



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

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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Sixth Report submitted by Armenia

**Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the
Framework Convention for the Protection of
National Minorities – received on 16 September 2024**

**6TH CYCLE PERIODIC REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
PURSUANT TO THE PARAGRAPH 2 OF ARTICLE 25-TH OF THE «FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES» OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 25 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe (hereinafter: the Framework Convention), the Republic of Armenia submits its 6th periodic report on the implementation of the Framework Convention (hereinafter: the Report).

In line with paragraph 21 of Resolution 10 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (97), the Report includes information on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention and the measures taken between 2020 and 2024.

The Report was drafted in accordance with the format adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in CM/RESCMN(2023)6, covering measures taken to implement the Resolution (as contained in Section 1 of the present Report) and the provisions of the Framework Convention (as contained in Section 2 of the present Report).

The preparation of the Report was coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Armenia in collaboration with the Ministries of Justice, Education, Science, Culture, and Sports, Internal Affairs, Labor and Social Affairs, Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, Economy, Environment, the Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia, the Human Rights Defender's Office, the Prosecutor's Office, the Statistical Committee, the Television and Radio Commission, and the Public Broadcaster Council of Armenia.

The draft Report was also distributed among representatives of non-governmental organizations representing national minorities included in the Council of National Minorities of the Republic of Armenia.

SECTION 1.

Measures under Resolution No. CM/ResCMN(2023)6 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities by Armenia

- 1. Effectively protect the right to freedom of expression of persons belonging to national minorities and their representatives according to international human rights standards and take effective measures to combat the chilling effect on freedom of expression.**

Article 42 of the Constitution of Armenia provides the right to freedom of expression. The freedom of the press, radio, television and other means of information shall be guaranteed. The State shall guarantee the activities of independent public television and radio offering diversity of informational, educational, cultural and entertainment programmes.

Freedom of expression of opinion may be restricted only by law, for the purpose of state security, protecting public order, health and morals or the honor and good reputation of others and other basic rights and freedoms thereof.

Article 7 of the Law "On Mass Media" of Armenia prohibits the dissemination of classified information as defined by law, or information that promotes criminally punishable acts, as well as information that infringes upon the privacy of an individual's personal or family life. It is forbidden to disseminate information obtained through video or audio recording conducted without notifying the individual, in cases where the person reasonably expected to be out of sight or earshot of the recording party and had taken adequate measures to ensure their privacy, except where those measures were evidently insufficient. The dissemination of information related to one's personal or family life, as well as the types of information mentioned in the second part of this Article, is permitted if it is necessary for the protection of public interest.

The Law "On Freedom of Information" outlines restrictions on access to information. The holder of the information may refuse to provide it if it:

- contains state, official, banking, or commercial secrets;
- violates the privacy of a person's personal or family life, including the privacy of correspondence, telephone conversations, postal, telegraphic, and other communications;
- contains preliminary investigation data not subject to publication;
- discloses data requiring restricted access due to professional confidentiality (e.g., medical, notarial, or legal secrets);
- violates copyright and/or related rights.

The "Press Freedom Index" published by "Reporters Without Borders" (RSF), which assesses the working conditions of journalists in 180 countries and territories worldwide, highlights that

Armenia has improved its ranking, moving from 61st in 2020 to 43rd in 2024. Armenia holds a leading position in the South Caucasus region for freedom of speech.

According to the 2023 Report on the Activities of the Human Rights Defender of Armenia, the majority of complaints submitted to the Ombudsman's office by individuals belonging to national minorities did not concern violations of rights or discrimination based on nationality. This includes the absence of complaints regarding any restrictions on the right to free expression of persons belonging to national minorities and their representatives.

2. Ensure that information about the culture, traditions, history, religion and language of national minorities and their contribution to society is included in school curricula, and accompanying teacher training and teaching materials. In this context, evaluation of the outcome of the pilot curriculum in Tavush should be carried out in consultation with persons belonging to national minorities.

On 4 February 2021, the Government of Armenia approved a **new state standard for general education**, outlining the state's expectations and requirements for schools, students, and graduates at all levels of general education. The development and implementation of subject curricula and textbooks were based on this new standard.

Information on the culture, traditions, history, and religion of national minorities was incorporated into the curricula of "The World Around and Me" and "History." During the testing and updating of these programmes, discussions were held with stakeholders, including representatives of national minorities. The introduction of the new state standard was accompanied by teacher training, including training on the history, culture, holidays, traditions, and religion of national minorities.

The pilot project implementing the new standard was completed during the 2022-2023 school year in the Tavush region, with nationwide implementation beginning in 2023 for 2nd, 5th, and 7th grades. The new standard will gradually be introduced across other grade levels in the near future.

3. Take priority measures to address the disproportionately high drop-out rate affecting Yezidi students, especially girls. The authorities should gather data and co-operate with civil society and minority representatives to design and implement a strategy with concrete indicators and outcomes for addressing drop-out rates, taking into account the full range of contributing factors.

The State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Armenia until 2030 (the new "Education Strategy"), adopted by the National Assembly in November 2022, covers the entire educational spectrum. The Strategy specifically aims to:

-Ensure access to quality education for national minorities, including at the higher education level, through teacher training, continuous professional development and qualification improvement, as well as various initiatives to encourage teachers who speak the languages of national minorities. It

also seeks to expand pre-school education in compact settlements of national minorities and other related measures (sub-item 5 of paragraph 81).

-Enrich printed and electronic educational resources in Armenian, as well as in the languages of national minorities, while considering the needs of Armenian educational centers in the Diaspora (sub-item 7 b of paragraph 81).

As part of the implementation of a registration system for children excluded from compulsory education, the Government of the Republic of Armenia, through Order No. 154 issued on 11 February 2021, established a **mandatory procedure for identifying and referring children who are not enrolled in education.**

According to the Order, the state non-profit organization "National Center of Educational Technologies" under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports compares data from the state population register with the education management information system in September and January of each academic year. The center then provides the ministry with the incomplete data of individuals aged 6 to 19 who are not registered in any educational institution, including pre-vocational or secondary vocational institutions.

The Order outlines the identification of the aforementioned children through the Education Information Management System and calls for the development of collaborative programmes to manage the risks of inclusion or exclusion from education. These programmes involve the resources of various ministries, communities, and local self-government bodies. The system is fully automated, allowing the identification of children who have already been excluded from general education, as well as those at risk of exclusion. Children who are absent for six consecutive school days without a valid reason are flagged as at risk, and steps are then taken to bring them back into the school system.

To prevent cases of children belonging to national minorities being excluded from educational institutions in the Republic of Armenia under the pretext of continuing their studies abroad, the Government of Armenia introduced changes to the existing procedure through Decision No. 597-N in April 2024. According to the revised procedure, the transfer of a student to an educational institution abroad is now only permitted after the submission of supporting documents to the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport, and upon receiving its approval.

In addition, as part of the new public education standard implemented by the state, a mandatory group programme on healthy lifestyle education has been introduced in schools. This programme focuses on children's self-development, self-awareness, avoiding harmful influences, promoting healthy eating, and developing first-aid skills. It also covers important topics such as anti-smoking, violence prevention, healthy relationships, and reproductive health. The project aims to raise children's awareness about early marriage and its negative consequences.

The universal inclusive education system implemented in Armenia aims to ensure access to education and equal participation opportunities for every child. In accordance with Government Decision No. 1265 of 11 August 2022, a new funding model was introduced in public educational institutions. This model facilitates, when necessary, the provision of reasonable accommodations and an accessible environment for students, enabling their more active involvement in educational processes.

Under Government Decision No. 2111-N of 29 December 2022, as part of the "1146. Public Education Programme, 11016. Providing Students of Educational Institutions with Textbooks and Educational Literature," the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport oversees and coordinates the provision of textbooks printed in braille for grades 1 to 4 in Armenian public schools, funded by the state budget. These efforts are guided by Ministerial Orders No. 81-N of 29 November 2021, and 9 June 2022, in line with the procedures approved by Orders No. 20-N. The initiative specifically addresses the needs of students from national minorities as well as children with visual impairments.

According to 2023 data, 164 children from national minorities enrolled in the public education system of the Republic of Armenia required special educational conditions. These students with special educational needs receive appropriate pedagogical and psychological support

All schools in national minority settlements are equipped with internet access, are included in the Education Management Information System via "schools.am," and have their own websites.

Various state agencies organize discussions with minority communities, settlement heads, and school directors from these communities to engage in dialogue about issues related to students leaving education prematurely. In May 2023, the Minister of Education held a meeting with representatives of the Yezidi community to discuss measures to promote educational continuity among Yezidi children, including increasing the inclusion of national minorities in higher education.

In December 2023, Rustam Bakoyan, Acting Chairman of the Standing Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Public Affairs of the National Assembly and a representative of the Yezidi community, organized a working discussion on the issues of early marriages and the need for legislative reforms in this area. In February 2024, parliamentary hearings titled "Legislative Reforms to Raise the Age Limit for Marriage in the Context of Protecting Basic Human Rights" were held. As a result of these discussions, a decision was made to pursue relevant legislative changes (see Article 4 of the present Report).

To encourage educational continuity and increase access to higher education for national minorities, subparagraph 17.1.1 of the "Education" section of Annex No. 1, approved by the RA Government's Resolution No. 1902-L of 18 November 2021, provides for up to seven free places annually for national minorities pursuing a bachelor's degree (including continuous and integrated educational

programmes). Following the Government's decision of 11 May 2023, regarding the additions to Government Decision No. 597-N of 26 April 2012 (No. 720-N), the Republican Admissions Committee was authorized to confirm and allocate these free places on a competitive basis for national minority applicants who achieved at least the passing scores for the paid system.

This change made it possible to allocate up to seven free spots on a competitive basis, starting from the 2023-2024 academic year, to national minority applicants with the highest scores for admission to undergraduate and continuous and integrated educational programmes.

Currently, a draft Government decision is under circulation, which is expected to establish new terms and dimensions for scholarships, including those for national minority students, admitted to universities in fields considered important and a priority for the state.

4. Collect data on gender-based violence against women and children belonging to national minorities, including early and forced marriages, and develop comprehensive policies and measures to prevent and combat this issue, engaging closely with law enforcement and social services and with the participation of national minorities. Such policies should be evidence-based and address the underlying social, economic and cultural drivers of early and forced marriages. They should aim at providing community care for vulnerable persons and strengthening trust between groups, individuals and institutions, and include information campaigns among parents, in schools and communities.

The new Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia, adopted in 2021 and enforced in 2022, criminalized several forms of gender-based violence. Specifically, Article 197 of the Code establishes criminal liability for coercing someone into marriage, divorce, or childbirth through violence, threats of violence, blackmail, humiliation, destruction or damage to property, or other forms of dependence on the perpetrator.

Additionally, the Code criminalizes performing an abortion without the person's prior consent, initial awareness, or properly formulated consent (Article 175), as well as coercing someone into having an abortion (Article 176).

In cases involving certain crimes, if the act is committed by a close relative, partner, or ex-partner, it is considered an aggravating circumstance, resulting in harsher penalties for acts of domestic violence. Following amendments to the Criminal Code adopted on April 12, 2024, crimes committed by a partner or ex-partner are now also considered aggravating circumstances. The amendments also introduced criminal liability for stalking.

Law enforcement agencies in Armenia maintain joint registration and statistics on individuals who have committed crimes, including gender-based violence, categorized by age, gender, national or ethnic affiliation, education, social status, and other factors. However, the current legal regulations do not mandate the collection of aggregated statistical data on crime victims. According to the 2023

annual report from Armenia's Human Rights Defender, one case of domestic violence within an ethnic minority community was reported to the Defender's office.

Armenia continues to implement policies and programmes aimed at reducing and eliminating child, early, and forced marriages, recognizing these practices as harmful violations of girls' rights. Efforts include legal reforms, awareness campaigns, community mobilization, and support services for girls at risk, as well as those at risk of child marriage.

According to the current legislation of Armenia, the legal age for marriage is 18. However, individuals can marry at 17 with the consent of their parents, adoptive parents, or guardians. Additionally, 16-year-olds may marry with parental consent if their partner is at least 18. In response to concerns about early marriages, legislative reforms have been initiated to raise the minimum age for marriage to 18 without exceptions. These reforms aim to strengthen Armenia's ability to implement more effective policies in education, health, and child welfare.

On 12 June 2024, the National Assembly adopted a draft bill during its first reading, **setting the minimum age for marriage at 18, without exceptions**, effectively eliminating premature marriages. On 11 September 2024, the law was adopted in its second reading and in its entirety.

- 5. Revise the Draft Law on National Minorities in full compliance with international standards, including the Framework Convention, having ensured that all those concerned have been effectively consulted on its substance. On that basis, the authorities should continue with the process of adoption of the Law.**

The Government of Armenia's Decision No. 1978-L of 26 December 2019 "On Approving the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights and the Action Plans 2020-2022 and 2023-2025" outlines the creation of legislative guarantees for the protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities. The draft law "On National Minorities" is being amended to align with international best practices and standards, in accordance with the National Strategy and the Action Plan 2023-2025 for the Protection of Human Rights. The deadline for submitting the revised draft to the National Assembly of Armenia is set for the second semester of 2024.

In 2023, the draft law "On National Minorities" was submitted to the Yerevan office of the Council of Europe for an expert opinion. In 2024, it was also reviewed by the Venice Commission and the Council of Europe's Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity (DGII), with their joint opinion being approved during a plenary session in June 2024.

From 12 to 13 July 2024, the Ministry of Justice and the National Assembly organized a working discussion on the draft law. During this event, experts from the Ministry of Justice and the Council of Europe presented the joint opinion from the Venice Commission and DGII. Based on the discussion, recommendations were summarized, and further steps were outlined. The draft law "On National Minorities" is currently being revised in accordance with this joint opinion.

6. Continue with the process of adoption of a comprehensive legal framework on anti-discrimination without delay, in consultation with representatives of civil society

The National Strategy 2023-2025 and the Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights were approved by Decision No. 1674-L on 28 September 2023, amending Decision No. 1978-L of 26 December 2019. Chapter 4 of this strategy, under the heading "Equality, Prohibition of Discrimination," includes provisions for the adoption of the draft law on "Ensuring Equality" (hereinafter referred to as the Draft).

According to the Action Plan, the deadline for submitting the Draft to the National Assembly of Armenia is set for the second semester of 2024. The Draft aims to ensure equal treatment of every person and citizen, providing equal opportunities to exercise their rights and freedoms without discrimination. It proposes granting the Human Rights Defender the mandate to address issues of equality and discrimination, including extending this mandate to cases of discrimination in the private sector. Additionally, the Defender would be authorized to represent individuals in court for discrimination cases and to facilitate conciliation procedures.

The Draft was submitted for expert opinion to the Council of Europe in July 2023, with the opinion received in March 2024. The National Minorities law project was revised, and discussions were held in June 2024 with broad participation from state bodies, representatives of the National Assembly, and civil society organizations. The law is planned to be adopted by the end of 2024.

The draft Law "On Child Rights and Child Protection System" also addresses discrimination, stating: "When protecting the rights of the child, it is necessary to ensure the exclusion of discrimination based on nationality, race, gender, the child's parents or other legal representatives, language, religion, social origin, property status, education, place of residence, circumstances of birth, health, or other factors."

Following the adoption of the Law "On Child Rights and Child Protection System" in 2024, it is planned to implement several sub-legislative acts.

The principles of equal opportunities, accessibility, and inclusiveness in education and care were established in 2020. The Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Preschool Education," amended by Decision HO-267-N, affirms Armenia's commitment to inclusiveness, accessibility, and quality in preschool education. This law ensures the right of every child to education and development, creating a safe environment for life and health. The amended law prioritizes providing a child-oriented, inclusive, and supportive environment in preschool institutions and defines the provision of equal opportunities and accessibility through adaptations as a key task in preschool education.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia developed the draft of the Government of the Republic of Armenia decision "On approving the strategy and programme of measures for the implementation of the gender policy in the Republic of Armenia for 2024-2028".

According to the 2024-2028 Strategy for the implementation of the gender policy of Armenia, 6 priorities are defined according to the problems and challenges of the present time. The Strategy and the Programme of Events were developed in accordance with international standards, taking into account the issues and problems related to people living in Armenia, including national minorities. The six strategic priorities are:

1. **Overcoming Gender Discrimination:** Addressing gender discrimination across all management areas and decision-making levels. Enhancing the national mechanism for advancing women, ensuring and expanding opportunities for equal and full participation of both women and men.
2. **Encouraging Gender-Sensitive Approaches:** Promoting gender-sensitive practices in the social and economic spheres, including the labor market and various branches of the economy. This includes reducing the gender gap in the workforce and improving labor protection structures.
3. **Addressing Gender Discrimination in Education and Science:** Tackling gender discrimination in education and scientific fields, promoting full participation of both genders, and expanding equal opportunities while strengthening a supportive environment.
4. **Ensuring Equal Opportunities in Health:** Guaranteeing equal opportunities for women and men in the health sector.
5. **Combating Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination:** Preventing and addressing violence against women and girls, including domestic violence. Providing protection and support for women and girls who have been subjected to violence.
6. **Developing Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Climate Change:** Ensuring inclusive principles and raising awareness regarding gender-sensitive approaches to climate change.

In line with the current state system reforms, the Government of Armenia has initiated the development of a strategic guiding document focused on social and gender inclusion. The methodology for this initiative is nearing completion. The goal is to make decision-making processes more equitable and transformative, transitioning from "neutrality" to inclusiveness, and includes training for public servants.

7. **Adopt measures aimed at collecting reliable equality data for all national minorities, disaggregated by age, gender and geographical distribution, in all relevant fields, including education, gender-based violence and socio-economic participation, based on the principle of self-identification and in accordance with international standards on data protection.**

As a result of a joint discussion between the Division for Ethnic Minorities and Religious Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia and the Statistical Committee of Armenia, the feasibility of importing data on national minorities into the country's sectoral administrative databases was considered.

Based on the feedback and observations received, discussions were held with departments managing relevant administrative databases about the potential inclusion of nationality data. Actions have been developed to address the statistical issues raised in the Council of Europe's Opinion regarding the 5th national report of the Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

This project is currently under discussion. After incorporating recommendations and comments, the document will be finalized and submitted to the Office of the Prime Minister of Armenia for implementation of the planned measures.

A census was conducted in Armenia based on Government Decisions No. 1115-N of October 10, 2018, and No. 1149-N of July 28, 2022. The census followed UN international recommendations and methodology, and instructions were approved by the State Council of Statistics.

The results of the 2022 census provided data on the permanent population of Armenia, including nationalities, gender, urban/rural distribution, and age groups, with detailed information on Yerevan city and regions. The data also covers mother tongue, proficiency in other languages, religious denomination, educational level, marital status, and administrative registrations of migration movements from 2018-2022. Additionally, statistics on live births and deaths during this period, disaggregated by nationality, were published in 2023 (see Annex 1 and Annex 2).

Recent statistics indicate that representatives of national minorities have utilized domestic violence support centers and shelters (3 individuals in 2020, 12 in 2021, 20 in 2022, and 24 in 2023). It is important to note that representatives of national minorities have access to all support services provided by law.

- 8. Intensify their support for national minorities to preserve and develop their linguistic, religious and cultural identity. Targeted efforts are needed to revitalise the essential elements of the culture of numerically smaller minorities. A comprehensive national strategy on national minorities should be elaborated, implemented and evaluated in close and active co-operation with representatives of national minorities and civil society.**

According to Article 56 of the Constitution, "everyone has the right to preserve his or her national and ethnic identity". Individuals belonging to national minorities have the right to maintain and develop their traditions, religion, language, and culture.

The protection of linguistic rights for national minorities is also assured by several provisions in the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On the Basics of Cultural Legislation." According to Article 8 of this law, "The Republic of Armenia supports the preservation and development of the cultural identity of national minorities living within its territory. Through state programmes, it aims to create conditions for the preservation, dissemination, and development of their religion, traditions, language, cultural heritage, and culture." Article 9 guarantees that everyone in the Republic of

Armenia, regardless of nationality, race, gender, language, religion, beliefs, social origin, property, or other status, has the right to participate in cultural life and cultural activities. Additionally, Article 6 recognizes cultural values as including languages, national traditions and customs, and geographical names.

Clause 6 of Article 4 of the RA Law "On Preschool Education," amended in 2020, stipulates that "the preschool education of national minorities in the Republic of Armenia can be organized in their mother tongue or national language, with the compulsory teaching of Armenian."

Additionally, Clause 2 of Article 7 of the same law states that "the admission of a child belonging to a national minority to an institution can be carried out by providing education in the child's native language or in an institution with a curriculum in that language. In the absence of such an institution, the choice of the language of instruction can be made by the parent (or the child's legal representative)."

The use of the languages of national minorities, both oral and written, is also guaranteed in the draft Law on National Minorities. According to this draft, persons belonging to national minorities have the right to use their language freely in their private lives and in public spaces, as well as to exchange and disseminate information in their language.

To support the educational and cultural activities of national minorities, 20 million drams were allocated annually during 2019-2023 to organizations representing the 11 national communities that are part of the Council on National Minorities under the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia. Efforts are ongoing to ensure the continued digitization of periodicals published in national minority languages, with the support of the RA Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports. All periodicals published by national minorities are included in the "Hay Press" database, and digital versions of most are also available.

One of the key priorities of the "Publication of Non-State Press" grant programme, run by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Armenia, is to support periodicals of national minorities operating within the country. The initiative focuses on preserving the languages and religions of national minorities, highlighting their cultural and public life, and promoting their cultural heritage. In 2023, nine periodicals of national minorities received funding through this programme. Additionally, under the grant competition for cultural programmes, the NGO "National Union of Yezidis" was awarded financial support (700,000 AMD) to conduct cultural programmes aimed at preserving and disseminating the intangible cultural heritage of the Yezidi community.

The allocation of funds under the "Publication of Non-State Press" Programme from 2019-2023 for individual publications is detailed in Appendix 3.

As of 2019-2022, the National Library of Armenia houses a variety of literature in the languages of national minorities, including approximately 1,800 works in Russian—spanning artistic, religious,

linguistic, philosophical, art, history, and natural sciences. Additionally, the collection includes 158 works in Kurdish, 40 in Greek, 7 in Yezidi, 5 in Persian, 8 Georgian textbooks, and 3 Ukrainian textbooks. Periodicals from the Ukrainian, Polish, Jewish, Kurdish, and Yezidi communities of Armenia are displayed at the HAG Printing Museum, highlighting the press of national minorities.

As part of the Armenian government's project to build 300 schools and 500 kindergartens, a kindergarten for 144 students is being constructed in Alagyaz, the largest Yezidi community in Armenia. This facility will provide preschool education for children from 11 settlements in the community and is expected to be operational in 2024. Additionally, a specialized wrestling school named after Yezidi wrestlers Roman and Malkhas Amoyan is planned for construction in the same community.

Between 2020 and 2023, a range of programmes were carried out with funds from the annual grant programmes provided by the Armenian state budget, which were approved by the Council on National Minorities of the Republic of Armenia. These included events dedicated to the holidays and memorial days of national minorities, as detailed in Appendix 4.

Preliminary discussions regarding the development of policies and strategies related to national minorities are ongoing, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, within the framework of the interagency group formed in 2024.

9. Take active steps to raise awareness of Armenia's ethnic diversity and of the culture, history, traditions, religions and languages of national minorities in society, counter ethnic and religious stereotypes and promote the conditions necessary for intercultural dialogue.

The websites of Armenia's regions and the Yerevan Municipality, under the "General Information" section, contain a dedicated "National Minorities" subsection, which provides essential information about national minorities, including their population, history, monuments, cultural events, and achievements. The public education department of the Yerevan Municipality maintains a database of students belonging to national minorities to facilitate their involvement in national holidays and cultural events, ensuring their active participation in these celebrations.

In 2022, for schools that are part of UNESCO's Associated Schools network, the Center for Development and Innovation of Education ("KZNAK") Foundation, in collaboration with "Yerevan Im Ser Foundation," organized a championship on the theme "Intercultural Communication, Valuing Different Cultures and Heritages" at John Kirakosyan School No. 20 in Yerevan. As part of this initiative, students visited Yezidi and Assyrian communities to explore and learn about their cultures. Representatives of national minorities participated as special guests in the event's concluding ceremony.

On 29 November 2022, at the initiative of KZNAK, a meeting was held with representatives of Armenia's national minorities. Attendees included Nikodim Yukhanaev, priest of the Assyrian Church of the East, Zemfira Mirzoeva, a representative of the Assyrian community and RA National Assembly MP, Rima Varzhapetyan-Feller, president of Armenia's Jewish community, and Hellada Raphaelidis, a representative of the Greek community. The meeting aimed to highlight the educational challenges facing these communities and discuss programmes that would raise public awareness of the various nationalities coexisting in Armenia, emphasizing their identity, culture, customs, and traditions. Additionally, the gathering sought to address educational issues and explore potential solutions.

In Armenia, the process of inventorying intangible cultural heritage is ongoing. This initiative aims to identify, collect, and register intangible cultural values that are still vibrant or in need of immediate protection, with the goal of implementing preservation programmes and measures. This inventory includes not only the intangible cultural heritage of Armenians but also that of the national minorities living in the country.

On 9 November 2023, the **2023-2027 Strategy for the Preservation, Development, and Promotion of the Culture of the Republic of Armenia** was adopted by Government Decision No. 1951-L. This strategy focuses on creating conditions for the preservation and dissemination of the languages, cultures, religions, and traditions of the national minorities living in Armenia. It includes support for periodicals published in minority languages, celebrations of national holidays, regional traditions, and folk music. The strategy also outlines the organization of international festivals under UNESCO aimed at promoting national musical instruments and dances included in the lists of intangible heritage. These festivals will involve the creative potential of the community, including participation from national minorities and individuals with inclusion needs.

Particular attention is given to the cultural heritage of Armenia's national minorities and the preservation of immovable monuments. Restoration projects include the Russian St. Nikolay the Miraculous Church and the preparation of scientific project documents for the restoration of the Kavarti Greek Church in Kapan, Syunik Region. The possibility of including the Greek church in the Madan district of Alaverdi, Lori Region, in the medium-term expenditure plan will also be discussed. Additionally, the Greek Church in Hankavan, Kotayk Region, a 19th-century monument, was included as a historical and cultural monument of local significance in 2003.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of Armenia actively collaborates with 11 non-governmental organizations representing national minorities, such as the "Ukraine" Armenian Federation of Ukrainians, "Ponti" Yerevan Greek NGO, "Sinjar" Yezidi National Association, "Harmonia" International Center of Russian Culture, and "Iveria" Georgian Charity Organization, among others.

Fine art, decorative-applied art exhibitions, and music festivals are regularly organized in Yerevan and the regions with participation from all minority communities. From 2020 to 2023, several festivals, concerts, exhibitions, and painting programmes were organized for children of national

minorities in Armenia. In 2022, the "Gyumri. Master City" festival aimed to unite folk crafts on a cultural platform, fostering recognition and creative advancement. Armenian national minority groups participated, showcasing the artistic works, songs, and dances of the Russian and Belarusian communities.

Cultural events in 2023 included a concert titled "The Roof: Armenia" at the Arno Babajanyan Concert Hall, featuring performances by national minority groups. A panel discussion was held with representatives of national minority organizations, and an art exhibition preceded the concert. The event drew an audience of 400 people.

Throughout 2023, various music festivals, concerts, and exhibitions were organized, including courses titled "Lorva Palette" with an aesthetic focus for 60 Yezidi schoolchildren in the Tashir community of Lori Region.

In 2021, Armenia established a National Minorities Day in its official list of holidays. Additionally, in 2024, the 3rd of August was designated as a commemoration day for the victims of the 2014 Sinjar Yezidi Genocide by a decision of the National Assembly of Armenia.

10. Extend the offer of teaching in minority languages, in particular Assyrian, provide for adequate teacher training and updated teaching materials to support this, and support further national minority organizations in offering Sunday schools and minority language preschool initiatives.

In communities densely populated by national minorities, primary education is both available and accessible in ethnic languages. In areas where the number of ethnic minorities is smaller, there are also provisions for optional language learning. A specific curriculum for general education schools (or classes) serving national minorities has been developed. According to this curriculum, the following number of weekly class hours are allocated for teaching "Native Language and Literature," which is part of the state educational subjects:

- Elementary School: 4 lessons
- Primary School (Grades 1-4): 3 lessons
- Middle School (Grades 5-9): 3 lessons

In 2021, the government approved the Alternative, Cost-effective Models of Preschool Education and the Procedure for their Introduction. This order prioritizes the introduction of these alternative education models in settlements predominantly inhabited by national minorities. The models aim to increase the number of children enrolled in preschool services and improve accessibility to early education.

Additionally, in several public schools in the Shirak, Aragatsotn, Armavir, and Ararat regions, preschools have been established. These preschools include classes specifically for children aged 4-

5 from national minority communities, which operate in the first half of the day, ensuring early childhood education opportunities for minority groups.

According to the model curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the Republic of Armenia for 2019-2023, a total of 34 lessons per week were allocated to the Assyrian language and literature across grades 1-12. The distribution of these class hours was determined in alignment with the respective grade-level curricula. The Assyrian language is taught as a main subject in Yerevan's A. Pushkin No. 8 Primary School and A. Margaryan No. 29 High School.

In the Armavir region, 11 Assyrian children are enrolled in public educational institutions. One of the 111 public schools in the region offers Assyrian language instruction through an extracurricular group at the "Nor Artagers Secondary School" in the Nor Artagers settlement of Metsamor community. Additionally, the Sergey Sarkhoshev Secondary School in Arzni, Kotayk region, teaches Assyrian as a part of the curriculum in Russian-language classes from grades 1 to 12, catering specifically to Assyrian students.

Between 2019 and 2023, various events, open classes, and seminars were organized in schools with the participation of Assyrian students, particularly during key cultural and linguistic celebrations like International Mother Language Day and the Assyrian New Year (Hab-Nisan), which has been officially recognized in Armenia since 2008.

In the Assyrian communities of Dimitrov and Verin Dvin, general secondary schools provide education in Russian, with compulsory Assyrian language instruction. Yazidi students study their mother tongue in extracurricular groups. Schools are equipped with appropriate textbooks and teaching aids for these courses.

In the Arzni community of Kotayk region, non-governmental organizations such as "Atur" and "Gabbara" work to protect the educational, cultural, and social rights of Assyrians. These organizations organize ethnographic events tied to national and religious holidays, and Assyrian kindergarten students often participate in these events. The "Alyonushka Kindergarten" in Arzni also has a Russian-language group for Assyrian children, with compulsory Armenian instruction as part of a preschool education programme.

Sunday schools operate in the communities of Belarusian, Georgian, Ukrainian, Greek, Jewish, German, and Polish national minorities, with the exception of Yezidi, Kurdish, Assyrian, and Russian communities. These languages are already taught in public schools according to state standards. Sunday schools are organized by NGOs representing these national communities, often within the framework of state grants, and many activities take place at the National Minorities Educational and Cultural Center, provided free of charge by the government.

Actions aimed at protecting national minority languages are further outlined in the section of the Report on Measures for Implementing the Framework Convention, specifically under Articles 14.1, 14.2, and 14.3.

11. Take steps to increase the offer of teaching in Yezidi in the general curriculum at primary and secondary levels, including through increased teacher training and financial incentives for Yezidi students to train and work as teachers. At the same time, the authorities should introduce further vocational, adult and continuing education in Yezidi.

As of 2023, the subjects "Yezidi," "Kurdish," and "Assyrian" are taught in schools within various regions (regiones) of Armenia, specifically for students from national minorities. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Armenia has funded the publication of textbooks for elementary, middle, and high school levels for these national minorities. Additionally, electronic versions of these textbooks, along with subject programmes, are available on the "Armenian Educational Environment" portal under the "Resources" section.

In 2023, a total of 941 textbooks were published for these national minority languages, including:

- 198 "Yezidi Alphabet" books for the 1st grade
- 26 "Kurdish Alphabet" books
- 25 "Kurdish" textbooks for the 2nd grade
- 30 "Kurdish" textbooks for the 3rd grade
- 315 "Yezidi Language" textbooks for grades 3, 4, and 5
- 84 "Yezidi Literature" books for the 5th grade
- 132 "Yezidi Language" books for grades 6, 7, and 8
- 22 "Kurdish" textbooks for the 7th grade
- 17 "Kurdish" textbooks for the 8th grade
- 37 "Yezidi Literature" books for the 8th and 9th grades
- 18 "Kurdish" textbooks for the 9th grade

These textbooks are distributed to schools, and teaching in the national minority languages is provided regardless of the number of children, funded by the state. National minority students also actively participate in various educational events, such as school subject Olympiads, regional and national cultural activities, and sports events, including celebrations of national holidays like "Aida Tausi Malak" and "Aida Yezdid."

In 2021, a system for the voluntary certification of teachers was introduced on a trial basis. In 2022, the Armenian government adopted Decision No. 596-N, which outlines the procedures for voluntary certification, bonuses, and the formation of a certification committee. Teachers who score 70% or higher in the certification process receive a 30-50% salary bonus. Teachers of national minority languages regularly participate in this certification, and by early 2024, five national minority teachers had been certified. Additionally, in 2023, five Yezidi language teachers received

letters of acknowledgement from the Minister of Education and Culture as part of a broader effort to incentivize and recognize educators.

12. Take a flexible approach to representatives of minority groups self-identifying as national minorities and interested in joining the Council of National Minorities, and to raise awareness of the existence, mandate and activities of the Council.

The National Minorities Council is open to discussions with representatives from any national minority group during its sessions. **The sessions are open to participants who are not members of the Council.**

In 2023, the "Revival of the Historical Aghvanki Udi People" NGO, representing the Udi community in Armenia, took part in the Council's meetings. Based on the application submitted by this NGO in 2023, they were allocated a portion of the state budget, which supported their activities. In 2024, a new application from the same NGO was also accepted and approved at the Council meeting alongside other applications.

On 29 December 2023, Prime Minister's decision No. 1297-L introduced several amendments to decision No. 486-L, dated 3 May, titled "On Establishing the Council on National Minorities and Approving the Composition of the Council." According to these changes, the Chairman of the Council is now the Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister, and the Council members include Deputy Ministers from the Ministries of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, and Justice.

These amendments aim to elevate the Council's status and enhance its effectiveness by facilitating discussions on national minority issues with the direct involvement of key state administration leaders, who can ensure that problems are addressed by the relevant bodies when necessary.

13. Gather data on the socio-economic situation of national minorities, especially in the fields of employment, access to proper infrastructure and the impact of climate change. Positive measures to address the disparities identified should be designed on this basis and in close co-operation with persons belonging to national minorities, with a view to actively promoting participation in socio-economic life.

All state-supported agricultural programmes implemented in the regions of Armenia, including the regions of Ararat, Kotayk, Lori, Armavir, and Aragatsotn, which are densely populated by national minorities, aim at the efficient use of water and land resources, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and the prevention of natural disaster-related damages. Studies indicate that lack of effective climate change adaptation and mitigation measures may negatively affect crop quality, yield, and overall output, particularly in the Ararat plain, where agriculture is dependent on irrigation.

In 2021, the government adopted Decision No. 749-L, which approved the list of national climate change adaptation actions and measures for 2021-2025. As a result, climate change adaptation programmes were developed for the four regions of Shirak, Tavush, Syunik, and Gegharkunik. Furthermore, by Government Decision No. 1222-L of 20 July 2023, the 2023-2026 implementation plan of the 2020-2030 strategy for economic development in the agricultural sector was approved. This plan includes about 20 measures specifically aimed at climate change adaptation and mitigation in agriculture.

The Prime Minister has instructed the Ministries of Territorial Management and Infrastructures, Education, Science, Culture and Sports, Justice, and Regionpets to enhance cooperation with leaders of communities inhabited by national minorities (including those in enlarged communities) to monitor the socio-economic situation, address challenges, and collaborate on issues such as access to resources and the impacts of climate change. Since 2021, communities with national minorities that were not part of the community enlargement programmes have been able to participate in subsidy programmes aimed at improving their socio-economic situation.

In 2021, six programmes were implemented, followed by seven in 2022, and nine in 2023. For 2024, eight programmes have been submitted for implementation. Due to changes in the "Financial Equalization" law, the 2024 state budget has allocated 50 million drams in subsidies for communities with small populations that did not participate in community enlargement. In addition to the planned projects for 2024, three major projects are already underway. These include design work for a 3 km road connecting the Ferik Yezidi community in Armavir region, costing approximately 150 million drams, an overhaul of the inter-community road in the Otevan settlement of the Metsadzor community in Aragatsotn region, costing about 100 million drams, and the gasification of Shamiram community, with a cost of around 400 million drams. Between 2021 and 2024, a total of approximately 1.8 billion drams was invested in projects, including 914 million in state co-financing, 585 million in community co-financing, and other sources of funding.

Additionally, by Government Decision No. 1485-L of 24 October 2019, a state-supported pilot programme for introducing an agricultural insurance system was approved.

In 2023, the United Nations World Food Programme in Armenia conducted a study, resulting in the report "The Impact of Climate Change on Livelihood and Food Security," which highlights the effects of climate change on agriculture in Armenia, including in the regions of Ararat, Kotayk, Lori, Armavir, and Aragatsotn, where national minorities are densely populated.

14. Engage in a dialogue with persons belonging to national minorities on matters relating to territorial or administrative reform and ensure prior and meaningful consultation before any future consolidation. The authorities should also ensure that the current separate municipalities have access to sufficient funds on an equal basis with consolidated municipalities, with a view to ensuring continued access to minority rights in the municipalities concerned.

At the session of the Armenian Government held on 4 January 2024, the Prime Minister referred to the socio-economic conditions of certain communities (settlements) inhabited by national minorities, including those that are part of larger, amalgamated communities. He acknowledged the existing challenges and shortcomings and outlined future tasks, instructing that steps be taken to improve the current situation.

Following these directives:

- Subsidies allocated to individual communities inhabited by national minorities that are not part of larger, amalgamated communities have been increased by 15%.
- An amendment was made to the Armenian Law "On Financial Equalization," which ensures that starting from January 2024, each community with up to 3,500 residents (there are eight such communities, all of which are inhabited by national minorities) will receive a subsidy of 50 million drams.
- A schedule has been established for organizing discussions within communities that include national minorities, ensuring their active participation.
- Efforts will be made to raise awareness about the activities in minority communities, particularly regarding the use of funds allocated from the state budget.

PART 2. Measures towards the implementation of the Framework Convention

Articles 1 and 2

- **The protection of national minorities and of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to those minorities forms an integral part of the international protection of human rights, and as such falls within the scope of international co-operation.**
- **The provisions of this framework Convention shall be applied in good faith, in a spirit of understanding and tolerance and in conformity with the principles of good neighborliness, friendly relations and co-operation between States**

The protection of national minorities continues to be a priority in Armenia's foreign policy, with a strong focus on **combating racism, discrimination, and intolerance**. Armenia actively advances the **genocide prevention agenda** and engages in international cooperation through relevant thematic forums and events.

Initiated by Armenia, the **International Day of Genocide Prevention and Remembrance of Genocide Victims**, celebrated annually on 9 December, has been officially recognized in the UN international calendar. The biennial **resolution on the prevention of genocide**, traditionally authored by Armenia, is presented at the **UN Human Rights Council** and adopted by consensus with broad interregional

support, co-sponsored by approximately 60 countries. This resolution addresses genocide prevention and atrocities, including denial, education, gender aspects, new technologies, early warning systems, and strengthening their capacities.

From 2020 to 2022, Armenia served as an elected member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, for the first time. During its membership, Armenia focused on preventing genocide and mass crimes, combating hate crimes targeting ethnic and religious groups, protecting the rights of women and youth, and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, including through enhanced international mechanisms.

The Global Forum "Against the Crime of Genocide," hosted regularly in Armenia, remains a significant international platform for substantive expert deliberations. This forum brings together government representatives, academics, human rights defenders, genocide scholars, and others. Supported by the UN Office of Genocide Prevention and Protection, and in cooperation with the International Association of Genocide Scholars (IAGS) and the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes (GAAMAC), the forum aims to advance the genocide prevention agenda and foster international cooperation. The discussions at the 4th Global Forum in Yerevan in December 2022 focused on the role of new technologies and media in spreading racism, intolerance, and xenophobia through disinformation and negative stereotypes, as well as managing the risks of identity-based mass crimes.

In 2024, Armenia demonstrated its strong commitment to genocide prevention and the protection of minority rights with the decision by the RA National Assembly on 16 April to designate **3 August as a day of remembrance for the victims of the 2014 Sinjar Yezidi Genocide.**

Armenia places significant emphasis on international cooperation regarding non-discrimination and inclusion policies, particularly in education, culture, language, and identity protection. In 2024, Armenia supported a UN Human Rights Council initiative aimed at developing a new legal instrument for early childhood education, free pre-primary and secondary education, and an Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, joining a working group to discuss this initiative.

Efforts related to national minorities, non-discrimination, and inclusion are central to Armenia's human rights development and ongoing cooperation with international monitoring bodies. This includes adherence to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Articles 3.1 and 3.2

- Every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such and no disadvantage shall result from this choice or from the exercise of the rights which are connected to that choice.
- Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention individually as well as in community with others.

Part 2 of Article 56 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia guarantees the right to preserve and develop the traditions, religion, language, and culture of national minorities.

The Armenian Constitution mandates the allocation of seats in Parliament to representatives of national minorities. Specifically, four mandates in the National Assembly are reserved for representatives of the first four national minorities with the largest permanent populations, based on the most recent census data prior to the elections.

Current Armenian legislation does not impose any restrictions on the choice of individuals regarding their identification as members of a national minority. However, Article 21 of the Law on Official Statistics ensures that individuals belonging to national minorities have the freedom to choose whether or not to identify as such.

Article 4 of the draft law "On National Minorities" proposes the right for individuals to choose their national minority affiliation or to opt out of such identification. It further stipulates that this choice, as well as the exercise of associated rights, must not lead to adverse consequences for the individual. Additionally, the draft law asserts that no one can be compelled to declare their national or ethnic identity, nor can anyone be forced to relinquish it.

Detailed information on the protection of the rights and freedoms of national minorities is also provided in the section summarizing the progress of the implementation of resolution CM/ResCMN(2023)6 of the Report, covering Articles 1 to 14.

Articles 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3

- The Parties undertake to guarantee to persons belonging to national minorities the right of equality before the law and of equal protection of the law. In this respect, any discrimination based on belonging to a national minority shall be prohibited.
- The Parties undertake to adopt, where necessary, adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority. In this respect, they shall take due account of the specific conditions of the persons belonging to national minorities.
- The measures adopted in accordance with paragraph 2 shall not be considered to be an act of discrimination.

National minorities in Armenia enjoy equal social support rights as defined by Armenian legislation. The labor laws of the Republic of Armenia include a comprehensive legislative framework prohibiting discrimination. Article 3.1 of the Labor Code establishes regulations on the prohibition of discrimination, including a clear definition of discrimination.

Employment announcements and the implementation of employment relations must not include restrictive conditions, except for those related to practical characteristics, professional training, and qualifications, unless they are inherent to the job requirements.

Article 114, Part 4, Clause 4 of the Labor Code specifies that gender, race, nationality, language, origin, citizenship, social status, religion, marital status, family status, beliefs, or views cannot be used as legal grounds for terminating an employment contract or for decisions regarding joining parties or public organizations.

Anti-discrimination provisions are also embedded in legislation regulating the employment sector.

Since 2023, the **Public Council on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities has been operating under the Armenian Human Rights Defender**. The inaugural meeting of the council took place on November 30, 2023. The meeting was attended by representatives from international organizations, state administration bodies, the National Assembly members representing national minorities, and members of non-governmental organizations involved in the protection of national minority rights. The council discussed its objectives, existing issues in the field, and the need to improve conditions that support the preservation of key elements of national minorities' identities—such as religion, language, cultural heritage, and traditions—along with the development of relevant sectoral legislation.

Measures to ensure equality and eliminate discrimination are also detailed in the section summarizing the progress of implementing resolution CM/ResCMN(2023)6 of the Report, under Article 6.

Articles 5.1 and 5.2

- **The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.**
- **Without prejudice to measures taken in pursuance of their general integration policy, the Parties shall refrain from policies or practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons from any action aimed at such assimilation.**

To enhance anti-discrimination framework and improve regulations, the government has initiated the development of draft laws titled "On National Minorities," "On Ensuring Equality," and related legislation. These legislative efforts address discrimination based on national minority status (also see Articles 5 and 6 of Section 1 of the Report).

According to the section on Culture contained in the 2021-2026 government programme, **culture in Armenia is viewed as a platform for public unity and solidarity, including among national minorities.** It underscores the importance of culture in fostering harmony and preserving the historical, spiritual, and cultural values of national minorities. The programme aims to create conditions for manifesting ethnic cultures of national minorities and their representation.

Efforts are continuously made to register the intangible cultural heritage elements of national minorities and to include them in the state lists of intangible cultural heritage in Armenia. To support the preservation of minority languages, the state budget allocates financial resources to non-governmental organizations within ethnic communities to facilitate the printing of periodicals.

Fine art, decorative-applied art exhibitions, and music festivals, involving all national minority communities, are traditionally organized in Yerevan and the regions with the support of the RA Ministry of Education and Culture. Between 2020 and 2022, notable events included a music festival of RA national minorities, an exhibition, and an educational painting programme.

The Ministry of Education and Culture regularly announces grant opportunities on its official website, www.escs.am, to allow national minorities to participate in cultural programmes and submit cultural proposals.

See also Article 8 of Section 1 of the present Report.

Articles 6.1 and 6.2

- **The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons' ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.**
- **The Parties undertake to take appropriate measures to protect persons who may be subject to threats or acts of discrimination, hostility or violence as a result of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity.**

Armenia is dedicated to fostering an environment of mutual respect, understanding, cooperation, tolerance, and intercultural dialogue for all individuals residing in its territory, regardless of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious identity.

Following the large-scale military attacks by Azerbaijan in 2020 and 2023 and the resulting humanitarian crisis, **the entire population of Nagorno-Karabakh was subjected to ethnic cleansing and forced displacement, leading to approximately 115,000 refugees.** This influx of displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh underscored the urgent need to expand public services in Armenia and ensure their accessibility. In response, the Armenian government has undertaken significant efforts to support the forcibly displaced population, particularly in social security, healthcare, and education.

In 2023, the government provided support to the displaced students from Nagorno-Karabakh who entered professional and higher education institutions after 19 September 2023. This included tuition compensation for 850 students in vocational institutions and 1,837 students in higher education. Additionally, 34 students in secondary vocational education (VET) and 1,159 in higher education were given the opportunity to continue their studies.

To aid in the employment of displaced teachers, the Ministry of Education and Culture launched the platform <https://kadrer.emis.am>, which lists teacher vacancies across the country. Teachers employed through this platform are eligible for a 30% bonus, with an additional 50,000 AMD bonus for those working in several neighboring communities. Currently, over 500 teachers from Nagorno-Karabakh are employed in state schools, with 330 placed in regional schools through this programme. Psychological support programmes have also been implemented in educational institutions to assist the displaced population, along with training courses for educational specialists.

As part of the broader efforts to preserve and protect the identity and cultural heritage of the forcibly displaced Nagorno-Karabakh population, the "Ktseg" initiative was launched, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Culture and in collaboration with the "Dizak ART" cultural NGO. The initiative promotes the Artsakh dialects through theatrical performances, showcasing the customs, proverbs, and cultural characteristics of Nagorno-Karabakh. The title "Ktseg" (knot-ball) symbolizes the collective culture of the displaced population and their unity.

Under the "Educate the Educator" programme, initiated by the NGO "Teryan Cultural Center" with the support of the Ministry of Education and Culture, courses were launched to develop and enhance skills in tapestry, embroidery, and pottery. The initiative aims to promote opportunities for displaced professionals from Nagorno-Karabakh to create their own products and establish cooperative relationships.

Under the 2023 grant programme in the category of "Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation Programmes" by the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the "Life in the Palm" pottery and miniature skills transfer course was implemented at the initiative of the "Goi" Humanitarian Foundation. The project's goal was to establish a school of miniature pottery and decorative applied objects, emphasizing the Kilikian and Artsakh-Utik miniature schools, as well as to promote the products of these schools and provide displaced artists from Nagorno-Karabakh with a platform for creative self-

expression and an environment conducive to transferring their skills. During the project, training was provided in two areas of intangible cultural heritage: pottery and miniature painting. Fifteen beneficiaries participated in 20 miniature painting and seven pottery courses, each lasting three months. In the miniature painting course, participants learned techniques in drawing, colouring, and got acquainted with the history, symbolism, and semantics of ornaments and patterns. They also mastered the skills and techniques of painting on paper, ceramics, and parchment.

As a result of Azerbaijan's policy of ethnic cleansing in Nagorno-Karabakh, the region's rich historical, cultural, and Christian heritage has become significantly endangered. Satellite imagery revealed by the "Caucasus Heritage Watch" indicate that the destruction of cultural heritage under Azerbaijani control has increased by 75% since September 2023¹. Despite Armenia's continuous appeals to UNESCO for a fact-finding mission to Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas, these efforts continue to be obstructed by Azerbaijan.

In connection with the policy of ethnic hatred and discrimination, **Armenia filed a claim against Azerbaijan in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2021 under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**, while simultaneously requesting the Court to issue provisional measures². In December 2021, the Court granted most of Armenia's requests for provisional measures, obligating Azerbaijan to:

- Protect ethnic Armenian persons who remain in detention in Azerbaijan from violence and bodily harm and ensure their equality before the law;
- Prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin;
- Prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts.

In February 2023, in connection with the blockade of the Lachin Corridor by Azerbaijan, the ICJ obligated Azerbaijan to:

- Ensure unimpeded movement of persons, vehicles, and cargo along the Lachin Corridor in both directions.

In November 2023, in connection with the military attacks launched by Azerbaijan in September and the forced displacement of Nagorno-Karabakh's population, the Court issued further provisional measures, obligating Azerbaijan to:

¹ https://caucasusheritage.cornell.edu/?page_id=866

² <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/180>

- Ensure that persons who left Nagorno-Karabakh after 19 September 2023 and who wish to return to Nagorno-Karabakh are able to do so in a safe, unimpeded and expeditious manner;
- Ensure that persons who remained in Nagorno-Karabakh after 19 September 2023 and wish to leave, can do so safely, unhindered, and promptly,
- Ensure that persons who remained in Nagorno-Karabakh after September 19, 2023 or returned to Nagorno-Karabakh and who wish to stay are free from the use of force or intimidation that may cause them to flee;
- Protect preserve registration, identity and private property documents and records that concern the persons identified under subparagraph (1) and have due regard to such documents and records in its administrative and legislative practices.

At the national level, **Armenia is actively working to eliminate discrimination or violence based on ethnicity, culture, language, or religion.**

The new Criminal Code includes comprehensive and inclusive regulations for addressing hate speech and hate crimes. Specifically, Article 329 of the Criminal Code establishes criminal liability for inciting hatred, discrimination, intolerance, or enmity against individuals or groups due to their racial, national, ethnic, or social origin, religion, political or other views, or any other personal or social circumstances. This includes criminalizing public speech that promotes hatred, discrimination or intolerance and the distribution of materials or objects intended to incite these issues.

Article 330 of the Criminal Code establishes criminal liability for public calls to commit violence against individuals or groups based on racial, national, ethnic, or social origin, religion, political views, or other personal or social circumstances. It also criminalises the public justification or promotion of such violence and the distribution of materials or objects intended for that purpose.

A more severe punishment applies if these actions are committed by a group of individuals with prior consent, using official powers or the influence thereof, or through publicly displayed works, mass media, or information and communication technologies.

Article 146 of the Criminal Code addresses the destruction or damage of cultural values, including religious or ritual buildings, with the intent to incite racial, national, ethnic, or religious enmity.

Regarding hate crimes, Article 71 stipulates that crimes committed with a motive of intolerance or enmity based on racial, national, ethnic, or social origin, religion, political views, or other personal or social circumstances are considered an aggravating circumstance.

The Criminal Code provides for more severe punishment for various violent crimes—including murder (Article 155), causing severe, medium, or light harm to health (Articles 166, 167, and 171), kidnapping (Article 191), illegal deprivation of liberty (Article 192), mental influence (Article 194),

physical interference (Article 195), causing severe physical pain or mental suffering (Article 196), destroying or damaging property (Article 264), and desecrating a corpse or grave (Articles 305-306)—if they are committed with a motive of hatred, intolerance, or enmity related to racial, national, ethnic, or social origin, religion, political views, or other personal or social circumstances.

The draft law "On National Minorities" establishes a prohibition on discrimination based on national minority status. It requires RA state and local self-government bodies to take measures within their assigned powers to:

1. Prevent instances of discrimination based on national minority status,
2. Effectively protect the rights and legal interests of individuals who face discrimination based on national minority status,
3. Ensure equal rights for individuals belonging to national minorities in educational, economic, social, political, and cultural spheres,
4. Raise public awareness about the rights of individuals belonging to national minorities and work to eliminate intolerance towards them.

The draft law "On Ensuring Equality" aims to define discrimination and its types and to establish the foundation for the creation and operation of an equality body. The related draft laws propose amendments to the Administrative and Civil Procedure Codes, introducing special procedures for investigating discrimination cases, including specifics on the distribution of the burden of proof, in accordance with international standards (see also Section 1 of the Report, Articles 5 and 6).

Article 7

- **The Parties shall ensure respect for the right of every person belonging to a national minority to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion.**

A total of 79 religious organizations have received registration in Armenia, including 12 that belong to national minorities: 4 Yezidi, 1 Assyrian, 1 Jewish, 1 Russian-Malik, and 5 Russian Orthodox Church. During the reporting period, the following new religious organizations affiliated with national minorities were registered:

- 13 April 2021: "Yezdi Religious and Cultural Center of Armenia"
- 26 April 2022: "Dine Sharfadin" (Yezidi)
- 23 March 2023: Diocese of Yerevan and Armenia of the Russian Orthodox Church

Armenia's Constitution enshrines the freedoms of assembly, thought, conscience, and religion, as well as the freedom of association, as fundamental human rights. Article 41 guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, including the freedom to change one's religion or beliefs and to express them publicly or privately, either alone or in association with others. Article 44 provides the right to participate in and organize peaceful, unarmed assemblies, while Article 45

affirms the right to freely associate with others, including forming and joining trade unions for the protection of labor interests. No one can be forced to join any private association.

Article 56 of the Constitution ensures the right of persons belonging to national minorities to preserve and develop their traditions, religion, language, and culture.

The draft law "On National Minorities" includes provisions aimed at ensuring the effective realisation of freedoms of conscience, thought, and religion, as well as the freedom of association for persons belonging to national minorities. Article 11 of the draft law affirms the right of persons belonging to national minorities to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion and stipulates that the exercise of this right will be regulated by law.

The Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" provides the legal framework for freedom of conscience, religious belief, and the establishment and operation of religious organizations. Although this law does not include special provisions for national minorities, it applies equally to all persons, including those belonging to national minorities and the religious organizations they establish. According to Article 2 of this law, all RA citizens are equal before the law in all spheres of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural life, regardless of their religious beliefs or affiliations.

The draft law "On National Minorities" proposes that persons belonging to national minorities have the right to celebrate their national and religious holidays and historical dates, participate in their national ceremonies, and use their national symbols, while adhering to the legislation of the Republic of Armenia. It also stipulates the right to a maximum of three days of unpaid leave per year for celebrating national and religious holidays or historical dates.

According to Article 4 of the "Language" Law, national minority organizations in Armenia must prepare their documents, forms, and seals in Armenian with a parallel translation into their own language. The draft law "On National Minorities" proposes to include a similar regulation in Article 15. This article also defines the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish non-commercial organizations aimed at protecting and implementing their rights.

Article 16 of the draft law provides for financial support from Armenia's state budget for the programmes of national minority organizations each year. This support is currently included in the state budget annually, under the budget of the Prime Minister's Office.

Article 8

- **The Parties undertake to recognize that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to manifest his or her religion or belief and to establish religious institutions, organizations and associations.**

Article 41 of the Constitution of Armenia enables every person, including representatives of national minorities, to enjoy the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. This right includes the freedom to change one's religion or beliefs and the freedom to express them, either alone or in association with others and in public or private, in preaching, church services, other rites of worship or otherwise.

Representatives of 22 national minorities work in cultural organizations under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia.

Every year, on the Wednesday following April 13, with the participation of the Yezidi community, Yezidi cultural, educational, traditional festive events are carried out during celebrations of the holiday of "Malake Tausi" (Charshama sare sale) - the Yezidi New Year, concluding with traditional Yezidi holiday "Chle havine".

On June 14, the Assyrian community celebrates "Marez" as an Assyrian religious holiday, and July 3 is celebrated as the Assyrian Church Day. Every year on April 1, the Assyrians celebrate the New Year ("Khab-Nisan"). The celebration is included in the list of intangible cultural heritage values of Armenia

On August 18, 2022, the cross was installed at the Assyrian Church of the St. Virgin Mary. The church was built in 1881. It is included in the state list of immovable monuments of history and culture and is protected by the state. There are 3 Assyrian churches in the Republic of Armenia.

Within the framework of the implementation of the state cultural policy, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia regularly organizes discussions of medium-term expenditure plans and budget applications regarding the capital costs of the renovation and construction of cultural houses and clubs received from the regions and communities of the Republic of Armenia. As a result of discussions, houses of culture are regularly renovated or built in different communities, including the settlements of national minorities.

In 2022 the draft of the protection zones of the Russian Fortress "Alexandropol" ("THE BIG") monument in Gyumri city of Shirak region was drawn up, sent to the head of the community for approval based on the positive conclusion of the expert committee. 2022 The status of sub-monument was given to the 3 existing structures (building N 11 (barracks), building N 13 (barracks), N 1, 2, 3 (club, sanmas)) in the area of the monument of the Russian Military Base "Kabardinsky" in the city of Gyumri. In 2023 the project of protection zones of the monument "Kabardinsky" military base was drawn up.

In 2020-2023 the process of installing trilingual signs in the territories of monuments belonging to national minorities continued.

79 religious organizations in Armenia have received state registration, 12 of which belong to national minorities (Yezdi: 4, Assyrian: 1, Jewish: 1, Russian-Malak: 1, Russian Orthodox Church: 5).

During the reporting period, the following new national minorities religious organizations were registered in the State Register of Armenia:

- 13.04.21 - "Yezdi Religious and Cultural Center of Armenia" religious community,
- 26.04.22 - "Dine Sharfadin" (Ezdins)",
- 23.03.23 - Diocese of Yerevan and Armenia of the Russian Orthodox Church.

All historical-architectural, cultural and religious objects over the territory of Armenia are under State protection, regardless their ethnic or religious affiliation. In addition to historical monuments which belong to Armenian Apostolic Church, there are also monuments registered and preserved in different regions of Armenia, most of which are cemeteries. Verin Dvin community of Ararat Region of Armenia has a functioning church and chapel. Assyrian religious organization of Armenia "Holy Apostolic Church of Assyrian Catholicism of the East" operates in the community. 80 percent of the community's population are Assyrians.

Articles 9.1, 9.2, 9.3 and 9.4

- **The Parties undertake to recognize that the right to freedom of expression of every person belonging to a national minority includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas in the minority language, without interference by public authorities and regardless of frontiers. The Parties shall ensure, within the framework of their legal systems, that persons belonging to a national minority are not discriminated against in their access to the media.**
- **Paragraph 1 shall not prevent Parties from requiring the licensing, without discrimination and based on objective criteria, of sound radio and television broadcasting, or cinema enterprises.**
- **The Parties shall not hinder the creation and the use of printed media by persons belonging to national minorities. In the legal framework of sound radio and television broadcasting, they shall ensure, as far as possible, and taking into account the provisions of paragraph 1, that persons belonging to national minorities are granted the possibility of creating and using their own media.**
- **In the framework of their legal systems, the Parties shall adopt adequate measures in order to facilitate access to the media for persons belonging to national minorities and in order to promote tolerance and permit cultural pluralism.**

In July 2020, the new Law on "Audiovisual Media" came into force, superseding the previous Law on "Television and Radio" (2000).

Under the previous Law on "Television and Radio," the minimum amount of airtime allocated for programmes about the life, culture, and languages of national minorities in Armenia was determined by the Commission on Television and Radio, which had set specific quotas in June 2018. The new Law on "Audiovisual Media" introduces updated regulations.

According to Article 22, Part 6, Clause 3, Sub-Clause "e" of the Law, public broadcasters are required to develop and implement a programmatic policy to ensure that programs about the life and culture of national minorities in Armenia are broadcasted during daytime hours. Specifically, public audio broadcasters must allocate at least 30 minutes per week, while public audiovisual broadcasters are required to provide a minimum of 2 hours per week for such programming.

Armenian legislation prohibits discriminatory speech in audiovisual media. According to Article 9, Part 7 of the Law on Audiovisual Media, audiovisual programmers that promote discrimination based on national, racial, gender, religious, age, disability, personal, or social characteristics, or that contain similar targeted information, are prohibited.

Part 3 of the same Article stipulates that programmes potentially harmful to the health, mental and physical development, or upbringing of minors may only be broadcast between 00:00 and 06:00. The criteria for identifying such programmes are defined by Decision No. 73-H of the Television and Radio Commission, dated 24 June 2024. This decision classifies as potentially harmful those programmes that may discredit national and global cultural heritage or registered religious organizations in Armenia.

Additionally, the Law on Television and Radio mandates the allocation of airtime for broadcasting special programmes in the languages of national minorities residing in Armenia.

Public broadcasters and private audiovisual media service providers in Armenia regularly air analytical, rights awareness, and informative programmes about national minorities. These often involve or are initiated by representatives of national minorities and are primarily broadcast in Armenian or Russian. At the request of television and radio reporters, comments on events or celebrations involving national minorities are provided in the minority languages.

In Armenia's regions, audiovisual media service providers frequently air programmes addressing issues relevant to national minorities. No mass media outlets in Armenia propagate negative stereotypes about ethnic minorities. Broadcasters adhere to the legal requirements, and the Television and Radio Commission has not identified any violations in its oversight.

According to Article 45 of the Law on Audiovisual Media, a license is required for broadcasters to use a public multiplex slot for broadcasting audiovisual content within Armenia.

Between 2020 and 2024, the public television company aired programmes focusing on ethnic diversity and the culture of national minorities, including "Side by Side," "National Flavors,"

"Ethnocolors" (2 seasons), and "News in Yezidi." The "Aravot Luso" programme also regularly features content on the culture of national minorities in various formats.

The Public Radio of Armenia broadcasts programmes in Yezidi, Kurdish, Assyrian, and Greek languages daily. These programmes include:

- AM 69.7: Yezidi (60 minutes), Kurdish (30 minutes), Assyrian (15 minutes), Greek (15 minutes)
- AM 1395: Yezidi (15 minutes), Kurdish (30 minutes)

These broadcasts are available both within Armenia and internationally, aiming to raise awareness of ethnic diversity and national minorities' cultures and to keep these communities informed about events in Armenia in their native languages.

In addition to daily news, minority programmes on public radio also cover topics such as culture, traditions, history, religion, and language.

On public radio, each national minority also has an official website published in its own language, featuring daily news translated from Armenian, along with reports, videos, and interviews with prominent figures representing minority communities. Additionally, each language section has a Facebook page where public announcements and updates from the respective radio website are posted, enhancing information dissemination in that language.

These editorial offices offer training opportunities for young minority staff, providing them with valuable work experience and skills.

In 2023, the editorial offices representing national minorities at Public Radio underwent significant reforms:

- The Yezidi department began publishing daily video news multiple times a week.
- A new schedule was introduced, with programming running from 08:00-09:00 and 21:00-22:00.
- The content of literary and cultural programmes broadcast in Yezidi on Saturdays and Sundays was expanded to emphasize the preservation of national identity.
- With support from the RA Public Radio Society, the Assyrian Department facilitated recordings by Assyrian dance, music groups, and church choirs. These recordings are preserved in the radio archive and used in cultural programmes.

Actions aimed at protecting the linguistic and cultural identity of national minorities are detailed in Section 1 of the Report under Articles 2, 8, and 9.

Articles 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3

- **The Parties undertake to recognize that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use freely and without interference his or her minority language, in private and in public, orally and in writing**
- **In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavor to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those persons and the administrative authorities.**
- **The Parties undertake to guarantee the right of every person belonging to a national minority to be informed promptly, in a language which he or she understands, of the reasons for his or her arrest, and of the nature and cause of any accusation against him or her, and to defend himself or herself in this language, if necessary with the free assistance of an interpreter.**

Every person belonging to a national minority has the right to freely use their minority language in private life and public places. The exercise of this right is regulated by the Law "On Language" and the draft Law "On National Minorities". Following the amendment to the "Language" law on 23 March 2018, the Language Committee ensures the protection of linguistic rights for national minorities. Article 1 of the Republic of Armenia's Law "On Language" states: "The Republic of Armenia guarantees the free use of national minority languages within its territory."

Article 2 of the same law stipulates that education and upbringing in national minority communities in Armenia may be conducted in their mother tongue under state programmes and sponsorship, with the compulsory teaching of Armenian. Article 4 further defines that national minority organizations in Armenia prepare their documents, forms, and seals in Armenian, with a parallel translation into their own language.

According to Article 27, Part 2 of the Law "On Fundamentals of Administration and Administrative Procedures," individuals who speak national minority languages in Armenia, per law or international treaties, may submit applications and accompanying documents for administrative procedures in their minority language. In such cases, the administrative body may request a translation of the documents into Armenian. Part 4 of the same article allows participants in administrative proceedings to use foreign languages, but they must provide an Armenian translation through their interpreter, unless the administrative body can provide one.

Article 59, Part 4 of the same law states that the administrative body that issued an administrative act, upon the request of the recipient, may provide a copy of the act translated into a foreign language, certified by the official seal of the administrative body. According to Part 6, an oral administrative act may be delivered in any foreign language understandable to its recipient.

According to Part 8 of Article 46 of the Law "On Notary," in the absence of a certified translator for a national minority language in Armenia, a person endorsed by the head of a public organization

formed to protect the rights of that minority may act as a translator for the notarial act. If no such organization exists, the head of the community or administrative district where the minority resides may appoint a person to fulfill this role.

The Criminal Procedure, Civil Procedure, and Administrative Procedure Codes of Armenia provide specific regulations ensuring that all individuals, including those from national minorities, may communicate with state bodies in their own language. Article 27 of the Criminal Procedure Code specifies that while the language of proceedings is literary Armenian, everyone, except the court and public participants, may use the language they know. If the accused does not understand the language of the proceedings, they are provided an interpreter free of charge to exercise all their rights under the Code, including receiving translated documents.

According to Article 350 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the translator must provide a translation of the final part of the judgment to any participant who does not understand the language of the proceedings. Similarly, Article 16 of the Civil Procedure Code grants participants the right to appear in court using their preferred language, provided they arrange for Armenian translation. In cases where individuals cannot afford translation services, the court will appoint an interpreter at the state's expense, covering participants, experts, or witnesses who do not know Armenian.

According to Article 9 of the Administrative Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia, a party, their representative, an expert appointed at the party's initiative, or a witness invited by the party has the right to appear in court in the language of their choice, provided that the party arranges for translation into Armenian. The same article stipulates that if a participant in the administrative proceedings, an expert, or a witness does not understand Armenian and lacks sufficient funds for a paid translation, the court shall provide interpretation services at the expense of state funds.

The Constitutional Law "On the Defender of Human Rights" does not specify any language requirements for submitting complaints to the Defender or for communication with the Defender. In practice, the Ombudsman's office strives to communicate with applicants not only in Armenian but also in other languages of their choice, arranging for an interpreter if necessary. Article 28 of the Constitutional Law "On the Defender of Human Rights" authorizes the Defender, as a national preventive mechanism, to engage an interpreter for private conversations with individuals in detention, staff of relevant institutions, or any other person with pertinent information.

Article 9 of the draft law "On National Minorities" proposes that in communities where national minorities constitute at least twenty percent of the population, their language can be used for oral and written communication with local self-government bodies. Regarding Article 10, Clause 3 of the Convention, it is important to note that Article 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia guarantees the right of every person deprived of personal liberty to be informed immediately, in a language they understand, of the reasons for their deprivation of liberty, and, in the case of criminal charges, of the nature of the accusation.

Article 43 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Armenia ensures that an accused person has the right to receive a written notice and an explanation of their rights immediately upon arrest or charge, including thorough information in a language they understand regarding the factual circumstances and legal assessment of the charges against them. If a restraining order is imposed, the accused must also be informed of the grounds and reasons for their deprivation of liberty.

The new draft Code on Administrative Offenses proposes in Article 57 that individuals subjected to administrative arrest have the right to be informed in a language they understand about the grounds for their detention and to present objections. Article 58 of the draft Code makes it the duty of the arresting official to provide an interpreter if the arrested person does not speak Armenian. Additionally, Article 66 of the draft Code grants those suspected of administrative offenses the right to be informed, in a language they understand, about the alleged offense, its factual circumstances, and legal qualification, along with a written notice of their rights and the grounds for their deprivation of liberty. They also have the right to use interpreter services free of charge.

The draft Code on Administrative Offenses was made available for public consultation in the second half of 2023, with discussions taking place among relevant stakeholders. The adoption of the draft code is planned for 2025, incorporating suggestions and amendments from the consultation process.

Articles 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3

- **The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language and the right to official recognition of them, according to modalities provided for in their legal system.**
- **The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to display in his or her minority language signs, inscriptions and other information of a private nature visible to the public.**
- **In areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of persons belonging to a national minority, the Parties shall endeavor, in the framework of their legal system, including, where appropriate, agreements with other States, and taking into account their specific conditions, to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is a sufficient demand for such indications.**

The legal relations concerning the registration of a child's first name, patronymic, and surname are regulated by the Law "On Civil Status Registration." According to Article 28 of the Law, the child's name is recorded in the birth certificate as stated in the application. The child's patronymic is registered according to the name of the father listed in the birth certificate, while the surname is recorded based on the parents' surname. In cases where the parents have different surnames, the child's surname is determined according to the one mentioned in the application. Civil status registrations, including birth registrations, are conducted in Armenian. However, the Law "On Civil

Status Registration" does not impose any restrictions on the choice of name or surname. Accordingly, the person submitting the application (the child's parent) may freely choose the child's name, including selecting one used in the language of a national minority.

Chapter 10 of the Law "On Civil Status Registration" also allows for name changes without restrictions concerning the nature of the name. Specifically, Article 53 of the law grants a person who has reached the age of eighteen the right to change their name, including the first name, patronymic, and surname, in accordance with the procedures established by this law. For individuals aged sixteen to eighteen, name and surname changes may be registered with the written consent of the parents, adoptive parents, or guardian. In the absence of such consent, a decision from the guardianship authority is required, except in cases where the person is fully recognized as capable. Name or surname changes for individuals under the age of sixteen are carried out based on a joint application by the parents, or in cases of disagreement, by a decision of the guardianship authority.

At the entrances of the Zovun, Nor Geghi, Arzni, and Kanakeravan settlements in Kotayk Region, RA, topographic signs are displayed in the languages of national minorities. In Tumanyan community, Lori Region, RA, state institutions feature trilingual signs, and Russian-language signs are installed in the Tashir, Fioletovo, Lermontovo, and Privolnoye communities.

In the Koghes and Yaghdan communities, the Greek residents, who are married to Armenians, speak Armenian fluently. The community head was advised to install Greek-language signs, but considering the linguistic integration of the population, they did not deem it necessary.

According to Article 18, Part 1, Clause 22 of the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Local Self-Government" and Article 12, Part 1, Clause 23 of the Law "On Local Self-Government in Yerevan," decisions regarding the naming of streets, avenues, squares, parks, and institutions are made by the Council of Elders.

With the support of the Armenian government, it is intended to open the Yezidi Amoyan brothers' martial arts school.

Bilingual signs have been installed in several regions:

- A sign in Armenian, English, and Assyrian is placed at the entrance to the Verin Dvin community, Ararat Region. The municipality building and the local church also display signs in both Armenian and Assyrian.
- In the Ferik community of Armavir Region, the preschool named after Mirza Sloyan features signs in Armenian and Yezidi, as does the school named after Rzalie Rashidi Ozmanyanyan.
- Fioletovo community school in Lori Region displays signs in Armenian and Russian. The same applies to all community recreation areas, shops, and infrastructure.

- Lermontovo community has Armenian and Russian signs on the school building and the municipal building, with a sign at the community entrance displaying the community name in both languages.

The legal basis for naming or renaming geographical objects in Armenia, as well as the registration and preservation of historical and cultural heritage names, is governed by the RA Laws "On Geographical Names" and "On Local Self-Government" and other cultural legislation. **The preservation of the traditions and historical-cultural heritage of national minorities in Armenia is a priority in the standardization of geographical names.**

The draft law "On National Minorities" proposes that in communities where at least 30% of the population belongs to a national minority, the names of communities, streets, and signage in state and community institutions, including community halls, schools, and kindergartens, should be displayed in the minority language alongside Armenian.

Articles 12.1, 12.2 and 12.3

- **The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority.**
- **In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities.**
- **The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities.**

Primary education in ethnic languages is provided to national minority communities whose languages are protected by the Republic of Armenia. In accordance with the Law "On Public Education," education at all levels in state educational institutions is compulsory and free for all citizens of Armenia, including national minorities. Additionally, in mixed settlements with smaller ethnic minority populations, optional language instruction is offered.

Children from national minorities are enrolled either in schools or classes where education is provided in their native language. If such options are unavailable, parents may choose the language of instruction. A curriculum for national minority schools (or classes) has been developed, allocating four weekly lessons in grades 1-4, and three weekly lessons in grades 5-12 for the subject "Native Language and Literature" in accordance with the state curriculum. In smaller mixed settlements, group language instruction is also an option.

According to amendments made by the Armenian government in 2023 (Decision No. 216-N), the position of group leader for national minority languages in state educational institutions can be held

by individuals with at least secondary vocational education and proficiency in the language, though higher education is required for this role.

Under Article 26 of the Law "On Public Education," teachers, including national minority representatives, are required to undergo periodic certification, with state-funded professional development provided in line with standards set by the Ministry of Education.

On 16 November 2022, the National Assembly of Armenia adopted the "State Programme for the Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030," which includes provisions to ensure access to quality education for national minorities. This includes training and incentivizing teachers, expanding pre-school education in minority communities, and improving the availability of educational materials in minority languages.

Article 10 of the draft law "On National Minorities" proposes that:

- Education for children from national minorities in pre-school and general education institutions may be conducted in their native or national language, with Armenian as a mandatory subject. Alternatively, additional groups teaching the language, culture, and history of national minorities may be established based on the location of their communities.
- Non-state educational institutions may also provide instruction in the native or national language of children from national minorities, with mandatory Armenian language teaching, following government-approved curricula.
- Armenia supports the development of educational programmes, textbooks, and materials for national minorities and funds initiatives to promote the teaching of languages and cultures of stateless national minorities, in cooperation with minority representatives.

Articles 13.1 and 13.2

- **Within the framework of their education systems, the Parties shall recognise that persons belonging to a national minority have the right to set up and to manage their own private educational and training establishments.**
- **The exercise of this right shall not entail any financial obligation for the Parties.**

According to Order No. 24-N, issued on 5 March 2021 by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, titled "On Approving the Procedure for the Formation of the List of Guaranteed Organizations Training Teachers Subject to Certification and Revoking Order No. 496 of 18 May 2012," Armenian citizens, including representatives of national minorities, are entitled to establish training organizations. These organizations can apply for accreditation from the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Armenia. Once approved, the certified training organizations are compensated according to the established procedure, based on the number of teachers they train, which includes meeting financial obligations in line with state guidelines.

Articles 14.1, 14.2 and 14.3

- **The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language.**
- **In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavor to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language.**
- **Paragraph 2 of this article shall be implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language**

The language policy strategy of the Republic of Armenia is based on the principle that foreign languages are an integral part of the country's linguistic culture and cultural heritage. Languages of national minorities in Armenia are protected and recognized by the state. Article 41 of the Armenian Constitution enshrines the linguistic rights of national minorities. The language policy principles include respect for linguistic and cultural diversity, and the encouragement of the development of minority languages and cultures. The strategy aims to preserve and develop these languages, and to foster effective linguistic communication and mutual understanding among them.

To support the preservation of minority languages, the state budget allocates financial resources not only for educational programmes, textbook publishing, and pedagogical training but also to non-governmental organizations representing ethnic communities. This funding supports the publication of periodicals by these communities. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia also supports the publication of press releases in 11 languages for 39 national minorities.

On 4 February 2021, the government approved decision No. 136, which introduced a new state standard for public education. This standard outlines expected outcomes for elementary, basic, and secondary education programmes, including the requirement for students from national minorities to be proficient in their native languages and to understand and present their cultural heritage. The 5th-grade curriculum includes the subject "My Motherland," which covers the history, language, and culture of national minorities. The KZNAK Foundation under the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports has launched events to highlight the traditions and holidays of national minorities, involving community representatives.

Yezidi and Kurdish textbooks are republished annually with state budget funds and provided to students free of charge. Electronic versions of textbooks and subject programmes are accessible on the "Resources" section of the "Armenian Educational Environment" portal (<http://lib.armedu.am>). Community representatives also develop textbooks for the Assyrian language.

According to Law HO-441-N enacted on 16 November 2022 "On Approving the State Plan for the Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030," the goal is to enhance educational resources and literature by 2030, particularly in Armenian and national minority languages. This includes introducing preschools and alternative, cost-effective models in communities lacking such services, including those with compact ethnic minority populations. The plan also aims to implement distance learning services and create electronic open resources in minority languages by 2024, 2026, and 2030.

Additionally, by decision No. 720 of 11 May 2023, an amendment to the government's 2012 order on "Admission to State and Non-State Higher Educational Institutions" provides the republican admissions commission with the ability to allocate free places for bachelor's and integrated educational programmes to minority representatives who meet the minimum entry requirements and achieve higher exam scores.

According to the list of activities for 2021-2026 approved by Government Decision No. 1902-L on 18 November 2021, the Government of the Republic of Armenia plans to allocate up to seven free places annually for national minorities at the bachelor's level of higher education, including continuous and integrated educational programmes.

The development of national minority languages and the strengthening of cultural ties are actively promoted at Brusov State University. The university hosts the Greek Language and Culture Center, the Franz Werfel Hebrew Studies Center, the Russian Language and Culture Center, and the Georgian Language Center. These centers ensure the active participation of representatives and professors of these languages in cultural activities, reflecting a constructive approach to the languages of regional or national minorities as part of Armenia's cultural wealth. The university also regularly organizes events, lectures, and seminars focused on the history, literature, culture, and significant events of national minorities.

To further the language policy, the Vanadzor-based Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Tumanyan State University plans to establish scientific expedition groups. These groups will research and study the traditional culture of the Russian-Molocans residing in the villages of Fioletovo and Lermontovo in Lori region. The main objective of these folklore, ethnographic, and dialectological expeditions will be to preserve traditional forms of folk culture, customs, and traditions. This initiative will be carried out by researchers of traditional culture and members of the scientific expeditions.

Under the community enlargement programme, as per the Government decision, four communities with national minority settlements (Yezidis and Kurds) were formed in Aragatsotn Region. Three of these communities were enlarged. There are 18 schools in the settlements of national minorities in the region. Kurdish is taught in Alagyazi, Charchakis, and Sipan secondary schools, and Yezidi is studied in group classes. In Avshen, Jamshlu, and other schools, Yezidi and Kurdish are taught as part of the curriculum. In Sadunts, Kaniyashir, Mirak, Shenkani, Mijnatun primary, and Rya-Taza

secondary schools, Yezidi language lessons are part of the school curriculum. In Arteni primary school, the mother tongue is taught in group classes.

Students from public educational institutions of national minorities actively participate in various subject Olympiads, regional and national events, cultural celebrations such as "Alda Tausi Malak" and "Kyosal Galdi," community and school activities, and sports events. In Aragatsotn Region, all necessary conditions are in place to preserve the culture and traditions of national minorities. Textbooks in national languages, guaranteed and printed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, are used in schools, and the teaching of these languages is funded by the state, regardless of student numbers. Children's magazines such as "Areg" and "Shams," as well as newspapers like "Rya Taza" and "Zagros," are subscribed to in various schools and communities. There is active cooperation with other regions and with representatives of national minorities living abroad.

In Armavir region, out of 111 general educational institutions, 10 offer Yezidi language classes, and 1 offers Assyrian language classes. The main challenge related to teaching national minority languages is the shortage of qualified specialists. Educational institutions with Yezidi students have hosted events celebrating national minority holidays and organized visits to the "Lalish" shrine in Aknalich settlement.

Students from national minorities are enrolled in general secondary schools in the Ararat, Artashat, and Masis communities of Ararat Region. Assyrian communities in Dimitrov and Vern Dvin have schools where Assyrian children receive education in Russian-language classrooms with compulsory Assyrian language instruction. Yezidi children study their native language in extracurricular groups, with schools provided with appropriate textbooks and teaching aids.

In Arzni community, Kotayk region, the non-governmental organizations "Atur" and "Gabbara" focus on safeguarding the educational, cultural, and social rights of Assyrians. They organize various ethnographic events celebrating national and religious holidays, in which kindergarten students actively participate.

At Abovyan City, primary school No. 5, named after Vanyan, and Hrazdan, primary school No. 12, named after Paronyan, as well as secondary school No. 12 named after Sergey Sarkhoshev in Arzni, offer advanced classes in Russian. These schools provide specialized programmes, textbooks, and methodological guides. In Jrvezh and Zovuni, Yezidi language is taught in secondary schools named after Baghdasaryan and No. 1 in Nor Geghi, Kanakeravan. Assyrian is also taught at the secondary school named after Sergey Sarkhoshev in Arzni, within group classes. In Abovyan's Vanyan primary school No. 5, classes are available in Russian for foreign citizens and national minorities, with advanced learning in Russian included in Armenian language classes.

In the secondary school named after Sergey Sarkhoshev in Arzni, Assyrian language classes are offered from grades 1 to 12. The subject "Assyrian Language and Literature" received 34 lessons per week from 2019-2020 through 2022-2023, according to the curriculum set by the Ministry of

Education, Science, Culture and Sports. In Hrazdan's N12 primary school, Russian language classes for foreign citizens and national minorities are included in the curriculum alongside Armenian.

In Jrvezh secondary school, Yazidi language is taught in group sessions due to the smaller number of Yezidi students, with a maximum of 11 hours of instruction per week. The educational base for Yezidi students has been enhanced with annual orders for Yezidi textbooks such as "Aibenaran" and "Yezdi Language."

At Zovuni's Baghdasaryan secondary school, approximately 50 Yezidi students have been enrolled each academic year from 2019 to 2024. Their instruction in Yezidi language follows a group programme approved by the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia, with classes held two hours per week for both elementary and middle school students. The school is equipped with Yezidi textbooks.

Since 1995, Nor Geghi N1 secondary school has been teaching the Yezidi language through group classes.

In Yerevan, primary school No. 8 named after Pushkin has offered Russian-language classes since 1998, and high school No. 29 named after Margaryan includes "Assyrian Language" and "Assyrian Literature" as core subjects. Textbooks developed and published by the Assyrian community support teaching, with Assyrian teachers enhancing students' exposure to Assyrian culture, traditions, and national characteristics. Lessons incorporate Assyrian history, poetry, and songs, complemented by open classes, performances, exhibitions, and other extracurricular activities. Seventh graders present reports on Assyrian history, while eighth graders explore Assyrian culture, lifestyle, and traditions.

According to the curriculum for public schools in the Republic of Armenia, the subject "Russian Language" is included in the state component for grades 2-9. Teaching is conducted using textbooks published in Armenia that account for the specifics of teaching Russian in the national school system. By government decision, several schools in Armenia have established advanced Russian language classes. In Yerevan, there are 30 intensive Russian-language schools under municipal jurisdiction, which are equipped with special programmes, textbooks, and methodological guides. As of 2020, 13 schools in Yerevan have Russian-language classes, and 60 primary and secondary schools across Armenia offer in-depth Russian language education, with an additional 50 schools providing Russian language instruction.

The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Armenia finances the publication of textbooks for elementary, middle, and high schools serving national minorities. In 2020, the state budget allocated for the purchase and distribution of textbooks included: "Yezdi Primer" (720 copies), "Yezdi Literature" for 5th grade (644 copies), 8th grade (635 copies), 9th grade (638 copies), "Yezdi Language" for 3rd-5th grade (1614 copies), and for 6th-8th grade (1625 copies).

In 2021, additional textbooks purchased included: "Yezdi Primer" (257 copies), "Yezdi Literature" for 6th grade (248 copies), 7th grade (240 copies), 10th grade (138 copies), 11th grade (128 copies), and "Yezdi Language" for 9th-10th grade (169 copies).

In 2022, the following textbooks were acquired: "Yezdi Language Primer" (400 copies), "Yezdi Language" for 2nd grade (400 copies), 3rd grade (400 copies), 4th grade (400 copies), "Yezdi Literature" for 12th grade (400 copies), "Yezdi Language" for 11th-12th grade (400 copies), "Kurdish Primer" (50 copies), "Kurdish" for 4th grade (50 copies), 5th grade (50 copies), and 6th grade (50 copies), "Speak Assyrian" for 1st grade (60 copies), "Write and Speak Assyrian" for 1st grade (60 copies), 2nd grade (60 copies), and "Allap-bit" for 1st grade (60 copies).

In 2023, a total of 941 textbooks were published for students of national minorities, including: 198 copies of "Yezdi Alphabet" and 26 copies of "Kurdish Alphabet" for 1st grade, 25 copies of "Kurdish" for 2nd grade, 25 copies for 3rd grade, 30 copies of "Kurdish" and "Yezdi" for grades 3-5, 84 copies of "Yezdi Literature" for 5th grade, 132 copies of "Yezdi" for grades 6-8, 22 copies of "Kurdish" for 8th grade, and 17 copies for 9th grade, along with 37 copies of "Yezdi Literature" for 8th grade and 9th grade, and 18 copies of "Kurdish" for 9th grade.

All schools in Armenia, including those serving national minorities, are part of the Education Network of Armenia (ENET) and benefit from continuous internet connectivity.

To support the education of national minority languages, Armenia has implemented ongoing programmes to enhance the organization of education for these communities. However, the effectiveness of these measures relies on the willingness of national minorities to utilize the available opportunities.

Between 2020 and 2023, preschools were established in approximately 70 urban and rural communities across Armenia's regions. By a government decision, a new nursery school is being constructed in Alagyaz settlement, Alagyaz community, intended to accommodate 144 students from 11 settlements in the community. The kindergarten is scheduled to open in 2024.

In the Ferik community of Armavir Region, a school-based preschool was established and has been operational since September 2022. The model charter for preschool institutions stipulates that education for national minorities can be conducted in their mother tongue or national language, with compulsory instruction in Armenian.

In Arzni, Kotayk Region, the "Alyonushka Kindergarten" includes a Russian-language teaching group for Assyrian children, where education is provided in Russian with mandatory Armenian instruction. The kindergarten regularly organizes various activities and open classes in Assyrian, including a traditional event for the Assyrian New Year (Hab Nisan), celebrating national culture and traditions with parental involvement.

Preschool education in the Russian language is also provided in the "Skazka" preschool educational institution in the Lermontovo community of Lori Region.

Article 15

- **The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.**

According to Article 89 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, seats in the National Assembly are allocated to representatives of national minorities in accordance with the procedure established by the Electoral Code.

As stipulated in Article 83, Part 5 of the Electoral Code, the electoral list for National Assembly elections may include a second part featuring representatives of the four national minorities with the largest permanent populations, based on the most recent census data prior to the elections. A candidate representing a national minority included in the second part of the electoral list may also appear in the first part of the list.

Article 95, Part 9 of the Code specifies that, based on the results of the National Assembly elections, four mandates are allocated to representatives of national minorities, with one mandate each going to the first four national minorities with the largest permanent populations, as determined by the latest census.

To encourage the involvement of national minorities in public and political life, the Constitutional Law "On Parties" provides for targeted state funding for parties to support women, youth, persons with disabilities, and representatives of national minorities, as outlined in Article 26, Part 7. This funding is intended to facilitate the inclusion of these groups in party activities.

The development of national minority cultures, which contributes to cultural diversity in Armenia, is a priority for the Armenian government. Conditions are created to promote the active participation of national minorities in cultural life and to engage the younger generation in youth sector programmes.

Various exhibitions, concerts, and festivals showcasing the ethnography and contemporary art of national minorities have been organized to integrate them into the cultural landscape of Armenia.

In the field of art:

On 20 May 2021, a programme titled "Concert of Classical Vocal Music" was held at the Komitas Chamber Music House in Yerevan, organized by the "Arvest" NGO (led by Ervin Amiryan, a Yezidi).

The concert featured Yezidi soprano Diana Amiryan (Germany) and Kurdish soprano Yulia Karatash (Germany). Approximately 100 spectators attended the event.

In December 2022, a joint concert titled "The Roof: Armenia" was held at the "Arno Babajanyan" concert hall. The concert featured music and dance groups from all 11 national minorities in Yerevan and RA regions. Booths were set up in the concert hall's lobby where each community displayed handicrafts, newspapers, books, and more. The event, which included a meeting-discussion, concert, and exhibition, received a budget allocation of 8 million drams.

In the field of preservation of intangible cultural heritage:

Through a grant competition for cultural projects organized by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Armenia, the "National Union of Yezidis" NGO received financial support to implement projects aimed at preserving and promoting Yezidi intangible cultural heritage.

From April to August 2019, the Yezidi community in Zovuni and Yeghvard participated in cultural, educational, and festive traditional events under the programme "Organization of Yezidi Cultural, Educational, Festive Traditional Events." This included celebrations for "Charshama Sare Sale" (Yezidi New Year) and the traditional Yezidi festival "Chle Havine" in Yeghvard.

From 2020 to 2021, the "Meeting with Mountaineers" programme was carried out in Aragatsotn region. This programme involved meetings with mountaineers from the region, featuring celebrations, performances of national music, song and dance, as well as the donation of books and newspapers. Each year, 60-70 participants of various ages took part in these events, aimed at preserving Yezidi holidays, customs, and traditions, and enhancing respect and appreciation for national customs.

In 2020, the Helsinki Committee of Armenia prepared the research report titled "The Rights of the Largest National Minority of the Republic of Armenia: The Yezidi Community," with advisory support provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of the Republic of Armenia.

In 2021, the "National Union of Yezidis" NGO and the Assyrian community of Armenia participated in the inventory of intangible cultural heritage. As a result, Government Decision No. 599 of 15 April 2021, which amended Government Decision No. 310-A of 11 March 2010, added elements related to Yezidi intangible cultural heritage and the "Assyrian New Year" celebration to the list of intangible cultural heritage values of Armenia. This inventory process is ongoing.

In the same year, the "Union of Greek Communities of Armenia" NGO participated in the inventory process for intangible cultural heritage in need of immediate protection. Consequently, Government Resolution No. 1825-N of 4 November 2021, amended Government Resolution No. 36-N of 20

January 2011, to include the "Pontian dialect of the Greek population of Armenia" in the list of intangible cultural heritage values requiring immediate protection.

In 2022, the "Gyumri Master City" festival, with a budget of 6,273,600 drams, aimed to unify contemporary folk crafts on a single cultural platform, enhance their recognition, and support the creative development of individuals preserving and transmitting this heritage. The festival featured creative groups from Armenian national minorities, including artistic performances, songs, and dances from the Russian and Belarusian communities.

On November 30, 2023, Government Decision No. 2097-N amended Decision No. 36-N of January 20, 2011, to include the Yezidi "Buka Barane" rain-bringing ritual in the list of intangible cultural heritage values in need of immediate protection.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day war unleashed by Azerbaijan, many cultural events that were originally planned for 2020-2021 were either canceled or implemented partially.

Article 16

- **The Parties shall refrain from measures which alter the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities and are aimed at restricting the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention.**

In 2016, administrative territorial reforms in the Republic of Armenia resulted in the formation of 64 new communities through the unification process. Seven communities were exempted from this process: Yerevan, Gyumri, and five communities with significant national minority populations. Thus, the total number of communities stands at 71, down from 915 prior to the reforms. Throughout the unification process, the RA government has carefully avoided creating community associations that would alter the demographic composition of areas predominantly inhabited by national minorities.

Some settlements with national minority populations are included in the "500 Kindergartens and 300 Schools" programme, which is currently undergoing an inventory and audit.

As of 2024, under the RA law "On Financial Equalization," the calculation of equalization subsidies is to be based on both the budgetary security coefficient of the communities (part "b") and their population (part "a"). Equalization grants under part "a" are designated for communities with up to 3,500 inhabitants, primarily benefiting ethnic communities of national minorities. This includes eight communities: Arevut, Metsadzor, Shamiram, Verin Dvin, Ferik, Lermontovo, Fioletovo, and Arzni. Each of these communities is set to receive 50 million drams (see also Article 14 of Section 1 of the Report).

Articles 17.1, 17.2, 18.1 and 18.2

- The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts across frontiers with persons lawfully staying in other States, in particular those with whom they share an ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, or a common cultural heritage.
- The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participate in the activities of non-governmental organizations, both at the national and international levels.
- The Parties shall endeavour to conclude, where necessary, bilateral and multilateral agreements with other States, in particular neighboring States, in order to ensure the protection of persons belonging to the national minorities concerned.
- Where relevant, the Parties shall take measures to encourage trans frontier co-operation.

Armenia acknowledges the crucial role of cross-border interaction in fostering intercultural dialogue, preserving historical, civilizational, and cultural heritage, and ensuring stability, peace, and sustainable economic development in the region.

Armenia is actively committed to enhancing cross-border exchanges, placing significant emphasis on measures that protect the rights of national minorities and maintain cultural and historical connections, including through cooperation with international partners.

In 2024, Armenia launched the "Crossroads of Peace" project to facilitate the unblocking of regional transport and economic communications³. This initiative is a key element of the Armenian government's broader efforts to advance peace and stability in the region.

³ <https://www.gov.am/am/thecrossroadsofpeace>