

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Recommendation 222 (2007)¹ Language education in regional or minority languages

1. The Congress has long recognised the close relation between language and culture and the need to support and sustain regional or minority languages. It was this conviction which led to the introduction of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148).

2. Since the charter has been in operation, the Committee of Experts which monitors its implementation has been steadily increasing its expertise in the field and the charter is now recognised as a key legal instrument for regional or minority languages in the European area.

3. While the number of states parties to the charter continues to grow, the Congress is concerned that more states have not ratified the charter. Some states which undertook to ratify it as part of their commitments for accession to the Council of Europe have so far failed to do so; others signed the charter some years ago, yet do not appear to have progressed towards ratification.

4. An analysis of the reports of the Committee of Experts with regard to language education has highlighted the benefits for educational authorities of introducing detailed descriptions of their educational models for regional or minority language education, of increasing consistency in their treatment and implementation of the charter and of taking further measures to consolidate and develop regional or minority language teaching in their regions, thereby continuing to progress towards a European space where regional or minority language education is systematically provided in a coherent fashion.

5. The Congress also believes that Council of Europe member states could benefit from applying the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to regional or minority language teaching.

6. The Congress believes that the principles enshrined in the charter are relevant to all Council of Europe member states, not just those which have ratified it to date. It therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe urge governments:

a. to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages if they have not already done so;

b. with regard to educational models:

i. to invite the competent authority to write a description of the ratification levels in terms of possible educational

models, the number of teaching hours in and of the regional or minority language and finally the target population (all pupils in areas with regional or minority languages or only speakers of these languages);

ii. to ensure that the teaching in or of the regional or minority language provides the basis for its effective transmission;

iii. to involve families in the transmission of the regional or minority language, in particular before pre-school education;

iv. to ensure that the education system provides continuity for education in the regional or minority language;

v. to ensure that education in the regional or minority language is generally available throughout the territory where that language is currently used;

vi. to offer teaching in or of the regional or minority language in territories where the language has traditionally been used;

vii. to determine a minimum number of pupils needed for the establishment of a regional or minority language class, which is lower than the threshold for a class in the official language;

viii. to teach the regional or minority language as part of the curriculum;

ix. to guarantee the availability of the chosen model of regional or minority language education;

x. to guarantee continuity in the provision of regional or minority language education in pre-primary, primary and secondary education;

xi. to guarantee the necessary resources for schools and pupils to deal with differences between the language skills of regional or minority language speakers and pupils that learn the regional or minority language as a second language;

xii. to give speakers of regional or minority languages a guaranteed option for education where that language is used as the language of instruction, within a reasonable distance from their home (those states that have ratified the charter at level i and level ii of Article 8, sub-paragraphs *a* to *f* of the charter);

xiii. to provide all pupils living in the area of the regional or minority language with some basic instruction in that language (those states that have ratified the charter at level i and level ii of Article 8, sub-paragraphs *a* to *f* of the charter);

c. with regard to educational goals and teaching materials:

i. to use the CEFR for the description of education goals in the regional or minority language;

ii. to provide sufficient high-quality teaching materials for teaching the regional or minority language based on the CEFR;

d. with regard to teacher training:

- i. to provide enough teachers for the teaching of regional or minority languages with sufficient proficiency in the minority language and the didactical skills for teaching in a multilingual setting;
- ii. to provide high-quality initial teacher training focused both on high-quality teaching in a multilingual setting and on language proficiency in the regional or minority language;
- iii. to provide for further teacher training courses focused on bringing knowledge and skills related to high-quality teaching in a multilingual setting up to date;
- iv. to provide further teacher training courses focused on improving the teachers' language proficiency in the regional or minority language;
- v. to use the CEFR to describe the desired language skills of the teachers in the regional or minority language;
- vi. to guarantee that only teachers who are qualified to teach the regional or minority language are employed to teach the language;

e. with regard to inspection:

- i. to organise a supervisory body, composed of inspectors with a thorough knowledge of the regional or minority language and the characteristics of high-quality instruction in a

multilingual setting, to monitor education in and through the language;

- ii. to give this body the task of publishing periodic reports on the quality and results of education concerning the regional or minority language;

f. with regard to the legal position:

- i. to ensure the parental right to opt for education in the regional or minority language (as a subject and as a language of instruction) within the area where the language is spoken, specifying the minimum number of pupils required for organising such education;
- ii. to prescribe minimum standards for lessons in the regional or minority language and a minimum number of teaching hours;
- iii. to guarantee continuity in teaching the regional or minority language during compulsory education;
- iv. to guarantee a clear division of responsibilities concerning regional or minority language education between the central, regional and local authorities.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 30 May 2007 and adopted by the Congress on 1 June 2007, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPR(14)3REC, draft recommendation presented by A. J. Mulder (Netherlands, R, SOC) and A. Tamsamani (Belgium, R, SOC), rapporteurs).