

*Tercera fase:
Més descomptes*

Tot 50% 70%

SUMMARY OF THE PRESS RELEASE

Linguistic Uses in Catalan Businesses

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**Barcelona, Spain
July, 2016**

- Convivencia Cívica Catalana (CCC) has published its report “Linguistic Uses in Catalan Businesses” in which analyzes the use of both official languages –Spanish and Catalan- in the commercial landscape of main Catalan cities.
- It should be remarked that in Catalonia the Regional administration does not allow free choice of language and imposes fines on businesses which use Spanish instead of Catalan. It is obvious that this regulation has a great influence on linguistic behavior and all the results found must be examined in that light.

Spanish language, under pressure in Catalan Businesses

- According to latest data published by the Catalan government, only 15.8% of businesses in Barcelona use Spanish in their main shop signage. A surprisingly low figure if we consider that Spanish is the usual language for 60% of population in Barcelona.
- It is obvious that under normal circumstances, businesses in Barcelona would tend to use the language of the majority of their customers (Spanish), even more if we consider that Spanish is an international language that can be understood by customers from the rest of Spain and other parts of the world visiting Barcelona.
- The so limited presence of Spanish in the shop signage in Barcelona, four times below their social use, is completely abnormal. No explanation can be found except the pressure exerted by nationalism in form of the so-called “linguistic fines”. In fact, Barcelona is a complete abnormality in the whole continent. Is the only major city in Europe in which the language of the majority of its inhabitants is not the language most used in shop and retail signs.
- But if the situation of the Spanish language in the commercial signage in Barcelona is striking enough, even more so is in other Catalan cities. In Lérida the presence of Spanish is reduced to only 9% of commercial signs and in Gerona to 5%, i.e., just 1 in 20. Anyone visiting Lérida or Gerona can see that along many streets is practically impossible to find one single shop sign written in Spanish.

Nationalism imposes a “differentiated” linguistic landscape

- It is no secret that Catalan nationalism is trying to impose a "differentiated" linguistic landscape from the rest of Spain, so that foreign tourists and people from the rest of Spain visiting Catalonia should have the feeling of being in a different "country". The action of the administration with its inspectors and linguistic fines accompanied by pressure to businesses by radical nationalist entities is definitely achieving its goal.
- Under the guise of "protecting the Catalan", nationalism is close to eliminate Spanish from the commercial linguistic landscape of our cities. We wonder what kind of "linguistic normalization" is that in which the language of the majority becomes residual in our shops due to a policy of coercion and fines. Is it "normal" that the language of 60 percent of inhabitants in Barcelona is present only in 16 percent of signage?

CCC will appeal to EU to intervene in favor of linguistic freedom

- CCC has decided to launch a campaign in the coming months of information and advice against the policy of linguistic imposition by the regional government. Businesses in Catalonia should use with complete freedom the language they prefer without penalties, sanctions or coercion.
- As part of this campaign, CCC will appeal to national and European institutions to intervene in Catalonia in favor of linguistic freedom of citizens and companies against coercive policies by Catalan nationalism.
- Language fines violate freedom of expression and clash with Spanish and European regulations on language diversity. When reviewing Catalonia's status in 2010, the Constitutional Court of Spain ruled that imposing either language on private enterprises violates the Constitution. Yet fines kept being imposed.
- Civic groups and liberal opposition politicians are increasingly alarmed in Catalonia. Catalan language fines are a worldwide abnormality. Catalonia is the only territory in the world where citizens cannot freely choose which official language use in their own businesses.
- European Union cannot look the other way while in an EU region fundamental freedoms, free enterprise and individual language rights are violated.

Convivència Cívica Catalana is a non-governmental organization created in 1998 which defends citizens' rights and gives insight into Catalan reality from an independent point of view.