (standard German) oral and written	160,000	20,000
Both estimates may overlap		

Source : estimates by Federal Committee of Associations for the regional language in Alsace and Moselle and national education 2006 : 1% of students under 10 years active dialect-speakers in the Upper Rhine, 4.5% in the Lower Rhine, 0.5 % in Moselle

Schooling (school year 2012/2013)

	Number of pupils
ABCM-Zweisprachigkeit education (11 associative schools)	1,206
Private education under contract (11 schools : primary, secondary)	4,300

National Education:

from kindergarten to year 10 / end of secondary school : 26,000

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2011
Television	92 hours / year
Radio France Bleu Alsace	21.5 hours / year
Radio France Bleu Elsass OM (lesser heard)	5 hours / day

Source : Caron Report 2013 (appendice V)

Written press: two dailies offer a daily supplement of 8 pages in German / regional language. A weekly offers 4 pages in German on 48 pages.

OCCITAN LANGUAGE SITUATION, IN FRANCE
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The linguistic area of the Occitan language (also known as language of oc) stretches over three countries: Spain (Aran Valley), Italy (12 Alpine valleys of Piedmont) and France (8 regions, 32 departments in the South).

In France :

The langue d'oc or Occitan does not present itself as a unified and standardized language, but in different regional variants.

Modern linguistics defines for Occitan six major dialectal varieties : Languedoc, Provençal (including Niçois), Gascon, Limousin, Auvergnat and Vivaro-Alpine. These varieties of a **single Occitan language, are all listed *definitely or seriously endangered* by the UNESCO's Atlas.**

Population : Between 15 and 16 million inhabitants.

Number of speakers (over 16 years old)

Estimated at between 2 and 3 million to varying degrees.

However, in the absence of any linguistic census, the number of Occitan-speakers is only partially known.

Furthermore, no sociolinguistic survey has been carried out on the whole of the geographical area of Occitan.

However, following surveys carried out in 2008 and 2011 on the Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrenees regions, we can extrapolate the following results :

	2008-2010
Bilingual (speakers able to hold a conversation)	11 %
“Passive bilingual” (having at least some knowledge)	36 %
Non-Occitan speakers	53 %

Schooling (school year 2012/2013)

	Primary and secondary
Immersive system (Calandreta)	0.11% (3 168 pupils)
Bilingual (schedule parity or initiation), public + private	2.65% (of which 4 187 pupils in schedule parity bilingual)

Source : Estimate based on the Ministry of Education, the Confederation of Calandretas, the FELCO and IEO websites.... (incomplete and sometimes diverging data)

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2011
Television	54 hours / year
Radio	563 hours / year

Source : Caron Report 2013 (appendice V)

PICARD LANGUAGE SITUATION IN NORTHERN PICARDY AND HAINAUT
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Listed as *severely endangered language* by UNESCO's Atlas

Population : Aisne, Nord, Oise, Pas-de-Calais, Somme, Hainaut (Belgium).

Number of speakers :

Era	Around 1900	2000-2010	Evolution
Number	Around 2,000,000	700,000 (500,000 in France and 200,000 in Belgium)	-65%
Percentage of population	Around 80%	Around 30%	- 62.5%

Schooling :

Picard does not exist as an option in education in France and works only in the form of clubs, or specific classes. However, teachers are paid to set up and run this teaching. There is more in college than high school, and only punctually in elementary schools.

Eras	Around 1995	2013	Evolution
Number of pupils*	Around 1000	Around 700	-30%

** estimate based on the number of students enrolled Picard contest in high school*

Presence in public medias

Television	0
Radio	Less than 100 hours/year

Shows (theatre, puppets, songs, etc.) :

More than one show per week

Intergenerational transmission :

Percentage of parents transmitting the language: estimated at less than 5%
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POITOU-SAINTONGE LANGUAGE SITUATION
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Listed as *severely endangered language* by UNESCO's Atlas

Original name : poitevin-séntunjhàes, pouétevin-saintonjhais

Language name : Poitevin-saintongeais (fr), **Country** : France

Alternative names :

Poitevin (dialect), saintongeais (dialect), vendéen (sub dialect), maraichin (dialect), charentais (dialect), gabaye (dialect), marot (dialect).

Location :

Vendée, Deux-Sevres (except extreme North-East), Vienna (except extreme South-East and extreme North-West), Charente-Maritime, Charente (except Eastern third), Southern Loire-Atlantique (Retz), extreme Southern-West of the Maine-et-Loire (Cholet), far West of the Dordogne (region of La Roche-Chalais), Northern Gironde (Blaye and Northern Libourne), plus an enclave straddling Gironde and Lot-et-Garonne.

Number of speakers

	2013
Number	200,000
Percentage of the population	10%

Schooling :

2013: Education at the University of Poitiers.

2013: No formal education in primary and secondary education, but specific and / or individual actions for some tens or hundreds of children.

Presence in public medias (2011)

	2013
Television	0
Radio / Plum FM	80 hours / year

Edition in Poitou-Saintonge language:

Hundreds of books, at a rate of more than a dozen a year in recent years by a dozen of publishers.

Intergenerationnal transmission :

	2013
Pourcentage des parents transmettant la langue poitevine-saintongaise à leurs enfants	Not available

France's languages



STATES
Langues in unilingualism situation
Langues in bilingualism situation

Isolates or scattered speakers
Scattered languages



According to European Minorities Organization
www.eurominrity.org
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Consultative status by the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations

**Registered association in Strasbourg district court's
Associations register
and governed by Articles 21 to 79 of the local Civil Code**

gathering in June 2011 :

- Institute of Occitan Studies
- Culture and Bilingualism in Alsace-Moselle
- Kevre Breizh, Associative Cultural Coordination in Brittany
- la Federació d'Entitats for Northern Catalonia
- Euskal Konfederazioa, Basque Country
- Defense and Promotion of Oïl languages for the field of Oïl
- Parlemu Corsu, Corsica
- Mama Bobi, Guyana
- Institute of Maroons' languages and cultures, Guyana

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