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CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE NEW MEDIA

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"Cerchiamo di capire cosa possiamo fare
perché diventi quello che speriamo".
H. Rheingold

Introduction: The Change

- Four revolutions had a dramatic impact on cultures and implied their redefinition:
- the chirographic revolution (i.e. the invention of writing, that replaced the oral culture and allowed to stock the cultural heritage, during the fourth millenary **AC**)
 - the Guthemberg revolution (i.e. the invention of printing, in the mid-fifteenth century)
 - the electric media revolution (TV, Radio, PC)
 - the digital revolution (taking place now).

The change implied by the latter is enormous: we are assisting to the shift from societies, economies and cultures based on physical consumption to others based on the usage of the information and to the passage from the central role of products to the central role of dematerialized services'. From the technological point of view, three are the factors determining the present revolution: **1) the digitalization**, that substitutes the analogical transmission and unifies the flow of signals; **2) the optical fibers**, that enormously enhance the capacity to transport the information; **3) the data compression**, that diminishes the costs and the delays of transmission.

In particular, the digitalization allows to (i) convey many information on the same communication mean, (ii) to distribute the same information through several means, (iii) to access, memorize, combine and revise the information according to the user's needs.

The digitalization effaced the boundaries between broadcasting, electronic publishing, telecommunications and information technologies. This convergence has been technology-driven and started because of the availability of new technologies developed in the defense and in the university sectors and not because of a households' demand for new products or because of an industrial strategy. The industrial strategies were in this case a consequence and they were based on the common consideration that the demand for telecommunications, broadcasting and IT reached a maturity phase where no more developments were possible². The three independently developed economic sectors tend today to integrate and their convergence is the cause of a trend towards concentration (due to the large-scale investments required to launch the new services) and o a trend towards vertical integration (the strategy consists in acquiring distribution systems as well as the contents' production).

¹ *this is also the thesis of the Information Society Forum*

² *As Richeri pointed out in his article "Le autostrade dell'informazione" in "Problemi dell'informazione"XX, 7.3.95p.25, in the most developed economies no more enlargement of the market was possible for the telephone companies, that counted for 80-90% of the telecoms income, since the penetration of the market was almost complete. In the case of TV and home video the conditions were very much the same: the TV reached almost every home, the channels transmitted 20 to 24 ours a day, the programs were full of advertisements and the TV fees, when existing, could not raise sensibly. The growth of the home video sector was slightly decreasing. The worst was for the information technologies: the big and medium sized computers were just covering the turn-over, while the PCs ended the growth period and the hard competition among the producers drammatically cut the profits.*

The role of communication and information becomes the central one. **An** enormous abundance of information is offered. The importance of the contents is increasing, since the consumers' choices are based on them, rather than on technology. Therefore, the offer of contents is expanding. The capacity to **diffuse** the contents largely increases: the physical constraints of the materials used for the analogic transmission (hertzian frequencies for TV, copper for telephony, paper for newspapers, etc.) are declining. The sources of information multiply and information can be diffused through different media. The contents can be reorganized and personalized in a number of different versions, accordingly to the consumers needs. Among the reasons for the widening of the offer is also the decrease of distribution costs. **On** one side, there are several technological alternatives (optical fiber, satellite, and wireless) for diffusing a signal. On the other, the costs for the production of chips never end to lower. Moreover, there is a big gap between the costs of the diffusion on-line and those of the diffusion through copies (books, newspapers, CD, tapes, films, have diffusion costs ranging from half to two third of the final price, while the electronic diffusion of the same package of contents increase the final price only for 6 to 7%). All those trends make explode the offer of images, texts, and sounds.

A first classification of the new media can divide them in media on-line and off-line. The first group connects a terminal to a source of information or another terminal (this is the case for Internet and professional on-line services). The media off-line are autonomous since either they contain a source of information and the program to be used, or this information *can* be inserted **in** them (CD-ROM³ and CD-S, DVI⁵).

For the purposes of the present study, since we will see the space is an important factor in determining the access of cultural minorities to the new media, it is useful to classify the new media in accordance with their spatial relations within three groups?

- (a) those implying the users move to use them (Bancomat and other POS services⁷, POI services⁸),
- (b) those usable without displacement (for example, CD-ROM, CD-I, Televideo, Videotel⁹),
- (c) those valorizing the movement and aiming at giving to the users the possibility of benefiting **from** certain services when moving (such as personal mobile devices including phone, fax, PC and other

³ Compact disk Read Only Memory, is a **CD** able to memorize an enormous quantity of multimedia information. In a **CD-ROM** can be stored, for example, encyclopedias or multilingual dictionaries, collections of texts, data banks or handbooks for language learning.

⁴ Compact Disk Interactive, is like a CD-ROM but the reader is connected to the TV set and can be used with a remote control. **CD-I** are desinated to the home use since they do not need a PC. They often contain entertainment or educational programs. Both the CD-ROM and the **CD-I** are one-read-only-memories, where the information can be registred only once in specialized centres and not by the users.

⁵ Digital Visual Interactive

⁶ this classification is also adopted by G. Bettetini in "Le nuove tecnologie della comunicazione"

⁷ the PUS (Points of Sale) are services for payment or money draw

⁸ the POI (Points of Information) allow to acquire information with a specific aim: they consist of kiosks where a simple interface connects the user with an internal data bank (e.g. the kiosks we may find in railways stations on trains timetables and routes).

⁹ Televideo (diffusing pages of written text, simultaneously with other programs on TV) and the Videotel (using the telephone lines and a modem, it offers a variety of services such as telebanking or homeshopping) constitute an evolution in the use of the pre-existing media.

services in a small agenda)¹⁰.

The range of services offered by the new media is large: teleshopping, databanks, videogames, telemedicine, telesurveys, telealarm, broadcasting services ("bouquets" of programs, thematic channels, near video on demand, pay per view, digital radio, diffusion on Internet of TV programs), etc. The most interesting phenomenon for this study is Internet, because of its decentralized character. Developed by the users, who continue to generate most of the contents, the Internet allows everyone to be a publisher and to publish anything he wants. It put the power in the hands of the individuals, outside centralized control: there is no central computer and no center at all. Defined as a combination of community and marketplace (it is at the same time a mean of communication, publication, broadcasting and commercial transaction), its community side is stressed by the large use of it made for the communication, safeguard, valorization of the cultural minorities.

For a long times the new services will integrate the existing ones: TV and Radio broadcasting, as well as the publishing of newspapers and magazines on paper will continue to play an important role in shaping the cultures and in the economy. The new services and the traditional ones will complement rather than substitute each other. This is evident, for example, when we consider that there are now 650 radio stations diffused on the Web and 270 sites offering video programs on Internet.

If we consider the various kind of communication going on within the new media, we will find three main types:

(i) the communication from one person to one other (e.g.: e-mail)

~~(ii)~~ the communication from one source to many receivers (e.g.: electronic publishing, broadcasting on Internet)

~~(iii)~~ the communication among groups of persons (many to many): this is the most innovative character of the new media and the one mostly affecting the new social structures and, therefore, cultures and cultural diversity.

The most relevant aspects of the communication within the new media for the purpose of the present research are (ii) and (iii) and the media permitting this communication will be the main focus in the following pages.

¹⁰ a further classification can gather them in groups according to their relations with *time* and divide the (A) media permitting a deferred communication (i.e.: those using a memory) and (B) media permitting a simultaneous communication - in real time - between people distant in the space.

PART 1: Minority cultures and languages in Europe

1.1. *The cultures*

A "culture" is commonly defined as the whole of the manifestations of the material, social and spiritual life of a group. The first anthropological definition, given by the British anthropologist Edward B. Taylor (1871), can still be considered as valid: "The complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, ~~art~~ moral laws, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society".

The culture is therefore a set of behavioral rules transmitted from a generation to another. According to the Working Group on "The Cultural Dimension and the Future of the Media" of the Information Society Forum, there is a culture when its members interpret themselves as participants to that culture through their thoughts and beliefs.

The problem is now to define which minority cultures can be considered as relevant for political concern and action when aiming at preserving and promoting the cultural diversity in the new media.

We can divide four different groups of minority cultures:

(1) the cultures of *special social groups*, where the members recognize themselves as a part of this group because they share with other members common values, myths, habits, behaviors, ways of expression (this is the case for the squatters or for the aristocracy, for example)

(2) the cultures *immigrated in* a territory, i.e. cultures that do not constitute a minority in other places: this is a very important issue in the context of the present evolution of the society towards a multiracial and multicultural one, as a result of the massive immigration phenomenon facing Europe (for example, the North Africans in France, the Turkish in Germany, the Indians in the U.K.)

(3) the cultures of minority *groups*: this may be the result of very old immigration waves (for example, the Swedish in Finland), or the consequence of geopolitical decisions (for example, the way the borders between two countries have been defined: see the German minority in Belgium), or the result of scarce demographic expansion of some groups

(4) the cultures widespread *in a region* (where they are the majority culture), but forming a minority in the country they are part of (for example, the Corsicans in France, the Tyrolese in Italy).

If the relevant perspective is simply preserving the cultures facing the risk to disappear, it seems evident this risk concerns only some of the cultures included in the third group. But if we evaluate the problem from the point of view of the social cohesion and cultural diversity, we realize that all those groups of cultures should be considered, and in particular the last three types will be the object of this study.

The political problems posed by the group (2) are going to increase in the near future. The concern for preserving the cultural identity of the immigrants should be harmonized with the concern to socially integrate them in the hosting country, while at present the political attention is often mainly devoted to the cultural integration.

The reasons why some cultures are minority cultures can be considered:

- a. **social and economic dynamics** restricting the number of the members of some social groups (this may concern all the four groups listed above)
- b. problems of **location/geographical position** (this concerns the groups 2. and 3.)
- c. problems of **cohesion**: (this concerns particularly some cultures of the group 4).

The G7 Report on the Information Society (Brussels, 1995) explicitly states that the new technologies threaten the cultural and linguistic diversity. In this study, we will see the issue is controversial: opposite trends are evident and it is up to some political decisions to determine if the all process will favor or damage the cultural diversity.

1.2. The languages

A language is of course part of a culture, but the boundaries between cultures and languages do not coincide (for example, German is certainly not a minority language but the Italians speaking German, i.e. the South-Tyrolese, constitute a **minority** culture, differentiating them from the Italians, the Germans and the Austrians).

Within the EU there are more than 40 languages and 50 millions Europeans speak a language other ~~than~~ the official one of the State in which they live. All the EU Member States - except Portugal - have at least an autochthonous linguistic community different from the majority language spoken in the country. The European Bureau for Lesser-Used Languages established five categories:

- (1) the national languages (Irish and Luxemburgish),
- (2) the languages of communities residing **in** a single Member State (e.g. Bretons in France, Sard in Italy, Welsh in the U.K.),
- (3) the languages of communities residing in two or more countries (e.g. Basque in France and Spain, Lapp in Finland and Sweden),
- (4)** the languages of communities which constitute a minority in the State where they live but are majority languages in other countries (e.g. German in Belgium, Danish in Germany, French in Italy),
- (5) the non-territorial languages (spoken in one or several States but not identified with a particular area, i.e. the languages of the Gypsies and the Jews).

The UNESCO calculated that out of the 6528 languages existing in the world, 12 disappear each year, either for the lack of will of the speakers to preserve their use, or because of a war, a region becoming depopulated or, in the majority of the cases, another language taking over.

According to the Report of the High Level Experts Group", the new technologies can also be used "to support the multilingual nature of the European society by making language learning easier and more accessible, by reducing the cost of translations, by creating storehouses of cultural and linguistic materials, and so on. In particular, the accessibility of such materials and opportunities should be increased".

Linguistic diversity has always been considered an important feature of the European cultural heritage, but at the same time a barrier to scale economies in the sectors of communication, information, entertainment. The digital revolution will change the role of the languages and their spread.

With the chirographic revolution, the languages that have not been transcribed, disappeared. With the Gutenberg revolution, the languages that did not produce a certain amount of books, became dialects. With the electric media revolution the languages selection, unification and standardization dramatically increased. With the **digital** revolution, some languages will become of minor importance, while we will assist to a dramatic increase in the diffusion of **English**¹². On the other hand, not only the translation costs will diminish, but also the technology to simultaneously diffuse contents in several different linguistic versions will be available.

If the *new technologies* can be a mean for the diffusion of minority languages, the **risks** lie on the possible standardization of the *market offer* in case a huge majority of the services is mainly provided by multinationals preferring to use English.

The new media final impact on linguistic diversity is therefore also controversial and depends on the interest and on the chances the speakers have to use and, therefore, preserve their languages.

¹¹ "Building the European Information Society for **Us All**", January 1996, p.66-67

¹² most of the key resources - such as directories and information libraries - are in English, Internet was created in America and America has twice as many users as the rest of the world put together

PART 2: The cultural changes promoted by the new media and their implications from the perspective of cultural diversity

2.1. Redefinition of cultures

In order to treat the problem of the new media impact on cultural diversity in a fruitful way, it is important to understand to what extent the new technologies are redefining the cultures. In fact, in some analysis and decisions appears the risk for policy makers to conceptually superpose the new technologies to the old cultural models and to design the new policies on this basis.

Features of the information society affecting the cultures are:

- (1) the interactivity: each *user can utilize the new services in a personal and unpredictable way*;
- (2) *an unlimited memory is part of the system*, while in the old media it was externally located (archives, libraries);
- (3) the *structure of costs becomes independent* from distance, quantity of information, audience.

In particular, the *interactivity* has relevant implications for the culture since:

- a) it diminishes the *power of control* of the media owners: the possibility to intervene and reply is independent from the willingness of any controller;
- b) the nature of the information itself is changing: because of the participation of the receivers in shaping it, *information becomes a dynamic process*; the *creativity* becomes more important;
- c) the media themselves - not only the information provided - adapt to users' needs

A further relevant aspect of the Information Society (IS) from the cultural perspective **is** the fact *information and cultures become "commodified"* (i.e. they become commodities). This may have serious negative implications, because of the risk of an overall commercialization of the human exchanges. Commerce *can* become the scope of most human interactions that will take place within the new media, while consumers are at present used to benefit from an enormous amount of information and, in some cases, entertainment for **free** (for example, the broadcasters - both private and public - offer their programs for **free** to listeners and viewers, who have to pay only the annual fee for the public service, while the majority of the broadcasters' incomes come from advertising). Even personal information on individuals will become a precious good for the marketing departments of industries offering always more personalized services and goods. If the merchantable character of the information will prevail, there will be no room and no habit within the new media for the cultural exchanges of the poor communities. Since some minority cultures are such because of their economic handicaps, they will be damaged by the likely prevailing of a merchant trend in the new media.

Cultural identity has never been a fixed data, but a continuous process where the cultures - including the minority ones - have been changed due to the influence of several factors, including technological changes. Within the Information Society the minority cultures are going to face severe upheavals. The problem of cultural identity has often been posed as a matter of preservation. The conservative approach may reveal not to be the most suitable in the revolutionary and dynamic processes

implied by the new media; choosing this contrasting attitude may imply an unprecedented cultural exclusion.

2.2. De-materialization of cultures

It is typical *of* the technologies to tend to the **dematerialization**, in the sense that they normally aim at producing more efficiently from fewer resources, time, workers. The new technologies are dematerializing not only the production, but also the economies - which will be based on something as immaterial **as** the information - and the cultures themselves, that will be the expression of an information society instead of an industrial society. The cultures are becoming immaterial: images, texts, archive, sounds released from their physical supports (paper, plastics etc.) will be exchanged or used.

The extreme reduction of distribution costs this entails and the explosion of the offer of information implies a shift from the problem of scarcity to the problem of abundance and the **management of abundance**. The **selection criteria** are the strategic focus of the stored knowledge, since they allow organizing and **managing** it. The problem of abundance is further increased because of the change in the concept of **usage**, due to the fact the information can be used several times and by several people at the same time.

The unlimited information opportunities offered by the new media, their almost unlimited memories have an obvious positive impact on cultural diversity, while the possibility to store multimedia information permits the memorization of all the aspects and manifestations of the minority cultures (traditionally only texts have been preserved). The **minority cultures are generally based on scarcity - of** people identifying with them, of material and immaterial resources - while the **new media are based on abundance**. Their use *can* have a revolutionary impact on minorities, permitting them to overcome the handicaps due to scarcity of immaterial resources (information, communication, social visibility, political influence) they often suffer from.

A last remark has to be made on **virtual reality** since it is the last stop, the point of arrival of the dematerialization process. Tridimensional computerized screens **amplify** the mind power allowing experiencing non-existing realities¹³. The reality vanishes behind a screen since the simulated realities are a major element of the forthcoming cultural revolution. We are about to be able to have any kind of experience we may wish. Virtual reality shows that we have to choose what we want to become: the power to create the experience is the power to redefine basic concepts such as identity and community; consequently, it may have in the long term **an** indirect impact on the feeling of belonging to a minority.

¹³ *The virtual reality is made of two ideas: the idea of immersion (utilizing stereoscopy and other technologies to create the illusion of being within a scene created by the computer) and the idea of navigation (utilizing the computerized model of an entity - that may be anything, from a molecule to a town - to allow the user to go around as if he was inside it). By the use of sophisticated devices such as data gloves, "flying mouses" (tridimensional mouses) and data suits with special sensors and viewers, the virtual reality involves further on the senses (hearing, sight, touch and the so called "sense of the body"). The effect of living a real experience is given by a virtual prosthesis of all the body. The users have a serie of codified gestures (for example, pointing a finger gives the impression of flying, or opening three fingers make a menu of instructions appear in front of the user) and natural gestures (holding **an** object or turning the head to see what is behind, have the same effects they have in real life) to **carry out** in order to move within the virtual reality.*

2.3. The dialectic local/global

Societies are now subjected to two opposite push: **(A)** the push to globalism and (B) the push to localism. The trend towards forms of local identification, too particularistic to allow social integration, and the trend towards forms of supranationalism, too universalistic too allow a real cultural identification, are emerging. The new media can either foster the divergence or reconcile those trends.

(A) On one side, *the new media are effacing the spacial dimension of the cultures*. The cultures will tend to **differ** not only on the basis of local and regional rootedness. Since the digitalization permits to reformulate the contents, to adapt, to personalize them, *outside the original context* of their production, there is a risk of loss of traditions and ways of living if there is no concern in the new societies for the preservation of cultural integrity.

While the *regions and the local collectivities are the natural places where the diversity is expressed*, the new cultures are *de-localized*. The distribution of audiovisual programs via satellite, cable, telephone give an impulse to the development of trans-national services. The economic globalization increases the de-localization effects, making homogeneous the life styles, tastes, consumption habits. The current massive immigration waves in Europe reinforce this trend.

Life is becoming more sedentary, the stimulations will come from the new media, the social interactions will be tele-mediated. The isolated individual sitting in front of its PC and interacting with distant people will be the typical participant to the new cultures. One of the most important changes in the history of the mankind has been the passage from nomadism to sedentarism. The shift is now *from sedentarism to de-localization*. Even if the new cultures will be as sedentary as never before from the physical point of view, they will permit to their participants to be ubiquitous because (i) the cultural exchanges will have a worldwide dimension, (ii) an abstraction from the actual spatial situation: according to Negroponte, the independence from time and space is the most precious service and product offered by the new technologies to the mankind. **As** several authors, including Negroponte¹⁴, have pointed out the mobility of the new media is a path covered when remaining in the same place: at the end of it, the knowledge gained is not only a content, but includes also skills such as the ability to "navigate" and reach a destination.

(B) On the other side, although the new media are global in reach, much of the contents are surprisingly narrow and local in focus. It is interesting to observe that it is at local level that the potentialities of the Information Society and bottom-up initiatives have **until** now been experimented. *The local level seems to offer the best opportunities to harmonize the aim of keeping citizens' identity with the technological changes*. It is at the local level that bottom-up initiatives have been experimented. The Information Society can allow reducing the obstacles and the handicaps due to the localization and attracting a part of the investments in the rural areas where the costs are lower. But this requires in those areas a high level of infrastructures, qualified work and an advanced level of education. The Green Paper "Living and working in the Information Society: people first" states: " ICTs will **permit** more people to work from, or near, home for at least some of the time, opening the way for more communities to become alive during the working day, and will allow more services - especially education and community services - to be delivered at local level. **As** the High Level Experts Group noted, such

¹⁴ *this point has been affirmed during a speech*

changes could help to reinvigorate all communities and lead to stronger social networks and a sense of place".

Cohesion and safeguard of local cultures, traditionally regarded as diverging objectives, could become reconcilable objectives because of the Information Society. This can take different forms in different contexts, depending on local systems of production, on local institutions and on the demand of the users. It could have different effects on different types of cultural minorities, and in particular it may have a different impact on minorities suffering from disadvantaged economic conditions (see point 1.1 a. of this study) and on those suffering because of their location (see 1.1 b. in the typology of causes considered earlier in this study). The final outcome is not certain yet. The opposite result, a radicalization of local identities and a **loss** of concern for larger structures, is also possible. The new media impact depends on several factors, and the decisions taken by policy makers are one among the most influential. In preserving the cultural diversity in Europe, policy makers should *pay special attention not to favor a phenomenon of fragmentation that may become source of conflicts while giving support to some minorities*, in particular as far as the Central European countries are concerned and when the identification with a local culture and language is connected with the demand for political autonomy.

Fostering the conciliation between cohesion and safeguard of local cultures is the aim. To this end, it is necessary to make the push to cohesion possible. At present, it is hampered by the big gap between the richest and the most disadvantaged regions of Europe as far as the infrastructures, costs, reliability and availability of the services are concerned. **Only 2%** of the structural funds are devoted now to the investment in telecom infrastructures. The opportunities to access and use effectively the new media are allocated in an inhomogeneous way within the European regions. Current data and market forecasts show the risk of an increasing gap between the more and the less advanced regions. It is essential to undertake initiatives in order to overcome this gap (see part 5 of this study).

2.4. The non-mass-new-media for non-mass-cultures

The participating cultural model promoted by the new technologies, where the users have a creative role, implies a shift *from the passivity to the autonomy* of the users. The interactivity is an antidote to the present "mass" media and leads to the personalization and to the specificity of the new services and contents. While the electric media revolution created mass products for mass audiences, the digital revolution is creating communication products tailored by the users. If it is true the emerging big vertically integrated multinational companies tend to diffuse worldwide a homogeneous culture, it is also true that the interactivity and the offer of new services targeted to groups of users will de-standardize the cultures.

While the mass media system was targeting a mass audience, the new media are breaking down the universe of the users. *The offer can become more and more personalized and fragmented*

The Information Society is a challenge for the mass culture and implies an increase of the direct role of the individuals and the groups in the public as well as in the cultural arena. It is typical of the mass media to form a culture outside localism and outside the community places, without the possibility of an immediate confrontation. Within that context, the members of local cultures and minority communities have been reduced to an audience of not communicating individuals. The new media may

have a positive impact on minority cultures since their organization of the information can better reflect diversified needs and practices. In fact, they offer to the minorities the possibility to become information producers and to diffuse this information, if some conditions will be realized:

(i) if they will be able to effectively reach them, i.e. if their potentialities will be fully available to the disadvantaged communities,

(ii) if the offer will not be dominated by large multinationals, i.e. if the personalization and fragmentation of the offer will prevail.

2.5. The demand-driven contents

The interactive media are based on a number of predetermined possibilities, but the users' choices create a new product and a situation not entirely pre-codified. The new media consist of the interchanges created by the technological opportunities and the users' creativity. The contents and the way they are presented will be determined by the demand within the new interactive media. The question is: are we moving in the direction of a better recognition of the differences or towards the imposition of conformity criteria, and therefore, *are we moving from the standardization of the offer (typical of the mass media) to the standardization of the demand*, as a result of the conformism created in the demand by the previous media culture and because of the cultural uniformity of the people having an effective master of the new technology?

Since the new services become more personalized, the role of the consumers becomes central in determining the contents. Because the consumers' choices are orientated on the contents rather than on the technological support, the *contents industry becomes the focal point of the economies of this sector*. According to the Green Paper on the Strategies to enhance the potential of the European Programs Industry within the EU audiovisual policies¹⁵, the operators will build their strategies on the contents and they will try to control the most profitable catalogues of programs. The capacity to offer a wide choice of different programs is the key resource within the IS.

According to the "Groupe de réflexion sur la politique audiovisuelle", that contributed to the preparation of the above mentioned Green Paper, the preservation of cultural diversity at national and at regional level, is connected to the *development of the European program industry* and to its profitability. *Promoting cultural diversity* does not only mean safeguarding cultural and linguistic minorities, but *it also concerns the promotion of a wide offer of cultural contents, where all the perspectives are taken into consideration* and where there is room for contents non-rewarding from a commercial point of view, and therefore not spontaneously offered by the market forces.

The scale economies will still be important, but contents may target specific groups. Therefore, the *European cultural fragmentation* that has always been considered as a problem *can become an opportunity*. A personalized offer allows to Europe to exploit a market where the diversity becomes an advantage. Exploiting market niches permits to keep and develop the cultural diversity. While the European linguistic variety is considered as a major cause of the crises of our audiovisual sector, the

¹⁵ COM(94)96, 6.4.1994

digital revolution permits to exploit it (since the digital compression enormously reduce the costs of distributing programs in several languages and allows to combine all the possibilities on the same support); offering to the public better chances to access European programs, it ends the division into national markets and increases the trans-frontier distribution.

2.6. The new communities

Because of their de-localized character and of the accent they put on information and contents, the new technologies make it easier to organize a group on a specific subject and to create *new social groups on the basis of a shared sectorial interest*. The new technologies allow to non institutional subjects - as it could be the case for the minorities - to participate, make proposals, intervene in the communication and, therefore, to modify the cultures. New "*communities of interest*" - where self-selecting groups, with shared interests, values and knowledge, interact - and "*focus groups*" - where individuals from different countries and cultures participate on the basis of a common concern - are emerging.

The enlarged opportunities to access, organize, distribute the information allow a wider participation of the local cultures and of the individuals. The new technologies can be used:

(i) for the *self-organization of non-spatial communities* (cultures immigrated in a territory and cultures of special social groups, type (1) and (2), point 1.1. of this study): a new kind of "community building", based on common interests rather than on geographical proximity, is made possible

(ii) to *support local cultures and groups*, since they can use the new technologies to identify common interests and the relevant information (it is mainly the case for the cultures of national and of regional minorities, type (3) and (4), point 1.1. of this study).

The self-organization of non-spatial communities has several positive effects on minorities, since it allows gathering with distant people sharing the same culture (what is particularly relevant for immigrated cultures). Nevertheless, it has to be noted that it can also increase the social fragmentation and the fragmentation of the cultures. The result can be an intensification of the cultural (and ethnic) conflicts. Groups having not negotiable needs or values can more easily organize themselves. The process of human *aggregation made on the basis of an always more specified selection of the interests could imply a social fragmentation*, and not a reinforcement of the sense of the community. If the communities will not mainly be based on spatial proximity but on common interests, we may assist to the shift from the search for social contacts to the search of the "most efficient" contact". In this perspective, confrontation will tend to be replaced by conflict because the new media users will feel the importance of the community of interest **they** belong to and **they** may lose the sense of recognizing and respecting those who are **different**¹⁷. The consequence may be the creation of virtual ghettos. Since the new media favor the communication among distant individuals and their participation to virtual communities, the users will tend to search **only** the most similar people and to avoid the present variety

¹⁶ see J. W. Chesebro, D. G. Bonsall "Computer-mediated Communication", Tuscalosa, Univ. of Alabama Press, 1989, p. 221 as quoted in Rodotà "Tecnopolitica", p. 125

¹⁷ this is the thesis of Rodotà, "Tecnopolitica", p. 126

of relationships.

"A later" of the new communities, special attention should be drawn to new forms of self-organizing and participating production and distribution of the information. They emerged outside the commercial sector and may be used by cultural minorities. They are called "*civil media*" because they are at the service of the citizens (for their work, health, culture, and environment), they are non-profit and based on participation. The minority cultures can take benefit from the civil media, which may allow them to better participate to the public life of the country they live in. The civil media can contribute to overcome the exclusion of the minorities from the exercise of their democratic rights and therefore they could be the object of EP initiatives (see later).

2.7. The **cultural** exclusion

Studies show that the majority of the Internet users tend to be male, young, educated and to have a high level *of* income. The so-called "have nots" risk to become culturally marginal. There is a serious risk for some of the minorities suffering **from** their economic conditions or from their geographical location to be part of the "have not", i.e. to become much more marginal than they are at present, since:

- (i) they do not have the means, opportunities and skills to access the new media
- (ii) the commercial mainstream will not include minority contents.

While the globalized markets will address the new products to international mass audiences, the "special interest channels" and the "programs on demand" will be mainly financed by subscription. This is going to **marginalize** the groups of citizens in a difficult economic position. The exclusion of all the interests unable to reach a critical mass and therefore non-profitable implies the cultural exclusion of the minorities carrying those interests. **As** Rodotà highlighted, diversity is acceptable only if it is "market consistent" and if it possible to classify it within the borders of a "normality" tending to coincide with the economic profitability".

The problem consists in assuring that not only the well-organized lobbies, but also the minority and the less favored groups can make **an** active use of the new media. Since it seems unlikely that this could happen spontaneously, **public** initiatives **are needed** (see point 5 of this study). The concept **of public interest** should become a major concern for the policy makers, because the market forces will tend to concentrate the investments in geographical areas where it will be more profitable, to the detriment of the others. Action is required on the questions of **universal access** and **universal service** and in particular, affordable tariffs and local availability have to be guaranteed. According to the Information Society Forum 1997 Report, there is a need to enlarge the concept of universal service, founded in telecommunications, to broadcasting and to new on-line services.

Cultural exclusion should not be regarded simply in terms of the "have nots". The problem consists not only in guaranteeing the **equality of access** but **also** the **type of access**, where a series of **skills for managing the digital environment** are required. Umberto Eco **has** depicted the risk of a society divided in three social classes. At the bottom level, a "proletariat" not having access to a computer and solely

¹⁸ see Rodotà, "Tecnopolitica", p.137-138

depending in TV. A "middle class" using the computer in a passive way. At the top level a nomenclature, in the soviet meaning of the word, able to make the machines think, knowing how the programs function and how to select the information. We may have a nomenclature led by people like Minsky, a middle class controlled by Bill Gates, and proletarians having to be satisfied with watching TV stars.

PART 3. Cultural and linguistic minorities and new media in practice

One of the most evident aspects of the information society is the pervasiveness and dominance of the English language, not **only** or mainly as regards the contents, but also the instruments. This is the case for Windows, that is in English and in other languages reaching economies of scale, where only a few communities (the Euskara, for example), decided and financed its translation in their language. Moreover, there is very little offer of software in minority languages, while the majority of the offer is in English or other very diffused languages (with some exceptions), due to obvious commercial reasons. The **aim** to promote the development and distribution of software in lesser-used languages, is supported, among others, by the Lulsda (Lesser-Used Languages Software Developers' Association: though mutual support and collaboration in the interests of the linguistic communities served by it members, the Lulsda aims at adopting a multilingual approach for developing software and at influencing major software developers to do so).

The use of **CD-ROMs** is still limited within the minority communities: in some cases they are used to teach a minority language or to describe a minority culture. The real exploding phenomenon in terms of the new media and services' exploitation for cultural diversity is the Internet. A very large use of the Internet is made to communicate among minority community members, to inform about minority cultures, to safeguard and promote their cultures and their languages. When navigating with the aim to explore the use of Internet for cultural diversity, the first impression is **variety**: on the web there is any possible kind of contents related to minority cultures and languages, almost everything is there. To give an orientation in this jungle a typology is requested.

3.1 The use of the Internet by the minorities

3.1.1 Typology of contents

(i) Information on the culture

This is the most frequent use and a very large number of sites dedicated to the information on everything concerning a particular minority exist. Contents include the history of a given minority as well as its present problems. Their scope can sometimes be very specific: there is even a Galician page dedicated to their bagpipes. The new technological opportunities and the almost unlimited memories are often used to create archives on a minority culture.

There are databases on all the aspects of a culture and cases of databases containing the electronic messages exchanged in a minority language. There are sites just containing directories of resources on

a minority or offering **links** to anything related to a specific minority culture from arts and history to genealogy. The interest for genealogy is particularly diffused on Scots, Welsh, Cornish sites, often managed by associations and organizations in Australia, New Zealand and USA.

Information on the life of minority communities and events is also offered, as well as on several minorities' organizations or associations and their initiatives.

(ii) Governmental, political, administrative information.

Several sites are created by local administrations (such as the Catalan Government) and they contain all the relevant political and administrative information for the people living in the region. Often additional information on cultural activities aiming at safeguarding a minority culture is included. In several cases, such as for example the pages of the **Sami** Parliament (in Sweden, in Finland, in Norway, having different sites), they also contain a section on the "hot" political questions.

Among this kind of contents, should be considered the sites of local political parties, which are in some cases the most ardent promoters of the sense of cultural identity.

(iii) Leisure

The use of Internet for Radio broadcasting is rather developed. In several cases, news on the community life and other general news in minority languages (see, for example, the site "Friul in Ret", for Friulans) are the main content. The declared aim of those services' providers is to reach all the members of their community everywhere in the world and inform them on what is going on in their homeland as well as on their local communities. The use of the Internet by traditional aerial broadcasters is made to overcome the space barriers and one of those sites, the Irish radio and TV broadcaster RTE, is even called "**RTE** to Everywhere". In some cases their services go beyond the **traditional** schemes and include "fora" for discussion of matters partly related to the programs broadcasted (see the case of "Television de Catalunya online"). The actual meaning of this phenomenon is understood when cases like "Radiodiffusió Catalana", offering their programs on the net **from** the State of Victoria in Australia, are considered. The same kind of information is also diffused by online newspapers and magazines.

Several sites' purpose is to offer and make known - and therefore preserved - traditional dances, songs, tails, sages, legends.

Some traditional feast took place on the Internet and on the traditional place at the same time (this is the case for a Bretons feast: the people assisting to it on the Internet where the double of those assisting on the spot).

Many sites are intended to develop tourism. This kind **of** contents can **also** be considered as a **part** of the point (vi), since they aim also at developing the areas where the minorities are located from the economic point of view. The range of contents of this type includes tourist information on the region (descriptions of places, artistic and architectural heritage, landscape, hotels, etc.) as it the case for example for the Walsers of Italy site or for one of the Welsh sites. This can be very specific and even addressed to a special public, e.g. the page "DTour. **A** visitors guide to Ireland for people with disabilities". There are pages using more the visual or the audiovisual possibilities offered by the Internet, rather than text (e.g. the pages on pictures of the country life in the Faroe Islands).

(iv) Education

A large use of Internet is made to teach minority languages. Linguistic education - in **minority** languages - is an area where the new potentialities - interactivity and unlimited memories - are exploited and even developed. There is a Galician site aiming at promoting the knowledge of this language where,

as a part of the linguistic training, chat-rooms are included. The net is used also as a terminology data bank. Automatic dictionaries are proposed online, as it is the case for a Breton site, also proposing the sound for reading the exact phonetics of the words listed. There is an automatic device to conjugate Occitan verbs. A site offers a dictionary Breton-German, while publishing the same dictionary on paper would probably have been considered as too expensive, because of diffusion and distribution costs.

Other sites are devoted to the literature of minorities. The examples are numerous, one of them being the page for Medieval Welsh poetry, or for the Arboreor literature, or for the poetry of the Greek minority in Italy.

(v) Communication among the members of minority cultures

Except for the use of the BBS (Bulletin Board System, a system alternative to the Internet also using a modem to transmit, receive and keep messages - normally e-mail - sent by users) that seems to be quite diffused within the minority cultures, the rest of this communication normally takes place on the Internet.

The Freenets are normally provided by local administrations of the areas where the minorities live. They offer e-mail, a large amount of information on the services available in the area (from medical assistance to entertainment), discussion areas and chat spaces. They are the bearing walls of the Network Communities, but they are normally created by big and powerful structures, such as the public administrations, rather than by the minorities themselves.

The minorities tend to create three kinds of networks on the Internet: the newsgroups, the mailing lists, the IRC. The Newsgroups gather on the net to discuss a specific issue. Even if the newsgroups are not a completely anarchic phenomenon (to open one is necessary to reach a minimum number of favorable votes), the second type, the mailing lists are more structured. They are made of an issue to be discussed, a file of welcome (or charter) describing the list and its policy, a person guaranteeing the technical functioning of the list, a number of people deciding to be part of it, archives gathering all the mail exchanged in the list. They can be open or close. In the first case, the registration is automatic, in the second the demand of participation is sent to an owner or a moderator deciding who is allowed to participate. The IRC, Internet Relay Chat, are the less regulated option: an unlimited number of users chat on the Internet, without rules or roles, and policy is freedom and disorder.

The issues discussed are the most varied: they can concern the preservation of a specific minority culture or language, political problems, initiatives to undertake, comments on events, and they can be devoted to develop only one subject or, particularly in the case of IRC, can be really heterogeneous in scope.

(vi) Commerce

A further use of the Internet is intended to develop some minorities' economy and to directly earn some money. In some but not very frequent cases, business information is provided in order to promote investment and trade with a minority community. More frequent is the e-commerce of traditional products (e.g. the books, records and textile products sold on the "Ligallo de Fablans", an Aragonese site, while "Wales Direct" sell a variety of Welsh gifts: jewels, music, woolens, pottery). CDs on specific aspects of the minority cultures (e.g. songs, as it is the case for Cornish on Line) are also sold. There

is even a Celtic bookshop online, selling new, out-of-print and rare Celtic books.

3.1.2. Aims, problems and characteristics

While several sites offer one type of contents, in some case extremely specific (there is a Gaelic page listing traditional Irish set dancing and Ceili dancing events throughout Ireland), others offer several types of contents (e.g. a site for the Bretons containing a range of "information %om tourism to scientific research with excursions into legend and country life"). Some of them even include all the types of contents just listed. They can be divided accordingly to their purpose, since they may aim at:

(a) **diffusing** the information on a minority culture **also** to non-members or the knowledge of the language both among members and non-members; by doing this, they normally aim also at *promoting* and *valorizing* their culture,

(b) *preserving* a minority culture itself and the memory of it (see the sites containing archives on anything concerning the culture, the literary heritage, the traditional songs, dances, proverbs, sage, legends, etc.)

(c) *improving the community cohesion*, beyond the spatial barriers, through an increased communication among members, both in terms of quantities and in terms of common discussion of issues relevant for the community.

The use of the Internet is *really* inhomogeneously distributed *within* the European minority cultures. The differences depend on:

(A) the economic conditions of the minorities: the use of the net **is** very large, for example, in the case of Catalans, one of the richest Spanish communities, while it is a lot less diffised within other communities suffering fion disadvantaged economic conditions

(B) the diffusion of the new technologies and media in the country where a cultural minority is situated (for example, in Finland and Sweden, the **Sami** make a quite large use of the Internet in comparison with other minorities having similar economic conditions)

(C) the **size** of the minority: the smallest minorities usually do not have sites or pages produced by themselves and, normally, the smaller is the community the more limited are the services and functions of the available Internet sites.

In fact, the types of information or services offered on the Internet also largely vary. In some cases it is used only as a source - or a storehouse, depending on the point of view - of information on a minority culture and it has a traditional function (the same of a book, or in some cases, a library of books) just transferred on-line. On the other end, there are very rich sites, where use is made of the possibilities offered by the interactivity and where there are discussion groups etc.

As regards the creators and managers of the sites, they are:

- (1) the minorities themselves (their organizations, associations, etc.)
- (2) individuals **fi-om** minorities, in few cases

(3) other subjects, such as universities, regional or other local administrations where minorities live, cultural institutes external to the minorities.

It is interesting to observe that the developers of those sites are in the majority of the cases non-profit organizations, and more rarely the government. Therefore, the first impulse to the presence of the minority cultures on the Internet is given by the third sector, i.e. by the minority associations and organizations.

We do not know how many people among the visitors of those sites are members of the minority cultures. In some cases, there is a translation to English or to the main language spoken in the country where a given minority is set. But in several cases there is no translation, and it is therefore evident that the users of those sites are mainly the members of the minorities.

A complete *delocalization* took place already: this is going to reshape the sense of identity of the minorities and to create a new sense of cultural proximity. Most minority cultures have members around the world and the services provided on the Internet reach everyone, outside the spatial dimension. They permit a global gathering of the community itself, against past "diasporas" to the new continents and it is interesting to note that often the sites are created by members of the minority cultures living in the USA, Australia, New Zealand, feeling the need to safeguard their cultural identity and, therefore, their roots. The abolition of distance is the first impact the new media already have on the minorities. One of the most interesting sites on the Cornish culture is managed by the Australian Federation of Cornish Associations, and the examples of this kind are really numerous, also within Europe (the best page found for the Sardinian minority is part of the site of the Köln University in Germany).

The result of all this is going to be soon the development of *a new type of community life* and a new cultural identity. In the cases where the latter is not very much felt by the young generations and it is in the process of vanishing, the concern for cultural roots of the emigrants to the new continents may revitalize the sense of identity. The participation to the community life, that was rather limited in several cases, may also be increased by the new communication possibilities. The increased offer of education on minority languages and cultures, as well as the offer of entertainments and leisure, will enhance the cultural awareness of the minority cultures members.

The first political implication of all this is the *diminishing of the importance of the State* as an interlocutor for the minorities. New organized sub-communities of participants to discussion groups and to the mailing lists arise, beyond State subsidies and control (because of the extraterritoriality of the net). They are not limited to the State boundaries and new possibility to share the common problems and interests are opened to the minorities living in several countries. **As** a consequence they may want to tackle jointly their problems, with a joint body irrespectively to the States borders. New forms of direct democracy may arise where the chances to intervene and orientate the political debate by the minority communities may be enhanced.

In some cases, actually very limited, the minority cultures and languages contribute to the development of the new media and to an adaptation of their use, giving a *technological push* (for example, when a new software for the simultaneous translation in several languages is offered at a low cost, which is a "conditio sine qua non" for languages not reaching scale economies), while they are considered as groups in a disadvantaged position within the information society.

The fact a minority is well protected within the State where it is situated or, conversely, it is not and has

several political claims surprisingly seems not to be influential to the use of the new media, and to the use of the Internet particularly. No national governmental program to encourage the participation of cultural minorities to the information society, or to promote cultural diversity in the new media, has been found. The initiatives, the sites, have been spontaneously created outside any program for the safeguard of minorities. What has proved to influence the actual use of the new media by the minorities have been some general framework conditions (economic, educational, spread of the new media and technologies within the country) and policies towards the information society, while the cultural *policies on minorities did not show an impact on the actual use.*

This is shown by the following case studies where a choice of three minorities in very different situations **has** been made and where it is possible to observe that the difision of the use of the Internet does not depend on the protection granted to them by the State where they live, but on the conditions specified earlier **(A, B, C)**.

PART 4: Case studies: notes on the situation of some minorities and on their use of the Internet

4.1. Tire Sorbs

The Sorbian are a Slavic minority having a distinct culture and *two* written languages (High and Low Sorbian). They live in Upper Lusatia and in Lower Lusatia (the latter are also called Wends). Their estimated number is 60.000 of whom two thirds are living in Saxony, and one third in Brandenburg. In some local communities they account for up to 90 per cent of the population. **A** protocol note to art.35 of the Treaty on the Establishment of German Unity (1990) states: "everybody is free to declare his or her affiliation with the Sorbian ethnic community and with the Sorbian culture. The preservation and further development of the Sorbian culture and of Sorbian traditions are guaranteed". They seem to be a well protected minority also in the Länder where they live. **Art.** 25 of the Constitution of the Brandenburg Land establish the right of the Sorbian people to protection, preservation and fostering of their national identity. The local government and associations have to promote the fulfillment of this right, especially **as** regards the Sorbian culture and effective political participation by the Sorbian people. The Land has to ensure the cultural autonomy of the Sorbs. The Constitution of Saxony Land (art.5) states the Land guarantees and protects the right of national and ethnic minorities of German nationality to preserve their identity and to foster their languages, religion, culture and traditions. The principle of equal rights is also established. The cooperation across Land borders, among Sorbs, is defined as being in the interest of the Saxony Land.

A Council for Sorbian Affairs, elected by the Landtag of Brandenburg, has been established to advise the Landtag on Sorbian issues, especially as regards legislation. The Sorbian language is admitted by the authorities and administration in Sorbian areas and the language is also taught in schools. The Sorbs do not have political parties (but since 1994 a member of the Sorbian minority is elected at the EP).

The Sorbian press is considered as particularly relevant for the preservation of this national identity: there are a daily newspaper (Serbske Nowiny), a weekly magazine (Nowy Casnik), a monthly cultural periodical (Rozhlad), and a professional journal for Sorbian teachers and children's magazine. There are also pages on the www for the first two publications. The public broadcasters offer programs in High and Lower Sorbian. Several are the Radio programs, while TV programs consist of a half an hour per month program in Lower Sorbian (there is no TV program in Higher Sorbian).

Since 1998 the Länder of Saxony and Brandenburg established and financed the Foundation for the Sorbian People with the aims of promoting the institutions preserving the culture, arts and homeland of the Sorbs, the documentation, the language, the identity and projects for fostering international understanding and cooperation with other ethnic groups and national minorities in Europe.

The umbrella organization of Sorbian associations and institutions is Domowina, to which 14 Sorbians organizations are affiliated. Domowina is committed to free and democratic procedures aiming at supporting the preservation, development and difision of Sorbs language, culture, national awareness, solidarity. The organization also **aims** at representing the interests of the Sorbian people in public, viv-à-vis local, provincial and federal institutions and authorities. Domovina manages a reach site with information on the organization itself and on Sorbian issues - type (i), part 3.1.1 - and links to other

Sorbs sites in Australia, Poland and USA. The site of Concordia University (where approximately 10% of Concordia's students, faculty and staff have Wendish origins) at Austin (Texas) has information concerning its foundation by the **Sorbs**. In Texas there is also a page of the Wendish Heritage Museum. A page is made by the community of Australian Sorbs.

Moreover, concerning the type (i), the Serbski Institut has a server with information on the Institute itself and on **Sorbs** and Sorbian institutions, including on radio and TV programs. - Zalozba za serbski lud, is the site of the Foundation of the Sorbian Nation containing information on the Foundation itself. The Sorb Library has a site (Serbska centralna biblioteka).

The religion **has** an important role within the Sorbs minority, and after forty years of Communist rule there is a **revival** of it. Many Sorbian traditions and customs are closely associated with the yearly circle of religious feasts and, **as** is the case for the Easter Riding, they continue today. There is even a Pastor Kittner's homepage from Blairsville, Pennsylvania.

Concerning the type (ii), there are homepages of the town and region of Cottbus and a part of the site of the Land Brandenburg is devoted to the Sorbian issues.

Within the type (iii), there is a computer game in Sorbian, Billy.

In the field of type (iv), there are an online dictionary WWW Oborsorbisches Online-Woerterbuch, the homepages of Institut fuer Sorabisistik Universitaet Leipzig and Homepage Boehmak (for a Sorbs students organization). Language courses are offered, A Primer for Upper Sorbian, as well as texts corpora (The Upper Sorbian Text Corpus and Direct information for terminological problems), and international linguistic projects (The Slavic Linguistic Atlas).

Outside the field of the Internet, it has to be added that Win95 has been translated to Sorbian.

The conclusion is that the use of the new media by the Sorb minority is not yet extremely developed and the most interesting phenomenon is delocalization again, since it seems the Sorbs living outside Europe feel particularly concerned about their ethnic origins.

4.2. The Sami

The Sami live today in Norway (40.000), in Sweden (15 to 25.000), in Finland (6.500), in Russia (2.000). In the first three countries, a person is considered as a Sami if he regards himself as such and has at least one parent or grandparent that learned **Sami** as his mothertongue. The official recognition of them **as** indigenous people is very recent. Within the same countries, the Sami elect among themselves a representative body, the Sami Parliament, which has an advisory role.

In Finland, the Sami Parliament exists since **1973** and is made of 20 elected representatives. Its purpose is to attend to the rights and interests of the Sami by presenting initiatives and proposals. Since 1991, according to the Constitution, the Sami have been heard by the Finnish Parliament on matters especially Concerning them. On the municipal, regional and State level, they have the same status of any other Finnish citizen. A special statute allowing them to take decisions on their language, cultural, social and economic situation does not exist, and there are several claims in this sense. The Sami organizations and associations usually work unofficially and have little influence. They claim rights to **their** land's property and, according to Sami sources (on one of their www sites), their administrative position

undermines the chances to preserve their language and culture.

The **Sami** in Finland may use their language when dealing with the public administration since 1992. The **Sami** Radio broadcasts programs in Samit daily; a monthly magazine in **Sami** (Sapmelas) is published in Finland. Two North **Sami** newspapers (Min Aigi and Assu) printed in Noway, are also diffised in Finland.

In Sweden, the policies on the **Sami** issue changed during the last decades. The Reindeer Husbandry Law (1971, last revised in 1993) allows the **Sami** some freedom to organize their **own** affairs. The main result of the new policies has been the creation of the Sameting, the **Sami** Parliament (first elected in 1993, consisting of 31 representatives), also an advisory body. It is a State administrative body, which is under the Swedish Government jurisdiction and bound by its rules. Therefore, its power is limited and its administrative tasks are roughly the same of the previous **Sami** national organizations. The change consists in the power to launch initiatives on **Sami** issues. The Sameting is also responsible for the funds granted for the Sami culture and organizations by the Swedish Department for Culture. It is also the center of the Sami political debate.

Their cultural identity is generally strongly felt and the political claims are stated in several political documents. Until the '50s, the Nordic countries pursued a discriminatory policy in order to assimilate the **Sami** into the **main** population. Successively, the Sami established broad-based organizations, which played an increasingly significant role at local, national, Nordic and international level, particularly through the **Sami** Council. The latter is responsible for preparing the **Sami** conferences, which in turn formulate the principles and objectives of **Sami** policies.

There are several **Sami** sites aiming at making the Sami claims known internationally. In fact, the English translation of those sites' contents is rather frequent and even more usual than the translation to the main languages of the countries where the **Sami** live. The **Sami Web**, an Internet site, is a product of the **Sami** Radios in Noway and Sweden, NRK Interactive and the Nordic Council of Ministers, granting financial support. The **journalists** of the participating Radios produce the contents. It contains a lot of news on the Sami concerns and on their cultural and political claims. Other issues regard the aborigines' problems worldwide and the **international** organizations for the indigenous people. There is an important amount of information on the **Sami** culture.

The **Sametinget**, the site of the Swedish **Sami** Parliament, is the main place for diffusing the information on the **Sami** "hot" political issues. An invitation to address e-mail on any Sami-related issue to the Sametinget is made on this content-rich site. Pages **from** other organizations (for example "**Samisk** Radio och TV") are hosted in **Sami** language, while the pages where the information on the Parliament itself is offered are also in English.

Saminet, is a mailing list for discussion about **Sami** related computing issues and it is run at the University of Oulu.

The Finnish **Sami Radio** www page daily diffuses the latest news in **Sami**. It also provides links to sites on the Sami and their land. A project for a joint (with the Swedish and the Norwegian **Sami** Radios) digital channel of multiple services will be soon implemented. An interesting character of this and the other **Sami** media is that they cover issues of general interest in the "Arctic circle", independently from any particular State. More or less the same for the site of the Norwegian **Sami** Radio site.

Samefolket, is the site of the homonymous **Sami** periodical.

It seems the **Sami** draw a lot of attention to the young generation (for example, a page of the Sami Web is dedicated to the young people issues) and there is also a Youth Source Book online.

Several Sami institutions have websites, as it is the case for the Nordic **Sami** Institute, Sami College, Sami Education Council, Samisk Laeremiddelsenter, Sami Language Council, Sami Church Council, and the South Sami Culture Centre. Also the Forum of **Sami** Women has its own site (Sami Nisson Forum).

Virtual Samiland, contains an extensive collection of links to **Sami** resources.

Among the curios, there is a database with **Sami** bird names (the Sami language is particularly rich of terms on nature and wildlife), Sami lottit.

A site offering information on the **Sami** culture (type (i), see above) not managed mainly by the Sami themselves is the site of the Tromso University in Norway, Senter for Samiske studier.

It is possible to conclude that the use of the Internet by the **Sami** is large and well developed in almost all the areas of the typology considered above (no use for e-commerce of Sami products, books, CD, etc. has been found during this research). The main use is made to diffuse the information concerning the political situation of the **Sami** and other general information on the culture.

4.3. The Catalans

With the re-establishment of democracy in Spain, the way was opened for the restoration of the Catalan self-government institutions. In 1977, the Generalitat de Catalunya was re-established while the Catalan Statute of Autonomy dates 1979. The latter states that the Generalitat shall be composed of the Parliament, the President of the Generalitat and the Executive Council. The Preliminary Section of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy states: "*Art.1. Catalonia, as a nationality, in order to accede to self-government, constitutes itself as a self-governing Community in accordance with the Constitution (...)*". The Catalan speakers of Catalonia (six million people) are a minority **only** if they are considered in reference to the Spanish State, but outside the perspective of the State boundaries, the total amount of the Catalan speakers (**8** millions) can hardly be considered as an European minority, while the total number of the inhabitants of several countries, not considered as a minority, is equal or inferior to the number of Catalans (e.g. the Finnish people living in Finland is less than **4** millions).

The use of the new media by the Catalans is very large and complete. Several Catalan sites exist for all the cases considered in the above contents' typology (**3.1.1**). It is not possible to consider here the hundreds of Catalan addresses founded. What follows is just a choice of some among the most interesting from the point of view of the present study.

An example of a very rich site is VilaWeb. It was originally designed as a local directory aiming at bringing together, in the Catalan language, all the websites managed in Catalunya. Created by a group of journalists in 1995, has extended its services and became a complete online system. This includes newspaper local editions in **54** cities in Spain and in the **USA** where there is important Catalan community. Two thematic channels have been created (on sports and computing) aiming at "giving the feeling of proximity" also during free time. Everyday a service of news is offered, generally with URLs listing information sources in order to allow users to enlarge their knowledge. A further service is a press review of selected newspaper articles from **all** over the world and dossiers on important issues,

both local and global. Current development plans include the creation of VilaWeb Plus (made of leisure initiatives such as a library, a service provider for children, a weekly radio program). Other important areas are:

- "L'Auditori" (the Auditorium), an area of multiple conversation (IRC) managed with a global-chat server. Debates are organized in co-operation with other mass media, institutions and associations. This session has welcomed majors, ministers, footballers, writers, singers, judges, actors and **all** kind of public figures. They voluntarily participate in a virtual press conference where the "journalists" are the users of VilaWeb themselves. They have the right to ask questions, accepting a series of rules for the debate laid down by the editorial board. Those press conferences are held in collaboration with the newspaper "La Vanguardia" and the Radio station "COM Radio".
- "La Plaça" (the Square) is a public area (for exhibitions, open-air celebrations in the eve of a Saint, etc.) aiming at involving the subscribers in a collective way through common activities.
- "El Quiosc" (the Newsstand) is a space of information; the reading is organized in sections, in order to make easier the location of the means of communications and the specialized sections.
- "La Biblioteca" (the Library) is a public library created in collaboration with the Catalan Guild of Authors. It also holds a magazine.
- "Gent del Barri" (People of the District) is an area of private usage and incorporates a space of debate, where also an area of tourism is included. There are also areas **for** discussion on culture, sports, computers, the Internet, etc.

Type (i): the site of Omnium Cultural, concerns the activities of this organization, founded in 1961, i.e. initiatives and claims concerning the rights of the Catalans. Catalunia al mon, is a site with much information on various aspects of the social life, politics and culture of Catalans communities outside Spain. There is even a site of the Federació Internet d'Entitats Catalanes a l'Exterior (Internet Federation of Catalan bodies abroad), that is advertised as the first Internet Federation: it is addressed to the Catalans residing in other continents so that they can use the Internet to promote the Catalan culture and identity. There are sites of several Catalan associations in the world, having the aim of safeguarding the Catalan traditions, culture, language and links with the homeland, but also the purpose to difise the information on the Catalan cultures in the countries where those associations are located: Associació cultural Catalana de Brisbane/Austràlia. Casal Català de Vancouver. Casal de Catalunya de Buenos Aires. Casal dels Països Catalans de la Plata/Argentina. Fundació Pauli Bellet in the area of Washington D.C., Des de Louisiana.

Some sites offer links and therefore orientation within the jungle of Catalan sites, as it is the case for CerCat, _____.

Type (ii): The Generalitat de Catalunya, has a very complete site of institutional information.

Type (iii): The site of Radiodifusió Catalana, broadcasting programs in Català in Australia, State of Victoria, is very rich of links. The Gran Teatre del Liceu (Barcelona's Opera House) has also a page. A further example is the Fundació Universal de la Sardana, with the aim to promote the teaching and the practice of the Catalan dance in the five continents. AVLJ is an online daily newspaper in Catalan available in either graphic or text form. El Manso Escorial allows a virtual visit to the Congregació de las Carmelitas de Vedruna del Vic, with a biography of the Saint who founded it.

Type (iv): TermCat, is the site of the Catalan Centre of Terminology, aiming at planning and coordinating the terminology research in Catalan, updating their data-bank of terminology data in Catalan, promoting linguistic engineering tools. There are also sites for learning Catalan on the Internet,

such as Parla Català and Learning Catalan. Poesia Catalana contains Catalan poems. The Association of Catalan Internaute Writers has a site containing information and advices called Escriptors Internautes.

Type (v): there are several mailing lists, IRC and fora (some of them by VilaWeb have just been described). The Corporació Catalana de Radio i Televisió initiated several online Fora on different issues including its TV programs. The CerCat (already quoted) also manages a mailing list and a Forum on "Internet and the Catalan culture" (in Catalan).

Type (vi): not only the site of the Caixa de Catalunya offers several information on Catalan business, but it also sells tickets for the Opera and other entertainment in Catalonia.

An interesting case is the pages of individuals in Spain and in the **USA**. They contain just everything: some offer information of the type (i) including Catalan recipes, other sells Catalan **books**. The fact that even individuals create Catalan WebPages shows up to what point the use of the Internet is diffused and developed within this community.

All the new technological devices and services one can imagine are offered in Catalan: there are navigators, navigators off-line, editors **html**, servers, software, searchers of mailing lists in this language.

PART 5. Options for political action by the European Parliament

In undertaking initiatives on cultural diversity it is important the policy makers do not take a purely *defensive* and preservative role: the new cultural pattern brought forth by the Information Society, with the opportunities and the risks it may imply for the minority cultures and languages, should be fully taken into consideration in the decision making on this issue. A rigid policy founded on quotas in broadcasting and in the offer of the new services (on the model of the directive "TV without frontiers") is in contrast with the flexible, dynamic and demand-driven culture typical of the new technologies. The most suitable initiatives seem to be those based *on promotion rather than on safeguard*. The approach should be pragmatic rather than defensive.

It has also to be considered that **only** the effective will of a minority culture members to keep their habits and to speak their language can make their culture live within the Information Society. History implies evolution and by definition history changes cultures (several cultures or languages disappeared, and even very important ones such as, for example, among the languages, Latin and Sanskrit). Instead of promoting a legislation to preserve the present map of cultures and languages in Europe, the European Parliament can establish some *principles* aiming at protecting the individuals belonging to minorities and the collective identity of minority groups, such as: (i) the protection of minority rights; (ii) the principle of non discrimination of minorities; (iii) the principle of mutual respect.

At first, the European Parliament has to make an effort in preserving its **own** legislative role on this issue, preserving the codecision role it should have on the matter relating to the new media. In fact, as it has been observed by Ms. Mouskouri, it would be absurd to substitute art.128¹⁹ with art.130²⁰ any time the technology comes up in a cultural matter.

The last preliminary consideration is that policies to protect the cultural minorities should be designed in such a way not to curb the investments, the development of this sector and the European international competitiveness.

Two types of initiatives can be proposed:

- (1) measures to *avoid exclusion* from the **IS**, consisting mainly in indirect legislation on market regulation and on the new public services;
- (2) measures for the *promotion* of minority cultures and of the technological means useful to that aim.

The following options concern the *issues where initiatives could be undertaken*, both in terms of EP resolutions and of EP requests for Commission's initiatives (according to the Amsterdam Treaty) or in terms of awakening actions.

¹⁹ "The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore (..)"

²⁰ "The Community and the Member States shall ensure that the conditions necessary for the competitiveness of the Community's industry exist (..)".

5.1. Cultural policies

■ The key action to promote the cultural diversity in the new media within the EU, consists in *promoting the content industry*. The EU institutions have perceived this priority and the European Council of Essen (9-10 December 1994) pointed out the importance of the contents in implementing the Information Society. The Commission action plan "The European way towards the Information Society" recognizes the importance of the contents and some specific initiatives have been taken with this aim. In particular, the INFO 2000 program²¹ takes into account the promotion of the linguistic pluralism and the improving of access from the peripheral regions. More efforts should aim at directing the European content industry towards cultural and linguistic diversity, with a particular attention to the minority cultures.

■ To allow the minority and less favorite cultural groups to take an active part in the IS it is suggested to:

(i) create *spaces of public* access everywhere in Europe, and in particular in remote areas where some minorities live and in place suffering of less favorite economic conditions

(ii) create *on-line and off-line catalogues of all the services available in Europe for the minorities*

(iii) charge the *public services* using the new media with taking into account the minority cultures and interests

(iv) create multimedia learning spaces, museums, art galleries for minority cultures and traditions, especially at local level, taking initiatives in collaboration with the Committee of Regions.

■ *Civil media* (i.e. media at the service of citizens' needs, non-profit, built on participation) should be promoted. As the European Forum on the Information Society has outlined, this requires: (i) ensuring that the citizens and the minorities' members in particular have an active participation to the design of the new services, (ii) promoting the development of technologies aiming at fostering the participation and the discussion, the organization of shared interests on the networks, (iii) helping the citizens to develop experiences within the new media through a participating approach.

5.2. Audiovisual and telecommunications policies

■ A directive could establish the new *social obligations* (deriving from the IS) that should be attached to the licenses both in the telecommunications and audiovisual sectors, and this should include elements orientating the universal service, the open access, the public broadcasters programs, to an effective promotion of cultural diversity (the latter being also based on the principle of pluralism, see the "Protocole sur le système de radiodiffusion publique dans les Etats

²¹ created by the Council Decision 96/339/EC of 20 May 1996, Info 2000 aims at:

- creating favourable conditions to the development of an European multimedia content industry;
- stimulating the demand and the utilization of multimedia contents;
- contributing to the professional, social, cultural development of the European citizens;
- promoting the exchange of knowledge between users and providers of multimedia products.

Membres", annex to the Amsterdam Treaty, "(...) la radiodiffusion de service publique dans les Etats membres est directement liée aux besoins démocratiques, sociaux et culturels de chaque société ainsi qu'à la nécessité de préserver le pluralisme dans les médias").

■ *It is essential that the minorities themselves are be in the conditions of producing contents* within the new media. At present, some of them largely use the Internet, others don't, due to the lack of infrastructures and technological, economic, educational resources. If the first task of public authorities is to take measures in order to overcome this gap, the second is to offer opportunities within the new media for the minorities, so that they can become content producers, in case they are not yet. In this respect, the framework of the MEDIA program seems to be the most suitable for initiatives.

5.3. Education policies

■ Education policies should promote not only computer literacy, but also the ability to manipulate images, sounds and words together and the understanding of the new media culture: it is essential to reach the point where all the European citizens will be able not only to receive information from the new media but also to use and manage this information and to transmit knowledge. In particular, tele-education should be exploited to the advantage of the minorities suffering from their geographical location. Programs like Erasmus, Tempus, Lingua could contain orientations to that aim.

■ The role of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages, created by the EP and financed mainly by the Commission D.G. XXII, should be enhanced (at present it seems quite limited) and its effectiveness in informing the public and the minorities members should be monitored.

5.4. Research policies

■ Making research on contents (~~as~~ **as well as** on their methods of production and their use) reflecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of the EU is one of the objectives of the 5th Framework Program (IST specific program). The EP can monitor, in the implementation phase, the efforts done to encourage the ICT industries to the development of *norms* taking into account the linguistic diversity (integrating them in their products and **applications**²²). The attention should be also drawn on the effectiveness of **research on multilinguality**, that is particularly important since only multilingual technologies *can* enable to overcome the fragmentation of the European contents' markets and, therefore, foster the competitiveness of the European industry. Some **socio-economic research projects** can be devoted to issues concerning cultural and linguistic **diversity in multimedia applications**.

■ Making the benefits of the Information Society available to the minority cultures should be a

²² *this consideration has already been done by the EU institutions and initiatives have been taken with this aim, e.g. the Council Decision 96/664/EC adopting a multiannual program to promote the linguistic diversity of the Community within the Information Society, but more attention could be drawn to this issue within the RTD specific programs*

concern for the ISAC/ISPO activities, and they could be asked to launch a research project on how to reach this objective. ISPO can also be asked to give support to a common awakening initiative by the EP, the Commission and the Committee of Regions, in collaboration with the cultural minorities organizations, like a "Cultural Diversity Fiesta", on the model of the "Internet Fiesta"²³, aiming at sensibilizing the minorities, the public at large, public authorities, local administration and cultural organizations on the problem of cultural diversity within the Information Society.

5.5. Regional policies

■ As it has been said earlier in this study, at present only **2%** of the structural funds is devoted to the investment in telecommunications infrastructures and the opportunities to access and use the new media are absolutely inhomogeneous in Europe. To overcome the handicaps some minorities suffer due to their location in disadvantaged areas and to adapt the structural funds to the new society (the Information Society), it is essential that ***a much more important percentage of them is devoted to fill the enormous gap among the European regions in terms of telecommunications infrastructures and of new services availability.***

■ ***Allowing the minorities living in disadvantaged regions to take profit from the delocalization of the new services*** should be a concern of regional policies. Because of the decentralized character of the IS, most of the initiatives to overcome the problems due to localization should be taken at regional level. The European institutions can launch actions aiming at sensibilizing regional bodies and organizations to ***promote local initiatives*** for the use of the new media.

5.6. Competition policies

● The IS implies important integrations and, in some cases, changes of the competition rules. Since the information is different from any other kind of product, the regulatory framework has to take into account its specificity and the social and cultural impact. New regulations on media concentration should consider the **risk** of a cultural standardization. The IS Forum has agreed that specific initiatives should watch over: (i) the information on the market at the controllers of the physical infrastructures disposal is available to all the content providers, (ii) the navigation systems to orientate the users among the TV channels **are** not discriminating, (iii) new opportunities for the consumers to get the benefits of the new media and building new communities are created.

■ According to the report of the High Level Group of experts, "L'enjeu fondamental de la société de l'information européenne consiste indéniablement à rechercher une compétitivité fondée sur la diversité culturelle, éducative et sociale" (pag. 65, "Building the European Information Society for us all"). To this **aim, panels** to evaluate the services provided from the point of view of the users,

²³ this event took place on March 1999 and consisted of 10.000 Internet-related events highlighting services and solutions offered on Internet for citizens, enterprises and administrations. The aim was to get involved as many people as possible. It included a diverse range of initiatives such as cyber communities meeting physically, administrations opening their offices to show new forms of interaction with citizens, webcasting of film festivals. Regions, towns, villages, groups were invited to submit their idea and to register on the web of this feast. The result was the sum of local initiatives.

should be created; minorities representatives should participate.

5.7. Administration and legislation

- **The European institutions as well as the national administrations can create a critical mass of demand for low cost digital multilingual and translation services. The use of advanced linguistic instruments within the administrations could be further fostered.**

ANNEX I

MINORITIES ON THE WEB

AUSTRIA

Slovene

- [Slovenci koroskem](#), a site with information on Slovene in Carinthia culture, history, news (politics, economy, religion, sport, media, organizations) and tourism.

BELGIUM

Germans

- [Alemana Belgikan](#), is a page containing information on the linguistic situation in Belgium

DENMARK

Faeroics

- [EARnet](#), Faroe Islands information network, containing an introduction to language and culture
- [Foroyingsoga](#), a complete saga from the Faeroe in Faroese on the WWW
- [Vit i Nordurlondum](#), reproduction of part of a book with pictures on life in the Faroe

FINLAND

Sami

- [Sami Parliament page](#), containing information on the Parliament activities, elections, organization and on the current political problems of the **Sami**
- [Virtual Finland](#), a site containing also **all** the information on **Sami** in Finland

FRANCE

Bretons

- [Bretagne](#), an information page about Brittany, from tourism to scientific research with excursions into legend and the countryside
- [Breton Folk Dancing and Music](#), information from a teacher of the circle and spiral dances of Brittany and the country dances of Central France
- [Breton Language Page](#), online lessons, summer courses info and pointers to Breton resources
- [Antourtan](#), server specialized in the Breton culture; in partnership with France Telecom it diffused alive on the Internet a Fest-Noz, traditional Breton feast. 3000 people assisted to the feast where it **took** place and 6000 in the world assisted to it on the Internet.

Corseans

- [Accademia di Corsica. Lingua è cultura Corsa](#), a page on education in the Corsu language

Occitan language

- [Clid](#), allows to automatically conjugate verbs

GERMAN?'

Sorbians

- [Obersorbisch für Anfänger](#), Sorbian lessons through German, with an online dictionary
- [The alternative Lower Sorbian Dictionary](#).
- [Domowina](#), is the site of the homonymous umbrella-organization for Sorbs and contains links to all Sorbian organizations.

IRELAND

- [LULSDA](#) homepage is managed by the Lesser-Used Languages Software Developers' Association.
- [An Saol Ceilteach](#), contains Irish Gaelic resources and a lot of links to things Celtic
- [Nua D+n \(New Art\)](#), a site by some Irish multimedia artists, exploring the medium and offering a taste of their work
- [Ceili](#), list of traditional Irish set dancing and ceili dancing events throughout Ireland
- [DTour A Visitor Guide To Ireland for People with Disabilities](#), this Web site gives access information about Ireland, including accessible inspected accommodations, transport and facilities
- [Radio Telefís Éireann \(RTE\) to Eyewhere](#), Irish Gaelic news as sound files on the Web
- [Interactive Irish Lessons](#)
- [Celtic bookshop online](#), new, out-of-print and rare books service in Limerick, Eire

ITALY

Albanians

- [Albanian literature and language](#), is a site in Albanian (with a cover also translated in English and German) on the subject

Friulans

- [Friul in Ret](#), the first Internet site in Friulan language, was created in 1996 aiming to experiment the new electronic media technologies within the context of linguistic minorities. The aim is to reach the Friulans communities in the world (over 2.500.000 people outside Friuli in Europe, Australia, Canada, Argentina, etc.) and inform them on news from their homeland as well as on their local communities. The site is managed by the "Cooperativa di informazione friulana" and is therefore an autonomous initiative. It includes pages on cultural associations involved with Friulan culture and language, links to sites with informative, cultural and linguistic contents; a section contains audio documents (GR in Ret, in collaboration with the journalists of Radio Onde Furlane).

Sardinians

- [Limba e cultura de sa Sardinia](#) is a page of the University of Koln in Germany containing a lot of information on the Sardinian language and culture, a mailing list, Sardinian texts, news, a dictionary, links on the www, information from several Sardinian organizations.

THE NETHERLANDS

Frisians

- FLMD, is the site of the Museum of Frisian literature documentation centre: it offers news, books, images and manuscripts in Frisian.

SPAIN

Aragonese

- Ligallo de Flablans de l'Aragones, a very nice site including a library, a shop and several other information, also on the homonymous association managing the site

Asturians

- Asturnews, information in Asturianu, an initiative of the Asturnet by the European Center of Enterprise and Innovation in Llanera, Asturias
- Asturia, the Asturian Community site on Internet

Catalans

- Television of Catalunya on-line, also containing Fora (Forum de TV on-line, Forum generic de televisiò, Forum de cinema, etc.)
- atalunya Radio
- "Vilaweb" the former "Infopista" (Information Highway), see part 4 of this study
- Radiodifusió catalana (in the State of Victoria, Australia)

Euskadi

- Euskadi.net, official information site from Basque government
- Pais Vasco.com, links to Basque **www**, with a search service

Galicians

- Galician resources page: links to information about Galicia, arts and culture, tourism etc.
- Galician Bagpipes (information on the gaita, Galician bagpipes)
- Galego.org, webpage in Galician, a resource **for** language learning including a membership-based chat room, aiming at promoting and informing on Galician language, including its history

SWEDEN

Sami

- Saminet, a mailing list **for** discussion about **Sami** related computing issues
- Saami Parliament Web site.
- Senter for Samiske studier, page of the University of Tromsø (Noway)
- Sami Web, containing all kind of information
- sami Radio, whose news are also broadcasted on the Web, in the three Sami languages (North Sami, Inari Sami, Skolt Sami).

U.K.

Cornish

- [Cornish pages](#) "for the Cornish worldwide and who loves Cornwall", a site on genealogy, heritage, language and more
- [Corwall on line](#) (Cornish links, World magazine, history, tourism, multimedia products from Cornwall selling, images from Cornwall, etc.)
- [Kernewk](#) (language lessons for beginners)
- [Cornish light](#), a travel guide with feature articles and picture galleries about Cornwall - its towns, fishing villages, coasts, holiday resorts, countryside, including the Moors, festivals and culture

Manx

[Isle of Man \(Mannet\)](#), heritage, proverbs, links

[Manx Megalinks](#) (an encyclopedic collection of sites Manx)

[Manx Folk Music Archive](#), collection of over 450 Manx traditional tunes

Welsh (Cymraeg)

- [Wales Direct](#), a wide variety of Welsh gifts (jewelry, music woolens, pottery) sell (e-commerce)
- [Welsh-L Archive](#), database of Welsh-L messages
- [Gwarnant](#), Mediaeval Welsh poetry
- [Data Wales](#), a site featuring information, maps, travel, history, culture, technology and more
- [On-line Welsh lessons](#)

Scottish

[S c o t , ,](#) newsgroup

[soc.culture.scottish](#) is a newsgroup open to the discussion of all subjects referring to Scottish culture
[the Scottish Office](#), site for governmental information

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

- [Minelres](#), is a very rich homepage made of a directory of resources on minority human rights and related problems of the transition period in Eastern and Central Europe. It is composed of directories on international organizations, NGOs, human rights sources, bibliography and selected publications, country information and **minority** information. Concerning the latter the minorities considered are the Roma, Jews, Hungarians, Russians, Greeks, Crimean Tatars, Meskhetians (the page is under construction).
- [East European Media and Cinema Studies](#) is the title of a page on the subject of the University of Texas, with several links.

Gypsies

- [Minelres](#), the pages on the Roma on this homepage are extremely rich of information and links and well done: they contain links to a large number of foundations and organizations concerned with Romani minority, contact points, the Roma associations, the international law and declarations on the Roma issues.
- [RNN online](#), the site is a service of the Roma National Congress, containing information not only on the Congress itself but also about Roma and news on related issues; there are also discussion forums.

UNITED STATES

- Native Web, is a source of resources for indigenous cultures around the world. The site is divided in eight sections, including Resources (an extensive listing of resources for indigenous people around the world), Books and Music, Site Map (a detailed listing of all major sections of NativeWeb), NativeTech (dedicated to disconnecting the term "primitive" from perceptions of Native American technology and art), Contact Us (information on URL submissions, questions, suggestions and feedback), Abya Yala Net (information on Indigenous people in Mexico, Central and South America), Logging In (to post information in the events calendar and message boards), Communities (message boards, white pages, jobs, events etc; the purpose of this section is to bring together the indigenous people on the Internet by providing the resources to communicate with each other; there are e-mail lists, chat boards and more; there is also a Relief Center on the Web).
- Terralingua is the homepage of the homonymous nonprofit organization dedicated to (1) supporting the perpetuation and continued development of the world's linguistic diversity, and (2) exploring the connections between linguistic, cultural and biological diversity, through a program of research, information, applied work and advocacy. Information related activities are carried out via the web site and the newsletter, an intensive interaction between the members. It is conceived as both a membership and a partnership/service organization.
- Computer Digest is the homepage of Comstar company in California also containing a multilingual Software Digest on several minority languages (including European).
- NMBC is the site of the National Minority Business Council, an umbrella organization that encompasses thousands of small businesses with the purpose to enhance their success and profitability and to act as a clearing-house for the minority and women-owned business enterprise community.

MATRIX

Selected examples concerning the use of the Internet by some cultural minorities (the descriptions are in Annex 1)

Slovene	Slovinci koroskem				
Germans	Alemana Belgikan				
Faeroics	FarNet		Foroyingsoga, Vit i Nordur		
Sami	SamiWeb, Virtual Finland	Sami Parliament	SamiRadio	Senter for Samiske Studier	SamiNet
Bretons	Bretagne, Antourtan		Breton Folk Dancing and Music, Antourtan	Breton Language Page	
Corsean				Accademia du Corsica	
Sorbians	Domowina			Obersorbisch für Anfänger, Alternative Lower Sorbian Dictionary	
Albanians				Albanian Literature and Language	
Friulans	Friul in Ret		Friul in Ret		
Sardinians	Limba e cultura de sa Sardinia				
Frisians				FLMD	
Aragonese	Ligallo de Fablans				Ligallo de Fablans
Asturians	Asturia		Asturnews		
Catalans	VilaWeb		Televisió de Catalunia online, Catalunia Radio	Vilaweb	
Euskadi	Pais Vasco.com	EuskadiNet			
Galicians	Galician Resources		Galician Bagpipes	Gelego.org	Galego.org
Cornish	CornishPages, Cornwall online		Cornish Light	Kernewk	
Manx	Isle of Man, Manx Megalinks		Manx Folk Music Archive	Gwarnant	
Welsh	Welsh-L Archive, DataWales			Online Welsh Lessons	Wales Direct
Scottish		Scottish Office			Scot.scot, Soc.culture.scottis

ANNEX II

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES IN EUROPE''

AUSTRIA

In the South of the country there axe small minorities of **Slovenians, Croatians, Hungarians.**

The **Slovenians** in Kärnten (**22.000**) and an other small group of them in Steiermark have developed cultural associations and representing organisms (Narodni svet Koroskih Slovencev), but have never had significant political claims. Well protected by the Austrian federal laws, their number decreased because of their spontaneous tendency to assimilate to the German-speaking majority.

The Treaty of Saint German (1921) assigned to Austria the former Hungarian province of Burgerland, since the majority of its population was composed by German speakers. Nevertheless there was a minority of **Hungarians** (6.000 according to recent estimations). In the Burgerland there is also a minority of **Croatians** (25.000), descendants of XVI centuty immigrants, to whom the Austrian government has granted significant forms of safeguard.

BELGIUM

Two **German** minorities in Belgium (**67.000** speakers in the Provinces of Luxembourg and of Liège) have completely drfferent political histories: those ~~from~~ the Arlon district (Luxembourg) have been part of Belgium since its origins (1830-31) and have been assimilated, while those from Liège became Belgians after the Treaty of Versailles (1919) and suffered from discriminations and restrictions in the use of their language. This explains their attachment to the Gelman language. Since **1967**, significant forms of linguistic autonomy have been granted to them (Gelman has been considered has an official language). In **1973** the Cultural Council for the Eastern Cantons has been created

²⁴ *The figures on cultural minorities vary largely according to the criteria adopted: genetic origins, mother tongue, personal decision, etc. In this section there are mainly census data or they come from bibliographical sources, and particularly from "Frammentid'Europa", F. Toso*

to preserve Gelman. Both the Flamish and the Wallons can be considered as the two majority groups.

DENMARK

There are two important **cultural** minorities in Denmark: the Germans and the Faeroics. The **Germans** (20.000), living in the region of Slesvig, are settled within the Danish borders as a consequence of their definition after the wass of the Schleswig-Holstein. In **1945**, they created the Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger, to protect their rights and German schools have been created. In **1955**, the German/Danish Agreements on the protection of their respective minorities increased the number of the safeguards initiatives. More recently, they obtained to have representatives in the regional Council and in the local Councils of the area.

The **Faeroics** live in the Faer Oer Islands (**part** of the Danish territory since 1380). After the reformation (**1540**) Danish became the official language, but the spoken Faroese survived in ballads and stories. After a long period of submission to the Danish administration, the Faeroics obtained to restore their Parliament in **1852**. Since **1948** they enjoy a large autonomy and wide forms of self-government. The language (the Foroyiskt) developed from Vikings dialects, is similar to the Islandic and is recognized as the first language of the region.

FINLAND

There are two **cultural** minorities: the Samits (6.500) and the Swedish (6% of the population, living mainly on the Western costs and on the Aland Islands). The **Swedish** immigration is very old and originated with the Finnish annexation to Sweden (**1156**). It **took** place in uninhabited territories. When the Finnish independence from Sweden took place (**1919**), the Swedish has been considered as equal to Finnish by the Constitution. There is a Consulting Assembly of the Swedish in Finland dealing with their problems. The Swedish Liberal **Party** has several representatives within the national Parliament. Nevertheless, the use of the Swedish language tends to disappear, except in the Aland Islands where **the** safeguard of the spoken Swedish is so strong that a maximum of Finnish inhabitants in the Islands has been fixed.

The **Samits** use a not Indo-European Ugro-Finnish language. They always tried to resist to the assimilation attempts of the majority administrations of the countries where they live.

A very small minority in Finland is made of **Tatars** from Lituania (1.000), immigrated during the Russian administration.

FRANCE

The French government is often accused, also in the literature on the issue, of being not particularly sensible to the promotion of minority languages and cultures. The French approach to the citizenship is based on the concept of "equality". According to French authors²⁵, the value of national unity is central and the minority's cultures have been consequently marginalized. The principle of equality warrants equal rights to the individual citizens but deny specific minority rights. The minority problems have been taken into consideration relatively recently (Deixonne Law - 1951 - on minority languages teaching) and only in the '80s a limited decentralization has been initiated (creation of the "Conseil National des Langues et Culture Régionales" in 1986 and laws on language teaching of 1984-85). The regional autonomy still remains a disputed subject in France (see the Corsean question). It has to be noted that France had a saving clause in the United Nations pact on political and civil rights, since its art.27 warrants the identity of minorities. France did not sign more recent international agreements on the issue (for example, the Council of Europe Charter for Regional and Minority languages).

The **Bretons** speak a language (Brezhoneg) that started its decadence during the last century. Their separatist movements do not enjoy a wide popular consensus.

The **Flamish** (100.000) live in the Westhoek (Dunkerque, Hazenbrouck and close to the Belgian border). No specific measures have been taken to protect their language (the Westvlaamsch).

The **German** speakers are located in Alsace and in Lorraine. In Alsace initiatives have been taken to valorize the local dialect.

The claims for the recognition of the cultural specificity of the **Basques** (100.000 in the Hautes Pyrénées) receive support within the population of the region.

The **Catalans** (200.000 in the Roussillon) are under the French administration since 1659 (Paix des Pyrénées) when the region was given to France; their use of the Catalan is regressing.

²⁵ this is also the opinion of Guy Scoffoni, "Eguaglianza e antidiscriminazione in Francia" in T. Bonazzi, M. Dunne (ed.) - *Cittadini e diritti nelle società multiculturali*.

The idea of an **Occitan** minority is the result of a theory rather than an historical and cultural reality: there is no common identity among the populations using dialects from the "langue d'oc".

The **Corseans** are the only minority having important independence claims. Their cultural renaissance was due to the increase of the importance of their autonomy movement, particularly from the '60s.

The **Tsiganes** (the 200.000 French Gypsies) suffer from integration problems: the French government does not seem particularly sensible to the difficulties of this minority.

GERMANY

The **high** figures in Germany concern the recent immigrants (6.500.000 people in less than 40 years), while the traditional minorities are small communities. The Federal Government recognizes as national minorities the Danish and the Sorbians with German citizenship. Frisians, Roma and Sinti also benefit of the principles and initiatives in favor of minorities, as established by the Council of Europe Convention. The basis for tackling the minority question is considered art.3, 3rd paragraph of the Federal Constitution prohibiting any preferential and discriminatory treatment, also on the basis of national origins. Measures taken by the State aim at placing the national minorities on an equal footing with the majority population, taking into consideration the specific conditions of each community when promoting an equal treatment. Most the initiatives and laws on minorities are made at the level of the Länder and their Constitutions (in particular those of Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein), while the main problem discussed at Federal level concerns the continuation of the "ius sanguinis" as the only basis for granting German nationality (implying problems concerning the immigrants due to the exclusion of "ius solis").

The **Frisians** had cultural claims from the 1923, but it is only in 1948 that the Federation of Nord-Frisian Association (Forening for Nationale Frase) has been created. From 1949 the Nord Frisisk Institute has also been established to codify and revitalize the use of the Frisian language.

As a consequence of the decision to attribute to Germany the former Danish land of Schleswig and as a result of the referendum of 1920, a **Danish** (30.000) minority is established in Germany. They created in 1920 the Sydsleviske Forening and, after the Second World War, they asked the annexation to Denmark, but a bilateral Treaty (1955), guaranteeing the protection of the respective minorities to a large extent solved the problem.

The **Polish** (now less than 5.000, due to the mass extermination of them during the Nazism period) arrived in Westfaha and in the Ruhr area around 1850, when the German government, in search of working force, encouraged their immigration. The cultural associations of the Polish in Westfaha, banished by Hitler and then readmitted, are trying to revitalize the language and the traditions of this group, where the catholic religion is an important element of cohesion.

The **Sorbs (60.000)** are a group speaking a Slavic language and professing the Catholic religion. They live in the Lusatia region from the VI century a. C. The Sorbs did not fight for independence and have been successively submitted to the Polish, the Bohemian and the German administrations, until the end of the second World War. The Communist régime recognized the specificity of the Sorbs' language and culture and a political representation within the regional and national bodies was given to them. The **main** problem of this minority concerns its demographic crisis and the fact that the new generation tends to abandon its original culture - which risks disappearing - in favor of the German culture.

GREECE

The biggest minority is the **Turkish** one (1%). The Turkish presence is due to the domination of the Ottoman Empire until the last century. In the **1922**, at the end of the conflict with Turkey, there has been a real exchange of populations (more than 1.2. million Greeks came in their homeland from Turkey, and half a million Turkish came from Greece). Smaller minorities are the **Bulgarians**, the **Armenians**, the **Macedonians**, the **Aromuns**, and the **Albanians**. The latter are divided in several communities. The most ancient, the Arvanites, live in the Attica region where their identity and language is losing ground. Many of them are even strongly nationalistic Greek. The Cham community, near the Albanian border, was massively deported to Albania after Second World War. There is also newer **Albanian** immigrants in Greece.

IRELAND

The Irish **Gaelic** (Gaelige), a Celtic variety that had high-level literary and cultural traditions since the Middle Ages, declined to the rank of a spoken dialect during the English administration. The British colonial policies since the XVII century contributed to the difision of a dialect, the Irish English, a variety of English, which progressively substituted the Gaelic. The revival of the ancient traditions and roots was promoted by the nationalistic movement during last centwy, and included the revival of the language

that gave birth to a wave of Gaelic literature. When the independence took place, the Irish Constitution established that the Gaelic was to be considered as the national language in all the country (despite the fact that it was only spoken in the Western part of Ireland: Donegal, Kerry and Galway), while English was the official language. Special safeguard initiatives have been undertaken for the inhabitants of the regions where Gaelic was spoken (Gaeltacht) by a significant part of the population (25% or more), while the teaching and the public use of the Gaelic was extended to all the country. The governmental efforts to promote this language have been successful and the number of speakers is sensibly increased. Nevertheless, it remains a phenomenon due to a linguistic policy and to the individual will and it can not resist the prevailing of English.

ZTALY

The **French-Provincial** minority in the NorthWest (Piemonte and Valle d'Aosta, 200.000 people) and smaller communities in the South (Puglia, Calabria) immigrated in Italy during the XIV and XV century. This minority has been in Northern Italy from time immemorial, and it has been reinforced both in number and in the sense of identity, during the persecutions of the Albigensians in the Middle Age in France. They have an enormous fragmentation of dialects. The Italian government recognizes a strong administrative and linguistic autonomy only to the communities located in Val d'Aosta.

The **Walsers** (approximately 2000 people) live mainly in Val d'Aosta and speak a variety of German dialects.

There are **German speaking minorities** and cultural minorities speaking languages coming from German dialects in almost all the northern regions (Alto Adige, Friuli, Valle d'Aosta, Trentino, Piemonte, Veneto). In Alto Adige they are 280.000 people and their immigration in this region is dated IX century. The autonomy has been recognized in **1946** with the Paris Agreements where it has been established that a region with special statute, also including Trentino, would be created from **1948**. The revision of those agreements by the Italian, the Austrian governments and the local party (Sudtiroler Volkspartei) took place in **1964**: a package of safeguard measures in favor of the German minority was decided, giving a parity status to Italian and German languages and fixing ethnic quotas for the public administration personnel.

The **Ladins** in the Dolomites region are approximately 30.000 people and do not benefit from particular forms of safeguard, at the opposite of the Ladins in Trentino-Alto Adige autonomous region.

The **Friulans** (more than 700.000 people speaking Friulans dialects) did not give rise

to a cultural movement against centralism until very recently. In 1964, the creation of the autonomous region of Friuli Venezia Giulia unified in the same region two populations without common roots: the Friulans and the Slovenians of the Venezia Giulia. The "Movimento Friuli" (1966) claims for a real autonomy as well as for more cultural and linguistic safeguard measures and recently it has joined its activities and objectives with those of the party "Lega lombarda" (asking for an autonomy/secession of the reach regions of Northern Italy, without an ethnic, cultural or linguistic basis).

The **Slovenians** (60/80.000 in Friuli Venezia Giulia) have been in the hinterland of the region since the Middle Ages. A new immigration wave took place during the Austrian administration in the last century because of the region industrial growth. The numerous Slovenian associations contributed to the diffusion of a normalized linguistic model and to the creation of periodicals in Slovenian. The Slovenians are politically represented at local level by the Slovenska Skupnost.

The **Albanians** (a minority continuing to increase since to the ancient migration waves it has to be added the new massive migrations of this decade) are calculated in the number of 100.000 in Southern Italy and speak the Arberesh. Their settlement in Italy started in the XV century, when they created communities endowed with forms of self-government. The migration continued during the Turkish invasion of Albania (1435) and it is still going on. While they never had political claims, they actively organized the recovery of their cultural identity.

The **Greeks** (40.000 in Southern Italy) speak dialects autonomously developed and different from modern Greek. They are disseminated in a vast area and do not have political claims.

The **Sardinians** (the 1.700.000 inhabitants of Sardinia speaking a neo-latin dialect) did not express political claims until the creation of the PSdAz (Partito sardo d'Azione) in 1921. The statute of the 1948 gave autonomy to the region; the PSdAz, which has been transformed considered this inadequate, in an ethnic party. Due to the pressure of the cultural associations and of the Sardinian press, the language has been recognized as judicially equal to Italian (1981) and the region has been declared bilingual. A **Catalan** minority is also in Sardinia (province of Alghero).

The **Croatians** (about 3.000 people) are in Molise since the XV-XVI century and speak an archaic dialect of a Stokavian type. There are approximately 50/60.000 **Gypsies** in Italy.

LUXEMBURG

When the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg achieved the independence (1839), two languages have been recognized as official: French and German. A movement for the valorization of the **Letzeburgesch** started in the second half of the last century and the language have progressively been introduced in the education system. Since **1984** it is the official language of Luxembourg. Despite the attempts to normalize it (there is a variety of standards), the Luxembwgesse continues to be **mainly** a spoken language, while the use of French and German is normal in written or formal communications.

THE NETHERLANDS

The only ethnic minority is the **Frisians** (400.000). They live in the Province of Friesland and, despite the fact that they are under the Dutch administration since **1648**, they continue to consider themselves as a separated community in The Netherlands. After a period of decay, the revival of the Frisian identity took place last century, as it is the case of many other European minorities. The Society for the Frisian Language and Literature was created (**1844**) with the aim of awakening public authorities and public opinion on its safeguard. At the beginning of this century, a nationalistic movement claiming for independence organized some activities. After the Second World War, the Dutch government gave wide possibilities to the Frisians to utilize their language (a variety of the German with English roots) in the education, in the judicial system and in any official document. The circumstances when the Frisian can be used are defined in the Pact for the Frisian Language and Culture (1989), signed by the Dutch government and the local authorities. The problems concerning the Frisians in The Netherlands are similar to those of other **cultural** minorities well preserved in the European Nordic countries: despite their organization, their culture risks to disappear because of the disaffection of the young generations.

PORTUGAL

There is no **cultural-linguistic** minority or political movement claiming a cultural identity on a regional basis. There are some villages (Rionodor, Guadramil and Terra de la Miranda) where Spanish dialects are spoken but there has never been a tendency to valorize them.

SWEDEN

There are two cultural minorities: the Samis (15 to 25.000) living in the northern part of the country, and the Finnish (35.000). **The Finnish** minority is located in the Northern region of Norrbotten and in particular in Kiruna. Their language is different from the

official Finnish and its speakers do not seem interested in preserving it.

The first initiatives in favor of the **Samits** have been taken at the end of last century to protect their economies; some associations have been created to study their culture; in order to difise literacy, itinerant schools have been created to follow them in their nomadic displacements. The development of their identity has been promoted with the creation of the Sallskapet Same-Atnam (Lapps Cultural Society) in 1945; among others, it provided to the orthographic normalization of the seven linguistic groups of the Lapps language. The Ruota Samiid Rii'kasaer'vi (the Union of the Swedish Lapps, created in 1958) deals with their economic and **cultural** problems. The Lapps have now in Sweden a Parliament with a consultative power since 1993. In 1973 has been created a governmental Commission for the study of the minority problems.

SPAIN

After the end of the Franco régime (1975) that has been strongly repressive of the minorities, the centrifugal forces started again their separatist claims. The Suárez government (1978-81) with important constitutional and administrative reforms, recognizing different degrees of autonomy for the requesting regions successfully tackled the problem. The Constitution of 1978 aims at protecting both the individuals and the populations of **Spain** in their human lights, cultures, languages, traditions and institutions. It not only recognizes the rights of the individuals and of the groups they are part of, but also establishes the principle of the light to the expression of the differences they carry out. The art.2 states that nationalities and regions constitute Spain. Its unity is indissoluble, but the nations and the regions have a right to the self-govenunent guaranteed by the Constitution, i.e. the right to create "Comunidades Autònomas". The decentralization process ended in **1983** Despite the fact the **Euskadi** problem has not been definitively solved, the measures taken in Spain have been successful in solving the problems of the other regions and in revitalizing the minority languages.

The **Gallicians** obtained a large administrative autonomy for their region (Galicia) in 1981 and the acknowledgement of the "galego" (a language also spoken in the Asturias and in the Province of Zamora) as a national language of Spain (1983). The cultural revival of this region follows the steps of other Spanish regions' push towards autonomy: 1) the "provincialism" phase (i.e. the request for more guarantees for the safeguard of the local identity at the end of last centmy); 2) the "regionalist" phase (where the request was for a moderate administrative autonomy) that took place in Galicia from 1870 until 1916; 3) the "nationalistic" phase (where the demand was for a large autonomy and the recognition of a Galician nation) from 1920. **As** it is the case for all Spain, the period of Franco dictatorship coincided with a politics of centralization and repression of minority

cultures.

The **Basques** use a language (Euskara) different from any other and comparable only to some Trans-Caucasian and Amerindian dialects (from a **structural**, not genetic, point of view). 600.000 people speak Euskara and it has been recognized as a national language in **1981**. The nationalistic claims started **during** the last century. The Franco régime repressed the Basque culture and identity. The autonomy has been voted by the referendum that took place in **1979**.

The **Catalans** are the **6** millions inhabitants of Catalonia, but their language is also spoken in Valencia, in the Balears Islands, **in** the "Franja de Ponent" (administratively part of Aragona), in Roussillon (France), Alghero (Sardinia, Italy), Andorra, by a total of **8** millions people. **During** the last century, the wealthy conditions of the Catalonia made possible a cultural renaissance and the development of publishing in Catalan. The Franco repression was tough. The statute of **1979** (also recognizing the Balears and Valencia autonomy) satisfied the requests of the Catalans. Since **1983**, the Catalan minority is not only protected, but also endowed of means giving it an unusual liveliness within the minority cultures. The problems concern the Spanish-speaking immigrants in Catalonia, suffering some forms of discrimination.

The **Aranesis** (living in the **Aran** Valley, on the Pyrenean chain) are administrated by the Generalidad Catalana, but speak a Gascon dialect. Since 1990 regional and national laws allow the official use of "Aranès" (with the Spanish and the Catalan) and teaching in local schools.

After the Constitution of 1978 gave wide room to the decentralization and administrative autonomy, the **Aragona** and the **Asturias** regionalisms (based on dialectal specificity) have been highlighted and asked for recognition.

The **Gitanos** (450.000 Spanish Gypsies) live at the margins of the society: they dropped their traditional nomadic habits and live in the "bidonvilles" of the towns in Andalusia. Their language, the "kalo" has a Spanish grammar basis and lexical elements of Gypsy origins.

UNITED KINGDOM

James I gathered England, Scotland and Ireland under **his** kingdom **in 1603**. The Union Act (1707) definitively conferred Scotland and England to the United Kingdom. For the **Scottish** nationalist movement the **cultural** and linguistic claims have always had a minor importance (the priorities are political and economical). The most diffused language is the

Scottish (or Lallans), a dialectal variety of English that had official uses and expressed a rich literature since the XIV century. The Gaelic (gàidhlig) was the official language of the ancient Scottish kingdoms, but after the U.K. unification it decayed (it was used only in the Northern Highlands and in the Hebrides Islands) and continues to do so (at present it is estimated it counts only 80.000 speakers while they were 230.000 at the beginning of this century).

The **Welsh** has a long history of opposition to the assimilation attempts culminated with the Union Act where the will of eradicating the Welsh language (used by 500-600.000 people in rural areas) was explicitly declared. A renaissance of the interest for the Welsh culture and language was started in the XVIII century by erudite societies of Welsh immigrants in London. During the '60s and '70s, the Society for the Welsh language (created in 1962) developed sensational initiatives to awaken public opinion and authorities. Due to the popularity of the Welsh autonomist movement, in 1967 the Welsh Language Act admitted the official use of the Welsh and since 1982 regular programs in Welsh are broadcasted.

The **Cornish** used to speak a Celtic language (similar to Welsh and Breton) that started to decay in the late Middle Ages and continued with the Anglican Reform. The Cornish revival started at the beginning of this century and gave origins to the Society "Cowedas Kelto-Kernuak" (1901), emulated by other cultural groups. During the '60s and '70s, the Cornish regionalism organized radical movements that had little success. The consensus to the Cornish autonomy has economic rather than cultural and linguistic grounds, as it is the case in other U.K. regions.

The **Manx** live in the Island of Man and speak a Celtic dialect, but the interest for the valorization of it is very limited due to the fact that only 35% of the population have local origins. The **Frenkish-Normands** in the Channel Islands speak French dialects similar to those used by the English court during the Normand period.

THE GYPSIES

This set of nomadic **cultural** groups came to Europe from NorthWestern around the V century. During their roaming, they modified their habits, traditions and language as a consequence of the contacts with the local populations of the countries they moved to. Their language added to the Indian basis, Persian, Armenian, Slavic, German and neo-Latin elements. The Gypsies are divided in two **main** ethnic **groups**: the Roms and the Manouches or Sinto. In the past, the relationships between the Gypsies and the other European population have been difficult, particularly after the industrialization process, when their traditional economic activities (coppersmiths, blacksmiths, horses breeders,

acrobats, etc.) declined, forcing them to an even more marginal living.

The difficult relations of the Gypsies with the European permanent populations culminated with the Nazism, when Hitler decided to adopt with them the same policies he adopted against the Jewish: since 1938 they have been systematically exterminated in the concentration camps (it has been calculated that 800.000 of them died).

Apart from Eastern and Central Europe, the biggest Gypsy communities are in Spain, France, Italy. Minor communities are in the U.K. (70.000), Germany (50.000), Belgium (5 to 10.000) and in other countries.

Also because of nomadism, the Gypsy culture **has** always been weak: the language has not been written until recently and governments have never recognized their tribal organization. To improve their situation the Gypsies created during the last decades some confederations with the aim of coordinating at the European and World level their relations with the permanent populations. They gather periodically to elect their bodies and to develop common strategies for the safeguard of their culture and traditional living, the children education, the adult professional training, the **free** transit rights of nomads. The World Gypsy Community (created in 1960) and the International Committee of Roms (1971) took several initiatives and established relations with the United Nations, UNESCO, and Council of Europe.

THE SITUATION IN THE FORTHCOMING EU MEMBER STATES

HUNGARY

After the First World War, the Hungarian policy on cultural minorities has been heavily influenced by the frustration due to the territory shrinking. Nonetheless, because of the Trianon Treaty (1920), the Hungarian government had to commit itself to the safeguard of the rights of the German, Slovenian, Serb, Croatian minorities, while no measure for the other minorities was taken. The Communist regime declared it was respectful of the minority rights, also protected by the Constitution: it allowed the minorities to organize their cultural life and to open public schools. In fact, a cultural repression against the German minority took place and a huge number of them (260.000) had to leave the country at the end of the last war, while the Slav minorities were disliked and accused to be in favor of Tito. Moreover, the official figures concerning the minorities during the Communist period were extremely low compared to the actual ones. The **Germans** (200/250.000) are the **1.6%** of the population and arrived in Hungary during the XVIII century. They form compact communities around Budapest, Sopron, the Balaton lake and at the South of Koros.

The **Slovaks** (nearly 110.000) are the 1.1% of the population and live North of Budapest and in the northEastern regions. The **Croatians** (almost 14.000) live around Sopron and at the borders with Croatia. The **Rumenians (25.000)** live in the regions of Békés and Csongràd.

Minor groups are the **Serbians** (5.000), **Slovenians** (5.000), while the **Polish** (10.000), **Greeks** (6.000), **Armenians** (3.000), **Bulgarians** (2.500) are recent immigrants. The **Jewish** are now roughly 43.000. The biggest minority is the **Gypsies** (400-600.000): their cultural identity is not officially recognized. Part of them is linguistically assimilated and some decided to drop nomadism.

The new government recently initiated a policy sensible to the minority problems, also considering they represent the 10% of the population: several are the legislative initiatives to safeguard the minority languages and since 1990 there is a governmental office for the minorities. Bilateral agreements have been signed with the neighboring countries. In parallel, the **dynamism** of the minorities increased; in particular, the Germans (benefiting fi-om the financial support of Germany) obtained to have some representatives at the Parliament and within the local administrations.

CZECK REPUBLIC

The census of 1991 indicated that in the present area of the Czech Republic, the **81.2%** of the population was Bohemian, the 13.2% were Moravians, the 3.1% were **Slovaks**, immigrated during the **unitary** period. There are approximately **6.000 Jewish** and 100.000 **Gypsies** (they have been submitted to a program forcing them to become sedentary in 1965), 53.000 **Germans** (those remaining after the mass ejection **in** 1945-47), 62.000 **Polish**. A program of transfrontier cooperation promoted **in** 1992 by the Gelman Lander for the creation of seven economic "Euroregions" were investments should be located, raised doubts within the Czech government, **afraid** of a Gelman influence within its territory.

POLAND

The official policy during the Communist period was respectful of the minority rights, and initiatives for their safeguard were taken (in education and in the organization of the cultural life), but the fact that the official figures estimated at 0.2% of the population the percentage of the minority groups shows the real governmental attitude at that time. In Poland *too*, the **German** minority has been massively expelled after the last war: at present there is 300.000 people disseminated in all the **country** and in particular in the Western regions. After the 1990 agreements finally defining the Oder-Neisse barde, the German language has been recognized as a minority one and it is taught in the bilingual

regions. Since the 1993 elections, the Germans have four representatives within the Polish Parliament. The Germans in the Silesia region claim for administrative autonomy since 1992, supported by a movement called "Ruch Autonomii Slaska". The Polish authorities also are **mistrustful** of the German projects for the "Euroregions", since they are afraid of a possible German political interference.

The **Ukrainians** (300.000) are settled in the East and South East of the country: since 1956 they have schools, cultural associations and they publish periodicals in their language. The **Belorussians** (165.000) owe the safeguard of their language not only to their schools and cultural institutions but also to the practice of the orthodox religion. Poland with Belorussia **has** signed bilateral agreements for the protection of the respective minority groups.

Other minorities are the **Slovaks** (25.000), the **Russians** (4.000) immigrated in the XVII century in the North East of the country, the **Lithuanians** (30.000), the **Tatars** (3.000), the **Gypsies** (15.000), the **Armenians** (15.000), the **Jewish** (they were 2.700.000 before the last war and they are now 1.500).

ESTONIA

The Estonian (**an**Ugro-Finnish language) is now the official language of the country. In the past, the government has favored the Russian immigration in the attempt to reinforce the presence of the Russian culture in the territory. **Only** 61.5% of the population is Estonian, while 30.3% **is Russian** (they live mainly in the industrial regions of Narva and Sillimae, where they constitute the 85% of the population), 3.1% is **Ukrainian**, 1.8% is **Belorussian**. The historical minorities are now very reduced in their number: there are very small communities of **Jewish**, **Tatars from** Lithuania, **Germans**, but the 1.8% of the population speaks Ugro-Finnish dialects different from Estonian.

The relationships between the Estonians and the Russian minority have been very difficult during the period immediately after the independence (1989), because of the local authorities attempts to emarginate those groups considered favorable to the Soviet regime. At the elections of July 1992, only the Russians having the Estonian citizenship since or before 1940 had the right to vote; nevertheless at the 1995 elections the party of the Russian minority had six representatives at the Parliament.

SLOVENIA

The country has a compact ethnic character. The biggest minority is the **Croatians** (2.9%) living at the border with their homeland and on the coast. In the NorthEast there are some groups of **Slovaks**. The 2.2% **Serbian**s are mainly recent immigrants (only a few of them arrived in the area of the Gorjanci mountains in the XV century). Recent immigrants are also the **Muslims** from **Bosnia** (0.7%). The **Hungarians** (0.5%) are ancient immigrants and live in the area of Maribor and Pluj: they are protected by the Slovenians laws and have a representative in the Parliament. Another old small community are the **Italians** (0.2%), **also** protected by the cull-ent legislation,

CYPRUS

The Cyprus question is outside the scope of this study. The country is divided between two communities: the Turkish (in the northern secessionist republic) and the Greeks. The tensions between those communities sometimes explode (as it was the case in 1996) on the "green line" **dividing** the island in two **parts** and protected by the international forces.

ANNEX III

The minority cultures within the international organizations context

In the present international relations' framework, the "minority question" is generally considered as the main source of conflicts and a threat to security. Governments and other public authorities have the double task to protect:

- (1) the collective identity of the minority groups
- (2) the rights of the individuals belonging to a minority.

Within the international context, since the norms concerning the minority question developed in the framework of the human rights protection, the attention is often concentrated more on the individuals rather than on the collective minority identity.

From the juridical point of view, the States have to consider the problem both in terms of

- (i) nationality, i.e. they have to recognize the right for the individuals to belong to a minority independently and in addition to their relations with the State they live in,
- (ii) citizenship, i.e. they have to grant an equal treatment to the minority members in their relations with the State they live in.

The need for international laws for the safeguard of the minority rights is felt at bilateral as well as at the multilateral level. **Bilateral agreements** in Europe have been signed in several cases by two States when the same minority group were present within their territory or when some citizens of one State were a minority community in the other country. The instrument of Joint Declarations is the most typical and it is often used for minorities living in a Western and in an Eastern European country (e.g. those between Italy and Slovenia, Germany and Poland, Germany and Czech Republic etc.). Those declarations often refer to the internal laws of the contracting countries and this is the cause of an inhomogeneous pursuance and, therefore, treatment of the minority groups.

It is at the multilateral level that the majority of the international law on this question developed. Since the conflicts involving minority groups concern not only the internal political stability and territorial integrity of some States, but also the relationships among some States, there is a current trend to increasingly recognize a competence of international bodies on the issue. The approaches, and the definition of what a minority is, vary from organization to organization. The **United Nations** adopted in 1992²⁶ the Declaration on the rights of the people belonging to national, ethnic, religious, linguistic,

²⁶ Resolution 47/135 of the General Assembly

minorities²⁷, where the attention is focused on the individuals belonging to a minority rather than on the minorities themselves. The Declaration states the rights to enjoy the culture, follow the religion, use the language, to participate in cultural life and in the decision making on issues relating to the minorities or the areas where they live. The minority groups are therefore considered as a community of individuals, each of them having rights and duties, including those related to the fact of being part of a minority. The concept of "nationality" is not taken in further consideration, while attention is put on the concept of "belonging" to a national minority. The Declaration does not connect the rights of the people belonging to a minority and the fact they are part of a State and it is in this perspective that the international law on minority rights developed mainly in the context of human rights' international law". In the same direction goes the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action (June 1993) of the UN.

The **UNESCO** took several initiatives in this field and finances some projects and programs. The Recommendation on participation by the people at large in cultural life of 1976 recommends to the Member States to protect the effective access to the culture by all members of the society and to guarantee the recognition of the equality of cultures, including those of national and foreign minorities, as forming part of the heritage of all mankind. National and foreign minorities should have opportunities for gaining access to and participate in the cultural life of the countries they live in, while safeguarding all forms of cultural expression. The mass media ought not to act as instruments of cultural domination but serve mutual understanding and peace. Member States should encourage the media to increase the variety and choice of their programs in order to offer the widest range of choices. The Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies of 1982 states that cultural diversity and cultural identity are inseparable. Cultural policies protecting, stimulating and enriching people identity and cultural heritage, establishing absolute respect for and appreciation of cultural minorities, are needed.

In Europe, the issue of cultural minority protection has **known** a real flourishing after the fall of the Berlin Wall, due to the political problems this question raises within Central and Eastern Europe. The most important documents are dated at the beginning of this decade.

The **Charter of Paris for a New Europe**, of the **CSCE** head of State and government meeting in November 1990, affirms that ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of national minorities shall be protected and that the persons belonging to national minorities have the right freely to express, preserve and develop that identity without any discrimination and in full equality before the law. The signing parties engaged to undertake further to improve the situation of the minorities, with the determination to foster their contribution to the life of our societies. The Charter also recognizes the rights of migrants legally residing in host countries.

On the basis of the consideration that the conflicts among ethnic minorities are one of the main challenges to security in the present world set up, in 1992 the **CSCE** (now **OSCE**) decided to establish the post of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (based in Den Haag) with the task to provide

²⁷ before it, the United Nation's "Sub-Commission on prevention of discriminations and protection of minorities" produced a report where the minorities were defined as a group counting a number of members inferior to the rest of the population of a country, having ethnic, religious or linguistic specificities and manifesting, even implicitly, a feeling of solidarity and the aim of preserving their culture, traditions, religion, language. A similar definition is given in the second Report of the sub-commission of 1993, where a minority is also defined as a group of residents in a State constituting less of one half of the country population.

²⁸ it has to be added that the UNO Commission on Human Rights created a Working Group on Minorities (WGOM)

early warning and early action in regards to tensions involving national minorities that have not yet developed beyond an early warning stage, but have the potential to develop into a conflict within the OSCE area. First, the High Commissioner has to try to contain and de-escalate tensions. Second, he is responsible for alerting the OSCE whenever such tensions threaten to develop to a level at which he cannot contain them with the means at **his** disposal. Even though his mandate places the High Commissioner's work in the category of short-term conflict prevention, in order to be effective he has **also** to overlook the long-term aspects of the situations confronting him. Immediate de-escalation of a situation can be **only** a first step in the process of reconciling the interests of the parties concerned. The goal is to start, maintain and enhance a process of exchanges of views and co-operation between the parties, leading to concrete steps calculated to de-escalate tensions and, when possible, resolves underlying issues. The **HCNM** activities are (a) independent, (b) impartial, (c) confidential (meaning that he acts through silent diplomacy).

The mandate of the HCNM does not contain a definition of the term "minority", but the High Commissioner (Mr. ~~Max~~ van der Stoep) defined it: "a minority is a group with linguistic, ethnic or cultural characteristics, which distinguish it from the majority. A minority is a group which usually not only seeks to maintain its identity, but also tries to give stronger expression to that identity"²⁹.

The Member States of the **Central European Initiative** signed in **1994** the CEI Instrument for the protection of Minority Rights, "being conscious of the need to avoid any encouragement of separatist tendencies of national minorities", confirms that issues concerning the rights of persons belonging to national minorities are matters of legitimate international concern and consequently do not constitute exclusively an internal affair of the respective State. A definition of the term "national minority" is given: it **shall** mean a group that is smaller in number than the rest of the population of a State, whose members being **national** of the State, have ethnical, religious or linguistic features different from those of the rest of the population, and are guided by the will to safeguard their culture, traditions, religion or language. The States recognize the existence of national minorities, considering them as an integral part of the societies they live in and guarantee the appropriate conditions for the promotion of their identity. To belong to a national minority is a matter of individual choice and no disadvantage shall arise from the exercise or non-exercise of that choice. The Initiative aim at guaranteeing the traditional rights to use the language, to practice the religion, to open schools, to learn the language and to avail of the media, to participate without discrimination to the political life and to establish political parties. Contacts with citizens of another State with whom a minority shares ethnic, religious or linguistic features shall not be impeded. A specific article (art.7) is dedicated to reaffirm all those principles and rights specifically for the Roma. States shall refrain from pursuing or encouraging policies aimed at the assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons against any action aimed at such assimilation. Persons belonging to a national minority shall respect the rights of others, including those of persons belonging to the majority.

The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, art. **14**, only establishes the principle of non-discrimination: it proscribes any discrimination based on belonging to a national or linguistic minority. In order to complement this right for individuals not to be discriminated with a positive initiative for the protection of minority languages, the **Council of Europe** established in 1992 (date of opening to signatures) the "European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages". The aim of the Charter is to protect and promote the minority languages as a threatened aspect of the European cultural heritage. The minority languages relevant for the Charter are considered those being: (a) traditionally

²⁹ from the speech the HCNM gave at the opening of the OSCE Minorities Seminar in Warsaw in 1994

spoken (with the exclusion of the languages of recent immigrants), (b) distinct from the other languages spoken in the **same** country, (c) geographically rooted in a specific area. **A** special feature of the Charter consists in offering a list of measures to be implemented "à la carte": each State can decide either to apply or not all the measures listed, but it has to choose within this list at least 35 measures to be implemented. The idea is that the Charter has to be a flexible instrument suitable for diversified situations³⁰. **Art. 11** of the **Part III** consists of measures to be implemented in the field of media, but only the traditional media (newspapers, Radio and TV) are considered.

The "Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities" (1995) of the **Council of Europe** is also based on the consideration that "the upheavals of European history have shown that the protection of national minorities is essential to stability, democratic security and peace". The Convention - having the juridical status of a Treaty - does not define what a minority is. It takes into account both the individuals belonging to a minority and the groups. The Convention states that a "pluralistic and genuine democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity". **A** climate of tolerance and dialogue is necessary to enable cultural diversity to be a factor of enrichment for each State, rather than a source of divisions. The Convention places the protection of minority rights in the framework of human rights and, therefore, within the scope of international co-operation. The signing States undertake not to interfere with the right of the persons belonging to a minority to establish contacts across frontiers, in particular with persons sharing their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity. They also refrain from measures altering the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities. The most relevant points of the Convention are:

- any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority is prohibited
- the promotion of equality between persons belonging to a minority and to the majority
- the encouragement of a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue
- the engagement of the signing States to refrain from policies aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will, without prejudice to measures taken in pursuance of the integration policies
- the freedom of peaceful assembly, association, expression, thought, conscience, religion
- the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas in a minority language, without interference of public authorities.

As far as the media are concerned, "the Parties shall not hinder the creation and the use" of printed media, radio and television broadcasting by the minorities and shall adopt measures in order to facilitate access to the media by the minorities and promote tolerance and cultural pluralism.

The Appendix II to the Vienna Declaration of the Head of States and governments members of the Council of Europe (October 1993) concerns national minorities. It stresses the importance of a climate of tolerance and dialogue for the participation of all in political life and the importance of bilateral agreements for European stability and for minorities' protection.

The **European Union** considers its cultural diversity as a major element of its richness. Not **only** the art. 128 of the Treaties states: "The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the

³⁰ *"si l'on traitait des situations objectivement différentes comme des situations identiques, cela équivaudrait tout autant à une forme de discrimination que si l'on devait traiter des situations identiques d'une manière différentes", said an official of the Council of Europe*

Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore", but this idea has been also applied to the Information Society with the Communication "The Information Society: from Corfu to Dublin" (1996), where protecting the cultural diversity is considered among the European priorities and where it is observed that the personalization **of** the new services favor the pluralism and the cultural diversity.

The European Council has highlighted the importance of the cultural and linguistic aspects of the Information Society during its Corfu session (24-25 June 1994) and recently reaffirmed the importance for the European Union **of** its linguistic diversity (Cannes, **26-27** June 1995); the G7 Ministerial Conference (Brussels, **25-26** February 1995) has drawn attention to the importance of the cultural and linguistic diversity within the global Information Society.

Among other initiatives (for example those in the field of RTD, see later in this study), the EU has adopted a program to promote the linguistic diversity of the Community within the Information Society³¹. This program **aims** at augmenting the knowledge on multilingual services; creating favorable conditions to the development of industries in the linguistic sector; reducing the costs for translating the information; contributing to the promotion of the linguistic diversity.

The Commission was supposed to publish in 1999 a Green Paper on the Cultural Aspects of the New Audiovisual and Information Services, but this initiative has been postponed "sine die" due to political reasons.

Within the EU, the institution that mostly expressed itself on the minority issues and on cultural diversity is certainly the European Parliament (see list of documents in the bibliography in annex to this study).

³¹ Council Decision 96/664/EC of 27 November 1996

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Executive Summary

Cultural identity has never been a fixed data, but a continuous process where the cultures have been changed due to the influence of several factors, including technological changes. Within the information society, the European cultural diversity is going to face severe upheavals.

In fact, the change implied by the digital revolution is enormous: we are assisting to the shift from societies, economies and cultures based on physical consumption to others based on the usage of the information and to the passage from the central role of products to the central role of dematerialized services. The role of communication and information becomes the central one. An enormous abundance of information is offered. The capacity to diffuse the information largely increases: the physical constraints of the materials used for the analogic transmission (hertzian frequencies for TV, copper for telephony, paper for newspapers, etc.) are declining. The sources of information multiply and information can be diffused through different media. The contents can be reorganized **and** personalized in a number of different versions, accordingly to the consumers needs.

The G7 Report on the Information Society (Brussels, 1995) explicitly states that the new technologies threaten the cultural and linguistic diversity. This study shows the issue is controversial: opposite trends are evident and it is up to some political decisions to determine if the all process will favor or damage the cultural diversity.

If on one side the new technologies themselves can be a mean for the diffusion, valorization and safeguard of minority cultures, on the other there is **an** evident risk of a possible standardization of the market offer. The information society can be considered both as a community or a market place. If the latter aspect will prevail and the majority of the services will be provided by large multinationals, interested in reaching scale economies, the risk of cultural standardization is evident.

In particular, the digital revolution will change the present map of the languages and their spread. The impact on linguistic diversity is also controversial. It depends on the interest and on the chances the speakers have to use and, therefore, preserve their languages. On one side some languages are likely to become of minor importance, while we will assist to a dramatic increase in the diffusion of English. On the other hand, since the translation costs will diminish and the technology to simultaneously diffuse contents in several different linguistic versions will be available, the final impact could also be positive.

Three types of minority cultures have been the object of this study:

– the cultures *immigrated* in a territory, i.e. cultures that do not constitute a minority in other places: this is a very important issue in the context of the present evolution of the society towards a multiracial and multicultural one, **as** a result of the massive immigration phenomenon facing Europe (for example, the North Africans in France, the Turkish in Germany, the Indians in the U.K.)

– the cultures of minority **groups**: this may be the result of old immigration waves (for example, the Swedish in Finland), or the consequence of geopolitical decisions (for example, the way the borders between two countries have been defined: see the German minority in Belgium), or the result of the scarce demographic expansion of some groups

– the cultures widespread in a *region* (where they are the majority culture), but forming a minority in the country they are part of (for example, the Corsean in France, the Tyrolese in Italy).

The features of the information society most affecting the cultures are:

- (i) the interactivity: each *user can utilize the new services in a personal and unpredictable way*;
- (ii)** *an unlimited memory is part of the system*, while **in** the old media it was externally located (archives, libraries);
- (iii) the *structure of costs becomes independent* from distance, quantity of information, audience.

In particular, the *interactivity* has relevant implications for the cultures since:

- a) it diminishes the *power of control* of the media owners: the possibility to intervene and reply is independent from the willingness of any controller;
- b) the nature of the information itself is changing: because of the participation of the receiver in shaping it, the *information becomes a dynamic process*; *creativity* becomes more important;
- c) the media themselves - not only the information provided - adapt to the users needs

More specifically, concerning the impact on cultural diversity of the new media, five are the aspects that will reshape the present framework.

(1) It is typical **of** the technologies to tend to the *dematerialization*, in the sense that they normally aim at producing more efficiently **from** fewer resources, time, workers. The new technologies are dematerializing not only the production, but also the economies - which will be based on something as immaterial **as** the information - and the cultures themselves. The latter are becoming immaterial because images, texts, archives, sounds released from their physical supports (paper, plastics etc.) will be exchanged and used.

The extreme reduction of distribution costs this entails and the explosion of the offer of information implies a shift from the problem of scarcity to the problem of abundance and the *management of abundance*. The *selection criteria* are the strategic focus of the stored knowledge, since they allow organizing and *managing* it. The problem of abundance is further increased because of the change in the concept of *usage*, due to the fact the information can be used several times and by several people at the same time. The unlimited information opportunities offered by the new media, their almost unlimited memories have **an** obvious positive impact on cultural diversity, while the possibility to store multimedia information permits the memorization of all the aspects and manifestations of the minority cultures (traditionally only texts have been preserved). The *minority cultures are generally based on scarcity* - of people *i d e n t i g* with them, of material and immaterial resources - while the *new media are based on abundance*. Their use can have a revolutionary impact on minorities, permitting them to overcome the handicaps due to scarcity of immaterial resources (information, communication, social visibility, political influence) they often suffer from.

(2) The societies are now subjected to two opposite push: **(A)** the push to globalism and **(B)** the push to localism. The trend towards forms of local identification, too particularistic to allow social integration, and the trend towards forms of supranationalism, too universalistic too allow a red cultural identification, are emerging. The new media can either foster the divergence or reconcile those trends.

(A) On one side, *the new media are effacing the spatial dimension of the cultures*. The cultures will tend to differ not only on the basis of local and regional rootedness. Since the digitalization permits to reformulate the contents, to adapt, to personalize them, *outside the original context* of their production,

there is a risk of loss of traditions and ways of living if there is no concern in the new societies for the preservation of cultural integrity.

(B) On the other side, although the new media are global in reach, much of the contents are surprisingly narrow and local in focus. It is interesting to observe that it is at local level that the potentialities of the Information Society have until now been experimented. *The Zocal level seems to offer the best opportunities* to harmonize the aim of keeping citizens' identity and participation with the aim of technological and economic efficiency.

Cohesion and safeguard of Zocal cultures, traditionally regarded as diverging objectives, could become reconcilable objectives because of the Information Society. This can take different forms in different contexts, depending on local systems of production, on local institutions and on the demand of the users. It could have different effects on different types of cultural minorities: in particular, it may have a different impact on minorities suffering from disadvantaged economic conditions or from their location. Fostering the conciliation between cohesion and safeguard of local cultures is the aim. To this end, it is necessary to make the push to cohesion possible. At present, it is hampered by the big gap between the richest and the most disadvantaged regions of Europe as far as the infrastructures, costs, reliability and availability of the services are concerned. Only 2% of the structural funds are devoted to the investment in telecom infrastructures. The opportunities to access and use effectively the new media are allocated in an inhomogeneous way within the European regions. Current data and market forecasts show the risk of an increasing gap between the more and the less advanced regions. It is essential to undertake initiatives in order to overcome this gap.

(3) The participating cultural model promoted by the new technologies, where the users have a creative role, implies a *shift from the passivity to the autonomy* of the users. The interactivity is an antidote to the present "mass" media and leads to the personalization and to the specificity of the new services and contents. While the electric media revolution created mass products for mass audiences, the digital revolution is creating communication products tailored by the users. If it is true the emerging big vertically integrated multinational companies tend to diffuse worldwide a homogeneous culture, it is also true that the interactivity and the offer of new services targeted to groups of users will de-standardize the cultures. While the *mass media* system was targeting a mass audience, the *new media* are breaking down the universe of the users.

The Information Society is a challenge for the mass culture and implies an increase of the direct role of the individuals and the groups in the public as well as in the cultural arena. It is typical of the mass media to form a culture outside localism and outside the community places, without the possibility of an immediate confrontation. Within that context, the members of local cultures and minority communities have seen themselves reduced to a multitude of not communicating individuals. The new media may have a positive impact on the minority cultures, if they will be able to effectively reach them and if their potential will be fully available to the disadvantaged communities.

(4) Because of their de-localized character and of the accent they put on information and contents, the new technologies make it easier to organize a group on a specific subject, creating *new social groups on the basis of a shared sectorial interest*. The new technologies allow to non institutional subjects - as it could be the case for the minorities - to participate, make proposals, intervene in the communication and, therefore, to modify the cultures. New "*communities of interest*" - where self-selecting groups, with shared interests, values and knowledge, interact - and "*focus groups*" - where

individuals from different countries and cultures participate on the basis of a common concern - are emerging. The enlarged opportunities to access, organize, distribute the information allow a wider participation of the local cultures and of the individuals. The new technologies can be used:

(I) for the ***self-organization of non-spatial communities***: a new kind of "community building", based on common interests rather than on geographical proximity, is made possible

(ii) to ***support local cultures and groups***, since the latter can use the new technologies to identify common interests and the relevant information.

Despite the self-organization of non-spatial communities has several positive effects, it has to be noted that it can also increase the social fragmentation and the fragmentation of the cultures. The result can be an intensification of the cultural (and ethnic) conflicts. Groups having not negotiable needs or values will more easily organize themselves. The process of human ***aggregation made on the basis of an always more specified selection of the interests could imply a social fragmentation***, and not a reinforcement of the sense of the community. If the communities will not mainly be based on spacial proximity but on common interests, we **may** assist to the **shift** from the search for social contacts to the search of the "most efficient" contact. In this perspective, confrontation will tend to be replaced by conflict because the new media users will feel the importance of the community of interest they belong to and they may lose the sense of recognizing and respecting those who are different. The consequence may be the creation of virtual ghettos. Since the new media favor the communication among distant individuals and their participation to virtual communities, the users will tend to search only the most similar people and to avoid the present variety of relationships. On the other hand, considering the positive impact on local cultures the new media may have, it has to be observed that ***their organization of the information can better reflect minority needs***, because they offer to the minorities the possibility to become information producers, to diffuse this information, to gather with people sharing the same culture (the latter aspect being particularly relevant for immigrated cultures).

(5) Information **and cultures will become "commodified"** (i.e. they will become commodities). This may have serious negative implications, because of the risk of an overall commercialization of the human exchanges. If the merchantable character of the information will prevail, there will be no room and no habit within the new media for the cultural exchanges of the poor communities. Since some minority cultures are such because of their economic handicaps, they will be damaged by the likely prevailing of a merchant trend in the new media.

Studies show that the majority of the Internet users tend to be male, young, educated and to have a high level of income. There **is a concrete risk** for the so-called "have nots" (i.e. for people not having the necessary **skills** - and opportunities - to access the new technologies) to become culturally marginal. People living in isolated communities are unlikely to encounter or have access to the new technologies. The commercial mainstream will not include local, regional and minority contents. The contents and the way they are presented will be largely determined by the demand, but while the globalized markets will address the new products to international mass audiences, the "special interest channels" and the "programs on demand" will be mainly financed by subscription. This is going to marginalize the groups of citizens in a difficult economic position. The exclusion of all the interests unable to reach a critical mass and therefore non-profitable implies the cultural exclusion of the minorities carrying those interests. ***Promoting cultural diversity*** does not only mean safeguarding cultural and linguistic minorities, but it also concerns the promotion of a ***wide offer of cultural contents***, where all the perspectives are taken into consideration and where there is room for contents non-rewarding from a commercial point of view, and therefore not spontaneously offered by the market forces.

The question **is**: are we moving in the direction of a better recognition of the differences or towards the imposition of conformity criteria, and consequently, ***are we moving from the standardization of the offer (typical of the mass media) to the standardization of the demand***, as a result of the conformism created in the demand by the previous mass media culture and because of the cultural uniformity of the people having an effective master of the new technology'?

Abstract

Cultural identity has always been a continuous process where the cultures have been changed due to the influence of several factors, including technological changes. Within the information society, the European cultural diversity is going to face severe upheavals. The final impact is controversial. On one side the new technologies themselves can be a mean for the diffusion, valorization and safeguard of minority cultures, on the other there is a serious risk of a possible standardization of the cultures due to commercial reasons.

The information society *can* be considered both as a community or a market place. If the latter aspect will prevail and the majority of the services will be offered by large multinationals, interested in reaching scale economies, the **risk** of cultural standardization is evident. If, due to interactivity, the participating cultural model where the users have an active role, will prevail, the offer will be more personalized and the impact on cultural diversity will be positive.

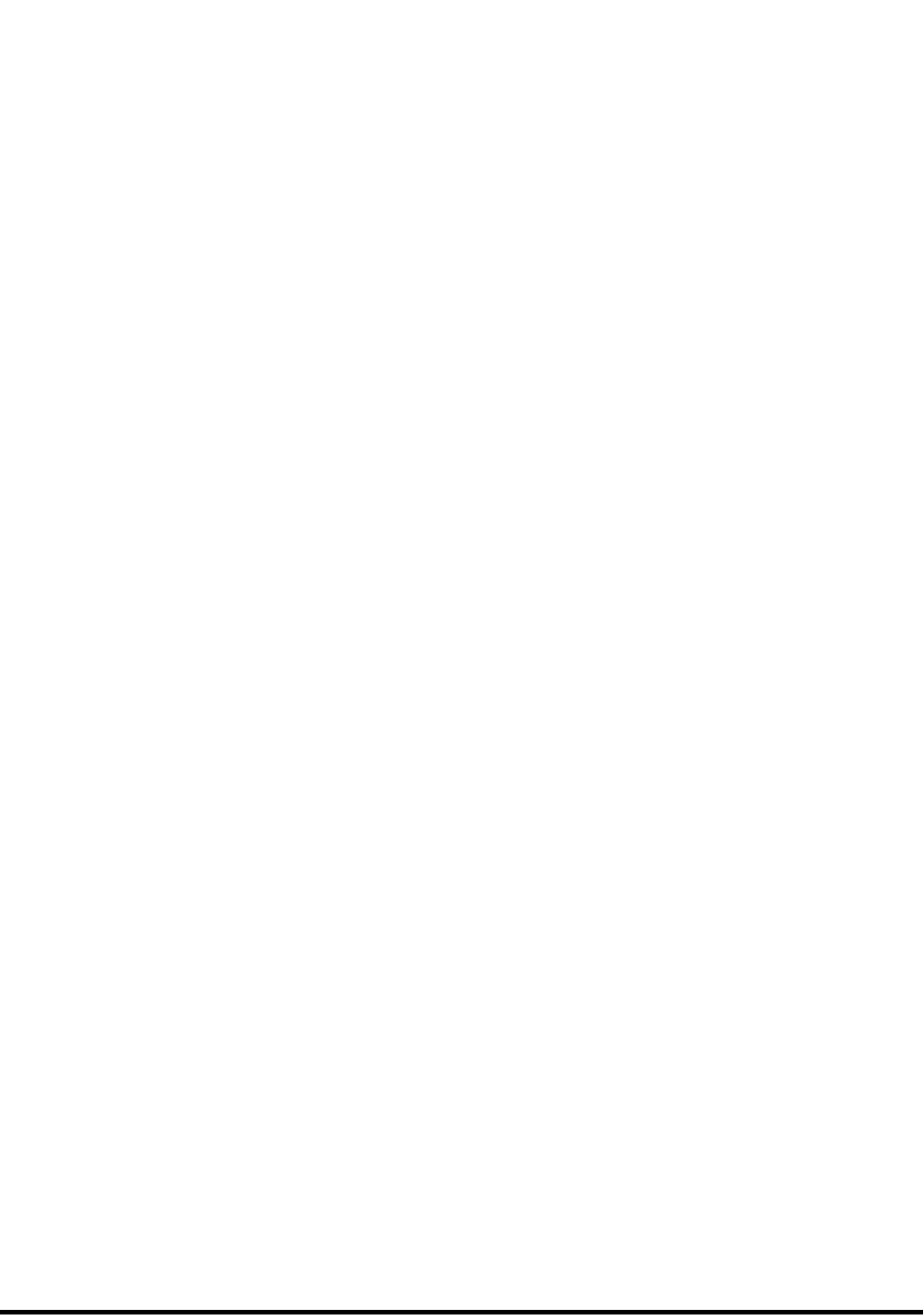
The fact *the new media will be not mass-media* offers better opportunities to minority cultures to express themselves in an information arena tailored by the users, outside centralized control.

The *de-localization* promoted by the new media can constitute a push both to globalism (i.e. the reformulation of cultures outside their original context with the risk of loss of traditions and ways of living) and to "tribalism" (i.e. the identification only with a local community, without recognition of larger levels). Nevertheless, cohesion and safeguard of local cultures, traditionally regarded as diverging objectives, can be conciliated within the information society.

The *dematerialization* of the cultures makes the offer of information and communication explode and will have a large positive impact on the diffusion and on the memorization of the information, and therefore, of the cultural heritage.

The *new communities* emerging within the information society may have a cohesive effect on the minority cultures that will profit of the chances to gather outside spacial distances on the basis of shared interests and cultural values.

The question is: are we moving in the direction **of** a better recognition of differences or towards the imposition of conformity criteria and, therefore, are we moving from the standardization of the offer (typical of the mass media) to the standardization **of** the demand (mainly due to the cultural uniformity of the people having an effective master of the new technologies)? The answer given in this study is that both scenarios are possible and the final outcome mainly depends on the policies that are decided now by the public authorities.



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