



Promoting lesser-used languages through contemporary popular music

Promozium da linguas main derasadas tras musica populara contemporana

A' togail air mion-chànain tro cheòl an làtha an-diùgh

21 July – 4 August 2001

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Alive and Rocking
Vivere far Vibrar
Beò is Beòthail

Background

In the European context there is a whole range of languages which are under threat of marginalisation or even extinction. A major reason for this is that very often these languages have little or no attraction for young people. The main problem is that the domains in which these languages were spoken have either disappeared or lost importance in young people's lives. With this consideration in mind it seemed as sensible to promote such minority or lesser-used languages as they are in more immediate need of promotion in the framework of a European programme aimed at raising language awareness.

Even though more is being done for the maintenance of lesser-used languages today, efforts predominantly focus on folk art and literature while other, potentially more attractive areas for young speakers, are not being promoted as

vigorously as they could be. One such area is contemporary popular music such as rock'n'roll, pop, rap, hip-hop and forms of world music. If lesser-used languages could be shown to be suitable for such forms of popular music, two major obstacles might be overcome: firstly, the still widespread stigma of backwardness and, secondly, the perception of cultural élitism, which can be a result of a focus on literature and folk art in language maintenance.

This project therefore proposes to bring together a small number of young musicians and singers from lesser-used language areas, Scotland and Ireland (Gaelic) and Rumantsch-speaking areas of Switzerland in order for them to exchange ideas and experiences and to play music together. They will be accompanied by mentors, who are well-known musicians committed to the promotion of Gaelic and Rumantsch.

Aims of the project

- To promote an increased awareness of the importance and usefulness of Rumantsch and Gaelic for the expression of contemporary concerns in a contemporary artistic form.
- To produce a CD which reflects the work of the young artists and the fruits of their co-operation.
- To produce at least two live concerts.
- To set up a web site with audio links which will be updated daily during the two weeks.

Partner organisations

The Swiss partners are GiuRu, the youth wing of the Lia Rumantscha, the Lia Rumantscha and the Canton of Grisons. The Gaelic partner is the Columba Initiative, which will also bring young Gaelic speakers from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland into the project.

