

National minority standards of the Council of Europe

- [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report, 1994](#)

The Framework Convention is the first treaty devoted to the protection of national minorities. Among other aspects, it promotes effective equality of persons belonging to national minorities and the conditions necessary for them to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage. Its Parties shall also ensure the effective participation in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs. The Framework Convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1994 and entered into force in 1998. It has been ratified by 39 states. Its application is monitored by the Advisory Committee composed of independent experts.

- [Monitoring documents](#) (state reports, opinions of the Advisory Committee, state comments, Committee of Ministers resolutions)
- [HUDOC database](#) (covers the opinions of the Advisory Committee, state comments and the Committee of Ministers resolutions)

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- [**Resolution CM/Res\(2019\)49 on the revised monitoring arrangements under Articles 24 to 26 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities \(as modified on 27 September 2022\)**](#)
 - This Resolution sets out the rules pertaining to the monitoring of the Framework Convention, including membership in the Advisory Committee, the procedure for election and appointment, the transmission and publication of periodical state reports and their consideration by the Advisory Committee and the Committee of Ministers, the failure of States Parties to comply with the reporting obligation, the publication of the Advisory Committee's opinion, follow-up of opinions, and the rules of procedure.

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- [**Thematic Commentary 1: Education under the Framework Convention**](#)

This Thematic Commentary, adopted by the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 2024, replaces the 2006 edition and provides an updated interpretation of the Framework Convention's provisions relevant to education, based on the Advisory Committee's country-specific opinions as well as on its three other Thematic Commentaries. The document serves as a practical guide to enhancing minority rights in education through inclusive educational environments and a spirit of tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and mutual respect among all communities. It is intended for state authorities, public officials, civil society organisations, persons affiliating with national minorities, and other stakeholders involved in advancing minority rights.

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- [Thematic Commentary 2: the Effective Participation of Persons Belonging to National Minorities under the Framework Convention](#)

This commentary sets out the Advisory Committee's interpretation of Article 15 of the Framework Convention relating to the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities, drawing on country-specific opinions adopted by the Advisory Committee. It aims to provide a useful tool for state authorities and decision-makers, organisations of minorities, human rights organisations, academics and other stakeholders involved in minority protection.

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- [Thematic Commentary 3: The Language Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities under the Framework Convention](#)

This commentary focuses first on the key importance of language rights for the preservation of a person's identity or identities (Part II - Articles 3 and 5 of the Framework Convention). Part III explores language rights with regard to the equally central principles of non-discrimination and the promotion of full and effective equality (Articles 4 and 6 of the Framework Convention). Parts IV to VII of the commentary then cover relevant clusters of linguistic rights concerning media, public and private use of languages, education and effective participation (Articles 9 – 17 of the Framework Convention).

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- [Thematic Commentary 4: the Scope of Application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#)

This commentary consolidates the manner in which the Advisory Committee has interpreted the scope of application of the Framework Convention, bearing in mind specific societal, economic and demographic developments. It shows that the Framework Convention is a key tool for states to accommodate increasing pluralism through minority protection in a way that carefully balances broader societal concerns with individual rights. It supports states in managing diversity by creating appropriate societal conditions that allow for the expression and acknowledgement of difference, for equal access to rights and resources and for social interaction and inclusion.

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- [List of States Parties of the FCNM](#)

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- [European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages](#) and **Explanatory Report, 1992**

The Charter is a treaty putting obligations on its States Parties to promote the use of the country's traditional regional and minority languages in all fields of public life: education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and cross-border exchanges. Beneficiaries of the Charter are users of regional and minority languages irrespective of their ethnicity. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 1992, the Charter entered into force in 1998.

It has been ratified by 25 states. Its application is monitored by the independent Committee of Experts.

- [Monitoring documents](#) (state reports, Committee of Experts' evaluation reports and evaluations of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action, state comments, Committee of Ministers recommendations)
- [HUDOC](#) (contains evaluation reports of the Committee of Experts, Committee of Ministers' recommendations, Secretary General's biennial reports, statements of the Committee of Experts)

- [Committee of Ministers Decision on Strengthening the monitoring mechanism of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 2018](#)

This decision contains measures reforming the Charter's monitoring procedure: Parties are required to present every five years reports on the implementation of the Charter and two and a half years thereafter information on the implementation of the Committee of Experts' recommendations for immediate action; due dates for state reports on Charter and Framework Convention are aligned; the implementation of the Charter may be monitored without a state report in case of delays in its submission and following reminders; Parties may request a confidential dialogue with the Committee of Experts; the publication of evaluation reports is accelerated, and wider use of the Committee of Experts' rapid reaction capacity is encouraged.

- [Statement of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on the utmost importance of communication in regional or minority languages in global medical crises, 2020](#)

In this statement, the Committee of Experts invited states to take language-related issues into account when developing policies and instructions to address the COVID-19 pandemic. It referred specifically to sharing the information, instructions, guidelines or recommendations relating to the pandemic also in the traditional regional or minority languages spoken in the respective countries and to use these languages in online teaching or teaching through the medium of television.

- [Statement of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on regional or minority languages in online education in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020](#)

The closure of schools was among the measures taken by authorities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this situation, many schools started online teaching. In its statement, the Committee of Experts encouraged the authorities of all States Parties to the Charter to foster access to online learning in and of regional or minority languages. Noting that distance education is becoming part of educational systems, the Committee of Experts also indicated that in the future it will examine the availability and the quality of online teaching in and of regional or minority languages, as a necessary complement to traditional educational methods.

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- [Statement of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on the promotion of regional or minority languages through artificial intelligence, 2022](#)

In this statement, the Committee of Experts notes that artificial intelligence (AI) applications may facilitate the daily use of regional or minority languages and support authorities in promoting them in accordance with the Charter. The Committee of Experts encourages states to promote the inclusion of regional or minority languages into research and study on AI with a view to supporting the development of relevant applications as well as to develop, in co-operation with the users of such languages and the private sector, a structured approach to the use of AI applications in the different fields covered by the Charter.

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- [List of States Parties of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages](#)
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Other texts relevant to the protection of national minorities:

- [1st Summit of Heads of State and Government](#), 1993
- [2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government](#), 1997
- [3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government](#), 2005
- [4th Summit of Heads of State and Government](#), 2023

At their 1st summit in 1993, the Heads of State and Government instructed the Committee of Ministers to launch the drafting of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Vienna Declaration and Appendix II). In 1997, at the 2nd summit, it was decided to complement the Framework Convention through confidence-building measures and enhanced co-operation (Final Declaration and Action Plan). At the 3rd summit in 2005, the Heads of State and Government encouraged the Council of Europe to continue protecting national minorities through the Framework Convention and regional languages through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Action Plan). In May 2023, at their 4th summit, the Heads of State and Government stressed the important role that the Council of Europe is playing to promote and protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

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- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2023\)9 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States on the active political participation of national minority youth](#)
 - [Recommendation 928 \(1981\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on educational and cultural problems of minority languages and dialects in Europe](#)
 - [Recommendation 1201 \(1993\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the additional protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights](#)

- [Recommendation 1623 \(2003\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the rights of national minorities](#)
- [Recommendation 1766 \(2006\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on ratification of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by the member states of the Council of Europe](#)
- [Resolution 1985 \(2014\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the situation and rights of national minorities in Europe](#)
- [Resolution 2196 \(2018\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in Europe](#)
- [Resolution 2262 \(2019\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on promoting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities](#)
- [Recommendation 43 \(1998\) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on territorial autonomy and national minorities](#)
- [Recommendation 410 \(2017\) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on minority languages](#)

In 1981, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation 928 which called for specific measures to promote minority languages and triggered the drafting of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. In addition to supporting the adoption of the Language Charter and, later, the Framework Convention, the Parliamentary Assembly also adopted a proposal for an additional protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights. This proposal inter alia contained a definition of the expression “national minority” and envisaged a right of persons belonging to a national minority to “appropriate local or autonomous authorities or ... a special status” in the regions where they are in a majority. The Parliamentary Assembly has ever since continued to follow the protection of national minorities and the promotion of minority languages and adopted pertinent recommendations.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, in whose framework the first draft of the Language Charter was prepared (1984-1987), has also continuously paid attention in its work to minority-related issues and adopted relevant texts.

In 2023, the Committee of Ministers adopted its Recommendation on the active political participation of national minority youth, which covers the space, opportunities, means and support for political participation of young persons belonging to national minorities and sets out specific guidelines regarding stakeholder organisations.

The documents of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress listed above are a selection; additional relevant documents are available on the websites of these institutions.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/council-of-europe-national-minority-standards>