

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 2 October 2019

ACFC/MR(2019)002

**65th meeting
Strasbourg, 24-28 June 2019**

***Council of Europe – Agora building
Room G06***

MEETING REPORT

Item 1: Opening of the meeting

1. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities held its 65th meeting from 24-28 June 2019 in Strasbourg. Mr Besarion Bokhashvili, President of the Advisory Committee, opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the Advisory Committee.

Item 2: Adoption of the Order of Business

2. The Order of Business, as reproduced in Annex II, was adopted with two modifications: the item on the ACFC's glossary was moved to the Advisory Committee's 66th plenary meeting in November 2019, and an item on the state of affairs of the FCNM reform was added.

Item 3: Approval of the report of the 64th meeting of the Advisory Committee

3. Having examined the report of its 64th meeting, the Advisory Committee adopted the final text of the report as reproduced in document ACFC/MR(2019)001.

Item 4: Report from the Bureau

4. The President indicated that no decisions based on Rule 10 of the ACFC's Rules of Procedure were taken by the ACFC's Bureau between the February and June 2019 plenaries. The President informed the members of the Committee about his presentation of the opinions on Albania and Ireland to the CM GR-H on 20 June 2019 as well as developments concerning the new to be established intergovernmental anti-discrimination committee.

Item 5: Update by the Secretariat

5. The Secretariat informed the Advisory Committee about developments in the Committee of Ministers (the state of negotiations of several country resolutions and the state of the FCNM reform following the GRH meeting of 20 June 2019) as well as other constituent parts of the Council of Europe (the return of the Russian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly).

6. As to staffing, the Advisory Committee was informed about the upcoming departure of Mr Ben Freeman. Mr Freeman was thanked for his outstanding work, including on the Montenegro Opinion, since March 2018 when he joined the Council of Europe as an intern. He was wished all the best with his Law studies.

Item 6: Follow-up events

7. A follow-up took place to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12 April 2019 and follow ups to Slovenia and Switzerland are in the process of planning. The Advisory Committee was also informed about the possibility of a follow up event in Portugal towards the end of 2019, including information meetings to Portugal, in order to introduce the Framework Convention to broader groups in the Portuguese society.

Item 7: Human Rights Database (HUDOC)

8. The Secretariat gave a demonstration of the working of the Human Rights Database (HUDOC) for the FCNM. It will look into the possibility of given ACFC members access to the confidential section. The Secretariat will also draw up guidelines on proper HUDOC use.

Item 8: Exchange on source book of ACFC principles

9. The Advisory Committee was informed about the progress made by the source book working group. A document containing the principles selected so far (Articles 3, 4 and 5) was distributed. The working group currently works on Articles 6, 7 and 8 and will present an updated source book at the next meeting. At the end of the meeting, members were asked to make suggestions which principles contained in the Opinions adopted at the meeting should be included into the source book.

Item 9: United Nations Regional Minority Forum

10. Ms Grossu reported on the Regional Minority Forum on 6 and 7 May 2019 in Brussels, one of the three Regional Forums organized by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, Mr Fernand de Varennes. She informed the Advisory Committee that a follow up will be given to the three Regional Fora at the annual Minority Forum in 28-29 November in Geneva.

Item 10: Gender Equality

11. The ACFC's 5th monitoring cycle has gender equality as special field of attention. To ensure States Parties are aware of this focus, the ACFC decided that in case reminder letters are sent, the opportunity should be used to prompt member states about the requested information concerning gender equality.

Item 11: 2018-2020 Biennial report/ Establishment of a preparatory Working Group

12. Following a decision at the ACFC's 64th plenary meeting, several members proposed themes for the 2018-2020 biennial report substantive analysis on "Trends and challenges for minority protection in Europe". After discussion, the Advisory Committee decided on the theme 'democracy' and a drafting group consisting of four members and the FCNM Secretariat was established.

Item 12: FCNM Reform

13. On 27 June 2019, Ambassador Keith McBean, Chair of the GR-H, and Mr Jeroen Schokkenbroek, Director of Anti-Discrimination, presented the FCNM Reform package as under discussion in the Committee of Ministers. In general, the proposed reforms were welcomed by the members of the Advisory Committee and several members asked questions, including about the nature of the confidential dialogue as well as the available staff resources and the role of the ACFC's Bureau in the procedure for election of the ACFC membership. The President took the opportunity to thank Ambassador McBean, who will be ending his mission to Strasbourg, for his commitment and support.

Item 13: Examination of draft opinions and their adoption

14. The Advisory Committee examined the draft 4th cycle opinion on Serbia. During the plenary session, it decided on 26 June 2019, in the light of the final version of the draft opinion, to vote on the text.

15. The voting was organised in accordance with Rule 34 of the Advisory Committee's Rules of Procedure, stipulating that opinions should be adopted by a majority of ordinary Advisory Committee members.

16. The 4th cycle opinion on Serbia was adopted unanimously on 26 June 2019.

17. The Advisory Committee examined the draft 5th cycle opinion on Finland. During the plenary session, it decided on 27 June 2019 in the light of the final version of the draft opinion, to vote on the text.

18. The voting was organised in accordance with Rule 34 of the Advisory Committee's Rules of Procedure, stipulating that opinions should be adopted by a majority of ordinary Advisory Committee members.

19. The 5th cycle Opinion on Finland was adopted unanimously on 27 June 2019.

20. The Advisory Committee examined the draft 4th cycle opinion on Portugal. During the plenary session, it decided on 28 June 2019, in the light of the final version of the draft opinion, to vote on the text.

21. The voting was organised in accordance with Rule 34 of the Advisory Committee's Rules of Procedure, stipulating that opinions should be adopted by a majority of ordinary Advisory Committee members.

22. The 4th cycle opinion on Portugal was adopted unanimously on 28 June 2019.

Item 14: Composition of Working Groups/ Planning of visits

23. The Advisory Committee agreed to a change in the composition of the working group on Bulgaria.

Item 15: Discussion about the upcoming opinions/ country visits

24. Given the presence of a national member, the Advisory Committee held an exchange on possible issues the working group on Poland may want to consider during their upcoming country visit.

Item 16: Discussion about the possibility of a new Thematic Commentary

25. Exchanges take place on the possibility of a Thematic Commentary on religious rights under the Framework Convention. Several members express an interest for becoming members of a working group exploring the subject and to start working on a framework. In due course, a brainstorm with external experts shall be organised.

Item 17: Exchange of views with CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Dunja Mijatovic

26. On 25 June 2019, the Commissioner informs the members of the Committee about her work in areas of interest to the Committee, in particular the area of languages. Ms Mijatovic indicated that she is working on a Human Rights Commentary on Languages, which will be shared with the FCNM Secretariat for comments. Other matters discussed concern access to areas of conflict and Artificial Intelligence.

Item 18: Any Other business

27. The Advisory Committee agreed with the proposal by the President of the European Court of Human Rights for an exchange of views during its November plenary.