



## Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

# Advocacy Calendar

### What minority NGOs should do and when, to promote their rights protected under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), a treaty of the Council of Europe which entered into force in 1998, obliges member states to protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in the most important areas of public life. Member states must submit information on the situation in their countries (state reports) every five years to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (its 47 foreign ministers), which is in charge of monitoring the implementation of the convention. It is assisted in this task by an Advisory Committee which is made up of 18 independent experts. Following receipt of the state report, the committee will usually visit the country and then draft an opinion in which it assesses the member state's adherence to the FCNM and makes suggestions as to how to further improve its implementation. Based on the opinion, the Committee of Ministers adopts a resolution, containing concrete recommendations to the state.

The recommendations will call on the state to take effective measures to further promote the rights of minorities and to do so in close dialogue and consultation with minority representatives. In fact, Article 15 of the FCNM requires that member states must create conditions for the effective participation of persons belonging to minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them. This implies that minority representatives are also encouraged to play an active part in the monitoring process. That is why the Advisory Committee will always seek to meet minority representatives to hear their views on their own situation. In addition, there are other important opportunities for minority NGOs to engage in the monitoring cycle.

This Advocacy Calendar provides an overview of the monitoring cycle of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and indicates how minority NGOs may contribute to the process.

Calendar of the implementation and monitoring of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities	What your NGO should do now
<p>The authorities draft the five-yearly state report on the implementation of the FCNM.</p> <p><b>DEADLINE for submission of the state report to the Council of Europe:</b> see website <a href="http://www.coe.int/minorities">http://www.coe.int/minorities</a></p>	<p><b>① The state report is an important source of information for the Advisory Committee when preparing its country visit and drafting its opinion. Member states are strongly encouraged to involve minority representatives in the drafting process.</b></p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Establish dialogue with the state authority that prepares the report.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Encourage the state authority to invite representatives of all minorities for a preparatory meeting to share their views and main concerns regarding the implementation of the convention (orally and in writing).</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Ensure that the state report reflects those views (for example by including the position papers of minority groups as appendices).</p> <p><b>Step 4:</b> You may also provide alternative reports directly to the Advisory Committee. These reports, also called "shadow reports", may cover all articles of the FCNM or only specific ones that are of particular concern.</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> Have the authorities missed the deadline for submission of the state report? Urge the authorities to submit the state report without further delay. If necessary, convey another update of your position paper to the authorities and request them to quote it in, and/or append it to, the state report.</p>

<p>The Advisory Committee receives the state report. In order to gather additional information and follow up on specific developments, a delegation of the Advisory Committee will organise a country visit. It usually travels to the capital, as well as to regions where national minorities reside, and meets with minority representatives, independent experts, and local, regional and central authorities.</p> <p><b>DATE of the country visit:</b> see website <a href="http://www.coe.int/minorities">http://www.coe.int/minorities</a></p>	<p>① <b>The country visit is a very important part of the monitoring cycle as the Advisory Committee delegation may directly assess what the situation is, including in the regions.</b></p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Advisory Committee delegation invites minority NGOs for discussions. Ensure that representatives are able to come to these meetings or send written information to the delegation if that is impossible.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> During the meeting, try to offer precise information and be clear on what your main concerns are.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Include in your brief presentation what your demands towards the authorities are and if and how you have already voiced them.</p> <p><b>Step 4:</b> Provide the delegation with a copy of your presentation after the meeting, if you can.</p> <p><b>Step 5:</b> If you have forgotten to mention something or remember something else after the meeting, just write to the delegation member through the FCNM secretariat so that your information can still be considered by the Advisory Committee.</p>
<p>The Advisory Committee delegation drafts the opinion which will be adopted during the next session of the Advisory Committee. This will usually be between two and five months after the visit.</p>	<p>If there are new developments in the months following the visit, contact the FCNM secretariat to ensure that the new information can be taken into consideration.</p>
<p>The Advisory Committee meets in plenary and adopts its opinion on the country. The opinion is subsequently submitted to the state authorities for their comments which are to be made within four months. States parties are encouraged to make the opinion public immediately.</p>	<p>① <b>The Advisory Committee opinion is a detailed article-by-article assessment of your country's implementation of the FCNM. It contains much more specific information than the forthcoming Committee of Ministers resolution and can be a useful tool for minority representatives to promote protection of their rights.</b></p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Encourage the authorities to publish the opinion and to have it translated into the official and minority languages of your country as soon as possible.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> If the opinion is made public, share your views on it with the authorities so that they can incorporate them into the government comments on the opinion.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Use the assessment of the Advisory Committee in your own advocacy work to promote your rights.</p>
<p>Unless the authorities officially object to this, the opinion is made public four months after having been shared with the authorities. The state comments are also submitted to the Committee of Ministers for its consideration after four months.</p>	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Once the opinion is made public, share your views on it with the authorities and other minority representatives. Encourage open discussion on the opinion in your country.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Encourage the translation of the opinion into your language.</p> <p><b>Step 3:</b> Use the assessment of the Advisory Committee in your own advocacy work to promote your rights.</p>
<p>Based on the Advisory Committee opinion, the Committee of Ministers adopts a resolution, containing specific recommendations which should be implemented by the state.</p>	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Use the resolution in your advocacy work and seek dialogue with the authorities on how they can best implement the recommendations.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Monitor the implementation of the recommendations by the authorities. Are they doing what they should and are their efforts efficient? Is there an improvement in the situation? Maintain dialogue with the authorities as well as with other minority representatives.</p>
<p>The Advisory Committee organises a "follow-up" seminar in the country to discuss its recommendations and to provide suggestions as to how best to implement them.</p>	<p>① <b>Follow-up seminars are an excellent opportunity for minority representatives to voice their views and have a constructive discussion with authorities on the implementation of the FCNM.</b></p> <p><b>Step 1:</b> Encourage the authorities to organise a follow-up seminar.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Participate in the seminar and use it as an opportunity to meet relevant authorities for future dialogue. Provide your own view on which measures the authorities should take to implement specific recommendations.</p>
<p>The next state report is due in five years, when the next monitoring cycle begins.</p>	<p><b>Step 1:</b> Keep an eye on how the authorities are implementing the recommendations and try to maintain an open dialogue. Stay informed on relevant developments (positive and negative) as they will be important to pay attention to in the next monitoring cycle.</p> <p><b>Step 2:</b> Share important developments with the FCNM secretariat. This will help to better prepare the next visit and ensure that your concerns can be taken up by the Advisory Committee members during their next meetings with officials.</p>