

CATALAN AND THE ELEVEN NEW OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE CANDIDATES FOR EU MEMBERSHIP

Twelve new states, eleven new languages

The European Union has received application for membership from twelve states: Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, the Czech Republic and Cyprus. All of these are set to join over the next few years.

The official languages spoken in these states are the following: Bulgarian, Slovak, Slovene, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Rumanian, Czech and Greek. In the enlarged EU there will therefore be eleven new languages, discounting Greek, which already has official status.

Unlike the fifteen states which currently make up the European Union, in some cases (Slovakia and the Baltic States) not all of the population can speak the official state language.

Catalan is the third most important language in comparison with the eleven new official languages of the twelve candidate states

In terms of number of inhabitants of the twelve member states only two have more population than the territories where Catalan has official status: Poland, with more than 38 million inhabitants, and Rumania, with over 22 million. There are eight states with less than 10 million inhabitants.

If the number of people who live in the territories where Catalan has official status is compared with the inhabitants of the future member states of the European Union, Catalan is ranked third and is above another nine languages.

Table 4. Catalan and the eleven new official languages of the candidate states

LANGUAGE	POPULATION
Polish	38,7 M
Rumanian	22,5 M
Catalan	10,8 M
Hungarian	10,5 M
Czech	10,3 M
Bulgarian	8,3 M
Slovak	5,4 M
Lithuanian	3,7 M
Latvian	2,4 M
Slovene	2,0 M
Estonian	1,4 M
Maltese	0,4 M

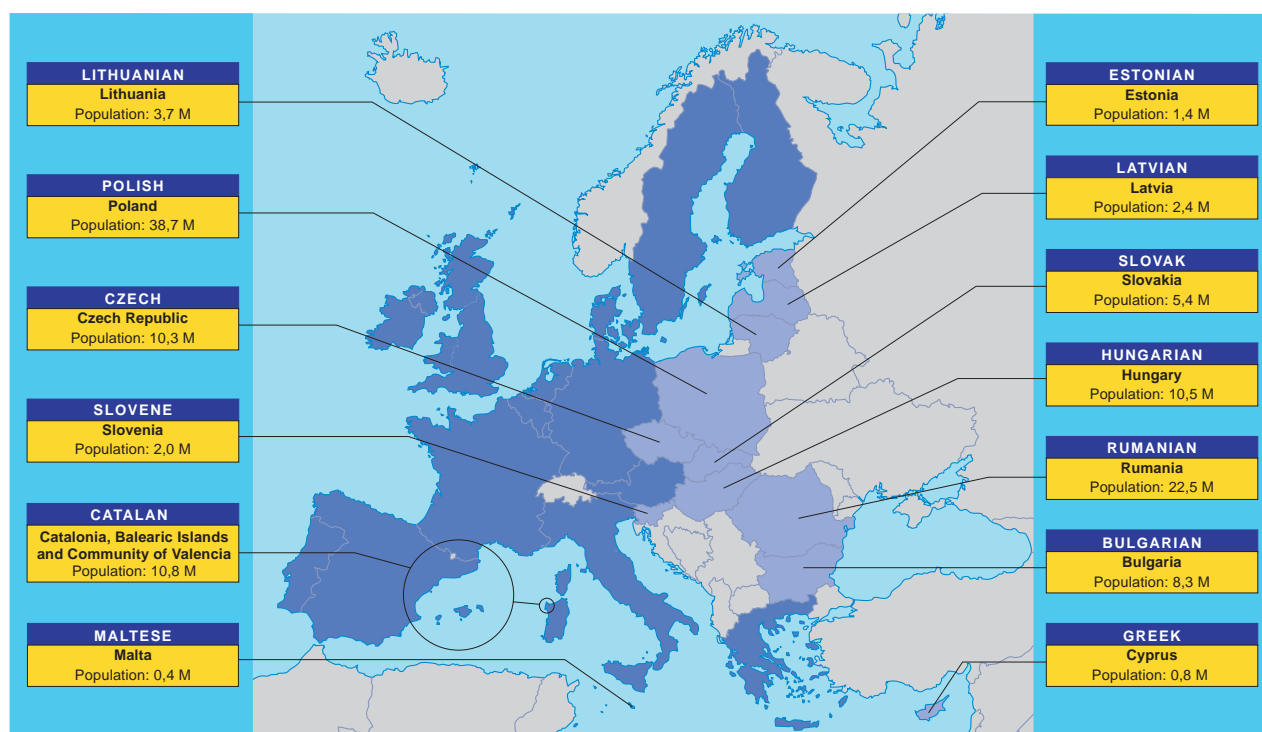
DATA SOURCE: IDESCAT. INE. Panorama of the EU, 2000.

If only the number of people who can really speak the language is taken into account, Catalan has more speakers than the languages of six candidate states.

As far as economic activity is concerned, and using as a reference point the GDP in disposable EPA per capita in these states, the joint average for Catalonia, the Balearic Islands and the Community of Valencia is above that of all of these states.

In the map below you can see:

- the name of the official language and the state where it is officially recognised.
- the population of the state where this language is officially recognised, expressed in millions of inhabitants (M).



With respect to the 11 languages from the European Union candidates states, Catalan is ranked third

SOURCES: Panorama of the UE, 2000. IDESCAT. INE.