



CHAIRMANSHIP OF CROATIA
Council of Europe
May - November 2018

PRÉSIDENCE DE LA CROATIE
Conseil de l'Europe
Mai - Novembre 2018

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Minorities and Minority Languages in a Changing Europe

Conference on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France
Palais, room 1

18 – 19 June 2018

Closing session

Ambassador Miroslav Papa, Chairman of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the Council of Europe

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is time to conclude by thanking you all for having made this Conference a success, renewing our commitment to the values defended by these two important instruments. I would like to thank in particular the Chairs and the members of the two monitoring bodies, the invited academics and civil servants who shared their views and knowledge with us, the colleagues from the permanent representations as well as the Secretariat.

If you allow me, before we close this event, I would like to insist on three points we should all keep in mind, and even use as a road map for the next steps:

The first point is of a general nature, but it relates to the very reason why we are here: to reconfirm our adherence to multilateral legal instruments as a whole, and to the two we are celebrating in particular. This has been mentioned at a number of occasions, and rightly so. There is certainly a need to further reflect on how to reinvigorate the collective protection of the rights enshrined in our common standards, such as the Language Charter and the Framework Convention.

The second point is the direct consequence of the first one, when it comes to put the instruments in practice: the need for strong but efficient monitoring bodies. These two aspects, being strong and being efficient, are neither exclusive nor contradictory, but rather go together. Monitoring bodies are at the very heart of the mission of the Council of Europe. We must ensure that they keep being seen as such, and that they have the capacity to remain impactful. Having an impact, in the long term, requires a constant reflection on the most efficient working methods. As Philippe Boillat rightly said, these bodies do contribute to the democratic security of our continent, which should be a sufficient reason for the States to ensure they can do their work in an appropriate manner.

The third and final point relates to our capacity to put our words into practice. This is where political statements become technical measures. We have heard a strong support for a reform process of the Language Charter, currently discussed by the Committee of Ministers, including an adjustment of its monitoring cycle with the inclusion of mid-term reports, the possibility to proceed with the evaluation process in the absence of a national report, as well as swifter publication of the evaluation report. These proposals seem in line with what we have heard since yesterday and should be the subject of further scrutiny by the Committee of Ministers.

For the Framework Convention, pertinent suggestions have been made on how to improve its monitoring, such as the importance of the visits, the involvement of civil society including youth and the possibility to facilitate the collect of information from the State. I will also make threes subject of further scrutiny by the Committee of Ministers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This Conference has reached its purpose: stimulating reflection and collecting proposals for the future of the two instruments. These discussions will have to be continued and deepened in the respective group of rapporteurs of the Committee of Ministers, and my intention is to further the discussions to the extent possible so that we can, if not terminate them, at least reach a significant progress before the end of the Croatian Chairmanship.

I wish you all now a safe return to your respective homes and renew my thanks to those who made this event possible, alongside the Croatian Chairmanship.