

## MULTILINGUAL ISSUES IN SPAIN. Country report for MINERVA Plus 2005

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### 1. Introduction

Spain has 43.67 million inhabitants (1st January 2005). It is a multilingual country as the result of its cultural diversity. Spanish or Castilian is the official language of the country as recognized in the Spanish Constitution of 1978. Besides there are other regional languages which are co-official in their *Comunidades Autónomas* or regions, such as: Galician in Galicia, Catalan in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, Valencian in the Valencia region and Basque in Navarra and Euskadi.

Other dialects claim the right to be considered languages, but in spite of controversy, multilingualism is a reality at local level, too: Balearic, Aragonese, Andalusian, and the dialects spoken in Extremadura, Murcia, Canary Islands and Asturias (bable). A variety of Occitan "aranés" is the official language of Val d'Arán and Portuguese is also spoken along the border with Portugal.

The Spanish Constitution recognizes the richness of language diversity as a cultural heritage which must be respected and protected.

Foreign immigration is a recent phenomenon and, though it implies an impact in multilingualism, the figures are still not very representative. Two million foreigners are recognized by the authorities, in a high percentage coming from Latin America (from Spanish speaking countries).

### 2. Some figures about Spanish linguistic variety

In order to illustrate the use of regional languages, following different surveys the table shows the importance of these languages:

Co-official language	% of population which speaks and/or understands co-official language	% of population which does not speak and/or understand co-official language	Population figures (2004)
Basque <sup>1</sup>	36 %	62 %	2.115.279
Catalan <sup>2</sup>	94.48 %	5.52 %	6.813.319
Galician <sup>3</sup>	89.02 %	10.97 %	2.750.985

### 3. Evaluation of the participation in the survey

The participation in the survey has been very low and is not representative of cultural institutions, nevertheless shows the interest of museums and IT projects related with heritage.

<sup>1</sup> EUSTAT, Instituto Vasco de Estadística; *Competencia lingüística por clase de bilingüismo, competencia en euskera, territorio histórico y zona lingüística (% vertical)*. 2001; [http://www.eustat.es/elem/ele0000400/xls0000494\\_c.xls](http://www.eustat.es/elem/ele0000400/xls0000494_c.xls)

<sup>2</sup> IDESCAT, Instituto de Estadística Cataluña; *Conocimiento del catalán*;

<http://www.idescat.net/dequavi/Dequavi.?TC=444&V0=8&V1=6&lang=es>

<sup>3</sup> Xunta de Galicia; *Situación lingüística del Gallego en la actualidad*; [http://www.xunta.es/galicia2003/es/05\\_03.htm](http://www.xunta.es/galicia2003/es/05_03.htm)

The number of multilingual web sites is low and the effort is not focused on foreign languages but co-official languages (mainly Catalan). Regarding the use of tools for information retrieval, controlled vocabulary is not used in any of the six web sites which have participated in the survey.

### 3. Multilingualism in Spanish cultural web sites.

A small survey of 12 of the main cultural Spanish institutions has been carried out in order to extract some conclusions.

INSTITUTION	LANGUAGES	% OF MULTILINGUAL CONTENT IN RELATION WITH SPANISH VERSION OF WEB SITE.
<b>Museo Nacional del Prado. Madrid. (National Prado Museum)</b>	Spanish / English	100%
<b>Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. (National Museum Art Center Queen Sofía) Madrid</b>	Spanish / English	10%
<b>Fundación Thyssen-Bornemisza. Madrid</b>	Spanish / English	100%
<b>Museo Guggenheim Bilbao</b>	Spanish / English /French/ Euskara	100%
<b>Museo de Bellas Artes de Sevilla (Museum of Fine Arts)</b>	Spanish	0%
<b>Museo de Historia de Cataluña (Catalunya History Museum). Barcelona</b>	Spanish / English/ Catalan	100 %
<b>Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno (Valencian Modern Art Institute). Valencia</b>	Spanish / English /Valencian	100%
<b>Museo Picasso de Málaga (Picasso Museum)</b>	Spanish / English	100%
<b>Museo de Arte Romano de Mérida (Roman Art Museum)</b>	Spanish	0%
<b>Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales (Natural History National Museum). Madrid</b>	Spanish / English	50%
<b>Biblioteca Nacional. (National Library) Madrid</b>	Spanish / English /Francés	50%
<b>Archivos Estatales (State Archives)</b>	Español	0%

From the analysis of these cultural web sites, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Cultural Web sites do not reflect Spanish multilingualism regarding the variety of co-official and minority languages.
- Regional Institutional web sites are multilingual but only regarding the co-official language of their region

- The importance of cultural tourism is showed in the concern for choosing English as the language which allows international dissemination
- Although most of multilingual web sites try to make their content available fully in other languages, still there are cases where only some site content is multilingual.