

COMMUNITY IN DIVERSITY: A PLEA OF A SUBSTANTIAL MULTILINGUALISM IN A COMMON EUROPE

Loenz Michael

Westfaelisches Forum fuer Kultur und Bildung, Germany

To understand Europe means to understand diversity, diversity in culture, political practice and also in language. Even on the basis of a single state the struggle for monolingualism accompanied only the rising of the national state (and the ideas of civil liberties and democracy) in the 19th century; in the Middle ages and the early modern times people at least in towns and markets had to have a command of different languages at least on a basic level. If we want to avoid nationalism and struggle for supremacy between different present European societies and states, we have to reinvent, to support, and to develop a contemporary culture of multilingualism. If we want to accept us as Europeans in a community in diversity, we have to address each other not only in a lingua franca but also - if not first of all – in the respective mother tongue.