

Nationalist Instrumentalisation of the Education System in Catalonia: the October 1st Case

Conclusions

Barcelona September 27, 2017



Conclusions

This report displays a large number of evidences that prove how the Generalitat – the Catalan regional government - misused primary and secondary schools together with universities in an alarming way during the days before and after the illegal referendum on October 1st. Shamelessly, Junts pel Sí's Executive Board turned schools and universities into key instruments in the pro-independence strategy, with the support, whether by action or omission, of most of the educational authorities (headmasters) and a relevant number of members of the teaching staff, without forgetting the unacceptable role played by parents' associations (AMPAS) and the inactivity of school inspectors.

As many teachers, students, parents and also some inspectors have recognized, while there was a certain opposition to the regional Government's actions, it was almost always concealed by the brutal environmental pressure, carefully woven for years.

The examples of misuse and utilization found in this record are many and extraordinarily worrying. The first chapter explains how, in an unprecedented decision, Clara Ponsatí, by then the Catalan Regional Councillor of Education, dismissed and replaced the President of the Management Board of the Consortium of Education of Barcelona and replaced the headmasters of all primary and secondary schools from Friday September 29th until Monday, October 2nd. It also establishes how the Teaching Territorial Departments gave instructions to mobilize teachers and students, and how the Barcelona Education Consortium set the guidelines to be followed by schools in order not to provide mandatory minimum services during the ominous *aturada de país*, a kind of governmental lockout in the guise of a general strike promoted by the Generalitat regional government on October 3rd.

The second chapter tells about the harassment suffered by inspector Jorge Cantallops in the hands of the pro-independence Catalan Public Administration, and how this situation provoked the outrage of the Trade Union of Education Inspectors of Spain. A disciplinary proceeding was initiated against inspector Cantallops for clearly political reasons that cannot be dissociated from the fact that he had drawn up two reports in which he called for action of the Education Inspectorate – which inconceivably never happened - regarding what was taking place in the educational centres in the context of October 1st illegal referendum. Without a doubt, the unprecedented number of interim inspectors in Catalonia explains why these were positioned against their colleague in an absolutely appalling way in this region, in

sheer contrast with the unconditional support Cantallops got from the inspectors in the rest of Spain.

The third chapter shows the clear subservience to nationalist ideology of majority teaching unions in public education in Catalonia, all of them radical supporters of the so-called *escola catalana* (Catalan school), and fundamentally of one of its pivotal axis: the mandatory educational system of linguistic immersion in Catalan which discriminates Spanish speakers. Despite their constant calls for democracy, the education unions' approach, their rhetoric of "civil disobedience", an insubordination paradoxically protected by political power, is one of a clearly reactionary nature. The most representative image of the role played by Catalan education unions in the autumn of 2017 is probably that of the President of USTEC-STEs, the Catalan education majority union, on November 8th, at Cathedral Square in Barcelona:



There, Ramon Font stated that Ponsatí was his only "legitimate Councillor of Education" and that they would not recognize "any authority imposed undemocratically". He also pointed out that "the heirs of the formation of the francoist national spirit" were accusing them – primary and secondary teachers- of indoctrination and that they would not teach in Spanish language under any circumstances.

The fourth chapter compiles an avalanche of manifestos and political statements promoted by school headmasters and primary and secondary school and university teaching staff, all of them with a pro-independence bias. They denounce the police records and charges ordered by judicial authorities, the application of Article 155 after the Catalan political leaders' attempt to repeal the constitutional order in Catalonia, and the provisional imprisonment of these politicians – who acted with an obscene irresponsibility and broke

coexistence in our Autonomous Community- pending the resulting court decisions. A meaningful fact that exemplifies the role played by school headmasters in the nationalist strategy was the letter sent by more than 600 headmasters to the European Commission on October 9th in which they demanded from it “that it publicly showed its solidarity and affection regarding the 893 – fathers, mothers, grandparents, young people...- wounded during the sad events that took place in our country on October 1st.” In the same vein, they required the Commission “to express to the Spanish Government its absolute rejection of the violent action of the Spanish National Police and the Civil Guard.”¹ Leaving aside the misconceptions surrounding the police charges, it is obvious that these headmasters abused their position, a position that in no way enables them to sign such a petition on an issue that completely exceeds their powers. On the contrary, we have not detected a single document that questions what happened in the Catalan Parliament on the infamous days of September 6th and 7th or the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. Accordingly, these school management teams and teachers flagrantly violated the principles of neutrality, objectivity and impartiality that should govern the action of the staff of both public and state-funded private educational institutions.

This same chapter also presents many statements in support of the illegal political strikes last autumn, and testimonies – directly received by SCC (Catalan Civil Society) and the AEB (Assembly for a Bilingual School) organizations or published in the press- on political harangues addressed to underage students and performed by primary and secondary teachers as a consequence of what happened on October 1st. In this sense, an extremely relevant fact was the complaint made by 200 students in Sant Andreu de la Barca in support of some of their classmates who had been singled out as civil guards’ children in their school by nationalist teachers.

Other facts denounced in Chapter 4 are the widely documented rallies and mobilizations of children and teenagers after the illegal referendum, both as a result of the impunity of the school management teams and the misuse of social networks in order to help spread a unique official current of thought in the area of education:

¹ https://www.ara.cat/societat/Mes-directors-Comissio-Europea-solidaritat_0_1885611603.html



Escola Guinardó
@escolaguinardo

Seguir

L'escola fa un minut de silenci i llegeix un manifest de rebuig a la violència policial viscuda ahir en molts indrets. @EscolesCoop @FTrams



3:29 - 2 oct. 2017

To a great extent, these actions can be explained by the fact that a good portion of the teaching staff has a clearly nationalist profile, as evidenced by a study published by Convivència Cívica Catalana in November 2017, based on the analysis of the indicators produced by the Spanish Government's Sociological Research Centre. This study revealed that "Catalan teachers have twice as much Catalan identity feeling as the rest of the population" and that "more than half of them (61%) are supporters of independence and mostly vote for the ERC" (Catalan Republican Left) pro-independence political party. In addition, the fact that there is a high number of temporary teachers also limits the possibility for them to express their disagreement, as many teachers have recognized to us.

As a result of all this, the nationalist ranks have created an Emergency Committee for the Teaching staff to protect the teachers denounced for using their classrooms to indoctrinate their students in a political way. Thus, the promoters of this nonsense have sent a letter to schools in which it is literally said: "Please, send us the number of members of the teaching staff who have joined to follow up (...)."

Meanwhile, as had happened to inspector Cantallops before, disciplinary action has been taken against secondary teacher Francisco Oya this time for providing his students with complementary learning materials to their Geography and History textbook, published by Teide publishing house, which is used in his school and written by Agustí Alcoberro, ex-spokesman of the ANC (Catalan National Assembly):

Purgan al presidente de Profesores por el Bilingüismo entre pancartas de 'fascista'

El director del IES Joan Boscà le comunicó que no estará más al frente de la asignatura de Historia. De momento, queda relegado a preparar "materiales complementarios"



Pancarta en la clase del presidente de Profesores por el Bilingüismo. (EC)

The fifth chapter addresses the central role played by AMPAS (Students' Parents Associations) in the nationalist strategy. In particular, of the FaPaC, the federation that brings together three quarters of Parents' Associations existing in Catalonia. In general, all federations use only Catalan as a language in their communications, despite the fact that Spanish is the language spoken by most parents. Another relevant fact is their commitment to the calls for disobedience of the Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality (LOMCE), supporting not carrying out the common tests established to all the autonomous communities by this law. The objective is none other than to sever the bonds with the Spanish educational system, following the trend of lack of respect for the rule of law established by the Department of Education itself.

From the analysis of the FaPaC's website, its social networks and the mails sent by it during the period covered by this report, we can conclude that this entity gives and unquestionable support to the secessionist theses surrounding the October 1st referendum. On its website, we have found pictures of work meetings packed with separatist symbols. It has also been observed that the people behind their campaigns always have a clearly nationalist profile. The pronouncements of its leaders leave no doubts. For example, their current president, Belén Tascón, in declarations to *El Punt Avui* newspaper on December 19th 2017 – hardly two months after the dismissal of the Generalitat government under the rule of art. 155- stated that she only recognized the former Catalan Regional Councillor of Education, Clara Posantí, as their interlocutor. She added that fundamental rights were being

violated in Catalonia, and that there was a Catalan government in exile and another one in office that had not been democratically elected by the ballot boxes, while, at the same time, rejecting the existence of any form of indoctrination in the classrooms. All this without forgetting the enormous amount of communications issued by this Parents' Federation along the same line as the ones delivered by schools and teaching staff assemblies after the most controversial events that took place last fall.

The FaPaC did not bring up any of these pronouncements for discussion by the Catalan families that are members of the AMPAS, not even such a significant action as the FaPaC's endorsement of the Table for Democracy on September 27th last year. Typical acting of Catalan nationalism: administrations and professional and social institutions express their political opinions on issues that absolutely go beyond their powers and do so on behalf of all their members without consulting them in order to generate the feeling that there are no disagreements in Catalan society.

A remarkable aspect of this chapter is that it proves the existing links between the AMPAS – which organized countless “autumn parties” to keep the schools to be used as polling stations on October 1st open- and the CDRs (Defence Committees of the Republic). The screenshot below shows how the WhatsApp chats of the AMPAS were used to get the volunteers and families locked up in the schools in touch:



After October 1st illegal referendum, the parents' associations either remained silent regardless the scandalous misuse of the school premises and space – even in the face of such serious situations as the one suffered by the underage students singled out by their teachers in Sant Andreu de la Barca and La Seu d'Urgell- or they gave their clear support to it:



 **AMPA Escola Catalunya - Sant Cugat del Vallés** ...
3 de novembre de 2017 · ✨

Comunicat de l'AMPA de l'Escola Catalunya de Sant Cugat del Vallès

Davant de l'empresonament sense fiança ahir del nostre soci, company, amic i pare de la nostra escola, Raül Romeva i Rueda, Conseller d'afers d'Exteriors, Relacions Institucionals i Transparència del Govern de la Generalitat de Catalunya, volem expressar el nostre total desacord amb la mesura presa ahir per la judicatura, i en aquest sentit, volem manifestar que, Entenem l'actuació del Conseller com a fruit d'un mandat democràtic clar i transparent, emanat de les urnes.

I que, en conseqüència, entenem que el seu empresonament respon estrictament a motius polítics.

Com a part de la Comunitat Educativa d'aquesta escola, i com a valors que des d'aquí hi defensem, manifestem la necessitat de poder debatre totes les idees polítiques a l'entorn que li és propi, el Parlament, amb la seguretat que no siguin segrestades, censurades o empresonades.

I en aquest sentit, manifestem el nostre total desacord, preocupació i oposició al fet que criatures de la nostra comunitat estiguin essent privades de la presència del seu pare.

Des d'aquí també volem donar el nostre total suport, escalf, solidaritat i acompanyament a tota la família Romeva, especialment a la nostra ex presidenta, així com als fills de tots dos, en un moment tant trist i delicat.

Així mateix, fem extensiu aquests sentiments a la resta de presos polítics, govern i ciutadania, i en reclamem la seva immediata posada en llibertat.

The sixth chapter shows some examples of how supposedly cultural entities – with an obvious nationalist character and openhandedly funded- try to influence and shape the child environment in general, and the school environment, in particular. Among them, Òmnium Cultural stands out. Once chaired by President Quim Torra himself, it has hundreds of partner schools that, not only support it financially, but also allow it to enter the classrooms and summon students to attend events such as, for example, the Sambori awards of narrative. Òmnium, which also publishes children's books, has also taken to the educational centres a digital journalism project called *Escoles en xarxa* (Networked Schools), promoted together with the radically pro-independence digital newspaper *Vilaweb*.

The cover of its magazine below says it all about the notion of educational policy this entity has:



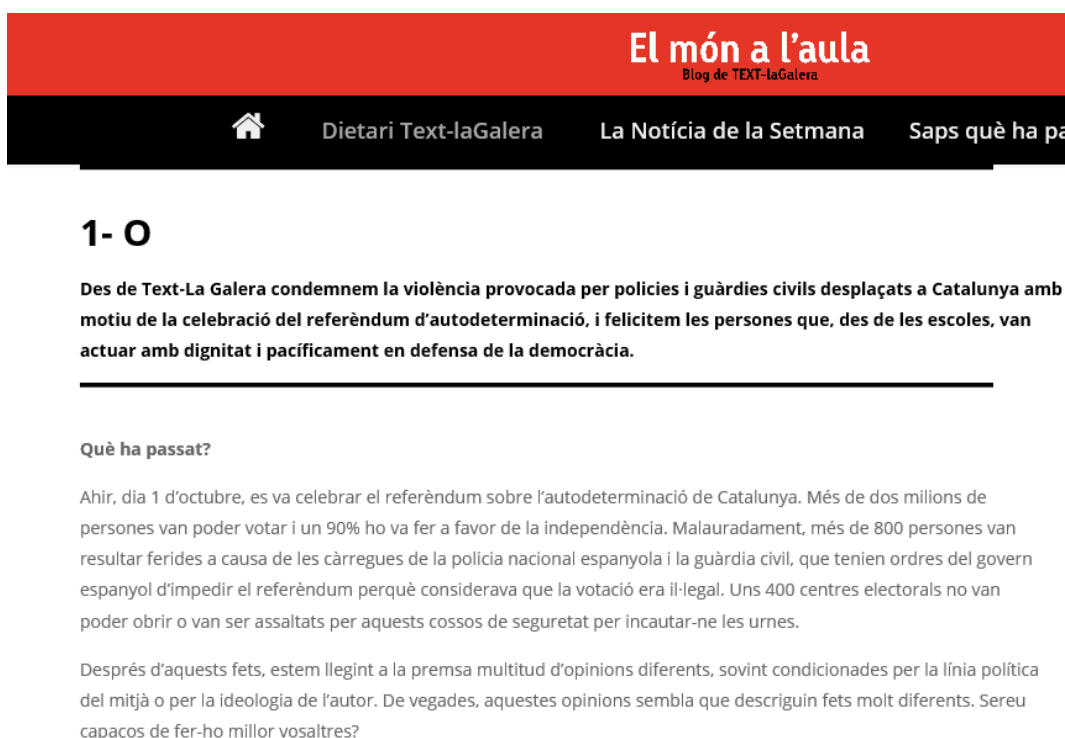
The girl, in addition to the shocking face painting, has a sticker on her chest with the slogan “For a country of all people, school in Catalan language” from *Somescola*. This platform, which is also referred to in this chapter, has devoted untiring efforts to plaguing the educational centres of Catalonia with banners that reproduce exactly that sticker. It is an openly exclusive message that, without a doubt, tries to marginalise any attempt to stand for a bilingual school in this region, not to mention the mental and emotional impact such a statement can have in a Spanish-speaking child.



The seventh chapter warns about the textbooks used in primary and secondary schools in Catalonia whose contents differ enormously from those in the rest of Spain. This is a consequence of the instructions publishers get from the Generalitat Department of Education. By way of illustration, it is utterly striking that History textbooks systematically speak of a non-existent Catalan-Aragonese Crown. Equally surprising are the biased interpretations of the War of Succession, and the obsessive and recurrent representation of Catalonia as a mythical reality differentiated from Spain and, tirelessly, victimised by “it”. Catalonia is persistently depicted as a nation/a country, and the textbooks highlight Catalan symbols while ignoring those shared by the whole of Spain.

This chapter shows how the Catalan administrations often commission the preparation of specific nationalist educational materials, sometimes in collaboration with the Generalitat's public media – also with a pro-independence bias. This was the case during the celebration of the Tercentenary of the War of Succession and the supposedly defeat of Catalonia in the hands of Spain according to nationalist mythology.

The chapter affords many interesting examples of clearly biased exercises, such as the one below, still available on La Galera publishers' website:



El món a l'aula
Blog de TEXT-laGalera

[Home](#) [Dietari Text-laGalera](#) [La Notícia de la Setmana](#) [Saps què ha passat](#)

1- O

Des de Text-La Galera condemnem la violència provocada per policies i guàrdies civils desplaçats a Catalunya amb motiu de la celebració del referèndum d'autodeterminació, i felicitem les persones que, des de les escoles, van actuar amb dignitat i pacíficament en defensa de la democràcia.

Què ha passat?

Ahir, dia 1 d'octubre, es va celebrar el referèndum sobre l'autodeterminació de Catalunya. Més de dos milions de persones van poder votar i un 90% ho va fer a favor de la independència. Malauradament, més de 800 persones van resultar ferides a causa de les càrregues de la policia nacional espanyola i la guàrdia civil, que tenien ordres del govern espanyol d'impedir el referèndum perquè considerava que la votació era il·legal. Uns 400 centres electorals no van poder obrir o van ser assaltats per aquests cossos de seguretat per incautar-ne les urnes.

Després d'aquests fets, estem llegint a la premsa multitud d'opinions diferents, sovint condicionades per la línia política del mitjà o per la ideologia de l'autor. De vegades, aquestes opinions sembla que descriguin fets molt diferents. Sereu capaços de fer-ho millor vosaltres?

Not to mention these shameful examples evidently made with the consent, if not the support, of these schools' teachers:

SCC Ensenyament
 @SCCensenyament

"España, la vergüenza de Europa", hoy en el IES Angeleta Ferrer de Sant Cugat. Así está la enseñanza en Cataluña!!!



8:40 - 2 oct. 2017

163 Retweets 85 Me gusta

SCC Ensenyament
 @SCCensenyament

Colegio Ramon Llull de Barcelona, esta mañana (4)



3:04 - 4 oct. 2017

57 Retweets 21 Me gusta

20 57 21

Chapter eighth gathers a great number of photographs that display pro-independence political symbols and messages mainly in the gateways and within primary and secondary schools, but also in special education schools or nurseries. Sometimes, even the signboard with the school's name is used as a stand to stick pro-independence messages on it:





The ninth chapter is full of images that illustrate the obsessive symbolic invasion of the children's recreational space, extra-curricular activities and leisure by the nationalist pro-independence movement. In Catalonia, children can easily find these scenes if they go to a Three Wise Men parade, the *Palau de la Música* concert hall and the Museum of History of Catalonia or get it as a present from their godparents as a *mona*, a chocolate Easter cake:



Así reciben a niños y adultos en el @mhistoriacat, con la "neutralidad cultural" a la que nos tienen acostumbrados los nacionalistas en Cataluña, esta vez en su #MuseoDelIndependentismo



A la Pastisseria Lleonart hem fet urnes, el preu són 45eur, 10eur de cada urna venuda aniran a la caixa del govern de la república Moltes gràcies.



We have found no single school or cultural institution with a constitutional symbol in Catalonia. Not a single one.

In the tenth and last chapter, it is observed that public universities without exception although with nuances – the next two examples belong to the one in Gerona-, reproduce the same practices followed by primary and secondary schools with plenty of pro-independence symbols, public statements and mass mailings from academic authorities and student associations, always of a nationalist pro-independence nature:



Mail del Decano @univgirona a todo el alumnado convocando a un paro contra un autojudicial! Alguien lo habrá leído?

para Alumnos
11:44 Ver detalles

Benvolguts,

Per protestar contra l'empresonament dels presidents d'Òmnium Cultural, Jordi Cuixart i de l'Assemblea Nacional de Catalunya, Jordi Sánchez, us convoco avui a les 12h, davant de l'entrada de la Facultat de Dret.

Cordialment,

Degà / Decano / Dean



Likewise, the creation in some universities of groups of students by SCC has triggered, especially at the UAB (Autonomous University of Barcelona), a real ideological

harassment to the members of these groupings, as it is documented and detailed in this report. In the University campus in Bellaterra, they have been surrounded and insulted, their tents have been attacked, the flag of Spain they usually fly in their different activities has been burned, and they have even experienced the humiliation of a signature campaign by radical secessionists to expel them from the campus (photo on the left). A petition promoted by the same violent pro-independence students who singled out Professor Rafael Arenas' office for his denouncing of their behaviour, deeply incompatible with a democratic environment (photo on the right):



But what is really unprecedented is that all these events, which have never been institutionally condemned within the campus by the UAB authorities, have led to a court sentence against the UAB itself, the first one of this nature against a Spanish university, for violation of several fundamental rights: the pro-Constitution students' rights of non-discrimination for reasons of opinion (article 14 of the Constitution), of ideological freedom (article 16), of freedom of expression (article 20.1.a) and their right to education (article 27). As reported to the courts by these students, Rector Arboix decided to deny their right to list the Youth Association of SCC in the register of student collectives of the University alleging, among other purely administrative and unfounded reasons, that they refused to rectify and retract their critical statements about the UAB they had made in social media and networks, despite the fact that their criticisms had always been legitimate and solid denunciations with the lack of political neutrality of the institution as their leitmotiv.

Everything exposed in these pages, and summarised in these conclusions, is in perfect agreement with the strategy designed by nationalist *Convergència i Unió* political party in the so-called *Programa 2000*, a political manifesto which focused on the need to control the

several main actors with an impact on teaching and the educational world, so they could contribute to their project of a nation-building process in Catalonia. Many references to this infamous and increasingly well-known document are made throughout this report.

In any case, what happened in the schools of Catalonia surrounding October 1st could never have been possible if the nationalist strategy had not already been deeply ingrained in the management teams, teachers, unions, inspectors, parents' associations and cultural institutions. In fact, the brazen behaviour in the actions described makes it clear that many people, maybe most of these people, had a clear sense of impunity, a feeling of acting in accordance with the dominant and official opinion. Perhaps, they even thought they were behaving in the right way.

Be that as it may, considering the evidences exposed here in a systematic, though not exhaustive, way, we believe it is essential:

- The competent authorities should impartially investigate all accusations of indoctrination that have been made so far and those which could be made in the future. It is unacceptable that, after all the facts listed above, the victims of the only files instructed by the Generalitat have been an inspector who claimed a reaction from the Administration against the more than obvious misuse of schools during the days surrounding October 1st, and a teacher who gave his students some additional materials to supplement the class textbook, written, in addition, by a well-known pro-independence activist.
- Stop criminalizing those of us who claim a calm debate on the Catalan educational model. Faced with nationalist parties and institutions which unrelentingly repeat the mantra "*l'escola catalana no es toca*" ("don't touch the Catalan school") – a statement clearly incompatible with the advancement of knowledge-, we strongly support that all policies must be open to discussion, especially when there are so many reasons to do so. If we really want to bet on coexistence in Catalonia, all sensitivities and perspectives must be considered. The introduction of bilingualism (or trilingualism) at school is an unquestionably reasonable demand, as is educating Catalan students in constitutional values, teaching them about our common symbols and traditions, supervision of textbooks by the Ministry of Education to ensure reliability and objectivity in their contents, favouring the mobility of teachers to all schools in all Spain avoiding inbreeding in the seventeen different regional educational systems, or strengthening the Spanish national High Educational Inspection. If the solution is to

create several networks of educational centres, let's do it. Imposing what some Catalans think upon the opinion of others cannot be in any way a solution.

Two recent extremely relevant endorsements support our requests. On the one hand, the Superior Court of Justice of Catalonia, in a recent ruling of July 5th 2018,² declared that the existence of pro-independence symbols in public buildings and spaces, as well as the exhibition of yellow ribbons by civil servants while on duty³ is null and void. On the other hand, the Spanish Ombudsman has made an Institutional Statement reminding that public authorities must respect “the principle of ideological neutrality in a plural society, which is incompatible with the presence in public buildings (especially considering that this presence is permanent) of symbols belonging to a given ideology, the respect to which must be compatible with respect to others who concur in a free, open, democratic and tolerant society”.⁴

The present report will be delivered to the Catalan Parliament, the Spanish Parliament and the European Parliament, so that these bodies promote the appropriate legal changes to guarantee that the dubious and sectarian practices we have denounced are expelled from Catalan schools and universities. Similarly, we will request from the governments of Spain and Catalonia a greater professional zeal and political neutrality concerning education, so that they place the values of citizenship ahead of the strategies of the pro-independence movement. We will also request support from the Spanish Ombudsman and ask him to study the complaints contained in this report in order to take appropriate actions. We will not do the same regarding the *Síndic de Greuges*, the regional Catalan Ombudsman, for our absolute lack of confidence in his neutrality. For years, he has recurrently proved through his actions that he is not the defender of all Catalan citizens, but an effective collaborator of the nationalist pro-independence cause.

² https://societatcivilcatalana.cat/sites/default/files/tsjc_sentencia_-_estelada_sant_cugat.pdf

³ https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2018-09-06/lazos-amarillos-juzgados-cataluna_1611536/

⁴ https://www.defensordelpueblo.es/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Comunicado_neutralidad_ideologica_edificios_publicos_Catalunya.pdf.

Once again, the Síndic de Greuges, the Catalan Ombudsman, has supported the nationalist authorities and public servants and, in a release issued on September 3rd 2018, advocated for a peculiar conception of freedom of expression of the Public Administrations that would protect that exhibition (<http://www.sindic.cat/Ca/page.asp?id=53&ui=5571>).

Our final message is, in any case, one of hope. Aware of the seriousness and magnitude of what has been exposed in this account, we remain hopeful that this report can represent a turning point and open a way to reverse a harmful educational policy that, should it persist, will only contribute to deepen the profound crisis of coexistence undergone by Catalan people in this uncertain present.

Barcelona, September 27th 2018