

Minority languages: what are we talking about? Why are we talking about it now?

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Summary

- Introduction: the issue of linguistic diversity in the construction of the nation.
- Minoritization as exclusion from the nation state.
- Minority languages in the European countries after 2 centuries of nation state.
- Media and minority languages.
- New linguistic realities and the re-nationalization policies.
- Some thoughts about the ways of approaching linguistic diversity.

The issue of linguistic diversity in the Revolutionary France

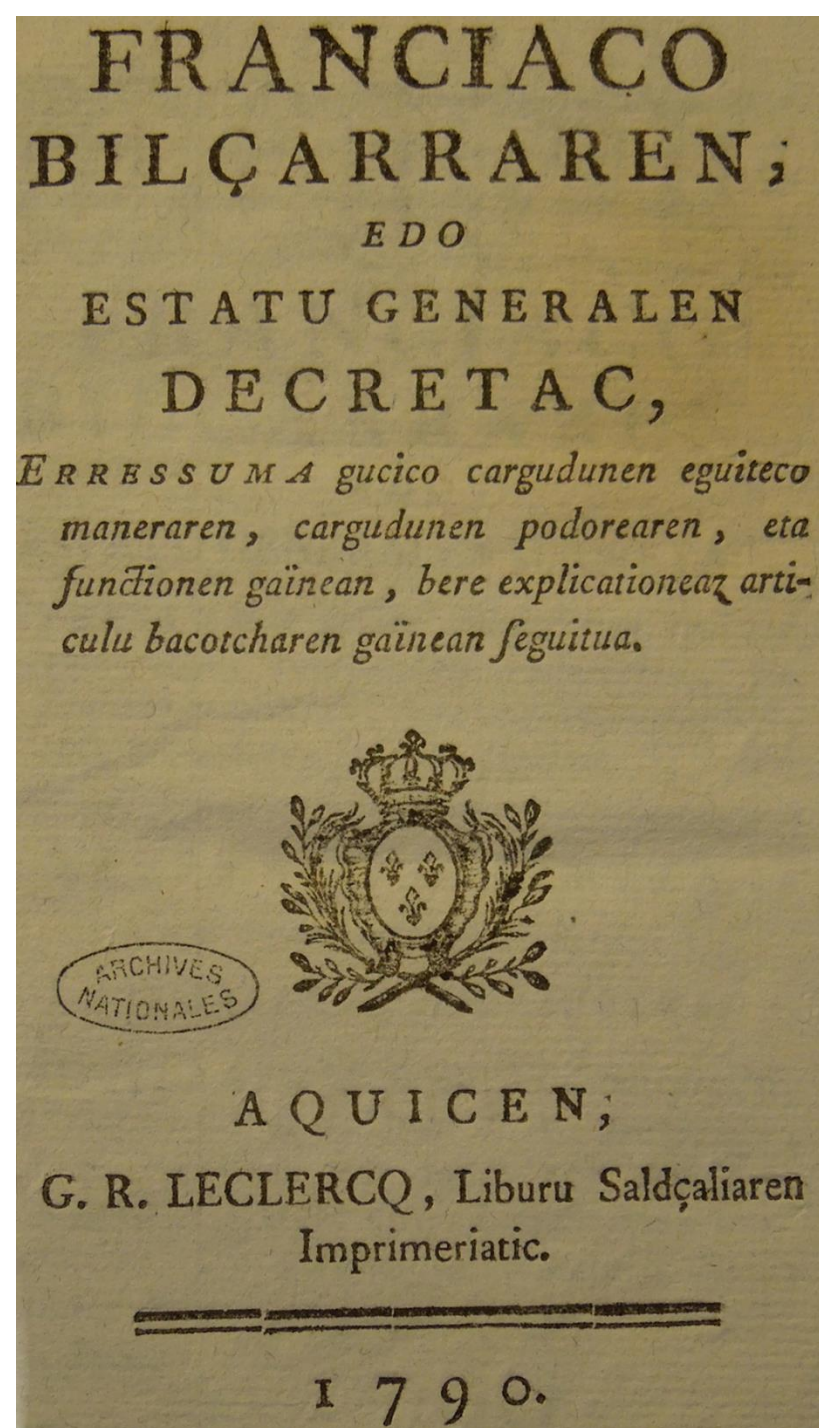
(Abbot Gregoire, 1794: *Report on the necessity and means to annihilate the patois and to universalize the use of the French language*).

28 ways of speaking (French and *patois*).

- 10 million citizens completely ignore French.
- 10 million unable to hold a conversation in French.
- 3 million can speak it correctly.

The ideology under the Report:

- The need to *transmit* the ideals of Enlightenment and Revolution.
- The *patois* as tools for clergy and contra-revolution.
- The French as substitute of Latin as *lingua franca*, as well as language of diplomacy and culture.



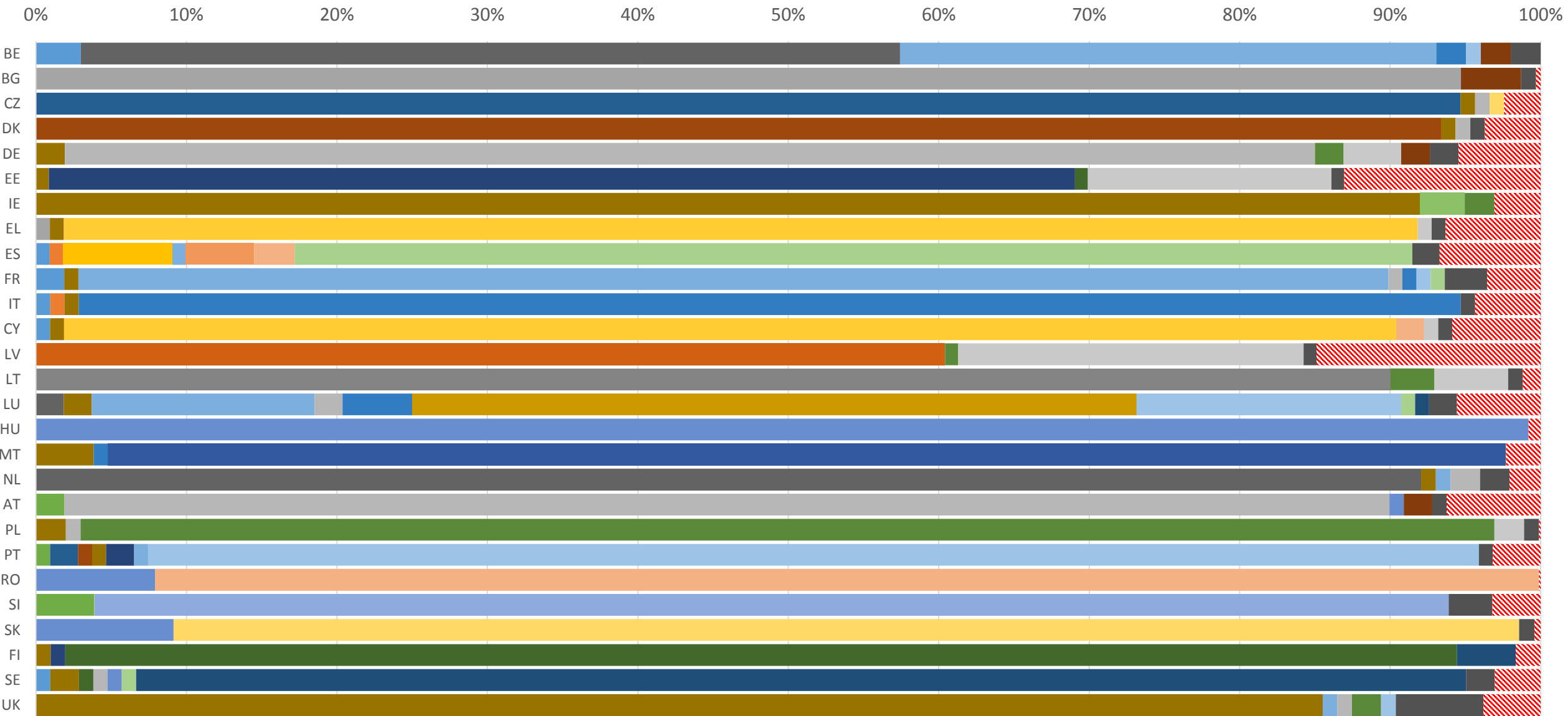
A failed first attempt

*[STATUTORY-ORDER OF THE ASSEMBLY OR STATES GENERAL OF FRANCE,
on the modes of action, powers and functions of the authorities, with
explanation of each section. Printed in Dax, by G.R.Leclercq. 1790]*

Loi relative à l'organisation des communes du royaume de France. Décret
de l'Assemblée nationale. 14 décembre 1789

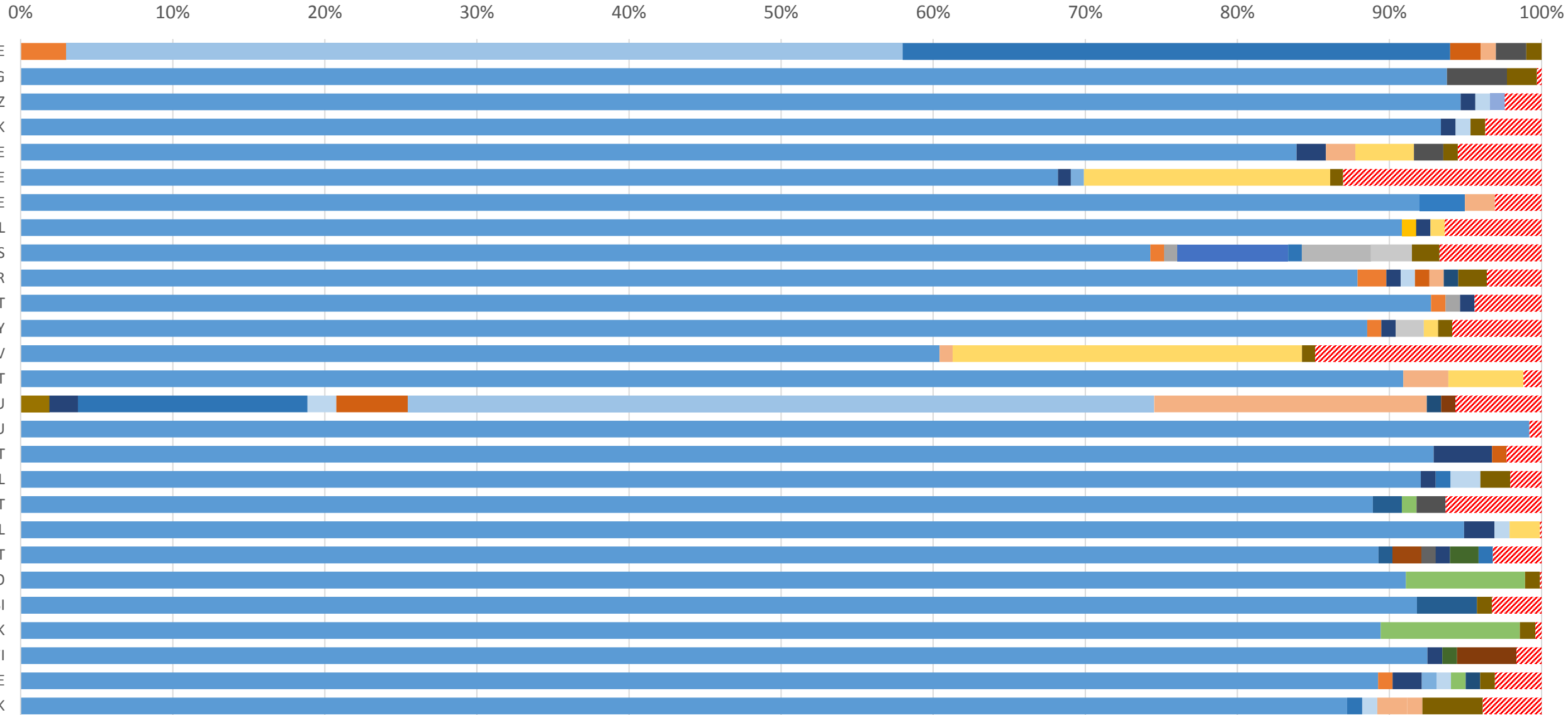
(Urruticoechea, 2016)

Mother tongue in the EU, 2012.



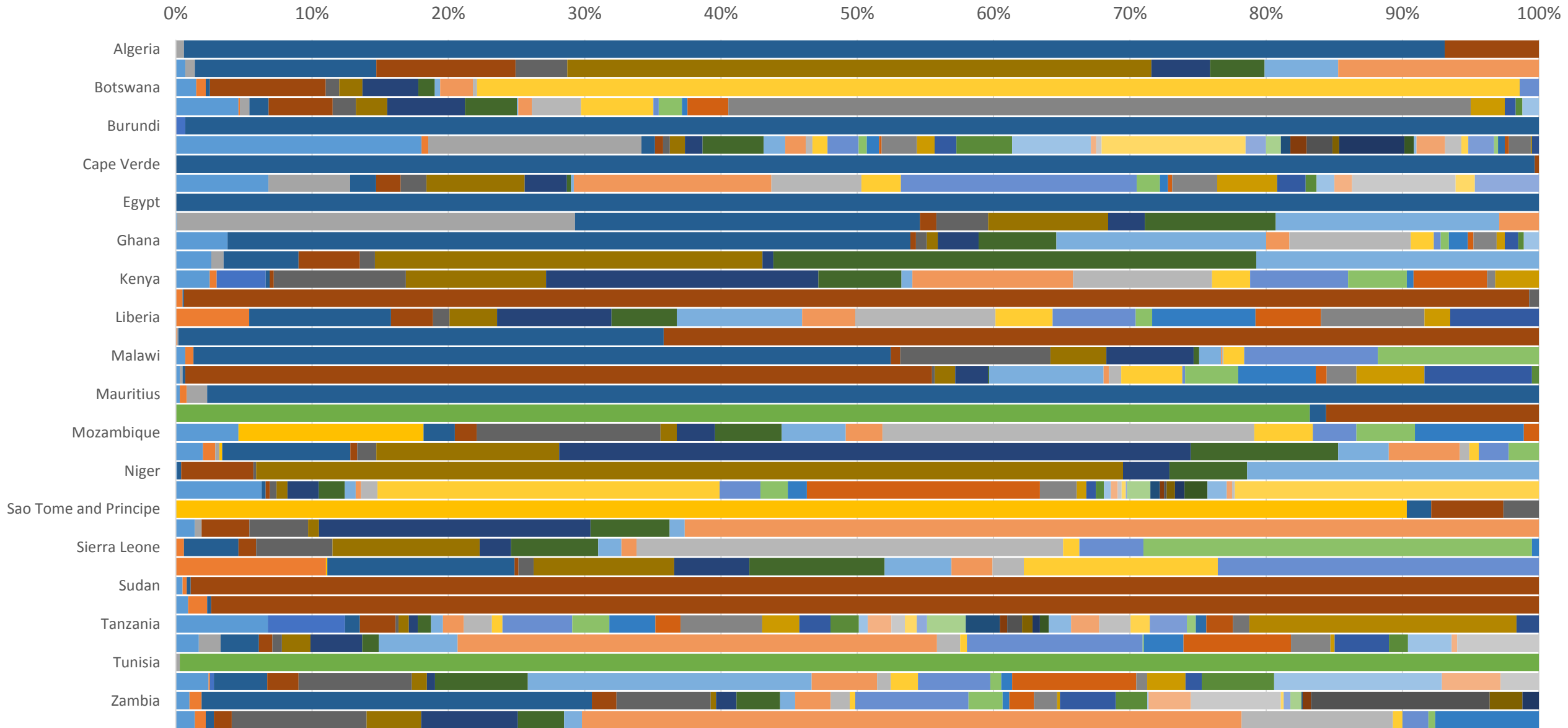
Source: made by the author based on the *Special Eurobarometer 386: Europeans and their Languages*. European Commission. (2012) - http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S1049_77_1_EBS386. The striped sections indicate percentage of non-EU nationals, who were not included in the survey, and they were extracted from *Migrants in Europe - A statistical portrait of the first and second generation*. Eurostat. (2011), <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-31-10-539>.

Mother tongue in the EU, 2012 (weight of the national language in each country, in blue).



Source: made by the author based on the *Special Eurobarometer 386: Europeans and their Languages*. European Commission. (2012) - http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S1049_77_1_EBS386. The striped sections indicate percentage of non-EU nationals, who were not included in the survey, and they were extracted from *Migrants in Europe - A statistical portrait of the first and second generation*. Eurostat. (2011), <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-31-10-539>.

Mother Tongue in Africa (36/55 countries).



Source: made by the author, from *Afrobarometer, Round 6, 2014/2015*. Afrobarometer (2016) <http://www.afrobarometer.org> .

Minority or minoritized languages

- A matter of power, not just numbers:
 - Catalan: 9 million speakers (and 84 % of population in Catalonia).
 - English in Namibia, official language (2 % mother tongue, 15 % speaks it).
- Minority languages as those excluded from the construction of the national state:
 - Limited social functions.
 - This includes Regional Minority Languages but also Immigrant Minority Languages.

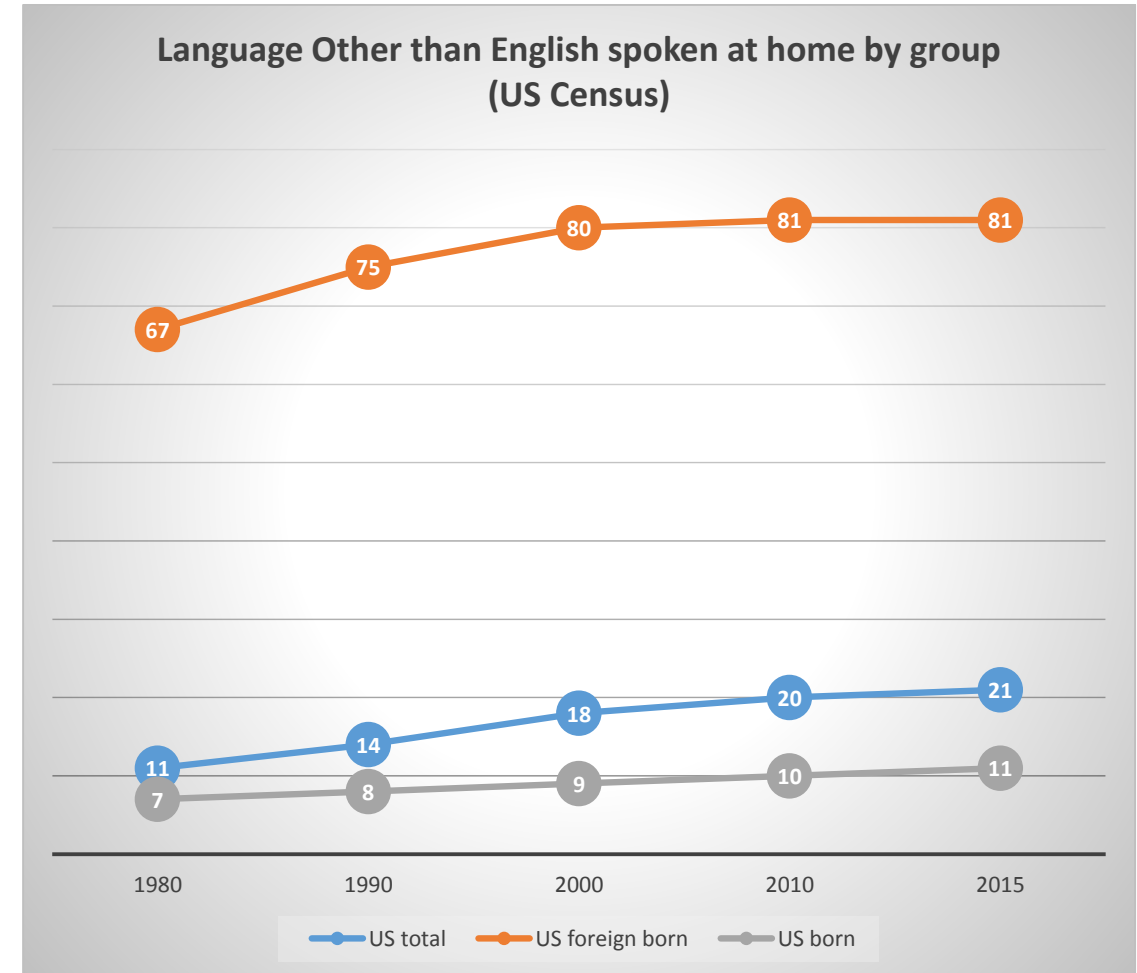
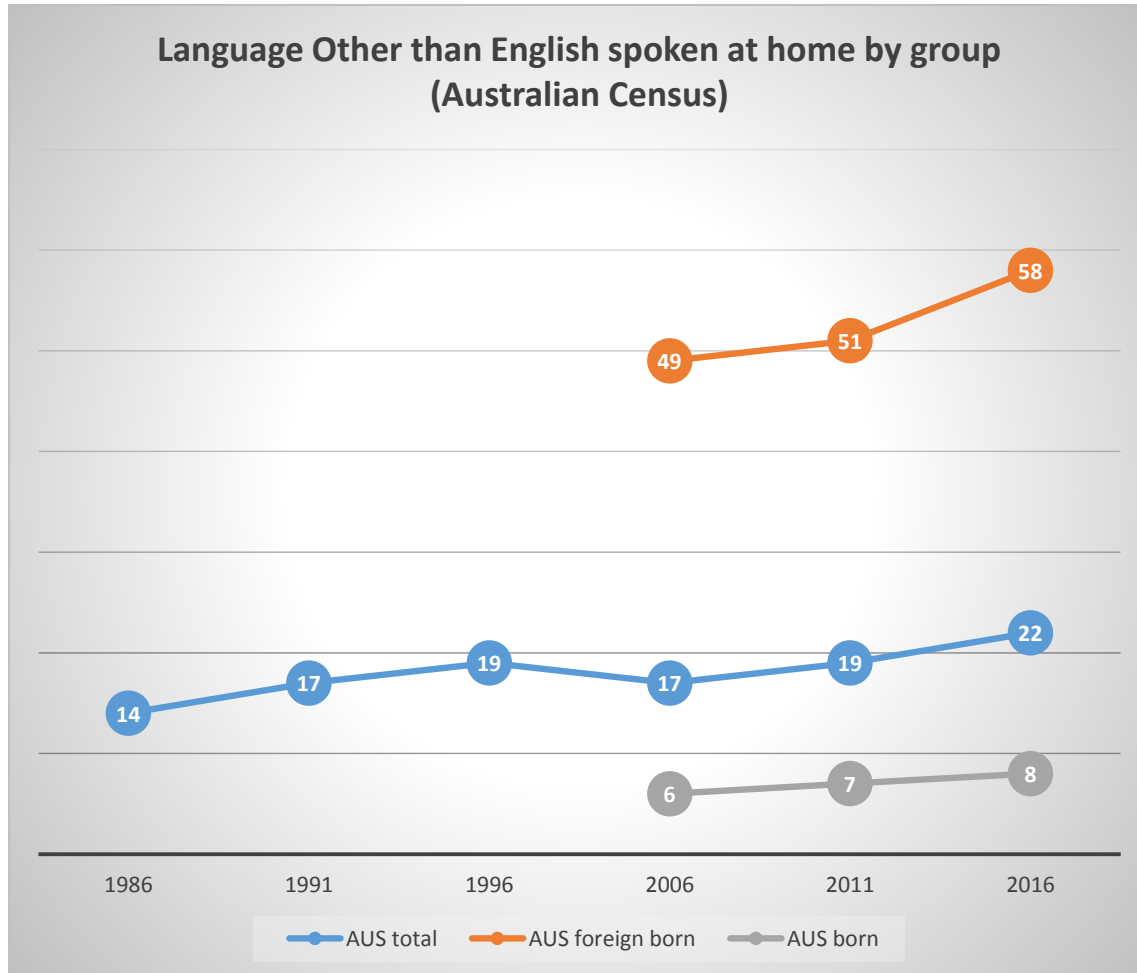
Regional (indigenous) Minority Languages in the EU

- About 100 minority linguistic [communities](#) in the EU:
 - 60 languages.
 - 40-50 million speakers (10 % of the population).

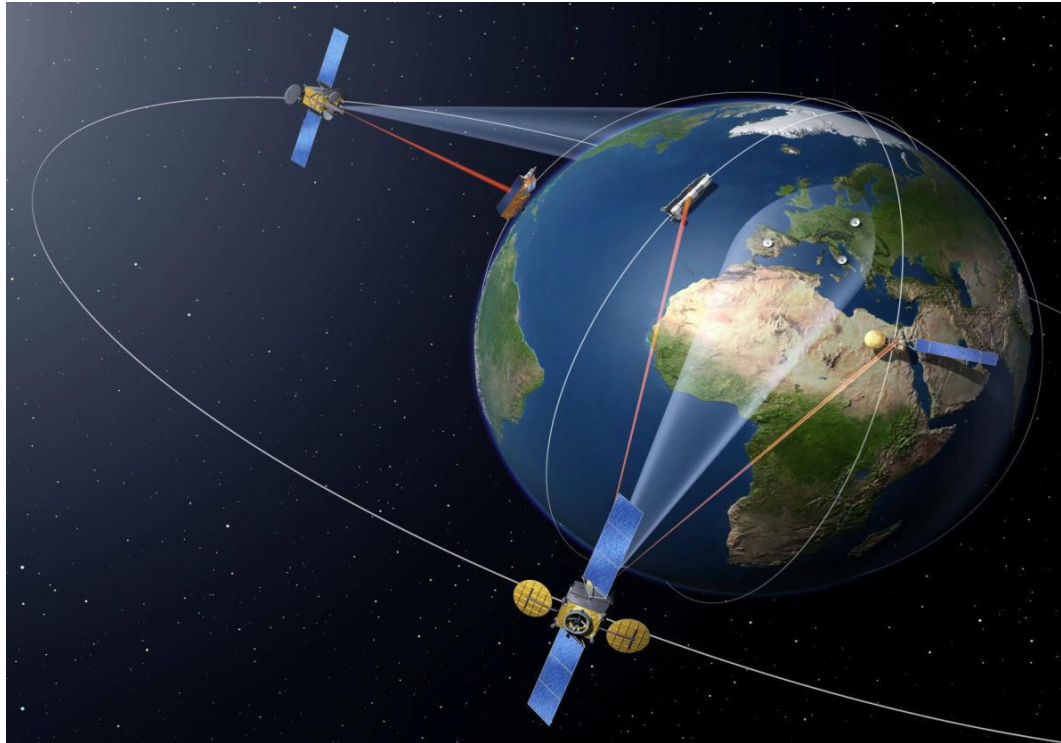
Immigrant Minority Languages in the EU

- No accurate data.
- 54 million foreign born.
- Some of them are RML and IML at the same time.

New linguistic realities



Satellite television



Two faces of globalization:

- 1.000 TV signals from English speaking countries to non-English speaking countries (cultural imperialism).
- 900 TV signals in languages other than English to US.

RML in the EU: Regional Minority Linguistic communities with their own broadcasts

Over 1,000 hours of broadcasts annually

• **Catalan** (Spain and France), **Galician** (Spain), **Basque** (Spain and France), **Welsh** (United Kingdom), **Frisian** (Netherlands), **Luxembourgian** (Luxembourg), **Swedish** (Finland), **Irish** (Ireland), **Gaelic** (United Kingdom), **Italian** (Slovenia)

•(18 million speakers)

Under 1,000 hours of broadcasts annually

• **Friulian** (Italy), **Finnish** (Sweden), **Breton** (France), **Corsican** (France), **Ladin** (Italy), **Sorbian** (Germany), **Saami** (Sweden), **Saami** (Finland)

•(1,7 million speakers)

RML in the EU: Regional minority linguistic communities with no own broadcasts but with access to television by satellite in their language

German (Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), **Turkish** (Bulgaria, Greece and Romania), **Russian** (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria), **Romanian** (Hungary), **Ukrainian** (Latvia, Poland and Romania), **Bulgarian** (Greece), **Portuguese** (Spain), **Polish** (Czech Republic, Latvia and Lithuania), **Serbian** (Hungary and Romania), Greek (Italy), **Dutch** (France), **Hungarian** (Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia), **Czech** (Austria), **Macedonian** (Bulgaria and Greece), **Slovak** (Austria, Czech Republic and Hungary), **Catalan** (Italy), **Luxembourgian** (France), **Albanian** (Greece and Italy), **Slovenian** (Austria, Italy and Hungary), **Croatian** (Austria, Hungary, Italy, and Slovenia), **Armenian** (Bulgaria), **Belorussian** (Latvia and Poland), **Danish** (Germany), **Irish** (United Kingdom), **Lithuanian** (Poland)

•(17 million speakers)

RML in the EU: Regional minority linguistic communities with no access to television broadcasts in their language

Occitan (France), **Low Saxon** (Netherlands), **Sardinian** (Italy), **Walachian** (Greece), **Kashubian** (Poland), **Romani** (Slovakia , Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Slovenia), **Corsican** (Italy), **Asturian** (Spain), **Franco-provencal** (France and Italy), **Occitan** (Italy and Spain), **Ruthenian/Lemkish** (Poland), **Faroe** (Denmark), **Tatar** (Romania and Bulgaria), **Mirandese** (Portugal), **Saterlandic** (Germany), **Cornish** (United Kingdom)

•(18 million speakers)

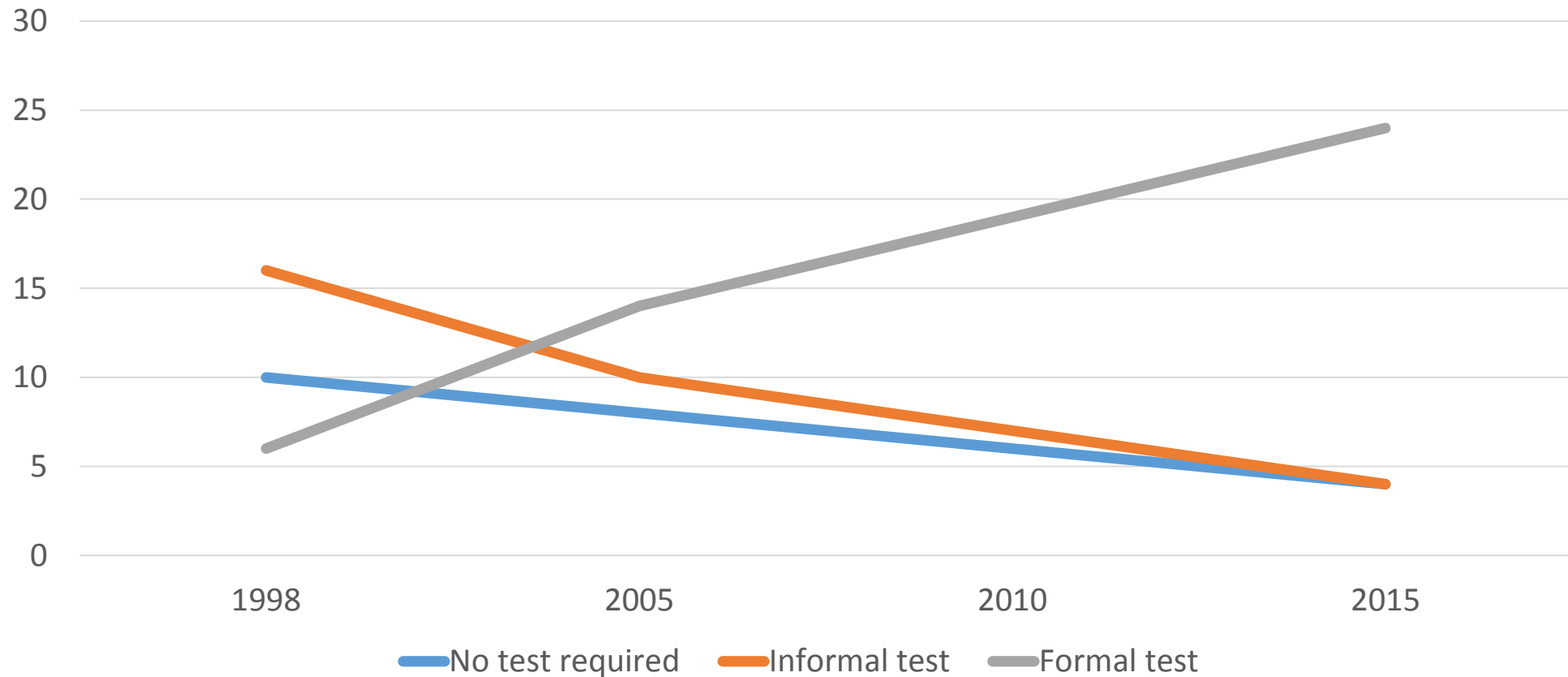
Satellite Television signals in the EU (2008)

Language	Encrypt	FTA	Total
English	1,474	535	2,009
Arabic	164	800	964
German	326	275	601
French	396	144	540
Italian	240	226	466
Turkish	195	237	432
Spanish	252	131	383
Romanian	255	67	322
Hungarian	260	12	272
Polish	222	27	249
Russian	153	87	240
Portuguese	136	41	177
Swedish	139	6	145
Bulgarian	77	42	119
Czech	100	11	111
Norwegian	103	3	106
Others (52)	620	324	944

Others

Dutch, Serbian, Danish, Greek,
Ukrainian, Finnish, **Albanian**, **Hindi**,
Farsi, **Slovak**, **Chinese**, **Kurdish**,
Croatian, **Urdu**, Slovenian, Lithuanian,
Catalan, **Bosnian**, Latvian, **Azerbaijan**,
Estonian, **Macedonian**, Luxemburgese,
Tamil, **Pashto**, **Korean**, **Japanese**,
Sinhala, **Bengali**, **Philippine**,
Malayalam, **Armenian**, **Georgian**,
Galician, **Punjabi**, **Hebrew**, **Gujarati**,
Breton, Maltese, **Thai**, **Icelandic**,
Belarussian, Welsh, Basque, **Kazakh**,
Vietnamese, **Uzbek**, **Somali**, **Nepali**,
Amharic, Frisian, Gaelic

Evolution of national language requirements for naturalization (EU + Iceland, Moldova, Switzerland and Turkey).



(Bruzos et al., 2017; Council of Europe, 2014)

Final thoughts

- The issue of mutual comprehension.
 - Is the unique common language the only way to address the linguistic diversity?
- Immigrant Minority Languages and Regional Minority Languages.
 - Re-thinking the monolingual paradigm.
 - Re-nationalizing policies as a threat for Regional Minority Languages.
- A contradictory era.
 - Increasing diversity into rich societies.
 - Death of hundreds/thousands of languages.
- Minority Languages.
 - A matter of ethics: humans are talking beings; culture –and language- is almost a natural characteristic.
 - A matter of culture: should not we try to keep a 4.000 years old but still live cultural feature?
 - A matter of politics: sharing power.
 - A matter of readiness for the future: a changing world.

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