

# Impressions on minorities and minority languages in a changing Europe

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities together with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages constitute the Council of Europe's commitment to the protection and promotion of the rights of national minorities, and the languages they use.

Parties to the Framework Convention undertake to promote full and effective equality of persons belonging to minorities in all areas of economic, social, public and cultural life together with conditions that will allow them to express, preserve and develop their culture, religion and language.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages obliges states parties to actively promote the use of regional or minority languages in education, courts, administration, media, culture, economic and social life, as well as in cross-border co-operation.

National minorities, and their languages as expressions of cultural wealth and diversity, are an integral part of Europe's cultural heritage, and their protection and promotion contribute to the building of a Europe based on democracy and cultural diversity.

[www.coe.int/minorities](http://www.coe.int/minorities)

[www.coe.int/minlang](http://www.coe.int/minlang)

ENG



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[www.coe.int](http://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.

Collected at the high-level conference organised under the Croatian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers 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

Strasbourg, 18 and 19 June 2018



” After 20 years of the implementation of the charter good practices have been developed; awareness of the existence of plurilingual and multicultural societies has been raised; “new” traditional languages have been recognised; languages have been assisted in their efforts to survive and develop.

*Vesna Crnić-Grotić,  
Chair of the Committee of Experts  
of the European Charter for Regional  
or Minority Languages*

” It is up to all of us – national governments, minorities and civil society – to ensure that envisaged measures are indeed implemented everywhere, including at the local level, while continuing to develop multilateral responses to the challenges that lie ahead.

*Marija Pejčinović Burić,  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister  
of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia,  
Chair of the Committee of Ministers*

” In light of recent challenges that Europe has faced, and the rise of extreme nationalism and xenophobia, the protection of European minorities’ rights must remain a priority today. Otherwise, we put at risk the benefits for everyone that come from living and working together in a spirit of unity. We are fortunate at the Council of Europe that so many member states recognise that need.

*Thorbjørn Jagland,  
Secretary General of the Council of Europe*



” Protection of national minorities based solely on reciprocity – the underlying principle of bilateralism – runs the risk of undermining the level of protection of minority rights. In most of these cases, it is the lowest common denominator on either side of the relevant border that is taken as the benchmark. It can never be repeated often enough that multilateralism is a tool for preventing conflicts.

*Philippe Boillat,  
Rapporteur of the conference*



” The Framework Convention is a pretty robust legal instrument. With its relevance confirmed on a daily basis, its multilateral approach to minority rights remains the sole feasible manner in which to prevent national minority issues from becoming a source of discontent between European states.

*Edita Žiobienė,  
Interim Chair of the Advisory Committee on the Framework  
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*

” A diverse world isn’t a burden. Knowing and being proud of your roots makes you able to open your heart to others without feeling threatened. I stand strong enough to find joy in others being themselves, just as they are and want to be.

*Josefina Skerk,  
Member of the Swedish Sami Parliament  
and Legal Advisor at Civil Rights  
Defenders, Saepmie, Sweden*

