

SPANISH PROPOSAL FOR THE DECLARATION OF LATIN AND GREEK AS AN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

In 2011, Prof. Luigi Miraglia, the very learned President of Academia Vivarium Novum (Frascati-Rome), addressed a document to the entire international community reiterating an idea that he had already exposed. This idea, written in different languages, consisted on a proposal for UNESCO to declare Latin and Greek as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Moreover, Prof. Miraglia requested that Italy should be invested as «garante della salvaguardia del latino e del greco» and as a «scigno simbolico e crocevia delle culture e delle lingue greca e latina».

Later, in 2017, Senator Fabricio Bocchino made this proposal his own and presented it to the Italian Senate, which approved it textually in this form (agenda n° G/2371/1/7 al DDL n° 2371, it can be consulted on the website <<http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Emendc&leg=17&id=00977280&idoggetto=00989220&parse=si&toc=no>>):

“impegna il Governo:

- a farsi garante d'una continua sensibilizzazione soprattutto nelle politiche scolastiche, per la salvaguardia concreta delle lingue latina e greca, come massima espressione della sostanza culturale d'Europa, portata in diverse parti del mondo;
- ad attivarsi per presentare all'Unesco la domanda per dichiarare il latino e il greco «patrimonio culturale dell'umanità» non soltanto europea, ma anche extraeuropea, come elemento unificante della civiltà occidentale e come eredità d'inestimabile valore lasciataci da oltre duemilasettecento anni di storia culturale;
- a voler assumersi la responsabilità di «garante della salvaguardia del latino e del greco» come discipline portanti, assieme alla filosofia, di una scuola formativa non professionalizzante, e di un'educazione globale e umana delle nuove generazioni;
- a richiedere all'UNESCO di nominare l'Italia «scigno simbolico» e crocevia delle culture e delle lingue greca e latina, perché si sviluppi un interesse che coinvolga tutti i settori della sua cultura, dal sistema scolastico al mondo della scienza, dello spettacolo e dei mezzi di comunicazione di massa.”

As these words show, the Italian Senate accepted Prof. Miraglia's proposal, whom we thank for his long-lasting efforts to defend the Classical Languages and Cultures.

Nevertheless, this proposal approved by the Italian Senate not only aims at declaring the Classical Languages as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, but also, as its two last items highlighted, seeks to invest Italy as «garante della salvaguardia del latino e del greco» and as a «scigno simbolico e crocevia delle culture e delle lingue greca e latina».

These two last petitions present some difficulties that should not be hidden:

- a) If the proposal's purpose is to achieve the declaration of Latin and Greek as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, it turns out incomprehensible to relate the concept of “Intangible” to a specific country.
- b) Thus, it might be incongruous to use Italy as the only representative cultural reference, even symbolically, for all the Classical Heritage.
- c) Naming Italy as «garante della salvaguardia del latino e del greco» and as a «scigno simbolico e crocevia delle culture e delle lingue greca e latina» could be acceptable for Italian people and for the Italian Government, but not for people from other countries, who are trying that their respective Governments assume the same role of safeguarding the Latin and Greek Heritage as an essential part of their own cultures. This aspect is especially relevant at times when Latin and Greek are losing their presence both in Secondary and University education.
- d) On the other hand, the nude nomination of Italy as «garante della salvaguardia del latino e del greco» and as a «scigno simbolico e crocevia delle culture e delle lingue greca e latina» could be highly debatable from the very perspective of Latin, since the main value of this

language lies in its diffusion all over the world not only in cultural terms, but through all the Romance languages, spoken by millions of people in all continents.

e) Finally, the proposal is also unacceptable from the Greek point of view, since the Italian soil (and, especially, Magna Graecia) is preferred as a symbolic referent of this language over Greece itself.

After evaluating these issues, the Spanish Society of Latin Studies, in collaboration with the Spanish Society of Classical Studies, the Institute of Humanistic Studies, the Asociación Cultura Clásica.com and many other scientific societies of our country, presented on July 20, 2018 a proposal, different from the Italian one, to the Spanish Parliament, which passed it unanimously in the form of Non-Legislative Motion on February 27th, 2019. The rapporteur for the proposal was the eminent Latin scholar and Popular Deputy Mr. Emilio del Río Sanz.

The main difference between the Spanish and the Italian proposals is the fact that the first one advocates the union of all the Governments from Romance language speaking countries around the world in order to be able to submit a joint and unitary proposal to UNESCO. This is the textuality of the Spanish proposition:

3.- Trasladar al resto de países donde estén presentes las lenguas romances, en particular en Europa, América y África, esta propuesta y pedir el apoyo a la misma.

In addition to this necessary union of all countries of Romance languages, the Society of Latin Studies defends as no less necessary the participation of Greece, Cyprus and every nation prone to our classical studies. This is also the spirit of the proposal approved in the Spanish Parliament.

Therefore, it would be a joint international appeal for Classical Languages focusing on their universality, which really fits better with the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This way, the achievement of our common goal could be easier and quicker, given that the petition would be signed by a large number of governments.

This objective is even easier because, one month after the approval of the proposal by the Spanish Parliament, France has also announced its intention to request from UNESCO the declaration of Classical Languages as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In the same sense, professors from Portugal and Latin America have stated their intention of acting together. An example is represented by Mexico, since university professors from this country will attend the International Congress "*Orbis Latinus: Classical Languages, Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*", which will be held in Granada from 10 to 17 May (the Conference's programme is attached).

All the aforementioned reasons have led the Spanish Society of Latin Studies to address a call to the International Scientific Community to ask their adherence to the Spanish proposal considering that this one is the most reasonable to request from UNESCO the declaration of Classical Languages as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

This petition should be closed, as could not be otherwise, by thanking Prof. Miraglia for his hard work promoting the Classical Heritage. At the same time, we must apologize for not being able to accept the invitation to participate in the International Conference "*Communis Hereditas*" on this same subject to be held in the venue of Academia Vivarium Novum from 2 to 4 May, given its obvious proximity to ours.

Madrid, April 30th, 2019,

José María Maestre Maestre,
President of the Society of Latin Studies (SELat)