



An open letter to the European Commission and European Parliament on language use in EU Consultation processes

27 October 2021, Brussels

Dear President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen,

Dear President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli,

We are sending this letter as European Coordination Via Campesina, representing 31 organisations of peasant farmers, small- and medium-scale farmers and agricultural workers on the European continent.

As you might know, 77% of farms in the EU are smaller than 10 hectares and in economic terms, 70 % make less than 8000 euros/year (EUROSTAT 2020). Even today, as small and medium-scale farmers, we are the ones providing most of the food consumed by the European population. In Italy, for example, large farms produce only 5.4% of the national production, while smaller farms produce 25.5% of the total production. In 2018, the UN General Assembly adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas recognising not only the importance that this group plays in the future of our society, but also the structural discrimination we experience compared to other sectors of society. For instance, in Europe our average income is much lower than the average income of other sectors.

The UNDROP calls upon the States *"to take appropriate measures to eliminate conditions that cause or help to perpetuate discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, against peasants and other people working in rural areas"* (Art. 3). In Particular in Article 2 the declaration says that *"States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with peasants and other people working in rural areas through their own representative institutions, engaging with and seeking the support of peasants and other people working in rural areas who could be affected by decisions before those decisions are made, and responding to their contributions, taking into consideration existing power imbalances between different parties and ensuring active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of individuals and groups in associated decision-making processes"*. And in addition, Article 10 states that *"Peasants and other people working in rural areas have the right to active and free participation, through their representative organizations, in the preparation and implementation of policies, programs and projects that may affect, their lives, land and livelihoods"*.

As you may know, our organisation and our members speak very different languages. We believe we have **the right to high-quality participation** in every matter of concern to us, and this can only be achieved through free expression (and understanding) **in our mother tongue**.

This right is enshrined in the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, adopted in 2000 and legally binding under the Lisbon Treaty, *"prohibits discrimination on grounds of language"* (**Article 21**) and *"imposes an obligation on the Union to respect linguistic diversity"* (**Article 22**).

In addition, it should be recognised that **Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union** states that the Union *"shall respect the richness of its cultural and linguistic diversity"*. Furthermore, **Article 165(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)** emphasizes that *"Union action shall be*

aimed at developing the European dimension in education, in particular through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States" while fully respecting their cultural and linguistic diversity (Article 165(1) TFEU).

In this context (as is the case for many other consultation processes in recent years), on 24 September the EC published an initiative to propose a legal framework for plants obtained by targeted mutagenesis and cisgenesis and for their food and feed products. On the base of this initiative the EC published an Inception Impact Assessment only in English and opened up a feedback period of 29 days.

We consider that this behaviour violates the **right to quality participation for our members on a subject of extreme importance for our constituency.**

We request that the EC stops publishing documents only in English for such important matter affecting peasant farmers and ensure our organisations have access to all documents of the European Union in the different official languages, and if this is not possible, **at least in Spanish, English and French**, as practiced by the United Nations.

We look forward to hearing from you and we wish you all the best.

Kind Regards,

Members of the Coordinating Committee of ECVC