

THE SITUATION OF THE PORTUGUESE MINORITY LANGUAGE IN SPAIN

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Abstract

The Portuguese language in Spain, although not officially recognized, is present as a minority language, particularly in regions such as Extremadura, Castile and León and Galicia. Portuguese is not used in administration and official documents are only published in Castilian. However, the language is becoming increasingly popular in education, with over 30 000 students studying Portuguese in Extremadura. In Galicia, progress has also been made in promoting the language, mainly through strengthening ties with Lusophone Countries. Further coordinated efforts are needed at both regional and national levels. The study analyzes the reports submitted by the Government of Spain under the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, as well as the recommendations of the Charter's Committee of Experts. This paper explores the current challenges of the Portuguese language in Spain, with a particular focus on the experiences of Extremadura, Galicia, and Castile and León.

Keywords: language policy, minority languages, Spain, Portuguese language, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Disciplines: law, political science

Absztrakt

A PORTUGÁL KISEBBSÉGI NYELV HELYZETE SPANYOLORSZÁGBAN

A portugál nyelv Spanyolországban, bár hivatalosan nem elismert, kisebbségi nyelvként jelen van különösen olyan régiókban, mint Extremadura, Kasztília és León, valamint Galícia. A portugál nyelvet nem használják a közigazgatásban, és a hivatalos dokumentumokat csak kasztíliai nyelven teszik közzé. Az oktatásban ugyanakkor egyre

népszerűbb, Extremadurában több mint 30 000 diák tanul portugált. Galiciában szintén előrelépés történt a nyelv népszerűsítésében, főként a luzofón országokkal való kapcsolatok megerősítésén keresztül. További koordinált erőfeszítésekre van szükség regionális és nemzeti szinten. A kutatásban elemzésre kerültek a spanyol kormány által az Európa Tanács Regionális vagy Kisebbségi Nyelvek Európai Chartája számára benyújtott jelentések, valamint a Charta Szakértői Bizottságának ajánlásai. Ez a tanulmány a portugál nyelv jelenlegi kihívásait vizsgálja Spanyolországban, különös figyelmet fordítva Extremadura, Galicia és Kasztília és León tapasztalataira.

Kulcsszavak: nyelvpolitika, kisebbségi nyelvek, Spanyolország, portugál nyelv, Regionális vagy Kisebbségi Nyelvek Európai Chartája

Diszciplínák: jogtudomány, politikatudomány

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proximately 50% of the Spanish population live in an area that has its own language and legislative powers in that area (Bianculli et al., 2018).

From a legal point of view, the treatment of language issues – especially minority languages – is not uniform. While some languages have official status in their respective territories, others, including the most vulnerable ones, enjoy the least protection and their use is increasingly marginalised (Ramallo, 2018). The study focuses on the situation of Portuguese in Spain.

Introduction

Spain is a multicultural and multilingual state, with certain characteristics that make it unique in the European context. Ap-

Language policy in Spain

Castilian is the majority language in Spain. Although regional languages have always been present in the country, they

were repressed during the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1939-1975). The Spanish Constitution of 1978 established the framework for a decentralised territorial model that relied on the devolution of administrative and legislative powers to autonomous regions in a number of areas, including language (Bianculli et al., 2018)

The re-emergence of minority languages in public life following the 1978 Constitution has brought new language policy guidelines for Spain. The constitution divided Spain into seventeen autonomous communities and defined Castilian as the official state language, but also allows for other variants at the level of the autonomous communities. Article 3 of the 1978 Constitution states that (The Spanish Constitution, 1978):

"Castilian is the official language of the Spanish state. All Spanish citizens are obliged to know it and have the right to use it."

"The other languages of Spain may also be official in the autonomous communities concerned, in accordance with their statutes."

"The richness of Spain's different linguistic modalities is a cultural heritage that must be particularly respected and protected."

This provision allowed the autonomous communities of Spain to develop their own language policies depending on the languages spoken in the region. Portuguese has no official status in any of

the autonomous communities in Spain, even in border areas where it is present through cultural and historical links.

Portugal's language policy

The study does not deal with the situation of the Spanish languages present in Portugal. Nevertheless, a brief description of Portugal's language policy is important, as it provides an opportunity to compare the two countries' different approaches to minority languages.

Portugal is linguistically almost entirely monolingual. Portuguese is the only official language in the country (Portugal's Constitution, 1976)

Minority language status has been granted to Mirandese in Miranda do Douro, known as a mixture of Asturian-Leonese and Portuguese, which has been the official language of the region since 1998 (Law 7/99 of 29 January).

Due to the so-called *dialect continuity*, Portugal is experiencing a gradual linguistic transition without sharp borders. The exceptions are the officially recognised Mirandese and the unrecognised Barranquenho. Both languages are spoken in border areas. Mirandese is a member of the Asturian-Leonese language family and has three varieties. Barranquenho is a mixed language, a blend of southern Portuguese and southern Castilian dialects, spoken only in Barrancos. The preservation of both languages is important for the linguistic heritage of Portugal (Banza, 2020).

Charter for European Minority or Regional Languages

The Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is the only international legally binding convention that focuses on the protection of minority languages. The principles and recommendations set out in the Charter provide a basis for analysing language rights and assessing the measures taken in Spain to promote Portuguese.

The Charter is designed to protect minority languages as part of the cultural heritage (Kardos, 2022).

When ratifying the Charter, each contracting state must specify which language(s) it is responsible for and what its obligations are. Spain has declared that all languages recognised in the statutes of the Autonomous Communities (both official languages and those which, although not official, need protection) are worthy of the protection afforded by the Charter. The Charter requires signatory States to report on the measures taken to ensure the application of the Charter. These reports must be submitted to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 1992).

In August 2001 Spain ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, promoted by the Council of Europe (BOE-A-2001-17500). The Portuguese language is not included in the instrument of ratification, but it is traditionally present in Spain and is therefore covered by Article 7 of the

Council of Europe's Language Charter (Government of Spain, 2002).

On 7 September 2021, Portugal also signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The signature will be followed by the ratification of the Charter by Portugal. The Charter will enter into force in Portugal once the instrument of ratification has been deposited with the Council of Europe (URL1)

Borders and relations between Spain and Portugal

The border regions of Spain and Portugal are the scene of cultural and linguistic exchanges. Many minority languages and dialects have developed in the border regions. The establishment of a political border has divided many culturally and linguistically unified regions. The dialects spoken here trace their roots to the Latin language introduced over two thousand years ago. Consequently, there are no rigid linguistic boundaries between neighboring towns or regions; rather, there is a gradual, subtle variation in language that ensures mutual comprehension.

The independence of Portugal in the 12th century marked the division of the Galician-Portuguese and Asturian-Leonese language areas by a political border. This division resulted in two branches of the same linguistic system, which developed separately over time. The languages were influenced by different state languages, adopted distinct linguistic models, and were subject to the influence

of various centers of social prestige. The border itself hindered the spread of linguistic innovations across regions. As a result, closely related languages emerged – such as Galician and Portuguese, and Asturian and Mirandese – but these languages developed significant internal and external differences. They also differ in their social and legal status (Pérez, 2020).

In the central and southern regions of the Iberian Peninsula, linguistic transitions are more distinct. The dialects spoken in these areas are not the product of organic evolution but rather of languages introduced during the medieval military conquest. This process occurred when national borders were largely already established, causing linguistic regions to align more closely with political boundaries, though some variations persist (Pérez, 2020).

Some Portuguese-speaking communities in Spain exist due to historical factors like border shifts, migrations, and military conquests (e.g., Olivenza). Until the latter half of the 20th century, these areas were almost exclusively Portuguese-speaking. However, in recent decades, the Portuguese language has seen a dramatic decline (Pérez, 2020).

The strategic importance of Olivenza

Olivenza, a town in the province of Extremadura, was founded in 1230. It was part of the Kingdom of Spain until 1297, when it was ceded to Portugal with the

signing of the Treaty of Alcañices. From that moment until the Portuguese Restoration War (1640), it was part of Portugal, but at the end of the conflict it was reclaimed by the Spanish Kingdom of Castile. It was returned to Portugal after the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon in 1668. It was captured by Manuel Godoy's troops during the 'War of the Oranges' in 1801 and has been under Spanish control ever since (Barrena, 2024).

Spain did not want to give up this strategically important area on the left bank of the Guadiana River, which, under foreign control, could have been a threat to the city of Badajoz because of its proximity. Manuel Godoy, Spain's Secretary of State at the time, ensured that Portugal would recognise Olivenza as Spanish territory in the Treaty of Badajoz of 1801 (Barrena, 2024).

The 'War of the Oranges' was a brief armed conflict between Spain and Portugal in 1801. The war was launched by Spain with the support of France to force Portugal to join the anti-British Continental Blockade. Spain's armies, led by Manuel Godoy, easily marched into Portuguese territory and captured some border towns, including Olivenza. The war was concluded by the Treaty of Badajoz, in which Portugal recognised Olivenza as Spanish territory, although this decision was later disputed internationally. The war is historically considered of minor importance because of its short duration and small size, but the question of the status of Olivenza has been raised from time to time

since then. It was a precursor to the peninsular wars that led to the Badajoz peace treaty and the loss of Portuguese territories, particularly Olivenza (Galarzo, 2021).

In September 2024, Nuno Melo, Portugal's new defence minister, revived an almost forgotten debate. During a visit to the Spanish border town of Estremoz, he said, "*Olivenza is of course Portuguese, and this is not a provocation.*"

In Portugal, the minister's statements sparked outrage. The leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party, Pedro Nuno Santos, has rejected the defence minister's words. The controversy forced the minister to clarify that his statements were made as a private opinion and did not represent the official position of the Government of Portugal. On the Spanish side, the mayor of Olivenza, Manuel José González Andrade, believes that the minister's words are wrong. The people of Olivenza are not concerned with the political controversy generated by Melo's statements. Relations between residents on both sides of the Spanish-Portuguese border are normal. Many Spaniards work, shop or spend their leisure time in Portuguese towns, and vice versa. There is also a cross-border EU cooperation project under way, involving Badajoz on the Spanish side and Elvas and Campo Mayor on the Portuguese side. Many of the inhabitants of Olivenza, who have historical ties with Portugal, have dual nationality and can vote in elections in both countries. There are currently around

1,500 Portuguese-speaking residents, most of them elderly, although younger generations have benefited from measures to keep the language alive in the municipality (Barrena, 2024).

The presence of Portuguese in Spain

There is no official data on the exact number of Portuguese speakers. The population of Olivenza is 11,765 according to 2023 data (citypopulation.de), of which there are about 1,500 Portuguese speakers in the area (Barrena, 2024). The Portuguese language is mostly preserved in border municipalities, such as in the south-eastern part of the province of Salamanca in Castile and León, and in Extremadura (Ciltan, 2023).

As far as the autonomous community of Galicia is concerned, although the official language is Galician (which is very similar to Portuguese), Portuguese is also present in the border areas, especially due to the proximity of the Portuguese border. However, Portuguese is not an official language in these communities and is only spoken in some border areas.

The situation of the Portuguese language in Extremadura

The dialects of the autonomous community of Extremadura can be grouped as follows:

Dialects of the Jálama Valley and Herrera de Alcántara. These dialects have almost completely disappeared. They are considered archaic Portuguese forms,

shaped by medieval features and modern Spanish influences. Archaism was due to isolation, which prevented the development of Portuguese in this area (Government of Spain, 2011).

Modern Portuguese variants developed in Cedillo, Valencia de Alcántara and La Codosera, mainly from the 18th century onwards, through immigration from neighbouring Portuguese regions (Government of Spain, 2011).

Oliventine is also a modern version of Portuguese, but it is endangered due to strong Spanish influence and is now spoken mainly by the older generation. The historical reasons for the situation of Olivenza are well known: the area was transferred from Portugal to Spain at the beginning of the 19th century. According to several qualitative studies, 'oliventino' (the dialect of Olivenza) is endangered because it is strongly influenced by Spanish and is now spoken mainly by the older generation (Government of Spain, 2011). The Autonomous Community of Extremadura is aware of the importance of strengthening Portuguese language skills as a first step towards mutual respect and understanding. It therefore provides a range of support for Portuguese courses organised in the region. The Office of Cross-border Initiatives (GIT) has funded Portuguese language courses annually since 1998 (Government of Spain, 2011). There are currently around 30 000 students studying Portuguese in Extremadura, and this autonomous community has the highest number of Portuguese students in

Spain. In the university environment, significant progress has been made. In 2004, the University of Extremadura graduated its first graduates in Portuguese Philology. The Portuguese Philology degree course was introduced as part of an ambitious programme of the Junta de Extremadura (Government of Extremadura) to renew and develop university studies in the region. In 2004, more than 80 students enrolled in this course, and the number is increasing every year, making the University of Extremadura the university with the largest number of Portuguese Philology students in Spain. This course is helping Extremadura to become a bridge between the two Iberian cultures. In recognition of this commitment and of the work of the professors of the Portuguese Department of the University of Extremadura, the *Office of Cross-border Initiatives* (GIT) awarded the Portuguese Department of the University of Extremadura the second GIT Prize for Portuguese-Extremadura Cooperation in 2004 (Government of Spain, 2011).

In addition to teaching Portuguese philology, the university also offers courses in other fields such as tourism, business studies and teacher training. The university has a total of over 700 students studying Portuguese (Government of Spain, 2011).

The Government of Extremadura has supported the efforts of public language schools to start new Portuguese courses since taking over the educational responsibilities. Portuguese experienced

the largest increase in the number of students in the 2000-2001 academic year. In the 2002-2003 academic year, the number of official schools teaching Portuguese increased significantly, reaching 1 049 students. Since 2004, Portuguese has been offered in all official language schools in Extremadura, and the language has become the most popular after English (Government of Spain, 2011).

The Public Administration School, under the aegis of the Regional Ministry of the Presidency has been offering Portuguese courses for civil servants since 2000, and the number of participants has increased significantly every year (Government of Spain, 2011).

On 13 July 2009, the Government of Extremadura hosted the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation in Mérida (Badajoz), signed by the Spanish Minister of Education, Ángel Gabilondo, and the Portuguese Minister of Education, Maria Lurdes Rodrigues. The agreement aims to promote the learning of Spanish and Portuguese. Extremadura was the first autonomous community to join the Convention through a cooperation agreement signed by the President of the Regional Government, Guillermo Fernández Vara. The Convention aims to promote the teaching of Spanish in Portuguese classes and Portuguese in Spanish classes, as well as the introduction of the corresponding official languages as optional foreign languages in the curriculum. The Spanish and Portuguese Ministries of Education are working

together to promote the learning of Spanish and Portuguese in the neighbouring country and to develop teacher training programmes (Government of Spain, 2011).

In the first years, the programme focused on beginner courses, later offering basic and advanced courses of 40 and 90 hours. In more recent years, priority has been given to courses for specific groups and sectors: exporters, traders, health professionals, police officers, and employees in hotels, restaurants and public services. When organising the courses, the qualifications of the teacher, the specialisation of the course and the co-financing of the cooperating organisations are among the criteria assessed. Non-profit organisations, municipalities and small local organisations can apply for such grants. In response to needs in the region, the range of courses offered has been diversified to make learning available in as many places as possible (Government of Spain, 2011).

Recommendations of the Committee of Experts

The first opinion of the Committee of Experts in 2005 showed that the Government of Spain had not concluded a language cooperation agreement with Portugal, although it stressed that the language clause of such an agreement would probably be similar to the bilateral agreement previously concluded between

Spain and France. The Committee of Experts pointed out this shortcoming and expressed its interest in receiving more detailed information in the next periodic report on whether Spain envisaged concluding such a bilateral agreement with Portugal (Committee of Experts, 2005).

According to the third periodic report, Portuguese was traditionally spoken in some settlements in Spain. For example, in Castile and León, in the municipalities of Bouza and Alamedilla, while in Extremadura, in the Jálama Valley, Herrera de Alcántara, Cedillo, and the border regions of Valencia de Alcántara and La Codosera. It also includes Olivenza, which was part of Portugal until the 19th century. The report emphasizes the near disappearance of the Portuguese language in the Jálama Valley and Herrera de Alcántara. In Cedillo and other border regions, Portuguese has been spoken since the 18th century, but there is currently no indication that it remains in use in these areas. The Commission has chosen not to address the issue of Portuguese at this time but may revisit it in the future if new evidence emerges confirming its continued presence. The data available at that time, in particular on the number and distribution of Portuguese speakers, did not prove sufficient to assess the situation of the language properly or to decide whether it could be included among the languages covered by Part II of the Charter in the territories of Castile and Leon and Extremadura (Government of Spain, 2012).

Although Article 71 of the Statute of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura (Ley Orgánica 1/2011, de 28 de enero) sets out new perspectives for the dissemination and promotion of Portuguese language and culture, the Committee of Experts has expressed concern about the situation of Portuguese in Extremadura, stating in its 2015 report on the situation of languages in Spain that *"Portuguese is under threat. It urges the Spanish authorities to take decisive action to protect the Portuguese language in Extremadura, including by supporting revitalisation processes based on current private initiatives"* (Government of Spain, 2016).

According to the Commission's 2016 opinion, there has been no progress in the protection and promotion of the language, although there are some limited private initiatives in the field of education. The Committee of Experts considers that the Portuguese language is in a vulnerable state and urges the Spanish authorities to take strong measures to protect it, such as supporting the renewal process started by private initiatives (Government of Spain, 2016).

In 2019, the Committee of Experts advised Spain to take decisive action to promote and revitalise Portuguese in Extremadura, particularly in the field of education (Government of Spain, 2019). The Commission also states in 2021 that the Portuguese language is in a very fragile state in Extremadura, and therefore calls on the authorities to take urgent action to protect the Portuguese language, in cooperation with the speakers. The 2021

Recommendation calls on Spain to promote the use and presence of Portuguese in Extremadura's television and radio programmes, as well as in print and online media. Allocate targeted funding to organisations that promote the protection and promotion of Portuguese in Extremadura. Create opportunities for the study and research of Portuguese in Extremadura at university level. Create a mechanism to advise the authorities on all matters concerning the Portuguese language (Government of Spain, 2021).

In its most recent recommendation, the Commission noted that efforts are being made at the local level to preserve and promote Portuguese, but more support is needed from national and regional authorities, particularly for the use of Extremaduran varieties in education. The use of Portuguese is increasingly present in public life, but further action is needed in education, public administration, media and cultural activities (Government of Spain, 2024).

On the positive side, there are strong community and cultural links among Portuguese speakers, with more than 25,000 students at all levels of education in Extremadura, and opportunities for adult learning. Cooperation agreements between Extremadura and Portugal promote linguistic and cultural exchanges, particularly in the field of education. The media generally promote positive attitudes towards Portuguese speakers. However, there are shortcomings in the recognition and protection of the Portuguese language

of Olivenza and there is no advisory body to assist the authorities in matters related to the Portuguese language (Government of Spain, 2024).

Evaluation of the Portuguese language situation and main findings in Extremadura

The situation of the Portuguese language in Extremadura is controversial. On the one hand, the autonomous community is making considerable efforts to teach and promote the language, including courses at different levels (school, university, adult education) and specific training for professional groups. The University of Extremadura plays a prominent role in the promotion of the Portuguese language and culture and is a national leader in Portuguese Philology training.

However, the Committee of Experts points out that the status of Portuguese remains under threat. Although autonomous government policies and private initiatives have brought significant results, the lack of a comprehensive language policy framework and limited funding still leave Portuguese vulnerable.

Attitudes have improved in recent years, but further decisive steps are needed to make a real breakthrough. These include the bilingualisation of administrative documents, wider media involvement and the promotion of the official and cultural integration of Portuguese in all areas of the region.

The situation of Portuguese in Castile and León

Initiatives and programmes related to the Portuguese language spoken in Castile and León are probably due to the region's close historical and linguistic links with Portugal, especially in the border areas where the boundaries between Portuguese and Spanish are gradually blurring. In addition, minority languages in the region, such as Asturian and Leonese, are linguistically close to Portuguese, thus strengthening linguistic, cultural and historical links.

In 2019, the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages recommended that Spain clarify the situation of Portuguese in Castile and León. The Committee of Experts has therefore not received sufficient information on the use and protection of Portuguese for a long time (Committee of Experts, 2019).

The Portuguese language and culture programme is offered in five schools in three municipalities in the province of Salamanca, with a total of 492 students participating. Portuguese is taught as a second foreign language in four secondary schools in three municipalities in the province of Salamanca, with a total of 120 students. Students studying Portuguese as a second foreign language have 315 lessons: two lessons per week from the first to the third year and three lessons in the fourth year. Portuguese has been taught at the Official Language School (EOI) in Salamanca since the 2001-2002

school year. In the academic year 2009-2010, 214 students are enrolled in ten groups, at each of the three current levels (Government of Spain, 2021).

The Ciudad Rodrigo section of the Official Language School of Salamanca, established in 2005-2006, also offers the opportunity to learn Portuguese. According to the current school year, 45 students are enrolled in four groups, having completed the basic and intermediate levels (Government of Spain, 2021).

The libraries of Salamanca and Zamora are actively contributing to the promotion of Portuguese. For example, the *Casa de las Conchas* library in Salamanca has organised a weekly language workshop. In Zamora, they joined the *Portugal Cuenta* project in 2019, which promotes reading Portuguese literature among children. The event attracted 200 schoolchildren. The above-mentioned language school and the Zamora Municipal Library launched a Portuguese language book club in 2019/2020 (Government of Spain, 2021).

Evaluation of the Portuguese language situation and main findings in Castile and León

In Castile and León, the teaching and promotion of Portuguese play a key role in fostering cultural and linguistic connections, but further support is needed to expand educational programmes and clarify the language's status. Current initiatives are laying the foundations for a more comprehensive language policy.

The situation of the Portuguese language in Galicia

Galician evolved from Latin, which was introduced during the Roman Empire in the northwestern mountainous areas of Spain. It remained in close contact with Latin even after the arrival of the Celtic population of the *Gallaeci*, who gave their name to the region around the 5th century (Government of Spain, 2002).

From the 12th century onwards, Galician was spoken in both the north and south of historic Galicia (which includes modern-day Galicia and northern Portugal). Galician literature developed early and by the 13th century had reached its peak. However, this area failed to develop into a well-defined political entity, and in 1139 the kingdom of Portugal extended its influence to the northern border shared with Spain at the time (Government of Spain, 2002).

From the 15th century onwards, Portuguese rulers no longer referred to it as Galician, but as Portuguese, to which it is still very close (Government of Spain, 2002).

In the following centuries, the influence of Castilian increased considerably in Galicia, which is part of Spain. The local nobility turned to Castilian, which increasingly became the language of administration. The Galician language was therefore marginalised from public life and essentially confined to popular use. Between the 16th and 18th centuries, the written use of Galician suffered a significant decline and was plagued by a sense of

inferiority towards Castilian, although it remained the everyday language of the majority of the population. It was only in the 19th century that the language began to revive (Government of Spain, 2002).

Spanish and Portuguese are internationally widely spoken languages; Galician is a kind of bridge between the two languages, facilitating the passage between them, but at the same time it is in danger of becoming a dialect due to the assimilation pressure of the dominant language and the abandonment of its own identity in relation to its "big brother" (Monteagudo, 2024).

The Galician language has significant similarities with Portuguese. Significant cross-border cooperation has developed between Galicia and northern Portugal, supported by several organisations and initiatives. Two main organisations are involved in cooperation between Galicia and Northern Portugal. The Working Community (since 1991), based on the 2002 Hispano-Portuguese Cross-border Cooperation Treaty, and the Atlantic Axis (since 1992), which includes 18 cities and four territorial cooperation communities. The Atlantic Axis recognised the full official status of Galician and Portuguese in the regions in 2001 and published its official publications in these languages. It is important to stress that the recognition given by the Atlantic Axis in 2001 does not refer to official status in the legal sense, but to the promotion and support of the cultural and administrative use of Galician and Portuguese at regional level. The

Atlantic Axis is an interregional co-operation organisation which aims to strengthen the ties between Galicia and Northern Portugal. It emphasises linguistic proximity and the regional role of languages. Only states can legally recognise the official status of a language in their state or constitutional system. In the case of the Atlantic Axis, however, this is a symbolic gesture or a support for the equal treatment of the two languages in cultural and practical terms. Such initiatives often aim to strengthen linguistic and cultural identity without creating a formal legal status.

Other collaborations include joint cultural and educational programmes, such as Erasmus exchanges and teacher training between Galicia and Portugal, and the Ponte nas Ondas radio programme. In addition, a joint UNESCO application has been submitted for the recognition of Galician-Portuguese intellectual heritage (Government of Spain, 2002).

Cooperation has shown visible progress, but the Committee of Experts believes that further practical improvements are needed. Although there are close linguistic and cultural links between Galicia and Portugal, cross-border linguistic cooperation is hampered, for example by centralised policies of central governments. This is a particular difficulty in Portugal, where decision-making is mainly taken in the capital, in contrast to Spain, where regional governments have a greater role in shaping language policy (Government of Spain, 2002).

The Galician Secretariat for Language Policy (SXPL) has participated, supported or collaborated in several cross-border projects aimed at exchanging linguistic and cultural experiences between Galicia and Portugal. A prominent example is the educational initiative "*Ponte... nas ondas!*" (Tune in!), which involved primary and secondary schools from Galicia and northern Portugal, and was joined by other countries too. These all-day meetings were originally launched as a 12-hour radio broadcast produced exclusively by Galician and Portuguese students. Since then, the broadcasting time has been extended to 24-hour broadcasts, with the participation of more than 50 schools (Government of Spain, 2014).

From 17-19 October 2013, Galicia participated in the Language Fair in Minde, Portugal, which included a session on Galician (Government of Spain, 2014)

The report of the Committee of Experts points out that despite the linguistic and cultural proximity between Galicia and Portugal, and the fact that Portugal has expressed its willingness to cooperate with the Government of Spain, it is impossible to receive Portuguese radio and television broadcasts in Galicia. In 2011, a civil initiative was launched with the aim of having the Government of Galicia negotiate with the Government of Portugal to facilitate the reception of Portuguese radio and television broadcasts. Information was also received about an agreement between Galicia and Portugal, mainly concerning the teaching of Portuguese in Galicia. The

Committee of Experts expects that this agreement will have a positive impact on the reception of Portuguese programmes in Galicia (Committee of Experts, 2016). The language promotion activity "*Obradoiros Falamos galego. Sabemos portugués*" aimed to promote Portuguese in the 3rd and 4th grades of compulsory secondary education and in the 1st and 2nd grades of non-compulsory secondary education. The activity consisted of 15 face-to-face workshops, which built on the knowledge of the Galician language and brought Portuguese closer to the students. The workshops were held between 24 March and 22 April 2015 in schools in the Autonomous Community (Government of Spain, 2018).

Televisión de Galicia (TVG) broadcasts 24 hours a day on two digital terrestrial channels and two satellite channels in the Americas and Europe, reaching nearly 4 million people in north-west Spain (Galicia and surrounding areas) and northern Portugal. Programmes include news, concerts, cultural programmes, children's programmes, competitions, games, series, films, debates and sports. More than 60% of these programmes are produced with their own resources. In addition, Radio Galega's three channels broadcast news, music and special programmes in Galician (Government of Spain, 2018).

It is worth mentioning the creation of the Centre for Galician Studies at the University of Minho in 1997, as well as the establishment of corresponding centres at the Universities of Algarve and Lisbon. These centres have played a major role in

the success and progress achieved in the field of language and culture in the recent past, especially in the relations between Galicia and Portugal, not only at the university level (Government of Spain, 2018).

A historic milestone was reached in 2013 when the Galician Parliament passed the Paz-Andrade Law, which promoted Portuguese as a subject in the non-university education system in Galicia. As a result, thousands of pre-school, primary and secondary school pupils have been studying Portuguese since the 2013-2014 school year, and the choice of the subject has been steadily increasing (Government of Spain, 2018).

Galicia's presence in the Portuguese-speaking community is also growing. This is illustrated by the collaboration with the Camões Institute, the status of the Galician Cultural Council as an advisory observer to the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, and the collaboration with the Portugal-Galicia Cultural Convergence Week since its first edition in 2015 (Government of Spain, 2018).

The Government of Galicia works closely with associations in border areas that focus on the promotion of the Galician language, such as the Galician Language and Culture Group As Médulas in Bierzo. This cooperation has resulted in various programmes, such as events to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Antonio Fernández Morales, a writer from Bierzo (Government of Spain, 2018).

Other noteworthy initiatives include the Martín Sarmiento Days, in which the Galician Government's Ministry of Culture, Education and University Planning participates every year, in collaboration with the Martín Sarmiento Cultural Committee. These days bring together more than a thousand primary and secondary school students in Villafranca del Bierzo who study Galician language and culture in Bierzo and Sanabria (Government of Spain, 2018).

The Autonomous Community of Galicia has links with the Lusophone world, as reflected in Article 48 of Law 1/2014, which deals with the use of the Portuguese language and the establishment of links with the Lusophone world. Accordingly, the Portuguese language has been promoted as a subject in the non-university education system in Galicia (Law 1/2014 of 24 March).

The term *lusophone* is rarely used in Hungarian. The Portuguese dictionary defines it as a country or people whose official language is Portuguese, or an individual who speaks Portuguese (Schriffert, 2011).

Examples of cooperation in this field include agreements with the Camões Institute, the entry of the Galician Cultural Council (*Consello da Cultura Gallega*) as an advisory observer to the Community of Lusophone States, and the Portugal-Galicia Cultural Week cooperation, which started in 2015. In addition, the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Community of Lusophone

States adopted Spain as an Associate Observer State at the Luanda Summit in July 2021. The Law of 10/2021, which regulates Galicia's external action and cooperation for development, provides for the creation of the Valentín Paz Andrade Lusophone Observatory by the Government of Galicia, which will include Galician organisations that have links with Portugal and the Lusophone region. Its aim is to advise the government, prepare action plans and facilitate the preparation of knowledge, exchange and programming activities. The Galician Government is also in close contact with associations involved in the promotion of the Galician language at the borders of the Autonomous Community of Castile and León, such as the *Grupo As Médulas para a Lingua y Cultura Galegas do Bierzo*. In the 2017-2018 school year, the *Cubillos del Sil* group of village schools became one of the schools offering Galician language courses in Bierzo. In the 2019-2020 school year, a total of thirty-four students joined the programme for the promotion of Galician in the Bierzo and Sanabria areas, bringing the total number of students participating in the programme to 1 146, compared to 1 112 in the 2018-2019 school year. Visits to Galician schools also play an important role here. During these visits, students participate in workshops, sports and language activities, guided tours and other cultural events. Promotional activities include the Martín Sarmiento Conference, which brings together in Villafranca del Bierzo over 1 000 primary and secondary

school students who study Galician language and culture in the Bierzo and Sanabria areas (Government of Spain, 2023).

Galician is the language used by Galician radio and television broadcasters. Xunta supports Galician-language productions, dubbing and films. TVG broadcasts 24 hours a day and is available in north-west Spain and northern Portugal. The public channels broadcast only a limited amount of Galician-language programmes. Online and local media also broadcast in Galician, but with limited financial support. Universities offer journalism training in Galician, and the Galician Radio-Television Society provides ongoing training for its staff (Government of Spain, 2023).

Regional authorities have facilitated cross-border contacts between Galician speakers. In addition, the Cervantes Institute offers Galician language courses in several centres (e.g. in France and the UK). The Spanish state has concluded educational, cultural and cooperation agreements with Portugal to promote the language (Government of Spain, 2023).

Evaluation of the Portuguese language situation and main findings in Galicia

The situation of the Portuguese language in Galicia shows significant linguistic, cultural and cooperation potential, reinforced by both historical and contemporary initiatives. The close relationship between Galician and Portuguese has

created special opportunities for cross-border cooperation, particularly between Galicia and northern Portugal. In education, the Portuguese language is becoming increasingly important. In addition, the recognition and use of Portuguese in Galician media help strengthen the ties between the two languages. Galicia's growing presence in the community of the Lusophone Countries is an important development that could open up further cultural and economic opportunities. Although cooperation is making significant progress, it also faces obstacles, in particular due to Portugal's centralised governmental policies.

Conclusions

The clarification of the situation of the Portuguese language by the Government of Spain came relatively late on the agenda, as reflected in the recommendations of the Committee of Experts. This delay highlights the uncertainty in the field of language policy, which has delayed the strengthening of institutional support and protection for Portuguese. Although Portuguese is historically present in the country, it does not have official status.

However, at the educational and cultural level, more and more efforts are being made to promote the language, especially at the University of Extremadura, and the language is becoming more widely available.

In Castile and León, the efforts to teach and promote Portuguese are crucial for strengthening cultural and linguistic ties. However, to ensure the language's broader presence, additional support is essential to enhance educational programs. The ongoing initiatives are serving as a starting point for the development of a more extensive language policy that could better integrate Portuguese into various spheres of regional life.

In Galicia, the situation is positive, as the Portuguese language is strongly promoted and cooperation in the region could lead to closer cultural and economic ties with Portugal.

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