



Motion nr. 8

Name of the person introducing the motion: Christian Kollman

On behalf of the party: Süd-Tiroler Freiheit (STF)

Motion: Yes to multilingualism, but mother tongue first!

In South Tyrol, currently a hot debate on the multilingual teaching method “CLIL” (Context and Language Integrated Learning) is taking place. This method, which in fact is a form of immersion teaching, is more and more recommended by the South Tyrolean Government to the South Tyrolean schools, and some of them have already adopted it on a project basis. However, article 19 of the South Tyrol Autonomy Statute says: “In the Province of Bozen, the instruction in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools is carried out in the pupils’ mother tongue, i. e. German or Italian, by teachers for whom the respective language is also their mother tongue.”

During the period of Italian Fascism (1922–1945) the German language was forbidden in South Tyrol. Only after a long fight South Tyrol managed, within the framework of autonomy that came into force in 1948, to reintroduce mother tongue instruction for the German population. For the founding fathers of the South Tyrol autonomy this measure was the most important achievement and regarded as the best guarantee for the survival of the South Tyroleans as an ethnic and linguistic minority in a foreign state.

Nowadays, however, the official South Tyrolean language policy is more and more ready to renounce voluntarily mother tongue instruction. Pressure, mostly by the Italian speaking and linguistically mixed population in South Tyrol, is being exerted on South Tyrolean society. The population as a whole is subtly urged to speak as many languages as possible so that all South Tyrolean citizens can become true cosmopolites. Especially, the South Tyroleans are expected to “internalize” the language of the state. It is evident that, due to this policy, the South Tyroleans, in the long term, threaten to lose their native speaker intuition.

South Tyrol is only a prime example in Europe and in the rest of the world showing how linguistic policy tries, under the cloak of multilingualism, to weaken and, ultimately, to oust autochthonous minority languages. The Vallée d’Aoste, for instance, is another example where, thanks to immersion teaching, both the autochthonous Franco-Provençal dialect and the French language are by now felt as foreign languages by the great majority of the population.

The European Free Alliance;

1. underlines the importance of the cultivation of the mother tongue, especially of ethnic and linguistic minorities respectively.
2. regards multilingualism as an enrichment and, however, specifies that learning foreign languages should not come at the expense of the mother tongue.
3. calls on the European Union to make more efforts for the protection of the mother tongues, especially of ethnic and linguistic minorities respectively.

ENDS.