

Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities



**Twelfth activity report
covering the period
from 1 June 2018
to 31 May 2020**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

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*Bureau of the Advisory Committee – 2018-2020 – President Besarion Bokhashvili
with the First Vice-President Edita Ziobienė (right) and the Second Vice-President Marie B. Hagsgård*

Foreword by the President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

The last biennium was marked by significant developments for the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC). The reform adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in December 2019 paved the way for the Advisory Committee to implement its mandate more effectively and in a more timely manner. Resolution CM/Res(2019)49 of the Committee of Ministers opened the door for confidential dialogue to be conducted between the Advisory Committee and states parties, ensuring that the opinions adopted by the Advisory Committee are more comprehensive, clear and accurate. The reform also tackled the long-standing problem of the delay in the publishing of opinions thus shortening publication deadlines.

The reform aimed at further strengthening the Advisory Committee's capacity to adequately advise states parties on the present needs and obstacles experienced by persons belonging to national minorities. This was more than timely, particularly now as the world is facing unprecedented challenges caused by COVID-19, which has made national minorities even more vulnerable. The provisions of the Framework Convention and relevant standards developed by the Advisory Committee, along with other Council of Europe standards on human rights and non-discrimination, should be seen by member states as guides to overcoming a range of problems faced during and in the aftermath of COVID-19.

We harbour no illusions that the task will be an easy one. Against a backdrop of rising xenophobia, anti-Semitism, islamophobia and anti-Gypsyism, which have reached alarming levels according to the recent report by Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović, efforts should be significantly stepped up to uphold and promote the principles of equality and diversity and to support individuals in affirming their ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious identities. Like the founders of the Framework Convention, we strongly believe that protecting and respecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is a prerequisite to ensuring democracy, peace and security. In this respect, I would like to highlight the invaluable forum offered by

multilateral human rights organisations such as the Council of Europe and call on all member states and states parties to the Framework Convention to work together to ensure that the rights of persons belonging to national minorities in Europe are protected.

With this goal in mind, the Advisory Committee has made every effort during the last biennium to assist states parties in implementing the Framework Convention's provisions in practice. In a number of its opinions, the Committee has welcomed positive legislative and practical initiatives implemented by state authorities. However, deep-rooted issues of segregation, exclusion and discrimination still strongly persist throughout Europe. States still frequently fail to build inclusive societies and wrongly see minorities as a threat to their security rather than a strength. There is still a long way to go to eradicate this cardinal problem, but on behalf of the whole Advisory Committee, I would like to reiterate that only an inclusive society, guaranteeing the effective participation of national minorities in decision-making processes and the different spheres of life in society, will ensure stability and peaceful coexistence.

Besarion Bokhashvili
President of the ACFC (2018-2020)

Introduction

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, opened for signature 25 years ago in February 1995, remains the most comprehensive treaty designed to protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. States parties to the Framework Convention assume a legal obligation to protect and promote rights of persons belonging to national minorities in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention has generated a wealth of case-law on the implementation of minority rights in all these areas and continues to do so with every new country opinion, most recently in the fifth monitoring cycle.

Thirty-nine states are party to the Framework Convention and a special monitoring agreement related to Kosovo* was signed with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in 2004. Four Council of Europe member states have not signed this treaty and four member states have signed but not yet ratified it.¹ One positive signal with a view to possible ratification of the Framework Convention by Belgium was an expert meeting on this topic organised by the Belgian authorities on 14 March 2019 in Brussels. The ACFC very much welcomes the persistent efforts of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to promote ratification of the Framework Convention by the eight remaining Council of Europe member states.²

The implementation of the Framework Convention is monitored by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, with the assistance of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC) as an independent and impartial expert committee. The monitoring procedure consists of

* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

1. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was adopted by the Council of Europe in November 1994. It was opened for signature in 1995 and entered into force in 1998. It has been ratified by Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. Four member states of the Council of Europe – Belgium, Greece, Iceland and Luxembourg – have also signed but not yet ratified it. Andorra, France, Monaco and Turkey have not signed the Framework Convention.
2. See Resolution 2262(2019) “Promoting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities”, adopted in January 2019.

a series of stages: submission of a state report by the authorities concerned, a country visit, adoption of an opinion by the ACFC – since 2020 upon request following confidential dialogue between the state concerned and the ACFC -, publication of the opinion, and adoption by the Committee of Ministers of a resolution containing recommendations to the state party concerned. Set up in 1998 and composed of 18 independent experts appointed by the Committee of Ministers, the ACFC is entrusted with monitoring adequate implementation by all states parties of the rights contained in the Framework Convention in the various fields of relevance for persons belonging to national minorities.

This twelfth activity report provides an overview of developments relating to the Framework Convention and the work of the ACFC between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020. It also offers a welcome opportunity to reflect on the major trends and challenges for minority protection in Europe today. All documents and information relevant to the two-year period covered by this report can be found at www.coe.int/minorities.

The operation of the Framework Convention's monitoring system underwent significant changes during the 2018-2020 biennium. To ensure that the convention remains the gold standard for minority protection, in 2019 the Committee of Ministers reviewed the Convention's monitoring mechanism and, on 11 December 2019, adopted *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*. The Committee of Ministers decided to shorten the average timeframe for the publication of opinions, to introduce a confidential dialogue between the authorities and the Advisory Committee before the final adoption of opinions, and to create a rapid reaction mechanism where developments in member states warrant urgent examination by the Advisory Committee. Furthermore, the text of the Resolution merges several former decisions and Resolutions by the Committee of Ministers into a single text and clarifies a number of established practices, for instance through the explicit reference to country visits. By agreeing on this reform package, the Committee of Ministers has chosen to significantly reinforce the effectiveness of the Framework Convention.

In 2018, the Committee of Ministers also reformed the monitoring procedure of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Language Charter). The reform included inter alia the prolongation of the monitoring cycle from three to five years, with mid-term information on the implementation of recommendations for immediate action to be submitted by the states parties every two and a half years. In this context, the due dates for state reports under the Language Charter and the Framework Convention were aligned, which will make it possible for states parties to both conventions to seek efficiency gains when preparing state reports and country visits.

Since 1 April 2020, the secretariats of the Framework Convention and the Language Charter have been placed under the same administrative division, the Division of National Minorities and Minority Languages, with a view to better planning, enhanced co-operation between the two secretariats and, as a result, the strengthening of both monitoring mechanisms.

The Advisory Committee fully subscribes to the objective behind the reforms: an FCNM monitoring system that is efficient, credible and transparent. Between 2018 and 2020, the Advisory Committee itself carried out a programme of innovations, including the development of instruments for improved knowledge management (HUDOC case-law database, Source Book and Glossary) to assure internal consistency; a new format for fifth cycle opinions aimed at enhancing the legibility of reports; and the introduction of new working methods to make better use of the existing expertise among the members. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Advisory Committee also demonstrated its ability to adapt to extraordinary circumstances by adjusting its working methods and by holding a plenary meeting by video conference for the first time.



forum

FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
FOR THE PROTECTION
OF NATIONAL MINORITIES



Part I

Trends and challenges for minority protection in Europe

“A pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity.”

Preamble to the Framework Convention

Over the past two years, the Advisory Committee has continued to observe the rise of nationalist, populist and xenophobic movements and political parties. While many persons belonging to national minorities still cannot participate fully in their societies’ cultural, economic and public life, populist discourse in the name of the “majority” is seeking to limit their space even further. The Advisory Committee has frequently been confronted with situations in which political representatives, from both far right and mainstream political parties, actively play a part in, or fail to condemn, intolerant discourse or even hate speech targeting national minorities. Such acceptance of divisive and xenophobic discourse is damaging the overall climate of tolerance and the enjoyment of equal human rights for all persons living in a state. Moreover, it is a threat to democracy as it dissuades persons belonging to national minorities to seek an active role in public debate and effectively participate in public affairs.

Considering the effects of these developments, the Advisory Committee would like to highlight the link between genuinely democratic societies and the protection of minority rights.

The preamble to the Framework Convention points out that a genuinely democratic society is one which enables persons belonging to national minorities to express, preserve and develop their identities. In order to achieve a society where persons belonging to national minorities are equally able to preserve and develop their identities as persons belonging to the majority population, it is not enough to protect them from discrimination and other forms of injustice. States must create the conditions for them to take an active role in the development of their societies. A genuinely democratic society is one where everyone – minorities and majority alike – can take part in an ongoing dialogue and influence decisions on how to build societies where everybody’s human rights are protected. A genuinely democratic society is an inclusive society.

Minority rights as an essential element of democracy

The Framework Convention provides a number of important safeguards based on the understanding that minority protection and genuinely democratic societies are inextricably linked. These include the right to free self-identification enshrined in Article 3, the principles of equality and non-discrimination guaranteed by Article 4, the obligation to encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue provided in Article 6, and the civic freedoms enshrined in Articles 7 (freedom of assembly and association) and 9 (freedom of expression). Finally, and too often not fully implemented, Article 15 of the Framework Convention obliges states parties to ensure effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and, perhaps most importantly, that they can effectively participate in public affairs.

In its monitoring work over the past two years, the Advisory Committee has witnessed progress and good practice, but also obstacles and difficulties in implementing the Framework Convention’s provisions. A general observation is that the national legal framework for the protection of minority rights has improved in many states but that implementation and follow-up of legislation still need to be improved.

Enabling and disabling factors for a genuinely democratic society

A key element of an inclusive approach to democracy is respect for the right to free self-identification, enshrined in Article 3 of the Framework Convention, which is a cornerstone of minority rights, including the right to effective participation in all areas of life. In its examination of the personal scope of application of the Framework Convention, the Advisory Committee has recommended during the past biennium that states parties avoid arbitrary exclusions from the protection of the Framework Convention and apply an open and inclusive approach.³

3. See ACFC Thematic Commentary No. 2 on Effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and public affairs, adopted on 27 February 2008, para. 152.

Comprehensive legal and institutional frameworks guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination are an important factor in democratic societies being perceived as fair by majorities and minorities alike. In order for persons belonging to national minorities to feel free to take an active part in society, it is important to know that there are independent institutions that will deal efficiently with any complaints of discrimination from them.

Under Article 4 of the Framework Convention, the Advisory Committee has observed some progress concerning national anti-discrimination bodies and in some member states also regarding the institutional powers or budgetary resources of equality bodies. In some countries, however, ombudspersons or equality bodies were subjected to personal attacks by politicians discrediting their work. In others, such bodies do not exist at all, are not sufficiently independent or do not have enough resources to reach out to persons belonging to minorities, despite previous recommendations by the Advisory Committee to this effect.

Article 6 encourages states parties to take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding among all persons living on their territory. This is important in order to create genuinely democratic societies where everyone feels free to contribute to public debate seeking solutions taking the interest of all groups in society into account.

The broad scope of application of Article 6 of the Framework Convention provides the Advisory Committee with a mandate to assess the societal climate of a state party not only with regard to national minorities but also from a more general perspective. This is important, as intolerance towards diversity in general often has a spillover effect to national minorities.

The Advisory Committee has observed a continuing rise of nationalist, populist and xenophobic movements, which base their rhetoric on supposedly defending the interests of the majority, allegedly threatened by an over-emphasis on minority rights. Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsyism are spreading further in European societies. These attitudes manifest themselves in the form of personal attitudes measured by opinion polls, statements by politicians, hate speech and hate crimes and other manifestations of violence. The Advisory Committee also observed how historical narratives and bilateral relations with so-called “kin states” can be used to justify the exclusion of minority groups and create distrust towards them. While many governments continue or even increase support for the promotion of tolerance through intercultural projects or awareness-raising campaigns, the Advisory Committee often concluded that greater efforts must be made to achieve effective inclusion and social cohesion.

The role of education in fostering tolerance and understanding between minorities and the majority cannot be underestimated. Through education, states should promote a climate of mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue, which is

a prerequisite for effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities.⁴ The Advisory Committee has observed both positive and negative trends and frequently recommended that appreciation of diversity, multiple perspectives on history, and knowledge about national minorities should be included in school curricula, textbooks and teacher training.

The Advisory Committee has also been concerned by situations in which the basic human rights of freedom of assembly and association, protected under Article 7 of the Framework Convention, have been restricted and where such restrictions affected the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. It also observed cases where associations promoting minority rights were denied registration and the possibility of gathering in protest in defence of minority rights was restricted. The Advisory Committee is concerned about such cases restricting the right to civil participation in decision-making by individuals, NGOs and civil society at large. Minorities need to be able to organise themselves, in order to effectively enjoy their rights and to participate in democratic processes, be it through associations or political parties.

Freedom of expression, enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and also provided for in Article 9 of the Framework Convention, is a fundamental human right that plays a vital role in exercising and protecting other rights. The Advisory Committee has, however, addressed concerns over abuses of this right, referring to European Court of Human Rights case-law, which states that hate speech does not enjoy protection from Article 10 of the ECHR. The Advisory Committee has therefore asked authorities to condemn systematically and in a timely manner all instances of intolerance, in particular in public discourse, and to ensure effective investigation and prosecution. This is also necessary so that persons belonging to national minorities feel safe when participating in democratic debate.

Effective participation as key to inclusive societies

The degree of participation of persons belonging to national minorities in all spheres of life is one of the indicators of the level of pluralism and democracy in a society.⁵ The Framework Convention is clear in its expectations: states parties are to actively seek consultation with persons belonging to national minorities when they are contemplating legislation or administrative measures likely to affect those persons directly; to actively seek involvement of persons belonging to national minorities in the preparation, implementation and assessment of plans, and to ensure their effective participation in decision-making.⁶ As such participation must be meaningful, the Advisory Committee looks beyond the formal structures in place and assesses its effects in practice.

4. See ACFC Thematic Commentary No. 2 on Effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and public affairs, adopted on 27 February 2008, para. 162, and ACFC Thematic Commentary No. 4, The Framework Convention: a key tool to managing diversity through minority rights. The scope of application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, adopted on 27 May 2016, paras. 59-61.

5. See ACFC Thematic Commentary No. 2 on Effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and public affairs, adopted on 27 February 2008, para. 8

6. See Explanatory Report to Article 15 of the Framework Convention, para. 80.

In the last biennium, the Advisory Committee observed that the formal structures for participation in public affairs are generally in place: in many states, national minorities are afforded institutionalised participation in decision-making either directly, for instance through allocated seats in parliament, or indirectly through consultative mechanisms, such as minority councils, or both. While the set-up for minority participation may differ, the Advisory Committee generally found that legislation enshrining such participation was in force. This is an important step forward compared to the earlier days of the Framework Convention, where the Advisory Committee frequently found that the lack of dedicated legislation was a major obstacle to the enjoyment of minority rights.

Having said this, it is also clear that the legislation in place does not in all cases enable all persons belonging to national minorities to effectively participate in decision-making. The Advisory Committee has been critical of thresholds hindering numerically smaller national minorities to effectively participate, for instance when formal legislation makes an arbitrary distinction between different groups.

Only rarely is legislation on effective participation evaluated as to whether it has the desired effect. This is regrettable as, on numerous occasions, the Advisory Committee has pointed out the importance of proper evaluation through independent research and the need to follow up the effect of such measures, with the participation of persons belonging to national minorities.

In its second Thematic Commentary on the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs the Advisory Committee emphasised that “it is not sufficient for states parties to formally provide for the participation of persons belonging to national minorities. They should also ensure that their participation has a substantial influence on decisions which are taken, and that there is, as far as possible, a shared ownership of the decisions taken.”⁷ In practice, this requirement is not always met, as evidenced by the fact that the Advisory Committee has learned of well-documented claims in many countries that consultation is not effective, for instance when the views of indigenous peoples on the use of the land they traditionally inhabit are neglected. Another example concerns ineffective participation schemes in the devising and implementation of national Roma integration strategies. To enable the most vulnerable communities to effectively participate in democratic processes, the Advisory Committee often reiterates that states must address basic obstacles, such as poverty, illiteracy or low levels of education, lack of identification documents, social exclusion and spatial segregation. The Advisory Committee has argued that such processes must also be democratic in their functioning. This includes capacity-building to facilitate negotiations with authorities or providing funding for meeting attendance.

Conclusion

The tendency to view democracy as only creating rights for the majority together with divisive and xenophobic discourse against national minorities threaten the right of persons belonging to national minorities to have their voice heard and influence

7. Ibid., para 19.

the decisions taken: a society that allows this to happen is the antithesis of a genuinely democratic society. Where divisions are constructed between different ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious groups, democracy is weakened. The backsliding of minority rights is a cause for real concern as it may threaten the inclusive nature of European societies, which is an important prerequisite for democratic security in Europe.⁸ The Advisory Committee stresses that an inclusive society that respects minority rights is a stronger, more robust society with less risk of conflicts.

Key measures to create a genuinely democratic society which includes all are to encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and promote mutual respect and understanding among all persons living in a state. This requires sustainable and substantive dialogue, both between persons belonging to national minorities and the majority population, and between persons belonging to national minorities and the authorities. These two dimensions of dialogue can only be achieved if effective channels for communication and consultation are in place.⁹

The monitoring mechanism set up under the Framework Convention is in itself a valuable process for facilitating dialogue between persons belonging to national minorities and the authorities of a state.¹⁰ During country visits, when the Advisory Committee meets with persons belonging to national minorities, non-governmental organisations, researchers and representatives of the authorities, the Committee can contribute to this dialogue in a very concrete way. Another way of contributing to the dialogue is provided by the follow-up activities in member states, where members of the Advisory Committee, together with representatives of the authorities and persons belonging to national minorities, can discuss concrete measures for implementing the recommendations resulting from the monitoring process. The reform of the monitoring procedures under the Framework Convention¹¹ has further strengthened this aspect of dialogue through the introduction of confidential dialogue between the Advisory Committee and the national authorities.

Looking ahead, the Advisory Committee stands ready to support efforts to create inclusive and stable democracies in Europe where persons belonging to national minorities and the majority work together to build a strong and inclusive society for all.

8. See Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (April 2019), Ready for future challenges – reinforcing the Council of Europe, p. 13.

9. See ACFC Thematic Commentary No. 2 on Effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and public affairs, adopted on 27 February 2008, para. 11.

10. *Ibid.*, para. 12.

11. 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, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 11 December 2019.



Part II

Country-specific monitoring by the ACFC

The monitoring procedure set up under the Framework Convention requires each state party to submit a first report within one year of entry into force of the Convention and, thereafter, a report every five years.¹² Having examined the periodical state report and visited the country in order to gather further information during meetings with the authorities, minority representatives and other stakeholders, the ACFC adopts its opinion on the implementation of the Framework Convention in the country. Since the adoption of Resolution CM/Res(2019) 49, a confidential dialogue between the state party concerned and the Advisory Committee takes place before an opinion is adopted. The final opinion is then sent to the authorities concerned for final comments. A party may consent to publication of the ACFC's opinion upon its adoption. Otherwise, the opinion will be made public when comments are received from the party, but no later than four months after its transmission, with a maximum two-month extension. Based on the ACFC's opinion, the Committee of Ministers adopts a resolution containing conclusions and recommendations in respect of the state concerned (see flow chart in Appendix 4).

In the two years covered by the present report, the ACFC received 19 reports and adopted 14 opinions during a total of six plenary meetings. Four draft opinions were also approved (prior to the confidential dialogue phase). Members of the ACFC's working groups took part in 14 country visits. In addition, four follow-up activities were organised in close partnership with the authorities concerned. Over the same period, the Committee of Ministers adopted 11 resolutions in respect of states parties to the Framework Convention.

12. Following CM Decision CM/Del/Dec(2018)1330/10.4e, for certain states parties the due date for submitting periodic state reports may have shortened or extended as a result of the introduction of the 5-year cycle.

Periodical state reports

With the receipt of a total of 19 state reports between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020, the fifth monitoring cycle is well under way and the fourth monitoring cycle is all but concluded. The last remaining 3rd cycle periodical state report was received on 11 July 2018. The following state reports were received between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020:

5th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Croatia, received on 2 April 2019
- ▶ Cyprus, received on 1 February 2019
- ▶ Czech Republic, received on 10 July 2019
- ▶ Denmark, received on 2 April 2019
- ▶ Estonia, received on 25 November 2019
- ▶ Finland, received on 1 February 2019
- ▶ Germany, on 31 January 2019
- ▶ Hungary, on 5 February 2019
- ▶ Italy, on 8 April 2019
- ▶ Malta, on 24 May 2019
- ▶ Republic of Moldova, on 22 May 2019
- ▶ Romania, on 8 November 2019
- ▶ Slovak Republic, on 31 January 2019
- ▶ Slovenia, on 28 February 2020
- ▶ Spain, on 1 April 2019

4th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Poland, on 9 April 2019
- ▶ Portugal, on 8 October 2018
- ▶ Serbia, on 18 September 2018

3rd monitoring cycle

- ▶ Netherlands, on 11 July 2018

The fifth monitoring cycle began in 2019. To this end, in summer 2018 states parties received information as regards the format of the state report as well as its due date.¹³

As already stated in its 11th activity report, the ACFC welcomes the fact that state reports are generally thorough and informative. It also appreciates the fact that in many states parties, civil society stakeholders – national minority organisations, human rights NGOs and national independent experts – are widely involved in the preparatory and drafting process. The ACFC invites those states parties that are not yet following such good practice to consider doing so in the fifth monitoring cycle. Furthermore, the ACFC considers that the inclusion of the views of civil society representatives in the final version of the report constitutes an added value and sends out a positive signal.

It is a cause for concern that not all states parties submit their report within the timeframe set by the Framework Convention. Timely submission is more than just a matter of complying with treaty obligations. It enables the ACFC to plan its work better, which in turn facilitates the task of the state party concerned. Moreover, late submission in a previous cycle does not extend the due date in the following one. The ACFC remains available to provide the states parties with assistance in the preparation of state reports.

Country visits

Between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020, ACFC delegations carried out 14 visits:

5th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Cyprus, in July 2019
- ▶ Croatia, in March 2020
- ▶ Denmark, in August/October 2019
- ▶ Finland, in March 2019
- ▶ Hungary, in December 2019
- ▶ Spain, in December 2019

4th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Bulgaria, in November 2019
- ▶ Ireland, in June 2018
- ▶ Poland, in July 2019
- ▶ Portugal, in May 2019

13. On 23 May 2018, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers, through its General Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H), was informed that the format for the 5th cycle state report would be identical to the format of the 4th cycle state report as already approved by the Committee of Ministers.

- ▶ Serbia, in March 2019

3rd monitoring cycle

- ▶ Georgia, in November 2018
- ▶ Montenegro, in November 2018
- ▶ Netherlands, in November 2018

Country visits form an indispensable part of the monitoring process. By meeting with minority representatives, authorities at the central, regional and local levels, representatives of parliaments and relevant institutions, including ombudspersons and equality bodies, as well as civil society organisations and independent national experts, the ACFC gains a more nuanced understanding of the situation in the country. Furthermore, visits not only generate a deeper insight in the country's situation but also offer a possibility of establishing dialogue with the authorities, minority organisations and academics, which goes beyond the timeframe of the visit itself. To this end, the ACFC visits not only the capital city of each country but also areas populated by persons belonging to national minorities, which is no less important and, in some countries, even crucial to evaluate the situation on the ground.

In 2019, the Advisory Committee visited Portugal, for the first time since the country ratified the Framework Convention in 2002. The Advisory Committee very much welcomes this opportunity. It observes that, with one exception, all states parties now agree to visits by the Advisory Committee. The understanding that the practice of country visits is in the interest of all involved in the monitoring process, including the state party itself, was given recognition through the explicit reference to country visits in Resolution CM/Res(2019)49.

Country-specific opinions

Between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020, the ACFC adopted a total of 14 opinions:

5th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Cyprus, on 7 November 2019
- ▶ Denmark, on 7 November 2019
- ▶ Finland, on 27 June 2019
- ▶ Hungary, on 26 May 2020 (following confidential dialogue)
- ▶ Spain, on 27 May 2020 (following confidential dialogue)

4th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Albania, on 11 October 2018
- ▶ Bulgaria, on 26 May 2020 (following confidential dialogue)

- ▶ Ireland, on 10 October 2018
- ▶ Poland, on 6 November 2019
- ▶ Portugal, 28 June 2019
- ▶ Serbia, on 26 June 2019

3rd monitoring cycle

- ▶ Georgia, on 7 March 2019
- ▶ Montenegro, on 7 March 2019
- ▶ Netherlands, on 6 March 2019

The Advisory Committee adopted the first three opinions following a confidential dialogue at its Plenary meeting in May 2020. Despite the circumstances related to Covid-19, all states parties concerned submitted their observations on time, which the Advisory Committee welcomes as a positive signal with regard to this newly introduced procedure. The Advisory Committee also notes that observations submitted chiefly pointed out inaccuracies of a factual nature or indicated elements requiring clarification, in accordance with Rule 37 of Resolution CM/Res(2019)49. The Advisory Committee is pleased to have the possibility of engaging in constructive dialogue and co-operation with the states parties and is confident that this will serve to further improve the quality and impact of its monitoring work. The ACFC has maintained its practice regarding the formulation of recommendations in the fifth cycle: recommendations for immediate action should be given priority; nevertheless, other recommendations are equally important, especially in the long term. An encouragement may well become a recommendation for immediate action in a subsequent opinion. This arrangement is intended to indicate to the state party where the priority for action should lie, but also what serious problems can still be anticipated and dealt with in time. The ACFC keeps track of measures implemented as a result of its recommendations and adapts its language to express increasing levels of urgency in cases where a recommendation is repeatedly not followed up.

Resolutions of the Committee of Ministers

Between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted a total of 11 resolutions:

5th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Finland, on 12 February 2020

4th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 12 June 2019
- ▶ Ireland, on 16 October 2019
- ▶ Lithuania, on 27 March 2019
- ▶ Malta, on 4 July 2018
- ▶ North Macedonia, on 27 March 2019
- ▶ Slovenia, on 24 October 2018
- ▶ Sweden, on 12 September 2018
- ▶ Switzerland, on 14 May 2019
- ▶ UNMIK/ Kosovo, on 3 July 2019

3rd monitoring cycle

- ▶ Netherlands, on 12 February 2020

The adoption of a resolution by the Committee of Ministers formally completes a given monitoring cycle. It is based on the opinion adopted by the ACFC and should therefore be read in conjunction with the opinion. It should be noted that while the Advisory Committee adopted 14 opinions in this biennium, the number of resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers during the same period decreased from 15 to 11 in comparison with the previous biennium. Some draft resolutions have been pending in the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Group on Human Rights for the past two years.

The ACFC and the Committee of Ministers pursued fruitful dialogue. The ACFC values in particular its constructive working relations with the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H). The President of the ACFC presents country-specific opinions to the GR-H, which provides an opportunity to exchange information on all issues of importance to the Framework Convention and its monitoring mechanism. This practice also reiterates the multilateral dimension of the monitoring mechanism, transcending the scope of bilateral or interstate relations.

The ACFC

At its 63rd meeting in October 2018, the ACFC elected a new Bureau: Mr Besarion Bokhashvili (member in respect of Georgia) as President, Ms Edita Žiobienė (member in respect of Lithuania) as First Vice-President and Ms Marie B. Hagsgård (member in respect of Sweden) as Second Vice-President.

The ACFC works as a collegial body, and its opinions and thematic commentaries, adopted at its plenary sessions, are the outcome of extensive discussions and exchanges. As stipulated in the Framework Convention and Resolution CM/Res(2019)49, independence, impartiality, experience, availability and expertise on minority issues are prerequisites for appointment as an ACFC member. In addition, a range of expertise is necessary for the ACFC to work efficiently, ranging from the legal field, political science and international relations to history and anthropology, linguistics and sociology. Persons belonging to minority and majority communities, with experience in academia, civil society or the judiciary, serve on the ACFC and contribute to its collective expertise. Proficiency in at least one of the Council of Europe's official languages (English and French) is a prerequisite, and other factors such as gender balance are of importance too. These considerations need to be consistently taken into account in the selection of candidates and elections to the list of experts eligible to serve on the ACFC.

The ACFC also welcomes the election of a number of experts to the list of additional members of the ACFC in the period covered by the present activity report. This allows the ACFC to examine implementation of the Framework Convention in most states parties in a composition including an independent expert member appointed in respect of the state party concerned. The ACFC encourages states parties to the Framework Convention to nominate experts for election to the list of experts eligible to serve on the ACFC, if they have not yet done so.



Members of the Advisory committee and the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – November 2019

Part III

Transparency of the process and dialogue

Publicity of the ACFC's opinions

Between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020, a total of 16 ACFC opinions were made public:

5th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Denmark, on 29 January 2020
- ▶ Finland, on 31 October 2019

4th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Albania, on 19 March 2019
- ▶ Azerbaijan, on 4 February 2019
- ▶ Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 3 October 2018
- ▶ Ireland, on 30 June 2019
- ▶ Lithuania, on 8 January 2019
- ▶ Poland, on 23 January 2020
- ▶ Portugal, on 27 January 2020
- ▶ Russian Federation, on 15 January 2019
- ▶ Serbia, on 18 December 2019
- ▶ Switzerland, on 10 December 2018

3rd monitoring cycle

- ▶ Georgia, on 5 September 2019
- ▶ Latvia, on 15 October 2018
- ▶ Montenegro, on 2 October 2019
- ▶ Netherlands, on 5 September 2019

The adoption of Resolution CM/Res (2019)49 changed the existing rules governing the publication of ACFC opinions. A state party may still consent to publication upon adoption of the opinion. Otherwise, the opinion will be made public when comments are received from the state party, but no later than four months after its transmission to the party. The Advisory Committee shall take into account a reasoned request submitted in writing by the state party concerned to postpone the publication of the opinion if necessary, but in any event for no longer than two months. The Resolution also provides that the comments of the party concerned in relation to the opinion of the Advisory Committee as well as the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee of Ministers shall be made public.

The publication of an opinion upon its adoption by the Advisory Committee, or soon after, without waiting for the deadline for comments to expire is a good practice as it ensures that the opinion enters the public domain when it is most topical. It also makes the monitoring process more transparent. Furthermore, during the period under review, many states parties translated the opinion into their official language(s) and into minority languages. Thanks to these translations, work to implement the Framework Convention has become more widely known and better understood by the persons belonging to national minorities and the public at large. This is an important means of promoting dialogue at national level on access to minority rights.

States parties have the opportunity to submit their final comments on the ACFC's opinion within four months (not including the permitted two-month extension) of the transmission of the opinion. The governments' comments are an important part of the monitoring process as they continue the dialogue engaged in with the authorities during the visit. They provide answers to some of the ACFC's findings, point out factual changes, which have occurred since the adoption of the opinion, and address any other relevant issues. The timely publication of opinions and government comments ensures that the findings and recommendations are not outdated when published and enables the authorities to quickly get down to work on implementing the recommendations.

Follow-up activities

Between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020, four follow-up events were held in cooperation with the ACFC. Two follow-up activities (Lithuania and Portugal) had to be postponed owing to the COVID-19 outbreak.

4th monitoring cycle

- ▶ Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 12 April 2019
- ▶ Finland, on 11 December 2018
- ▶ Sweden, on 13 November 2018
- ▶ Switzerland, on 27 November 2019

The ACFC considers monitoring as an open-ended process where each cycle builds on the previous one. The ACFC has always encouraged states parties to organise follow-up activities in between cycles. Follow-up meetings lead to a better understanding of

Committee of Ministers recommendations and those of the ACFC. It is also a unique opportunity to exchange on how to implement recommendations, to clarify them when necessary and to offer comparative and impartial advice on implementation of the Framework Convention.

The four follow-ups organised between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020 confirmed the value of such activities as a platform for open exchange between authorities, national minorities and other stakeholders. The ACFC will continue to seek support for organising them and encourage states parties to hold such events on a more regular basis as an essential step in the monitoring cycle.

Outreach and media presence

ACFC members continued to devote considerable efforts to bring the Framework Convention into the public eye. Through interviews on national radio and TV and in print media, often coinciding with visits or follow-up events, members of the ACFC have addressed topical issues of concern to national minorities, thus building public knowledge of how the Framework Convention is applied on the ground.

On 18-19 June 2018, the ACFC, together with the Language Charter, organised a high-level international conference in Strasbourg under the auspices of the Croatian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers to mark the entry into force of both instruments 20 years previously. The conference underlined the contribution of the Framework Convention to managing diversity in European societies: legislation on minority rights has been adopted, school curricula have been redesigned to make space for languages spoken by persons belonging to minorities and new forms of minority participation have been established. It was also reiterated that access to minority rights as an integral component of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the creation of appropriate societal conditions enabling persons belonging to national minorities to freely express, preserve and develop their identities remain one of the essential elements of stability, democratic security and peace across Europe, in the 21st century too. The conclusions and final remarks by the rapporteur of the conference, Mr Philippe Boillat, were referred to as a source of inspiration by many delegations participating in the reform process culminating in the adoption of Resolution CM/Res (2019)49.



Plenary meeting via videoconferencing – May 2020

Part IV

Other activities

The ACFC continued its thematic work in the period covered by this biennial report. A working group on religious rights analysed how, in the past monitoring cycles, the Advisory Committee has dealt with questions of freedom of religion and the right of national minorities to establish religious institutions, organisations and associations. In addition, the ACFC and its Secretariat have focused their energy and resources on developing research and drafting tools.

A new HUDOC case law database dedicated to the Framework Convention was put online in July 2019. It gives fast access to the entire production of the Advisory Committee over the last 22 years, but also to the final comments of the states, and the Committee of Ministers Resolutions.

A comprehensive sourcebook has been developed, for internal use only, compiling all the most important elements of case-law developed by the Advisory Committee under each of the provisions of the Framework Convention. A glossary is being developed to ensure that the terminology used is consistent.

Both tools have substantially improved the efficiency of the monitoring process on the Advisory Committee side and will continue to do so in the future. After only a few months of use, they are already proving to be indispensable instruments to ensure consistency of assessments as well as clarity and quality of findings and recommendations.



Member of the ACFC Aliona Grossu at the European Regional Forum on Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities – May 2019

Part V

Co-operation with other bodies

The ACFC believes that co-operation with civil society and academia as well as with Council of Europe and other international bodies active in the field of minority protection is of the utmost importance (see Appendix 5).

Co-operation activities within the Council of Europe

The ACFC participates in the Secretary General's annual informal meeting of the presidents of Council of Europe human rights monitoring bodies aimed at supporting their work, strengthening co-operation and ensuring that effective follow-up is given to their findings. Regular exchanges are also pursued with the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Parliamentary Assembly.

The ACFC also continues its co-operation with the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), as well as with the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (COMEX). No parallel visits of two or three monitoring bodies were organised during this biennium. However, the respective secretariats continued to work closely together, shared practical experiences and contacts and co-ordinated the timing of their respective visits in order to lighten the burden on states and representatives of national authorities.

Important steps have been taken to enhance co-operation with the European Court of Human Rights. In November 2019, the President of the Court, accompanied by a delegation of Court Judges, held an exchange of views with the ACFC. The Court subsequently nominated a focal point for minority rights in its registry and now plans to publish an enhanced factsheet on the Court's case-law on national minorities on the Court's website.

The Advisory Committee also co-operated with the European Commission for Democracy through Law ('Venice Commission'). Venice Commission experts with extensive knowledge of the Framework Convention sat on a number of Venice Commission working groups to assess national legislation pertaining to minority rights.¹⁴

14. North Macedonia - Opinion on the Law on the Use of Languages, adopted by the Venice Commission in December 2019; Ukraine - Opinion on the Law ensuring the Functioning of the Ukrainian language as State Language, adopted by the Venice Commission in December 2019; Latvia - Opinion on the recent amendments to the legislation on education in minority languages, adopted by the Venice Commission in February 2020.

Co-operation with other international institutions

The ACFC continued to regularly engage with other international institutions involved in minority rights protection, in particular the Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE). The High Commissioner addressed the ACFC during its February 2018 plenary to take stock of common challenges and reflect on the way forward in implementing minority rights. In addition, the second vice-president of the ACFC spoke at an HCNM conference marking the 20th Anniversary of The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life, in Lund, Sweden, on 14 November 2019.

Regular and fruitful co-operation with institutions such as the European Union, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as UN treaty bodies, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and the Forum on Minority Issues, also remains of key importance to the ACFC. Noteworthy in this context, were a minority rights workshop organised during the 2018 FRA Fundamental Rights Forum by the Advisory Committee, the hearing on 3 September 2018 on minimum standards for minorities in the EU in the European Parliament and the exchange with the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Professor Dr Fernand de Varennes, on 8 October 2018.

Co-operation with civil society

Co-operation with civil society organisations remains a key priority for the ACFC. The monitoring process provides an opportunity to widely engage with minority associations and human rights NGOs (country visits and follow-up seminars, submission of alternative/shadow reports and replies to the ACFC's specific questions etc).

Furthermore, the ACFC considers the alternative/shadow reports provided by civil society as essential sources of information to gain an overview of the national situation as well as insight into specific areas of concern. The ACFC encourages civil society organisations to continue providing as much information as possible on the state of implementation of the FCNM in states parties.

Appendix 1

Signatures and ratifications of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (CETS No. 157)

Treaty open for signature by Council of Europe member states and up until the date of entry into force by any other state so invited by the Committee of Ministers.

Opening for signature

Place: Strasbourg

Date: 1/2/1995

Entry into force

Conditions: 12 Ratifications.

Date: 1/2/1998

Status as of: 31/5/2020

Member states of the Council of Europe

	Signature	Ratification	Entry into force	Notes	R.	D.	A.	T.	C.	O.
Albania	29/6/1995	28/9/1999	1/1/2000							
Andorra										
Armenia	25/7/1997	20/7/1998	1/11/1998							
Austria	1/2/1995	31/3/1998	1/7/1998			X				
Azerbaijan		26/6/2000 a	1/10/2000			X				
Belgium	31/7/2001				X					
Bosnia and Herzegovina		24/2/2000 a	1/6/2000							
Bulgaria	9/10/1997	7/5/1999	1/9/1999			X				
Croatia	6/11/1996	11/10/1997	1/2/1998							
Cyprus	1/2/1995	4/6/1996	1/2/1998							
Czech Republic	28/4/1995	18/12/1997	1/4/1998							
Denmark	1/2/1995	22/9/1997	1/2/1998			X				
Estonia	2/2/1995	6/1/1997	1/2/1998			X				
Finland	1/2/1995	3/10/1997	1/2/1998							
France										
Georgia	21/1/2000	22/12/2005	1/4/2006							
Germany	11/5/1995	10/9/1997	1/2/1998			X				
Greece	22/9/1997									
Hungary	1/2/1995	25/9/1995	1/2/1998							
Iceland	1/2/1995									
Ireland	1/2/1995	7/5/1999	1/9/1999							
Italy	1/2/1995	3/11/1997	1/3/1998							

	Signature	Ratification	Entry into force	Notes	R.	D.	A.	T.	C.	O.
Latvia	11/5/1995	6/6/2005	1/10/2005			X				
Liechtenstein	1/2/1995	18/11/1997	1/3/1998			X				
Lithuania	1/2/1995	23/3/2000	1/7/2000							
Luxembourg	20/7/1995					X				
Malta	11/5/1995	10/2/1998	1/6/1998		X	X				
Republic of Moldova	13/7/1995	20/11/1996	1/2/1998							
Monaco										
Montenegro		11/5/2001 a	6/6/2006	*						
Netherlands	1/2/1995	16/2/2005	1/6/2005			X		X		
North Macedonia	25/7/1996	10/4/1997	1/2/1998			X				
Norway	1/2/1995	17/3/1999	1/7/1999							
Poland	1/2/1995	20/12/2000	1/4/2001			X				
Portugal	1/2/1995	7/5/2002	1/9/2002							
Romania	1/2/1995	11/5/1995	1/2/1998							
Russian Federation	28/2/1996	21/8/1998	1/12/1998			X				
San Marino	11/5/1995	5/12/1996	1/2/1998							
Serbia		11/5/2001 a	1/9/2001	*						
Slovak Republic	1/2/1995	14/9/1995	1/2/1998							
Slovenia	1/2/1995	25/3/1998	1/7/1998			X				
Spain	1/2/1995	1/9/1995	1/2/1998						X	
Sweden	1/2/1995	9/2/2000	1/6/2000			X				
Switzerland	1/2/1995	21/10/1998	1/2/1999			X				
Turkey										
Ukraine	15/9/1995	26/1/1998	1/5/1998							
United Kingdom	1/2/1995	15/1/1998	1/5/1998							

Total number of signatures not followed by ratifications: 4

Total number of ratifications/accessions: 39

Notes:

* Date of accession by the state union of Serbia and Montenegro.

a: accession; s: signature without reservation as to ratification; su: succession; r: signature "ad referendum". R.: reservations; D.: declarations; A.: authorities; T.: territorial application; C.: communication; O.: objection

Source: Treaty Office on www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/home.

Kosovo* is subject to a specific monitoring arrangement in conformity with the 2004 Agreement between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Council of Europe.

Appendix 2

Geographical scope of application of the Framework Convention

States parties to the Framework Convention

Albania	Estonia	Malta	San Marino
Armenia	Finland	Republic of Moldova	Serbia
Austria	Georgia	Montenegro	Slovak Republic
Azerbaijan	Germany	Netherlands	Slovenia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Hungary	North Macedonia	Spain
Bulgaria	Ireland	Norway	Sweden
Croatia	Italy	Poland	Switzerland
Cyprus	Latvia	Portugal	Ukraine
Czech Republic	Liechtenstein	Romania	United Kingdom
Denmark	Lithuania	Russian Federation	

States having signed but not ratified the Framework Convention

Belgium	Iceland
Greece	Luxembourg

States having neither signed nor ratified the Framework Convention

Andorra	Monaco
France	Turkey

Kosovo* is subject to a specific monitoring arrangement in conformity with the 2004 Agreement between the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Council of Europe.

Appendix 3

Composition of the ACFC between 1 June 2018 and 31 May 2020

Mr Besarion BOKHASHVILI (Georgia) – *President*

Ms Edita ŽIOBIENĖ (Lithuania) – *First Vice-President*

Ms Marie B. HAGSGÅRD (Sweden) – *Second Vice-President*

Ms Evis ALIMEHMETI (Albania)

Mr Goran BAŠIĆ (Serbia)

Ms Olga BUTKEVYCH (Ukraine)

Mr Martin COLLINS (Ireland)

Ms Laura-Maria CRĂCIUNEAN-TATU (Romania)

Mr Giuseppe FALBO (Switzerland)

Ms Melina GRIZO (North Macedonia)

Ms Aliona GROSSU (Moldova, Republic of)

Mr Sławomir ŁODZIŃSKI (Poland)

Mr Arayik NAVOYAN (Armenia)

Ms Antonija PETRIČUŠIĆ (Croatia)

Mr Detlev REIN (Germany)

Ms Marieke SANDERS-ten HOLTE (the Netherlands), who resigned and was replaced by Mr Bob DEEN (the Netherlands) in February 2019

Ms Elisabeth SÁNDOR-SZALAY (Hungary)

Mr Petter WILLE (Norway)

Appendix 4

Monitoring arrangements under the Framework Convention



Appendix 5

Participation in events related to the protection of minority rights (1 June 2018 – 31 May 2020)

Conference on 'Minorities and Minority Languages in a Changing Europe' 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, organised under the Croatian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, Strasbourg, 18-19 June 2018

Annual Conference of the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), Leeuwarden, 21 June 2018

10th Anniversary of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-state Relations: New Challenges and Lessons Learned', organised by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Udine, 15-16 July 2018

Meeting with staff from the European Commission for a general briefing on the FCNM, organised by the CoE Brussels Office, and hearing with the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) on 'Minimum standards for minorities in the EU', Brussels, 3 September 2018

Seminar on 'National Minorities and the state: from exclusive identities to multi-layered forms of identities' organised in the framework of the FRA Human Rights Forum, Vienna, 25 September 2018

UN Forum on Minority Issues, Geneva, 29-30 November 2018

Informal Brainstorming on the format of 5th Cycle Opinions of the ACFC, 31 January 2019, Strasbourg

Meeting of the Belgian Group of Experts on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), Brussels, 12 March 2019

European Regional Forum on Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities, organised by UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Brussels, 6-7 May 2019

ECRI's 25th Anniversary Conference, Paris, 27 September 2019

International Conference -Towards the Concept of One Society for All and Interculturalism, Skopje, 3 October 2019

Council of Europe Children's Rights Conference "Redefining Power: Strengthening the rights of the child as the key to a future-proof Europe", Strasbourg, 13-14 November 2019

Conference marking the 20th Anniversary of The Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life, Lund, 14 November 2019

12th session of the Forum on Minority Issues, Geneva, 28-29 November 2019

Economic participation and inclusion of national minorities – an expert discussion, OSCE HCNM, video conference, 30 April 2020

Minorities and COVID-19: A webinar series of the Institute for Minority Rights, EURAC Research, Episode 1: COVID-19 and its effects on minorities, 13 May 2020

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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