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Working document

Compilation of Opinions of the Advisory Committee relating to Article 12 of the Framework  
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (4<sup>th</sup> cycle)

"Article 12

- 1 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities."

Note: this document was produced as a working document only and does not contain footnotes. For publication purposes, please refer to the original opinions.

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As of 18 September 2017, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities had adopted a total of 24 opinions, among which 17 opinions on Article 12, of which 17 are public.

NOTE

Based on the information currently at its disposal, the Advisory Committee considers that implementation of certain articles does not give rise to any specific observations.

This statement is not to be understood as signalling that adequate measures have now been taken and that efforts in this respect may be diminished or even halted. On the contrary, the nature of the obligations of the Framework Convention requires a sustained and continued effort by the authorities to respect the principles and achieve the goals of the Framework Convention. Furthermore, a certain state of affairs may be considered acceptable at one stage but that need not necessarily be so in further cycles of monitoring. It may also be the case that issues that appear at one stage of the monitoring to be of relatively minor concern prove over time to have been underestimated.

Armenia

*Adopted on 26 May 2016*

## Article 12 of the Framework Convention

### Equal access to education for persons belonging to national minorities

The Advisory Committee recalls its observations made in the previous opinions concerning inadequate access of Yezidi and Kurdish children to preschool. In addition, the curricula in such preschools, where they existed, did not correspond to the multilingual community and the diverse needs of the children attending them.

The Advisory Committee is pleased to note that one of the focus points of the Strategic Programme for Reforms in Preschool Education for 2008-2015, was the expansion of the preschool network in areas inhabited by national minorities. The authorities set the initial goal of increasing the intake of the upper preschool age group (5 and 6 year olds) to 90%. The Advisory Committee notes that, according to data available through the World Bank, the number of 5 and 6 year-old children enrolled in the preschool programme reached 65% in the 2012/2013 school year, with a further increase in the enrolment rate to 75% in 2015. These efforts are very commendable but demonstrate the challenge of meeting the 90% rate for preschool enrolment by the government's new deadline of 2017.

In order to facilitate the establishment of such preschools, the minimum number of children required has been lowered in cases of children speaking a national minority language to 8 (down from the standard 25). The setting-up, with financial assistance of foreign donors, of Yezidi classes in the villages of Geghamasar, Arpunq, Poqr Masrik in Gegharkunik *Marz* (municipality), providing preschool education to 50 children aged 4 and 5 is particularly welcome. The Advisory Committee notes in this context that reliance on foreign donors cannot be considered a sustainable solution in the long term and may put at risk any progress achieved due to external factors that are beyond the control of the national and local authorities.

The Advisory Committee further notes the ongoing revision of the National Curriculum Framework for Grades 1 to 12 to ensure its conformity with the requirements of the National Curriculum for General State Education approved by the government in 2011. It appreciates in particular, that creating necessary conditions for the right of persons belonging to national minorities at school to learn their own language and culture, is one of the general objectives of the national curriculum. Furthermore, the national curriculum stipulates that children need to learn to “respect human rights and the fundamental freedoms, be humane, tolerant and demonstrate civilised attitudes to other people and their cultures”.

The Advisory Committee welcomes the number of initiatives taken by several schools to familiarise children with other cultures and languages, such as exhibitions of crafts of national minorities, the Native Language Day and holding lectures on the International Day of Tolerance. Furthermore, specific events were organised to promote awareness of national minority cultures, such as celebration of the “Yezididi” holiday of spring awakening, “Russia – brother of mine”, “I am Georgian, and you – Armenian” and “Discovering Greece”. Such initiatives, while praiseworthy in themselves, tend to limit the perception of national minorities to their folkloristic aspects, without deeper reflection on their contribution as part of Armenian society. Moreover, the Advisory Committee notes that representatives of national minorities consider that such initiatives need to be greatly expanded as schools devote little attention to the history of national minorities. As a result, many minority children, such as the Yezidis and Russian Molokans, are less aware of their own history than of Armenian history or “the History of the Armenian Apostolic Church” which is taught as a subject. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee

recalls its long-held view that the history of national minorities, as a constituent part of society, should be taught at all schools to increase children's awareness of the cultural and ethnic diversity of their country.

The Advisory Community commends the continuation of a special grant scheme according to which one student from each national minority can be enrolled without the obligation to pass entry exams in the Faculty of Oriental Studies of Yerevan State University or another language or culture-related faculty. Furthermore, such students can benefit from a partial waiver of tuition fees. The Advisory Committee notes that students from Yezidi, Kurdish and Jewish communities have benefited from these provisions (Yezidi and Kurdish students at the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Jewish students at the Yerevan State Conservatory).

*Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to continue their efforts to develop civic and intercultural curricula and to ensure that the culture and history of national minorities are adequately portrayed and taught in all schools, including those attended by majority children, and that they should convey all aspects of national minority cultures as an integral part of Armenian society.

Austria

*Adopted on 13 October 2016*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Equal access to education

*Present situation*

The Advisory Committee is pleased to note the substantial efforts made by the authorities to promote equal access to education for Roma children. A variety of governmental and non-governmental reports point to a clear improvement with respect to the inclusion and acceptance of Roma children in school, as compared with previous generations. At the same time, there is also agreement that previous practices of exclusion, including through the disproportionately frequent placement of Roma children in special schools, have resulted in high levels of illiteracy among the Roma of a certain age. This in turn has led to a parent generation that is often ill-prepared to accompany their children through a school system that classifies children according to their academic potential from a very early age. Civil society and national minority representatives consider the availability of Roma school mediators a key factor in order to promote trust and dialogue between parents and teachers, and to support children in their daily work at school. While coaching lessons have become available free of charge in many schools in Vienna, the Advisory Committee regrets that only four Roma school mediators are engaged by eight schools to look after some 250 children. It notes with interest that civil society organisations are very actively engaged in providing additional assistance to Roma children in schools through a variety of projects where necessary. While improvements continue to be made in this regard, Roma children remain disproportionately under-represented in upper secondary and higher education.

In addition, anti-gypsyism in school is still reported to be common and has a negative impact on the individual learning situation of Roma children. In the opinion of national minority and civil society representatives, there is still far too little appreciation of Roma cultures and traditions in schools. Furthermore, there is very little awareness of the history of persecution and deportation suffered by the

Roma in Austria. This lack of understanding and critical reflection translates into affirmation of prejudice and stereotyping in the school environment, as teachers do not systematically condemn and address discriminatory attitudes amongst pupils and thereby inadvertently encourage them. The Advisory Committee notes with interest the observation put forward by national minority representatives that the risk of being discriminated in schools faced by Roma children diminishes in more heterogeneous settings. The situation in the very diverse schools in Vienna, where some teachers and school administrators have been trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom, is reportedly much less problematic than for instance in Burgenland, where Roma pupils and their parents do not always feel treated with the necessary respect (see also paragraph 61).

#### *Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to increase their efforts to promote equal opportunities in access to education for Roma children at all levels, including by providing consistent learning support with the help of Roma school mediators and by ensuring that teachers are adequately trained and prepared to systematically prevent and combat all discriminatory attitudes.

Teaching and learning materials, teacher training and inter-cultural education

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee welcomes the substantial efforts that continue to be invested in an advanced system of teaching and learning minority languages through the preparation of relevant educational materials and through specialised teacher training in the respective languages. As of 2013, language learning is considered to be one of the basic competencies for all students of pedagogy and multilingualism is especially encouraged throughout the education system. In the pedagogical colleges of Burgenland and Carinthia, teacher training courses are offered in Slovenian, Croatian and Hungarian, both for bilingual classroom teaching and for teaching the languages as a subject (see Article 14). While there is no shortage of interested students for the teaching of Slovenian, the number of students wishing to become minority language teachers in Burgenland is diminishing. This affects in particular Burgenland Croatian, a regional variation of Croatian that is taught at primary school level.

While in Burgenland childcare facilities and preschool establishments are also covered by the Burgenland Child Education and Childcare Act, which offers nursery school teachers access to specialised training courses and diplomas for bilingual teaching, there is no such provision in Carinthia. Despite the fact that one year at nursery school forms part of compulsory education, staff at the ten bilingual private nursery schools do not need to be in possession of a specialised qualification. According to national minority representatives, this should be required to ensure relevant standards from an early age onwards and facilitate learning in primary school. The Advisory Committee further regrets that there are still no opportunities to study Romani at university anywhere in Austria which could promote interest in the teaching and learning of Romani in schools.

While the teaching and learning of minority languages thus forms an integral part of the curriculum (see Article 14), the Advisory Committee notes the shared concern of national minority representatives that their distinct cultures, traditions, and history in Austria over centuries are not adequately reflected in relevant educational materials, nor in the curriculum. The State Report makes reference to a number of exhibitions and initiatives to commemorate the history of national minorities that are being promoted within the educational system. Yet, the Advisory Committee understands that schools and teachers are free to choose from these topics as part of the framework curriculum “if there is interest”. However,

there is no minimum set of data and information that 'must' be included. According to national minority representatives, students in Burgenland and Carinthia are often unaware of the fact that national minority communities have been living in the territory and contributing to the development of society for centuries, and that their languages are today still taught in schools.

Moreover, while welcoming information that plaques have been established at various locations in Burgenland to commemorate Roma victims of the Holocaust, the Advisory Committee points to the concerns of national minority representatives that teachers require additional sensitisation and training before they can adequately accompany their classes to such sites. With respect to intercultural content being developed in schools in order to foster respect and dialogue among students, the Advisory Committee welcomes in particular initiatives developed, among others, in the cities of Vienna, Graz and Dornbirn. It regrets, however, the apparent lack of such initiatives in other regions and considers that all teachers at all schools should be trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and promote openness and mutual respect among all pupils (see also Article 6).

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to extend the availability of specialised teacher training courses for the teaching and learning of minority languages to the preschool level in order to ensure that relevant education standards are set and consistently adhered to and monitored throughout compulsory education.

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure in close consultation with national minority representatives that the history and distinct cultures of their communities are suitably reflected in the curriculum and that pupils in all schools are made aware of the traditional diversity of Austrian society. Teachers and school staff must further be adequately trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and to promote intercultural respect and understanding throughout the educational system.

Croatia

*Adopted on 18 November 2015*

#### Article 12 of the Framework Convention

##### Equal access to education

#### *Present situation*

Equal access to education remains a concern in particular for persons belonging to the Roma minority. According to a UNDP Survey in 2014, only 25% of Roma children complete elementary education and only 10% complete secondary school. While most Roma children enrol in primary school, irregular school attendance and early drop-outs remain very common. For many children, in particular those living in settlements, no transport is organised and the distribution of responsibilities regarding the provision of bus services between the Ministry of Education and the local authorities remains unclear. Significant efforts have been made by the authorities and civil society organisations, with substantial help from international organisations, to promote the enrolment of Roma children in pre-schools. The NRIS foresees that Roma children shall attend pre-school free of charge for two years in order to promote their integration and academic achievement in school. A variety of interlocutors report, however, that the presence of Roma children in pre-school is still very low. While the payment of pre-

school fees for Roma children by the Ministry of Education is welcome, transport to the facility from remote settlements is problematic and often impossible to manage by the parents. In addition, the number of classes where only Roma are educated has increased, despite the 2010 *Oršuš* judgment of the European Court of Human Rights that bans segregation of Roma in schools. According to minority representatives, this phenomenon is not sufficiently addressed by the authorities. Reportedly, classes are recorded as mixed even when only one child or two children are non-Roma. There has also been no official response to the increasing occurrence of parents of non-Roma children deregistering their children from schools that are considered to be attended by a majority of Roma children.

It is in addition of deep concern to the Advisory Committee that Roma children are reportedly often not encouraged by teachers to do their homework or apply themselves academically, even to the extent that a reduced curriculum is applied to them, or they are placed in special classes where teachers are reportedly less well-qualified. While noting the recruitment of 23 assistants in primary schools in Međimurje County to address in particular the linguistic needs of Roma children, the Advisory Committee is concerned by reports that many Roma children are still placed in a lower class with the argument that their language skills are inadequate. No efforts are made subsequently, however, to provide them with additional language training or otherwise promote their integration into regular school. The Advisory Committee notes with concern reports that Roma children have been rejected by a kindergarten in Rijeka. Overall, the approach towards Roma children and parents depends very much on the specific school, with some teachers making considerable efforts to accommodate diversity in the classrooms and promote inter-cultural understanding despite sometimes limited encouragement and support from higher level.

As a result of high drop-out rates in particular from secondary schools, a very large proportion of the young adult Roma population has no secondary education certificate and correspondingly small prospects on the labour market (see also Article 15), where they often still face discriminatory attitudes (see Article 4). Adult education and vocational training thus remains an urgent concern for Roma representatives and is, in their view, not sufficiently addressed in the NRIS.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to develop a comprehensive strategy to ensure that Roma children have effective and equal access to education, through close co-ordination between the relevant central and local authorities and through the allocation of adequate resources, both human and financial. The active enrolment of all Roma children in pre-schools and their integration in mixed classes should be viewed as a priority in this regard.

The Advisory Committee further urges the authorities to comprehensively address the disproportionately frequent drop-outs experienced among Roma children. More efforts should be made to use the first languages spoken by Roma in schools in order to promote their understanding and development, and enhance their academic achievement and inclusion.

Textbooks, teacher training and inter-cultural education

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee is pleased to note that textbooks in minority languages, which are mainly based on translations of Croatian textbooks and produced in-country, continue to be provided to schools teaching in Czech, Hungarian, Serbian and Italian. Difficulties are reported, however, regarding the provision of appropriate minority language textbooks for use in so-called Model C schools (see

Article 14), where the majority of classes are taught in Croatian and the so-called “heritage canon” (literature, language and culture) is taught in the minority languages. While consultations on a curriculum for such schools were concluded in 2014, it has not yet been adopted, as a result of which no adequate textbooks are available. While teachers reportedly manage by using a variety of education materials, including those received from neighbouring countries, the absence of an agreed curriculum still carries disadvantages for students, such as regarding the monitoring of education standards and the organisation of exams (see Article 14). In addition, minority representatives point out that textbooks for use in minority language education are not always provided in sufficient numbers, especially at secondary level, and are updated less frequently than regular school books. As regards the content of textbooks, the Advisory Committee observes that information about the life and history of national minorities in Croatia is reportedly scarcely addressed, with only inadequate and rather folkloric notions of their traditions as distinct from Croat history and culture. It is further deeply concerned by reports of tendencies of revisionism in history teaching, particularly when it comes to events during World War II and in the 1990s, or with regard to the ethnic background of well-known individuals who lived in Croatia. The Advisory Committee underlines the importance of introducing critical thinking in history teaching, based on the appreciation of multiple perspectives and the promotion of inter-cultural understanding and respect throughout the education system.

The Advisory Committee is pleased to note that the Education and Teacher Training Agency organises conferences and training events for teachers in the various minority languages and also provides some support for teachers traveling abroad to increase their knowledge. It further welcomes the introduction, in 2012, of courses of Romani language, literature and culture at the Humanities and Social Sciences Department of the University of Zagreb and expects that this will result in an increase in the education in and of the languages spoken by Roma in Croatian schools. The Advisory Committee further welcomes the organisation of a number of awareness-raising and training events related to inclusive education and diversity management in classrooms, in particular in Međimurje County. It reiterates the importance of such efforts country-wide to promote better understanding and mutual respect among youth generally. In this context, it notes with regret that most students of Serb origin from the Gračac region face resentment when entering high school in Zadar and rather choose Rijeka or the Orthodox school in Zagreb as a result, despite being farther away from their families. Training initiatives to build capacity among primary and secondary school teachers to promote intercultural tolerance and inter-ethnic dialogue should be expanded and attention paid also to the organisation of extracurricular activities that can promote inter-ethnic contacts and help overcome existing stereotypes (see also Article 6).

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to raise awareness of minority rights in general education as an integral part of human rights, and to ensure that curricula and textbooks adequately reflect the diversity of Croatian society, including with respect to the appreciation of multiple perspectives in history.

It further calls on them to ensure that teachers and school staff are effectively trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and promote intercultural respect and understanding throughout the education system.



Cyprus

*Adopted on 18 March 2015*

## Article 12 of the Framework Convention

## Intercultural education and equal access to education

*Present situation*

The Advisory Committee welcomes broader efforts to reform the education system in Cyprus aimed in particular at modernising language learning and introducing more elements of intercultural education as well as the promotion of rights awareness and tolerance. At the same time, it notes that the current school system still does not offer many opportunities for the creation of intercultural relations and friendship. The organisation of schools for students with a minority background (see below) results in a situation where the Armenian Nareg schools are only attended by pupils with Armenian roots, while the small St. Maronas School welcomes students from all backgrounds but is mainly considered a Maronite school. The Advisory Committee further understands that the majority of Roma children attend one school in Limassol, the Agios Antonios primary school. While the Ministry of Education has adopted an official policy of discouraging any form of separated education and has made efforts to integrate pupils of all cultural backgrounds, the situation in practice still appears to reflect some division according to ethnic background. The Advisory Committee notes, for instance, that the school in Limassol has somehow become known as a “Roma school”, resulting in it being attended by 28 Roma children from Cyprus and 18 Roma from other EU countries, i.e., by Roma from very diverse language backgrounds. While appreciating that the attendance of students in the mentioned schools is prompted by parental desire in some cases and influenced strongly by residential criteria in others, the Advisory Committee considers that targeted efforts must be made to ensure that students from various backgrounds meet and interact in an effort to develop awareness and understanding of other backgrounds and thereby overcome prejudice or stereotypes.

The Advisory Committee understands that a number of private schools in Nicosia, such as the English school and Terra Santa College, are attended by students belonging to the Armenian, Maronite or Latin communities, as well as by Turkish Cypriot students. These schools are chosen as an alternative to the public school system, which is still not regarded as offering an appropriate education for the specific language and religious education needs of these children. As such, the schools are widely considered as an opportunity for intercultural exchange and the promotion of cohesion. The Advisory Committee notes that the Terra Santa College has been identified as a new proto-type secondary school and is supported by the University of Cyprus in its development of modern language learning, in particular regarding English and Italian. It understands however that the different language streams at the school do not interact and that the promotion of interethnic friendship and solidarity, particularly as regards Cypriot society, is not a priority of the school. The organisation of classes at the English school is reportedly such that students have to opt for lessons in either Greek or Turkish. In addition, the Advisory Committee regrets a decision by the school management board of the English School, a bi-communal high school attended by some 150 Turkish Cypriot students, not to celebrate Bayram (Eid) as an official school holiday in the school year 2013/2014. The Advisory Committee is pleased to note successive interventions of the previous Presidential Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs and Overseas Cypriots as well as the Ombudsman Office, attempting to encourage the board to declare an official Bayram (Eid) holiday for the entire school, but understands that no such steps have been taken. The Advisory Committee reiterates that the promotion of tolerance and respect for diversity must not only be taught

as a subject in class but must be lived through the organisation of joint classes wherever possible, as well as through the respectful accommodation and affirmation of the various beliefs present in the schools.

The Advisory Committee regrets that incidents of racial prejudice against Roma and migrant children in schools and of Greek parents removing their children from certain schools perceived as having too many non-Greek Cypriot students continue to be reported. It welcomes in this context repeated efforts by the Antidiscrimination Authority to organise school competitions to raise the awareness of the school population as regards the effects of xenophobia and racism on children and thereby prevent further such incidents, as well as the development of an anti-racist code of conduct by the Ministry of Education, with support from the Antidiscrimination Authority in 2014, which will be introduced in schools on a voluntary basis at first. The Advisory Committee regrets in particular that equal access to education and equal opportunities in the education system remain elusive for Roma children. While there are few updated studies or surveys, earlier reports as well as information gathered by the Advisory Committee during its visit point to continued challenges, such as irregular school attendance, early drop-outs, overall low academic achievement and small numbers of students continuing to secondary school.

Academic achievement of Roma children is reportedly less problematic in subjects that do not require high command of Greek language knowledge. Cypriot Roma children, who usually speak no Greek but Turkish as well as Kurbetcha, thus require targeted assistance to promote their learning in Greek. The Advisory Committee understands that two Turkish speaking teachers have been assisting in classes and have also been engaged in some teaching of the Turkish language and history. It regrets, however, that no specific education material has been provided, which hinders the learning experience. Efforts have also been made by the school leadership to promote a sense of belonging amongst the Roma community to the school affairs. The open approach towards the celebration of various holidays observed by the diverse groups attending the school is very welcome and may contribute to increased school attendance and academic achievement. A report of the Equality Body of September 2011 considered, among others, that the specific identity of the Roma was not adequately taken into account in Cypriot schools and that schools should be actively involving members of the Roma community in the design and implementation of teaching programmes. In addition, the Advisory Committee considers that the general curriculum in public schools should overall promote awareness and appreciation of Roma culture, traditions and history as an integral part of Cypriot society (see also below).

### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to enhance their efforts towards the introduction of more intercultural elements into the education system in line with the envisaged reform, in particular by ensuring that teachers and school administrators are adequately trained and encouraged to organise classes and school activities in ways that facilitate intercultural exchanges and the development of friendships.

It further calls on the authorities to further increase their efforts towards promoting effective equality of Roma in the school system, including by making suitable learning materials available and by promoting respect and openness towards diversity among students generally.

## Textbooks and teacher training

*Present situation*

The Advisory Committee regrets that information provided in textbooks and education materials on the specific identities, cultures, languages and histories of minorities in Cyprus is reportedly still inadequate. While it is welcome that one third-grade religious education textbook now includes a few pages each on the Armenian, Maronite and Latin communities, representatives of these communities regret the fact that the information provided is very superficial, falling far short of the comprehensive contributions provided by them, and that its presence in only one textbook, without any instruction to teachers to include those pages in the class reading, does not translate into an actual increase of awareness amongst school children generally. The Advisory Committee considers that the teaching aids prepared by the three communities, including documentary and audiovisual material, should be used to the fullest extent in schools to ensure that the historical presence of these communities in Cyprus and their specific identities are appropriately appreciated in all schools. It further considers that more efforts should be made also to include information on the Roma and their distinct cultural heritage and history in Cyprus in the school curriculum and education materials. The presence of minority communities as an integral part of Cypriot society should not only feature in religious education but should also be covered in other relevant subjects, such as history, which should be taught in a manner that accommodates multiple perspectives.

The Advisory Committee understands that there is a general shortage of qualified teachers in schools with minority profile, in particular those with special language-teaching qualifications. While some training was organised in November 2012 as well as September 2014, which is welcomed by the schools concerned, more regular and intensive training is required to ensure that teachers advance their skills according to modern language learning methodologies. These are particularly important for speakers of minority languages in order to achieve proficiency in multiple languages: their own, official languages, and international languages. The Advisory Committee considers that the relevant training offers at the Pedagogical Institute in Cyprus should be increased to ensure adequate opportunities for the teachers of the schools concerned who have reportedly often not been trained for years. Courses must also contain elements of intercultural education as well as necessary training of teachers to prepare them for the particular requirements of teaching in multilingual and multicultural environments.

The Advisory Committee reiterates its appreciation for the support provided to the revitalisation of CMA, including at schools. It welcomes reports that learning material is currently being prepared by the Committee of Experts for teaching CMA at A1 level and should be available as of June 2015. The Advisory Committee considers that these efforts should be complemented with targeted funding for the introduction of more advanced Maronite teaching materials such as those available in Lebanon. The combination of such materials with modern language learning methodologies such as Content and Language Integrated Learning may accelerate the revitalisation of CMA as a living language in Cyprus, which is the main concern of the speakers. The shortage of qualified teachers continues to be of concern to the community, which is reportedly exacerbated by the fact that teachers need to teach for a minimum number of years in other schools before they can request to be assigned to a specific school, such as St. Maronas School. The Advisory Committee understands that exceptions to this rule are applied to other teachers, such as those teaching in the enclaves, and that the community would like these exceptions to be equally applied to teachers who wish to teach at St. Maronas School.

As regards the availability of textbooks for Armenian language learning, supplies reportedly remain inadequate. Given cuts in the budget, students have to cover the fees for some textbooks themselves, such as those for the English language, while other subjects including maths, use Greek language books, despite the fact that classes are conducted in Armenian. According to interlocutors of the Advisory Committee, the history and religion textbooks are still imported from Lebanon and are considered particularly unsatisfactory, even though factual information on the specifics of the Armenians in Cyprus is added by teachers. The community has produced some material itself and a decision on possible funding from the Ministry of Education for their printing is reportedly outstanding. The Advisory Committee considers that pragmatic solutions must be found in close consultation with the school community to ensure that the limited funds available are used in an optimal way, taking the specific situation of Armenian students in Cyprus into account. The Advisory Committee underlines the particular significance of adequate teacher training in this regard to ensure that shortcomings in education material are overcome through high-quality teaching.

#### *Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to enhance their efforts in close consultation with respective school representatives, to offer adequate opportunities for teacher training, in particular regarding language learning methodologies and teaching methods in multilingual environments, and to identify practical solutions for the adequate supplies of education materials in all subjects.

Czech Republic

*Adopted on 16 November 2015*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Intercultural dimension of education

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee recalls that in 2007 a cross-curricular subject *A Citizen in a Democratic Society* became a compulsory part of the curriculum within the Framework Elementary School Education Programme. Furthermore, a cross-curricular subject *Multicultural Education* aims to teach and raise children's awareness about diversity of their cultural identity, traditions and values. Children are acquainted with basic information on various ethnic and cultural groups living in the Czech Republic and Europe, develop the ability to orient themselves in a pluralistic society and to use intercultural contacts, learn to recognise and tolerate the differences of other national, ethnic, religious, and social groups and to work with members of different sociocultural groups, and are taught to recognise expressions of racial hatred and xenophobia.

The Advisory Committee notes further that in 2013, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports updated its Recommendation on teaching the history of the 20th century with the view to provide information on Nazism, the Second World War, the Holocaust and the genocide of the Roma. Particular emphasis is placed on the teaching about the Holocaust and the genocide of the Roma, through specialized seminars *How to teach about the Holocaust* or through the documentary project for pupils *Neighbours who disappeared* (organized by the Educational department of the Terezín Memorial and the Education and Culture Centre of the Jewish Museum in Prague). The Advisory Committee further notes that information about the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans is also included in the programme.

*Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee encourages the Czech authorities to continue their efforts to develop civic and intercultural contents in textbooks and curricula and to ensure that history teaching contains adequate coverage of the 20th century.

## Equal access to education; the situation of the Roma

*Present situation*

The Advisory Committee recalls that the implementation of the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of D.H. and others v. the Czech Republic (application no. 57325/00) in which the Court found that the Czech Republic violated the European Convention on Human Rights by placing a disproportionate number of Roma children into “special schools” in which they were subjected to a limited curriculum and segregated from the mainstream student population, has been ongoing for over seven years. Under the Schools Act of 2005, “special schools” have been renamed “practical schools” without any substantive change to their composition, curriculum and position within the education system of the country, where they continue to be considered as a “special education” branch. Such schools continue to teach on the basis of a reduced curriculum which prevents these pupils from accessing higher educational levels. The latest Action Plan on Inclusive Education and the 2012 Consolidated action plan for the execution of the D.H. judgment adopted by the authorities in 2012, which both aimed to reduce the proportion of Roma pupils in “special education” classes has failed to achieve its aim.

In fact, according to the Special Representative for Roma Issues to the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, the proportion of Roma children in “special classes” and “practical schools” has risen during the school year 2013-2014, to 32.4% from 28.2% in the year 2012-2013. At the same time, the proportion of Roma children in mainstream schools fell from 10.3% to 9.5%. These findings broadly confirm the 2012 findings of the Public Defender of Rights according to which Roma children accounted for 35% of all children in “practical schools”. Moreover, according to Roma interlocutors, there have been cases of Roma children being separated from the majority children, even in mainstream schools.

Against this generally alarming background, the Advisory Committee welcomes a recent amendment to the Education Act adopted by the Czech legislature on 13 February 2015 which as regards children with special educational needs removed a passage which posed a risk that children without mental disability would continue to be enrolled into “practical schools”. The Advisory Committee welcomes this amendment as a first step towards the reform of Czech schools and inclusive education.

The authorities continue to implement programmes targeting Roma children with the aim of improving their educational prospects. The Programme for Support of Roma Integration provides for early care for Roma children from a socially disadvantaged environment so as to ensure their education within the mainstream system. Under the Programme “Support of Socially Disadvantaged Roma Students at Secondary Schools” 1,280 scholarships were granted to Roma students in 2013. Finally, new assistant positions were established in the framework of the “Funding of Assistant Teachers for Socially Disadvantaged Children, Pupils and Students Programme”. The Advisory Committee welcomes these efforts, but it notes nonetheless that they are of limited scope and have not achieved their intended goals.

Another issue of concern is the low preschool attendance of Roma children which creates a handicap already at the outset of their education. In fact, whereas generally 80% of all children attend preschool in the Czech Republic, the figure for Roma children is much lower and stands at 30%. In this context, the Advisory Committee welcomes the authorities’ decision to provide, as of 2012, last year of pre-school

education free of charge and plans for making it compulsory. This move should better prepare Roma children for the primary school, increasing their chances of success.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to take, as a matter of urgency, all necessary measures to implement the D.H. judgment in particular by eliminating, without further delay, practices that lead to the continued segregation of Roma children at school and to redouble their efforts to remedy other shortcomings faced by Roma children in the field of education. The authorities must ensure equal opportunities to Roma children to access all levels of quality education. Measures should be taken to prevent children from being inappropriately placed in “practical schools”, and to ensure that fully-informed consent is given as a condition for placement into special education. Placement in regular schools should be the rule and special schooling reserved for exceptional cases only. All diagnostic examinations to assess the aptitude of school aged children must be conducted in a manner that takes the individual background of the child into account and must be repeated regularly in all cases.

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to ensure access to pre-school facilities for all Roma children and guarantee that the curriculum in such kindergartens correspond to the diverse needs and multi-lingual composition of the groups concerned.

#### Article 14 of the Framework Convention

##### Teaching of/in minority languages and instruction in these languages

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee recalls that the Education Act of 2004 creates the necessary conditions guaranteeing equal access to education of children belonging to national minorities and that representatives of national minorities express general satisfaction with its implementation.

A well-developed system of Polish language education, from pre-school to secondary school level, exists in the Frydek-Místek and Karviná districts, permitting students belonging to the Polish national minority to receive instruction in Polish. The Advisory Committee notes that in the 2014/2015 academic year, 852 children attended 32 Polish language kindergartens, 1,781 children received instruction in Polish in 25 elementary schools in the region, and that these numbers continued to increase year by year. The number of children attending Polish language high-schools (383 in the academic year 2014/2015) showed, however, a trend going in the opposite direction.

The Advisory Committee regrets to note that the situation has not changed since the last monitoring cycle and there are no opportunities for Roma children to learn the Romani language in primary schools. Romani language is taught, as a foreign language, however, to 41 children at one secondary school (a secondary vocational school of management and law).

As regards other languages, it is not possible to determine from statistical data collected by the Ministry of Education the number of pupils educated at primary and secondary schools belonging to a specific national minority, and consequently the number of national minority children belonging, for example, to the Russian and German national minorities learn these languages in the framework of the study of modern languages as part of the curriculum. Given the small number and geographic dispersal of persons belonging to national minorities, the pre-condition of eight children asking for teaching of a minority language in a particular school is extremely difficult to fulfil. Lessons of less spoken languages in the Czech Republic, such as Hungarian or Croat are organised by organisations of these national

minorities with the financial assistance of the authorities, and representatives of these minorities report their satisfaction with the current situation.

*Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to continue monitoring the situation, in consultation with the representatives of national minorities, to assess whether the framework for teaching of and in minority languages corresponds to actual needs and, where appropriate, take the necessary steps to address any shortcomings.

The authorities should increase their efforts to provide persons belonging to the Roma minority with better opportunities to receive teaching in their language, according to the demand.

Denmark

*Adopted on 20 May 2014*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Promotion of knowledge of the culture, history and language of national minorities

The Advisory Committee welcomes that the primary school curriculum sets broad goals for what children should learn in class, and specifies that local history and culture should be taught. The curriculum also sets binding targets for children's awareness of culture and stereotypes affecting various ethnic and religious groups in a multicultural society, and aims to encourage a critical debate on social and cultural issues. It has to be noted, however, that there is a lack of general understanding in the wider society about minority issues and diversity in Denmark.

The Advisory Committee notes with satisfaction that, according to German minority representatives, schools teaching in the German language have become a fully integrated element of the Danish educational system, with some Danish-speaking parents choosing to educate their children through the medium of the German language in these schools.

*Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee invites the authorities to continue to monitor the visibility of the German culture and language within the Danish education system.

The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to promote knowledge and awareness of minorities in the educational system.

Estonia

*Adopted on 19 March 2015*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Equal opportunities in access to education for persons belonging to national minorities  
and intercultural dialogue

*Present situation*

The situation as regards education has not altered significantly since the last Opinion. The Estonian school environment continues to be divided between Estonian and Russian-language schools and there has been no encouragement for creating bilingual classes that could bring together pupils from different language backgrounds and enable them to learn both languages while promoting inter-ethnic contacts and networks and thereby contributing to the aim of the Estonian Government to create a more cohesive and integrated society. In this context, it has to be noted that there is a great interest among children (and their parents) for learning the Russian language, as about 60 per cent of children in Estonian language schools opt to learn Russian as a foreign language.

The Advisory Committee notes the information about the monitoring together with the North Estonian Roma Association of the number of Roma children in Estonian schools and their specific needs as regards educational support, carried out by the Ministry of Education and Research.

The Committee notes that preschool education which includes Estonian language learning will be provided to all children at least one year before school. The Advisory Committee welcomes this approach, which is essential to provide a fairer start for children whose first language is not Estonian at the beginning of their schooling.

The Advisory Committee notes with satisfaction that the “Integrating Estonia 2020” strategy, adopted in 2014, follows up on the earlier Integration Strategies and assigns an essential role to the education system in supporting social cohesion, strengthening the feeling of belonging of all components of the Estonian society, including persons belonging to national minorities, in particular by creating opportunities for cross-cultural communication and greater understanding of other cultures among the various ethnic groups. In order to enhance multicultural competencies among students, school curricula have been developed aiming to promote a positive and respectful attitude towards cultural diversity in Estonia; enhance skills of effective cross-cultural communication and culture-centred education while basing pedagogical activities on a humanistic approach and effective pedagogical interaction.

As regards cross-cultural communication, understanding and respect for other cultures, the Advisory Committee notes with regret that no arrangements exist to facilitate observance of Christmas celebrated by Orthodox believers according to the Julian calendar, and which falls on 7 January according to the Gregorian calendar. This is particularly problematic for children of school age who cannot take a day off on that day. The Chancellor of Justice who was petitioned in March 2014 by the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights on behalf of the Orthodox applicants declined to take any action. The Advisory Committee notes however, that school directors may use their discretionary powers to declare within their establishments holidays on such day.



The revision of the national basic school and secondary school curricula, with the view of giving a more prominent place in the context of World War II to the topic of the Holocaust and other wartime crimes against humanity is welcome. The Advisory Committee notes especially efforts to re-examine Estonian modern history, in particular with regard to World War II. It reiterates that these efforts should aim to ensure that schools, when teaching history, promote respect for all groups in society and that multiple perspectives are encouraged in historical research.

#### *Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee reiterates its call on the authorities to consider the introduction of bilingual classes and schools for Estonian as well as for Russian-speaking pupils, while ensuring that the specific pedagogical skills and tools are developed and used and that appropriate teacher training is available to all teachers.

The authorities are encouraged to continue their efforts aimed at promoting mutual respect and intercultural dialogue in the field of education, including by creating adequate opportunities for bringing together pupils from different language backgrounds.

The Advisory Committee encourages the authorities to adopt a more flexible approach to the question of religious holidays, in consultation with those concerned, which would demonstrate sensibility to religious sentiments of the Orthodox believers.

Finland

*Adopted on 24 February 2016*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Equal access to education

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee notes with concern that the constitutional position of Swedish as a national language in education appears to have become more fragile as a consequence of a series of developments diminishing its actual presence. The 2015 citizens' initiatives against the obligatory teaching of Swedish in Finnish-language schools, as pinpointed by the *Folktinget* and the Advisory Board on Languages, are the latest of these developments. Although the Parliament outvoted them, at the same time it approved a government's investigation on the feasibility of regional linguistic trials where Swedish may be replaced by another language in schools. Independently from constitutional issues that such an initiative might raise – which are currently checked by the government – the Advisory Committee highlights a discrepancy between the objective of the 2012 Strategy for the National Languages of Finland calling for measures to strengthen education in Swedish and this decision.

More importantly, the Advisory Committee understands that teaching of Swedish starts now in an earlier grade than was the case in the past, but it continues to be later than Finnish learning in Swedish-based schools and the overall amount of hours has not changed but is just re-distributed over two years instead of one. Also, since 2004, the matriculation exam does not require Swedish any longer as a compulsory subject and studies have shown a decline in the number of students opting to take the

exam. Finally, the early immersion education programme aiming at teaching children the second national language from preschool up to the end of basic education has been particularly successful in enhancing the learning of Swedish at an early age. Nonetheless, these programmes were limited in numbers and unlikely to be expanded by municipalities to meet the rising demand of the public. This is also due to a shortage of qualified immersion teachers since the graduate education course launched in 2009 has not been regularly continued. When read in combination, the Advisory Committee gains the impression that all these factors point to the direction of undermining the learning of the language, and that will have a negative repercussion on language skills of future higher education students and the labour force. Such an eventuality was also underlined by several interlocutors. While the 2011-2015 short-term objectives of the 2012 Strategy proposed measures to address these shortcomings, little progress has been accomplished so far.

The Advisory Committee welcomes the considerable progress achieved as regards access to basic education of Roma pupils, both boys and girls, in the period 2008-2014, as stated by various interlocutors. Substantial financial support made it possible in that period to ensure attendance and provide support for basic education of 80% of school-age Roma pupils in 37 municipalities. In 2011, 50% of the Roma pupils in basic education continued in further education, mainly in vocational education. The Advisory Committee notes that interlocutors concurred that positive results are the outcome of several specific measures, such as tackling the causes of absenteeism from school, improving communication with families, tackling bullying based on ethnicity (see also Article 6), helping with homework, providing support personnel in class with Roma background, etc. Progress has also been achieved by enhancing preschool education of Roma children, whose participation increased exponentially in the last ten years to reach almost full coverage of the age cohort, *inter alia* through efforts to liaise with families to explain the importance of school attendance.

Interlocutors of the Advisory Committee indicated that efforts have now shifted, on the one hand, on how to reach the 20% who encounter slight or severe problems or dropout from basic education, and, on the other hand, on how to improve Roma pupils' attendance in upper secondary education and higher education. The Advisory Committee observes that the fact that a large proportion of Roma youth does not attain upper secondary education degrees diminishes their prospects to access the labour market (see also Article 15) where, in addition, they continue to face discriminatory attitudes (see also Article 4). Roma representatives consider consolidating and completing achievements as regards basic education and equal access to upper secondary and higher education as priorities which require continued commitment by the government.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to assess the current Swedish-language teaching system in the light of recent developments and commit to the full implementation of the measures outlined by the 2012 Strategy for the National Languages of Finland through the Action Plan in order to prevent any further decline and to ensure the knowledge of the language of the future labour force and of the population in general.

It also calls on the authorities to maintain their commitment to achieve equal opportunities for equal access to education for the Roma, in particular as regards upper secondary and higher education for Roma youth, thereby addressing the root causes of dropout. It calls on them to encourage municipalities to play actively their role, including by allocating them adequate resources, as well as diversifying incentives.

## Textbooks and teacher training

*Present situation*

The Advisory Committee learned that a new national curriculum has been adopted and will be launched in 2016. Schools and municipalities are currently working on local curricula and publishers will develop textbooks accordingly. The new curriculum is held to reflect more adequately the presence and role of national minorities in Finland through human rights education. The Advisory Committee, however, understands from interlocutors at municipal level that they contain limited content on Roma history and culture. It considers it important that curricula provide accurate information on the composition of society and portray positively its ethnic diversity. Considering the high degree of decentralisation in educational matters, it observes the manner in which the new curricula will be implemented at local level so as to ensure the promotion of inter-cultural understanding, knowledge of minorities, and respect for diversity by pupils, is of the utmost importance.

The Advisory Committee notes that the situation varies as regards the availability of material in the different minority languages. Production of Sámi material is the responsibility of the Sámi Parliament, which receives public funds for this purpose. The Advisory Committee understands from its interlocutors that progress has been accomplished, but the scarcity of funds, as well as of authors and translators, affect the production of material, which is lacking in particular for Inari and Skolt Sámi, and with respect to upper secondary, higher and adult education. Although punctual projects allowed some progress, overall the situation appears to be also worrying as regards learning material in Romani, both for the scarcity of resources and the difficulty to find authors.

Although there are continued efforts to support university level and continuing training of teachers of minority languages, the Advisory Committee observes with concern that it is the opinion of minority representatives, as well as of the authorities, that overall there is lack of sufficiently qualified teachers. The Advisory Committee understands that for each linguistic group, measures are in place to improve teacher training. In the context of the 2012 Strategy for the National Languages of Finland, language immersion education at university level has been introduced for Swedish-speaking teachers to develop their skills. Higher education on Sámi languages and culture, as well as teacher training, is organised at three universities, along with the Sámi Education Institute which develops learning materials, online teaching and other support services. Finally, the shortage of Romani teachers is particularly critical: the courses started at the University of Helsinki on Roma language and culture will, in due time, provide qualified personnel, but meanwhile continuing training is also needed. The Advisory Committee recalls that it is essential, however, that the attainment of quality standards by teachers in minority language schools is regularly monitored by specialised experts who also provide recommendations for necessary teacher training. It is further essential that teachers for all schools are adequately trained to promote respect for different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and promote inclusion and dialogue in the classroom and throughout daily school routines, including extracurricular activities.

*Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that, while respecting the decentralisation of education, the newly developed curricula at local level and the textbooks reflect appropriately ethnic diversity and the historical presence of all minorities in Finland. Staff of all schools shall be effectively trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and promote intercultural respect and understanding in schools.

It further encourages them to ensure that a sufficient number of qualified teachers are trained in the different minority languages and, to the extent possible, that appropriate learning material is available.

Germany

*Adopted on 19 March 2015*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Equal access to education

*Present situation*

The Advisory Committee is deeply concerned by continuing reports of problems regarding the equal access to education of Sinti and Roma children, including disproportionately high numbers of pupils leaving school with no secondary diplomas as well as significant overrepresentation of Sinti and Roma children in the lower streams of education and in special schools. It welcomes indications that this situation may be gradually improving, and notes with interest that a number of *Länder* are in the process of adopting inclusive education strategies and planning to abolish special schools. However, it emphasises that it is essential to tackle the underlying causes of disparities in education outcomes, which may for example include persisting prejudices against and discrimination experienced by Sinti and Roma children in schools, poor communication and/or mistrust between teachers or schools and Sinti and Roma parents, lower kindergarten attendance rates among Sinti and Roma children, and socio-economic factors that affect the amount of educational support that these children may receive at home. It underlines that unless such factors are adequately analysed and addressed, Sinti and Roma children will continue, in spite of other measures taken such as abolishing special schools, to experience discrimination and lower educational outcomes in the German education system.

The Advisory Committee notes with interest various programmes and projects in place to employ Sinti and Roma mediators in schools and/or provide additional educational support outside school hours, with the aim of facilitating Sinti and Roma children's path through school and improving their education outcomes. It draws attention to the importance of placing such schemes on a sustainable footing where they already exist, and of extending them to other regions through the sharing of good practices.

The Advisory Committee is aware of ongoing debates regarding the best means of ensuring that children beginning school in Germany and whose first language is not German, including some Sinti and Roma children, rapidly acquire sufficient German language skills to enable them to understand and participate fully in the classroom. It underlines that a lack of language skills should not be used as a pretext for separating children into different groups, as such separation creates hierarchies between children that risk becoming permanent, and may in addition increase the exposure of children with lower language skills to bullying and discrimination. It considers other means of assisting children to acquire German rapidly but that allow them to remain in the same school and classroom, such as the employment of mediators or additional assistance outside the classroom, to be preferable in this respect.

*Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to take resolute measures to put an end to discrimination against Sinti and Roma children in the education system. These should include preventing the unjustified placement of Sinti and Roma children in special schools, boosting efforts to create an inclusive

education system, extending measures such as the employment of mediators that have proved successful in encouraging children to remain in the school system, and intensifying efforts to increase awareness of both teachers and other pupils about the history and culture of Sinti and Roma.

#### Intercultural education

##### *Present situation*

Representatives of national minorities again drew attention to the fact that public awareness of the four national minorities recognised in Germany is low, especially outside their traditional areas of settlement. The Advisory Committee underlines that the heritage of national minorities should be seen as an integral part of the wealth and cultural diversity of the country as a whole, and not just of interest in the areas in which minorities are traditionally settled.

A number of initiatives are in place in schools to promote a culture of tolerance, and several *Länder* include elements of Roma history and culture as part of their school curricula. The Advisory Committee notes with particular interest the recent publication by the Rhineland-Palatine Association of Sinti and Roma, with support from the Rhineland-Palatine Ministry of Education, of documentation intended for use in schools and other educational institutions, focusing not only on the past but also on the present-day life of Roma and Sinti. The Advisory Committee regrets however that initiatives referred to by the authorities of several *Länder* in this context are presented as concluded at the point where materials are made available on-line. It wishes to underline the important role to be played by the authorities not only in supporting and making such publications and educational materials available but also in actively promoting their use in schools, in order for them to play an effective part in counteracting prejudices against and stereotypes about persons belonging to minorities.

The Advisory Committee recalls that in addition to ensuring that adequate materials are available for intercultural education, teachers must be properly trained to create and promote a classroom environment in which diversity is welcomed and accepted, and to include intercultural elements effectively in their classwork. It also refers to its comments above (see Article 6) regarding efforts made to promote tolerance and prevent extremism through education. It emphasises here the importance not only of educating children about past horrors but also of drawing a link between these events and manifestations of xenophobia and related forms of intolerance.

##### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee strongly encourages the authorities to step up their efforts to ensure that teachers and pupils throughout Germany have better knowledge of the culture and history of national minorities as an integral part of German society. It again calls on the authorities to develop further projects designed to impart awareness of Sinti and Roma history and culture.

The Advisory Committee invites the authorities to ensure that teachers are adequately trained to create and promote a classroom environment in which diversity is welcomed and accepted, to include intercultural elements effectively in their classwork, and to address current manifestations of xenophobia and related intolerance.

### Teacher training and textbooks for teaching in and of minority languages

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee notes that the lack of teachers is a significant hindrance to the provision of teaching in and of Sorbian; although new teachers are being trained, not enough qualified teachers are arriving to compensate for future retirements. Sorbian representatives in Saxony observe that the funding for teaching of Low Sorbian at the University of Leipzig (one part-time post) is currently insufficient to provide teacher training on a sustainable basis and have requested that additional measures be taken to redress this situation, such as re-training Sorbian speakers from other professions as teachers. In Brandenburg the lack of teachers is reportedly placing under threat the provision of bilingual teaching under the *Witaj* project in some kindergartens.

As regards Frisian, for which similar difficulties are experienced (see also below, Article 14), the Advisory Committee welcomes the forthcoming introduction at Oldenburg University (from 2016) of a new certification process for teachers of Sater Frisian, a project which the authorities hope will attract more teachers of this language. A new teaching post for Frisian studies has also been opened at the Europa University in Flensburg, although representatives of Frisians in Schleswig-Holstein have expressed concern that there is no requirement that the person recruited to this post be a speaker of Frisian.

Representatives of both Sorbs and Frisians also underline the particular weight placed on the shoulders of teachers who provide teaching in and of these minority languages to develop their own teaching materials, as there is not a wide body of pre-existing materials available. This makes it particularly important to remove obstacles to the recruitment of teachers already able and willing to provide teaching in and of these languages – for example, by providing that such competencies be considered an advantage for teachers applying for jobs in the relevant regions.

#### *Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to pursue and intensify their efforts to increase the availability of teachers qualified to teach in minority languages at all levels of the education system, and to take positive measures to promote their appointment to areas where such skills are needed.

Hungary

*Adopted on 25 February 2016*

### Article 12 of the Framework Convention

#### Situation of Roma children in the sphere of education

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee recalls that segregation of Roma children at school, disproportionate placement of Roma children in special schools and other difficulties experienced by Roma children have been followed with considerable attention in the previous Opinions and the authorities were recommended to take specific measures to eliminate the identified shortcomings.

The authorities have adopted a number of programmes designed to tackle the identified problems, following the “explicit but not exclusive targeting principle” called for under the EU’s 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion (see also §§ 51-54 above). The longest-term programme is the National Strategy “Making Things Better for our Children”, a multigenerational programme (2007-2032) adopted already in 2007. The programme was elaborated by the Programme Office to Combat Child Poverty, a team operating within the Hungarian Academy of Science (MTA GYEP) in the years 2005-2006. One of its espoused priorities has been the gradual but radical improvement in the situation, particularly as concerns access to quality education of Roma children.

In 2011, the authorities carried out a comprehensive overhaul of all hitherto existing programmes in the social field and combined them into one overarching programme “National Social Inclusion Strategy - Deep poverty, child poverty and Roma 2011-2020” (hereafter: NSIS). The Advisory Committee notes that the rationale for such a profound review has been justified by the significant overlap of the target groups of all the programmes. The authorities acknowledge that among the approximately 750,000 Roma, between 500,000 and 600,000 are very poor. Furthermore, it is estimated that of the 400,000 children living below the poverty line at least half are Roma. Finally, significant parts of the Roma live in the poorest regions of Hungary. The Strategy has been well received by the European Commission, which is overseeing the Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 and was praised for being “comprehensive, multidimensional and integrated” with targets, which are “specific, numeric, in line with the Europe 2020 objectives”.

The Advisory Committee notes that in May 2011 the authorities and the National Roma self-government signed a framework agreement which, among others, established a common decision-making mechanism aimed, among others, at improving the education and employment of Roma children. In 2012, the authorities created the advisory Roma Co-ordination Council tasked with the development, implementation and evaluation of the social situation of Roma and the promotion of their social integration. Finally, the Evaluation Committee of the “Making Things Better for Our Children” National Strategy provides its own assessment of the implementation of that specific component of the NSIS.

Roma children largely benefit from various scholarship schemes developed under the Útravaló – MACIKA Scholarship Programme. A requirement has been introduced in 2011 that at least 50% of beneficiaries of all equal opportunity schemes (“Road to Secondary School”, “Road to the Secondary School-leaving Examination” and “Road to Vocation”) of the Útravaló – MACIKA Scholarship Programme be of (self-declared) Roma origin. This ratio was largely attained already in the 2012-2013 academic year. Of 16,636 students benefitting from the programme, 9,178 students (corresponding to 55% of the total number of students covered by the programme) declared that they were of Roma origin.

Under the “Road to Tertiary Education” programme, 57 Roma students (14% of the total of 387) received scholarships in the 2012-2013 academic year (the last year for which figures are available) to cover university tuition fees, with the exact amount of the scholarship being dependent on the grades obtained. Also, the “Second Chance” programme *Híd* (Bridge) has been set up to help young adults who have dropped out of the school system, to obtain secondary school qualifications.

Against this highly developed institutional background the Advisory Committee regrets to note that the espoused targets are not only not being achieved but, on the contrary, the indicators point to the worsening of the situation. School segregation of Roma children is very high in Hungary. Approximately 45% of all Roma children attend schools or classes where all or the majority of their classmates are also Roma. The Educational Authority (EA) reported in 2014 that 381 primary and secondary schools had 50%

or more Roma among their students (although the EA warned that there is high latency in the provided data). Regrettably, these figures demonstrate that declarations by the authorities that “[t]he Hungarian government stands firmly against segregation and will continue to do everything for the integration of the Roma” are not being followed by concrete action.

The Advisory Committee is deeply concerned that in practice the authorities give clear preference to the notion of “catching up” by the Roma children (*Felzárkozás*) to be achieved through education in Roma classes and schools. This notion follows from the Fourth Amendment to the Fundamental Law and stigmatises Roma children as being solely responsible for the existing low attainment and high school dropout levels. Placement of Roma children in segregated classes and schools, where they are supposed to “catch-up”, removes the issue of providing quality education to Roma children away from the view and care of the majority population. Perversely, it makes the victims of discrimination responsible for overcoming it (see related comment under Article 4). The Advisory Committee considers that all evidence points to the conclusion that “catch-up” classes and schools are in fact segregated classes and schools where nobody ever catches up.

The Advisory Committee notes the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Horváth and Kiss v. Hungary* of 29 April 2013. This judgment confirmed that Roma children have suffered wrongful placement in special (remedial) schools due to the systematic misdiagnosis of mental disability, which constituted a prima facie case of indirect discrimination. In this context, the Advisory Committee further notes that the authorities have taken general measures to prevent wrongful placement of children in special schools. In particular it is noted that new testing methods have been introduced to secure their objectivity and non-discriminatory nature. Furthermore, members of expert panels involved in the evaluation process were offered specialised trainings in order to modernise and to adopt uniform procedures and protocols, while the expert panels were reorganised. The steps taken seem to have led to a measure of improvement of the situation. Whereas the total number of children with special education needs seems to have stabilised in recent years at around 81,000, corresponding to just under 5% of all children attending school, the proportion of children with special education needs in integrated institutions is on the rise (over 52,000 in the school year 2012-2013) while the number of children educated in segregated institutions is falling (under 29,000 in the school year 2012-2013). Finally, the Advisory Committee notes that, in November 2014, a system of voluntary registration of ethnicity was introduced in all special education services. The Advisory Committee notes however, that the measures which have been undertaken by the authorities have been considered by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe inadequate and the monitoring of the implementation of the judgment is ongoing.

The lowering of the compulsory school-attendance age from 18 to 16, which was introduced by the National Public Education Act of 2011, raises serious concerns. Given the high rate of repetition of classes and the lack of entrenched culture of school attendance among Roma children, in particular young Roma girls, many will have left school by the age of 16 without completing primary education. This will impact very significantly on their employment prospects as most jobs require a completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade of education. The Advisory Committee notes, however, that the proportion of Roma girls who have left school before the age of 16 has halved in one generation in Hungary, to 33% in 2011.

A combination of the difficulties experienced in education results in only 1% of Roma children reaching tertiary education. The proportion of Roma university graduates is lower still due to a high dropout rate. The Advisory Committee welcomes information in this regard on the bonus system for university candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds and different tutoring initiatives undertaken by student organisations to offer academic help to Roma students.



The Advisory Committee notes that as of the school year 2014-2015, free kindergarten education for all children became compulsory from the age of three. It notes, however, that whereas the attendance is 94.7% of all children nationally, the figure for Roma children is only less than 50%. Such a low proportion of Roma children attending kindergartens cannot, in the view of the Advisory Committee be simply explained by the fact that a disproportionate number of Roma live in isolated small villages and that some of the children may be exempted from the obligation due to their mothers being homemakers.

Finally, the Advisory Committee wishes to commend the extraordinary efforts undertaken at the Gandhi school in Pécs and the considerable resources put at its disposal by the national and local authorities. This boarding school, which is attended almost exclusively by Roma children, most of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds, is striving to achieve educational excellence for Roma children. The school teaches both Romani and Beash languages in addition to standard academic subjects and six Roma teachers are among the staff of 40 employed at this establishment. It notes, however, that the dropout rate, particularly in the first year is, according to the interlocutors of the Advisory Committee, very high. This is yet another confirmation that primary schools in very many cases fail to provide expected education to Roma children.

The Advisory Committee wishes to commend the continued operation of the Romology course available at the Education Department of the Pécs University, aiming to provide teachers with greater understanding of Roma culture, traditions and wider issues which have an impact on children's opportunities in education.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to take, as a matter of urgency, all necessary measures to end without further delay, practices that lead to the continued segregation of Roma children at school and to redouble their efforts to remedy other shortcomings faced by Roma children in the field of education.

The authorities must ensure that Roma children have equal opportunities for access to all levels of quality education. Measures should be taken to prevent children from being wrongfully placed in special schools. Placement in regular schools should be the rule. Special schooling should be reserved for exceptional cases only following diagnostic examinations based on appropriate testing methods that have been introduced with a view to securing objectivity and non-discrimination.

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to ensure access to preschool facilities for all Roma children and guarantee that the curriculum in such kindergartens corresponds to the diverse needs and multilingual composition of the groups concerned.

Italy

*Adopted on 19 November 2015*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

#### Teacher training and curricula

The Advisory Committee notes that the availability of teachers capable of teaching a minority language or in a minority language varies greatly depending on the language. Whereas for most languages

(including less spoken languages such as Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Franco-provençal) there seems to be a sufficient number of teachers, hired on stable long term contracts; the teachers of other languages (in particular Croatian, Slovenian and Greek) are employed on a short-term basis or in a bilateral co-operation with states concerned. According to information given to the Advisory Committee, the problems concerning the teacher qualification standards have been resolved for the German, French, Ladin and Slovenian languages and partially resolved for the Friulian language. Apparently, the teacher qualification standards for other languages, in particular, Albanian, Croatian, Greek and Sardinian have still not been resolved. Furthermore, problems persist with regard to training and testing of Slovenian-language teachers which is carried out in Italian, not in the respective minority language.

The Advisory Committee notes the increasing availability of textbooks in minority languages. It regrets however to note that the improved access to teaching materials in minority languages coincides with the present financial crisis, which puts the strain on the provision of qualified language teachers. Such is the situation concerning Greek-language teaching in Salento where all ten Greek-language teachers seconded by Greece have returned home at the time when the previously unavailable textbooks for teaching Greek to children whose first language is Italian have finally been produced. It is most regrettable that lack of coordination of possibilities results in a loss of opportunity to capitalise on various initiatives.

The Advisory Committee regrets to note that, according to minority representatives, the teaching materials and curricula, in particular used in mainstream education contain very limited information on the languages, history and culture of minorities. It notes, however, that in 2014 the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) issued new “Guidelines for the reception and integration of foreign students” which defines “the Italian way to the school and cultural integration of foreign students” and establishes a framework and general principles of inclusive education of foreign children. This step is to be welcomed. The Advisory Committee notes, with regret, however, that the recent reform of the education system and the adoption of a new Law on Education have not been used to review the curricula with the view to increasing mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue and promoting integration of society as a whole.

#### *Recommendations*

The authorities are asked to ensure the adequate provision of qualified teachers of minority languages and/or capable of teaching other subjects in minority languages. Standards for testing teachers’ qualifications should be developed for all minority languages. In this context, special attention should be paid to the needs of persons belonging to the numerically smaller minorities.

The authorities are asked to identify, in consultation with national minority representatives, ways to provide the necessary textbooks in minority languages.

The Advisory Committee invites the authorities to continue to monitor the visibility of the minority cultures and languages within the Italian education system. Furthermore, the authorities should review the existing curricula to broaden knowledge and awareness of minorities in the educational system, with a view to promoting integration of society as a whole.

#### Education of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti children

##### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee welcomes the continued sustained efforts made by the central, regional and municipal authorities as well as civil society organisations to promote and ensure access to education for all Roma, Sinti and Caminanti children regardless of their legal status. As a general rule Roma children

are not placed in segregated classes or special schools. Although Roma children follow the same curriculum in the same classes as other children significant differences persist in educational outcomes for many of them. These differences can be explained for a large part by the difficult social and housing backgrounds of the students, inaccessibility of schools to children living in isolated “camps” (often located outside the networks of public transportation) and didactic gaps present already at the outset of their schooling, which all lead to marginalisation and increased probability of early school dropout. The authorities’ own research shows that the number of Roma children attending school at all levels of education has been decreasing in the last years.

According to research carried out by the Ministry of Education, whereas in the school year 2008/2009, 12,838 Roma children attended kindergarten, primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools, in the school year 2012-2013 their number decreased to 11,899. It is also estimated that those Roma children who attend school, due to a combination of above-mentioned socio-economic factors, are generally not less than three years behind their peers in their education. Furthermore, the authorities estimate that at least 20,000 Roma children of foreign origin, under the age of 12 (for the most part from the Balkans) are not attending school at all. Data aggregated locally in Rome by the Rome Municipality confirms this overview and shows that in the school year 2012/2013, 55% of Roma children attended school regularly, 19% attended without continuity and 17% had never attended. Research conducted by the *Angelo Abriani* Foundation (see also under §122) indicates that illiteracy is more widespread among Roma, Sinti and Caminanti women (25%) than among men (14%) and the percentage of women without any qualification is also higher (40%) as compared to 28% for men.

The authorities are well aware of the challenges. The National Roma Integration Strategy identifies the low average level of education of the Roma as one of the main causes of poor living conditions and difficult access to the labour market, in particular for Roma, Sinti and Caminanti women. The Strategy further underlines the need for the adoption of an integrated approach to social inclusion policies as an essential condition for promoting the schooling of Roma children.

Within the Strategy the “Project for the inclusion and integration of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti (RSC) children” has been implemented in 13 participating cities (Bari, Bologna, Cagliari, Catania, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Reggio Calabria, Rome, Turin and Venice) in 2013 to develop good practices, which would combat early school dropout among Roma children. In order to achieve this aim, schools with an increased presence of Roma children were identified and specific educational support was offered in the classes of the first two years of primary school and the first year of secondary school. The project, which was funded by the National Fund for Social Policy, tested an innovative approach of working simultaneously within the school environment and in the living environments of the students, thus combining academic support with the promotion of the welfare of the child through facilitation of access to local services and health care of the participating families.

Another programme “Growing up in cohesion”, which was implemented by the Ministry of Education, identified 26 schools in areas where the risk of school dropouts was especially high among foreign students. The project aimed to combat early school dropouts through the creation of partnerships between schools and social civil society organisations by adopting models and tools for the recovery of young people most at risk of marginalisation, delinquency and illegality. The Advisory Committee regrets that the data on the effects of the two programmes is not available at the moment of adoption of the present Opinion.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee reiterates its call on the authorities to continue and step up their efforts to support access and effective inclusion of all children from the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities in

the education system, in consultation with families concerned, regardless of their origins and legal status.

The authorities are asked to continue their efforts to address causes for the high dropout rate and underachievement of Roma children and devise strategies, in consultation with the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti communities, aimed at finding solutions to this issue. Specific measures should be taken without delay to support the families concerned and representatives of the Roma, Sinti and Caminanti should be consulted and involved in seeking the most appropriate solutions to the difficulties observed.

Moldova, Republic of  
*Adopted on 25 May 2016*

#### Article 12 of the Framework Convention

##### Teaching materials, teacher training and intercultural education

###### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee is pleased to note the continued efforts of the authorities to provide minority language schools with textbooks and education materials. Overall, however, a number of important shortcomings remain. Textbooks in minority languages are only provided for the first nine grades and only for the study of language and literature. Reportedly, they are based on outdated language learning methodology and are reviewed with less frequency than other textbooks. There are no textbooks for the study of minority cultures, and still no curriculum has been adopted for those classes. Textbooks used in Russian-language schools are translations from the state language and, according to national minority representatives, contain a number of mistakes that have not been corrected despite repeated requests. In their view, contact and co-ordination with the Ministry of Education has become much harder since the closure of the minority language department that existed until 2007. The Advisory Committee welcomes recent plans of the Bureau for Interethnic Relations to reinstate the positions of minority language specialists in the Ministry of Education in order to ensure that educational standards and curricula in the specific languages can be better co-ordinated at ministerial level, in consultation with the respective school directors and communities.

According to national minority representatives, the number of suitable pedagogical facilities for the preparation of teachers at Russian-language schools, where national minority languages are taught, is also decreasing. Following the closure of the philological department for Bulgarian at Chisinau University as well as of Taraclia College, teachers of the Bulgarian language can only be prepared at the University of Taraclia, which, despite its existence since 2004, has not yet been accredited. It is reportedly particularly problematic to recruit suitably trained teachers for the study of maths, physics and other natural sciences at Russian-language schools. As a result, the increasing age of teachers and their lack of qualifications are presented as important reasons for the decrease in student numbers at such schools that has been observed over recent years (see Article 14).

The Advisory Committee regrets that, in general, very little information regarding the wide diversity of Moldovan society is contained in the curriculum and textbooks used in public schools. Efforts to agree on a curriculum of Moldovan history have failed thus far amid ideological differences. According to national minority representatives, only the “history of Romanians” is taught in schools, with few or unfavourable references to other cultures and identities, thus leading to a sense of their being overlooked and marginalised. This is not conducive to the formation of an integrated society in which

persons belonging to national minorities are perceived as an integral part (see Article 6). In addition, teachers are not always well equipped to deal with linguistic and other diversity in their classrooms and to promote appropriately respectful intercultural dialogue. Moreover, there is reportedly some unfriendliness amongst teachers against Roma students and incidents of mobbing or bullying from other students are frequently addressed inappropriately.

The Advisory Committee further notes reports that the study of religion in schools, while optional, still appears to reflect mainly Orthodoxy, as the religious curriculum receives input in particular from the Moldovan Orthodox Church, and children who do not attend are not always effectively protected against possible pressure from school administrations.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that the teaching of minority languages is supported through adequate supplies of teaching materials and that there are effective opportunities for the preparation of suitably skilled teachers in all subjects, including for teachers of numerically smaller languages, in particular for the introduction of multilingual teaching methodologies.

It further calls on the authorities to ensure that curricula and textbooks adequately reflect the diversity of Moldovan society, including with respect to the appreciation of multiple perspectives in history, and that teachers in all schools are effectively trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and promote intercultural respect and dialogue.

### Equal access to education

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee welcomes sustained efforts to improve access to education for Roma, in particular through the enhanced attention paid to primary school enrolment. Indeed, while the numbers of students with a Roma background have increased as a result, mainly owing to the engagement of Roma community mediators and civil society, under-representation is still an important issue, in particular at preschool level. Comprehensive research regarding access to education for Roma children points to a variety of interrelated obstacles, such as high poverty levels, unaffordability of the hidden costs of education, practical issues with transport from remote and often sub-standard neighbourhoods, as well as the persistence of very low quality education for Roma that contributes to the phenomenon of early school drop-outs. Roma girls are disproportionately affected, resulting in only 63% of Roma women between 16 and 24 being literate, compared to 99% of non-Roma women in that age group. The Advisory Committee notes with particular concern reports of segregated education continuing in 2016 in Otaci, where Roma children are reportedly all taught together in one class with a significantly lower quality of education. In addition, the Advisory Committee understands that the non-use of the Romani language at schools and the absence of teachers and education assistants with such specific skills also constitutes a barrier for Roma children, who often speak Romani at home but attend schools where the medium of instruction is either Russian or the state language.

The Advisory Committee further notes the concerns expressed by the Equality Council with respect to the principle that “money follows the student”, included in the new Education Code, which entered into force in November 2014. In the view of the Council, this principle does not sufficiently take into account that persons belonging to national minorities who attend additional language and culture classes (such as in Bulgarian, Gagauz, Russian and Ukrainian, see Article 14) follow a heavier curriculum, implying more work for the teachers and school administration, and thus requiring more funding. The Advisory Committee notes the proposal made by the Equality Council to amend the new Education Code to address this situation of indirect discrimination with respect to access to education.

*Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to address comprehensively the continued obstacles to equal access to education experienced by Roma children in co-operation with the respective line ministries and local authorities, and in close consultation with minority representatives. Instances of segregated education must be discontinued without delay and effective measures taken, including through the employment of adequately trained teachers and education assistants, to pursue and support the ongoing efforts of civil society towards inclusive education.

It further calls on the authorities to address the shortcomings in the new Education Code, including with respect to equal access to education as identified by the Equality Council.

Norway

*Adopted on 13 October 2016*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Equal access to education

*Present situation*

The Advisory Committee understands that for those among the Romani/Taters and the Roma who traditionally travel during the summer, access to education for children in that period continues to be difficult, although in some rare cases solutions have been found. As the Advisory Committee was informed, part of the problem lies in the strict application of the legislation in force, which limits the number of absences from school of children under the age of 16. Consequently, travelling Tater/Romani and Roma are forced to alter their lifestyle.

In addition to seasonal travelling, the Advisory Committee understood from the Ombudsman for Children that Roma children's low level of school attendance is also due to an overall lack of trust in the education system. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsperson has indicated that there are some measures with proven effectiveness as to school attendance, such as mentors who liaise between parents and the school and organised transport between home and school for security reasons.

*Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to show flexibility and put in place best practices, such as distance education, to allow children belonging to Tater/Romani and Roma minorities to continue to have access to quality education while travelling.

The authorities should also take steps to increase their support for existing good practices as regards the education of Roma children by allocating more resources for the work of Roma mentors with the aim of improving co-ordination between schools, municipal guidance services and Roma families.

Textbooks and other teaching materials; teacher training

*Present situation*

The authorities indicated that the school curriculum foresees teaching and learning about national minorities but leaves a margin of appreciation to schools when applying the curriculum. Relevant

pedagogical material is available online for schools, but while textbooks were subject to the approval of authorities until 2000, today it is the responsibility of the authors and publishers to ensure the quality of the teaching materials. In the opinion of the interlocutors of the Advisory Committee, from civil society organisations to independent bodies, school education provides an incomplete and at times 'too neutral' overview of the national minorities present in Norway. Teaching material does not provide a wide knowledge on the situation of national minorities and omits, for instance, information on past assimilation policies. Similarly, the wide discretion enjoyed by teachers on how to use this material, as well as their lack of knowledge and training as regards national minorities, are deemed to have a strong impact on learning. Hence, the limited awareness on Kvens/Norwegian Finns, Tater/Romani and Roma (as well as Sami) in society at large. The Jewish minority is also considered to be affected by the shortcomings described above, although more systematic attention is now devoted to the Holocaust at school and university level.

The Advisory Committee also notes that the so-called 'path-finders' are young people belonging to national minorities who visit schools around the country in order to spread knowledge about the situation of the Sami and the Jews in Norway. The Advisory Committee considers that, when adapted to the specific circumstances of other minority groups, such projects could help to improve both the visibility and understanding of national minorities. It would be beneficial to the Roma, whose representatives pointed out the need to spread knowledge about their minority in society at large. As regards the Tater/Romani minority, it appears that this community is divided over the question of whether awareness-raising should be carried out by members of the community, as is sometimes the case already, or by the authorities. Those expressing a preference for the latter option fear stigmatisation based on being recognised as belonging to the national minority (see Article 5).

The Advisory Committee was informed about the lack of qualified Kven language teachers. Kven is not a subject offered at teacher training college. University education in Kven is offered only in Tromsø (see Article 14). Finally, the Advisory Committee observed that opinions differed between the authorities and minority representatives on the existence of sufficient teaching materials in Kven and to what extent the existing material is brought to the attention of municipalities and schools. It considers that a future action plan to revitalise the Kven language should include the development of teaching and learning materials in co-operation with the national minority.

The Advisory Committee finally notes that measures are in place to improve the understanding of cultural diversity in schools both by pupils and teachers, and to develop good practices. It recalls that it is essential that all teachers be adequately trained to promote respect for different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and to promote inclusion and dialogue in the classroom and throughout regular school routines, including extracurricular activities.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that in co-operation with national minorities, curricula, textbooks and other teaching materials appropriately reflect the history and diversity of society in Norway so that education provides broad knowledge on minorities as forming an integral part of Norwegian society.

The authorities should also direct efforts to ensure that the existing curricula are appropriately implemented and that training for teachers is provided in order to increase their knowledge of and

teaching on national minorities and cultural diversity, as well as their competence to promote inclusion and dialogue in the classroom.

Slovak Republic

*Adopted on 3 December 2014*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

Equal access to education

*Present situation*

Roma continue to be over-represented in special schools designed for children with various forms of disabilities, including learning difficulties (so-called 'A variant', which is defined as 'mild mental disability'). Based on comparative studies conducted by international and national observers, the proportion of Roma children in special schools accounts for a minimum of 60% overall, reaching some 85% when it comes to the proportion of Roma pupils in special classes in standard primary schools. The special report of the Ombudsperson, following her examination of the situation in 21 schools in eastern Slovakia, raises very serious concerns about the methods applied by the Centres of Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling and Prevention (Psychological Counselling Centres hereinafter), which conduct diagnostic examinations of pre-school aged children to establish their aptitude for schools. It is welcome that the Ministry of Education reacted promptly by providing guidance through the regional education authorities to the District Psychological Counselling Centres, recommending that all children be individually tested with methods that are adapted to their specific social, cultural and language background, that the finding of a child's socially disadvantaged environment should prompt the inclusion of the child into a preparatory year (so-called zero-class) rather than a special class, and that the child's educational abilities be re-assessed after one year.

Evidence found in some schools, including during the Advisory Committee's visit, however, suggests that the diagnostic examinations are still regularly performed without adaptation to the specific cultural and language barriers experienced by many Roma children. It is further of deep concern that even when recommendations for placement in zero-class are made, such classes are not always provided, or are often organised in Roma-only classes. The Advisory Committee understands that the financial support provided to schools according to the number of pupils with special education needs (such as the 'A' variant) may also support the continued and disproportionate placement of Roma children in either special schools or special classes in standard schools. It further understands that Roma parents may agree with the placement in special education as the schools are often located close to settlements, or because they consider that the child may be better protected in a socially controlled environment, as they may not be comprehensively informed about the consequences of their decision. It is deeply concerned by reports that re-examinations of the educational abilities of children are performed irregularly and do not occur at all in some schools, thereby permanently barring children from access to standard education based on one discussion held, often in a language that is not primarily spoken at home, at the age of 5 or 6, which is contrary to the principles contained in Articles 4 and 12 of the Framework Convention and incompatible with the best interest of the child principle, as contained in Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.



The Advisory Committee is further deeply concerned by the continued existence of segregated education of Roma, despite the fact that such practices were outlawed in 2008 and the Ministry of Education has repeatedly provided guidance to schools to eliminate any organisational or spatial exclusion or separation of Roma students. A case initiated by the Centre for Civil and Human Rights in 2010 against the segregation of Roma children in the Primary School in Šarišské Michaľany was decided by the Prešov District Court in favour of the claimant, ordering the school to desegregate classes as of the 2012/2013 school year. The Advisory Committee welcomes the sustained commitment of the newly appointed Director of the school, which accommodates up to 60% children from a near-by settlement. The previous spatial separation of children even during breaks and in the canteens has been discontinued and children are now moving freely throughout the school, enjoying the same type of food. The integration of Roma children into mixed classrooms continues to pose a variety of challenges however, including practical considerations including transport, broader didactical concerns, as well as resistance from parents, both Roma and non-Roma, given that Roma only classes often follow a reduced curriculum. While commendable efforts are being made by the Director of the school as well as civil society organisations engaged in addressing segregation in the education system, the Advisory Committee is concerned that regular guidance as well as substantial and sustained financial, conceptual, and methodological support is required to enable schools to effectively deconstruct segregatory practices in the education system, mirroring broader social exclusion and anti-Gypsyism in society, and have often been in place for decades.

The Advisory Committee welcomes the employment of teacher assistants in many schools with large numbers of Roma pupils to promote their achievement in school and liaise between schools and parents, as absenteeism and early drop-out are still common challenges regarding Roma access to education, particularly among girls. While noting increased support and commitment by the Ministry of Education and the Roma Plenipotentiary, it considers that the employment of teacher assistants should be further enhanced and institutionalised. More efforts are further required to ensure that staff are recruited who speak Romani. The Advisory Committee further underlines that access to quality education for Roma pupils who often do not speak the language of instruction at home, may require that more teachers are recruited and employed in relevant schools with at least some Romani language skills so that they can facilitate understanding for pupils if necessary. It points to the conclusions of a number of actors, including the Ombudsperson, to urgently promote the attendance of kindergartens or pre-schools by Roma children.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to desegregate the education system and to allocate adequate resources, both human and financial, as well as continued political and methodological guidance and support to schools. The provision of free spaces in pre-schools for Roma children should be viewed as a priority in this regard.

The Advisory Committee further urges the authorities to comprehensively address the disproportionately frequent placement of Roma children in special schools or classes. Placement in regular schools should be the rule and special schooling reserved for exceptional cases only. All diagnostic examinations to assess the aptitude of school-aged children must be conducted in a manner that suitably takes the individual background of the child into account, and must be repeated regularly in all cases.

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to prioritise the recruitment and employment of teachers and teaching assistants with Romani language skills in all schools with large proportions of Roma students.

#### Textbooks and teacher training

##### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee notes continued efforts to support the university and on-going training of teachers at minority language schools, both for Slovak language and literature and for subjects taught in minority languages, mainly Hungarian, Ukrainian, Ruthenian and some Romani. It is welcome that a number of these courses emphasise contemporary methodologies of language learning, including conversational classes and special aids to promote communication competencies in daily life. It is essential, however, that the attainment of quality standards by teachers in minority language schools is regularly monitored by specialised experts who also provide recommendations for necessary teacher training. While some programmes have also been created to provide training in methodology for teachers of pupils from socially disadvantaged environments, a variety of reports indicate that few teachers are appropriately trained to cope with diversity in the classroom and apply methods that promote the engagement of children from different backgrounds according to their individual abilities, including when undergoing desegregation processes. It is further essential that all teachers for all schools are adequately trained to promote respect for different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and promote inclusion and dialogue in the classroom and throughout daily school routines, including extracurricular activities.

While there are continued efforts related to the preparation and printing of textbooks in minority languages, including Romani, national minority representatives still consider that the available material is often of low quality, containing inaccurate translations for instance, and is only available in insufficient quantities. It is further of concern that education materials used in all schools reportedly still reflect inadequately about the historical presence of and positive contributions made by national minorities in Slovakia. It is essential for the promotion of inter-cultural understanding and respect that all pupils learn about the wealth of different cultures, languages, traditions and identities living in the Slovak Republic, including those of the numerically smaller minorities, and that positive images of these different cultures are portrayed in teaching materials and school curricula. The close consultation of national minorities in the preparation of history textbooks is especially important in this regard to encourage the accommodation of multiple perspectives in historic research.

##### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that teachers of minority language schools have access to suitable training programmes for teaching in all subjects, and to ensure that they are provided with relevant education materials and textbooks in sufficient quantity and quality.

The Advisory Committee further calls on the authorities to ensure that teachers and staff of all schools are effectively trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and promote intercultural respect and understanding in schools, and that textbooks and school curricula adequately reflect and appreciate the ethnic diversity of Slovakia.

Spain

*Adopted on 3 December 2014*

## Article 12 of the Framework Convention

### Equal access to education

As noted in the Advisory Committee's Third Opinion, there has been important and welcome progress regarding the access of Roma children to education in Spain over the past several decades. Moreover, Roma overwhelmingly recognise education as an important factor in achieving success. Nonetheless, the Advisory Committee notes with concern that significant gaps remain between the rates of access to education and the educational achievements of Roma and non-Roma pupils. Thus, 64% of Roma children do not complete compulsory secondary education, whereas for the population as a whole, this figure is 13%; only 55% of Roma children are still enrolled in school at age 16, compared with 93.5% of the rest of the population; the great majority of Roma children who are still in school at the age of 15-16 years are in vocational training; and, while the enrolment rate of Roma children in primary school is now close to 100%, more than one in five Roma children still fail to complete primary school successfully. Illiteracy rates remain approximately five times higher among Roma than among the general population, and the percentage of Roma who attend university reportedly remains very low.

The Advisory Committee also remains deeply concerned by the persisting issue of school segregation. It notes that the authorities have at times taken the position that high concentrations of Roma in certain schools do not result from deliberate segregation but arise due partly to residential segregation and partly to school admission criteria that for example favour the enrolment of children who already have a brother or sister attending the same school. The Advisory Committee is concerned that certain schools nonetheless include far higher concentrations of Roma pupils than the overall percentage of Roma in the local population, or that in some schools, Roma pupils in need of additional support receive such instruction in separate classrooms. The Advisory Committee underlines moreover that segregation in schools is frequently associated with higher rates of absenteeism and lower educational outcomes for the pupils concerned. It notes with interest that in response to a complaint lodged with the Ombudsman on school segregation affecting Roma, the latter has requested detailed responses from the relevant educational authorities, which are currently awaited.

The Advisory Committee welcomes the fact that the authorities at central level as well as at the level of the Autonomous Communities have continued to develop, implement and support a wide range of programmes, actions and campaigns (often implemented in practice by NGOs) aimed at improving access to education, some of which expressly target Roma and others of which may include Roma as part of a broader ambit. These include for example a Unión Romaní programme to support pupils at high risk of absenteeism during the transition from primary to compulsory secondary education; the Promociona programme currently run in 13 Autonomous Communities by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, which works with individual Roma pupils and their families to promote the completion of compulsory education; a project on community learning in Córdoba and several other provinces in Andalusia, run in co-operation with the University of Córdoba, Instituto CREA and Federación Kamira; and the Siklavipen Savorença programme run by the Pere Closa Foundation in the province of Barcelona. Thanks to Spain's participation in the "Roma families get involved" project, co-funded by the European Union, a Guide for working with Roma families towards achieving the success of their children in school, aimed at education professionals, was also published in April 2013. With support from the government, NGO campaigns run in recent years to promote education amongst Roma pupils include a campaign

launched in 2012, "*Gitanos con estudios, gitanos con futuro*", to combat school drop-out, and another launched in 2013 and aimed at encouraging Roma pupils who begin compulsory secondary schooling to see it through to completion, "*Con estudios, tus sueños se cumplen*".

The Advisory Committee further notes with interest that the National Roma Integration Strategy 2012-2020 includes a series of strategic lines of action aimed at increasing the schooling rates of the Roma population in infant education, ensuring universal access to schooling as well as increased success of Roma pupils at primary level, increasing the rates of successful completion of compulsory secondary education and increasing the education level of the adult Roma population. The Advisory Committee also welcomes the inclusion in the Strategy of a specific line of action dedicated to developing measures to avoid the concentration of Roma pupils in certain schools or classrooms. However, it regrets that this does not appear to have been followed by the inclusion of specific measures in this respect as part of the Operational Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma People 2014-2016.

The Advisory Committee also notes with concern that budget cuts made as part of austerity measures adopted in the face of the economic crisis have adversely impacted a number of programmes in place to improve access to education, including measures specifically designed to support children belonging to disadvantaged groups or from disadvantaged areas or to combat school absenteeism, such as the Educa3 Plan to promote access to infant education for 0- to 3-year-olds, the PROA plan to support schools in socially disadvantaged areas with the aim of reducing academic failure and the Educación Compensatoria programme. It is concerned that such measures may undo the progress made in recent years towards achieving equality in education for Roma. In addition, it is concerned about changes introduced in December 2013 by the Law on Improving the Quality of Education (LOMCE), in particular as regards new selection processes that may accentuate inequalities faced by Roma children and earlier streaming of children into general or vocational education. In this respect it draws attention in particular to the possible impact on equal access to education of Roma children of the introduction of new tests at various levels of schooling. While the authorities have emphasised that such tests are intended to assist each pupil in choosing the education path best suited to them, the Advisory Committee is concerned that in practice, they may result in the exclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged children, including Roma, from the higher education streams. It is also concerned that impact of such tests may be particularly negative for Roma girls, who already have a significantly higher school drop-out rate than their male peers.

The Advisory Committee stresses the importance of building on the progress made in the past years and decades towards achieving equal access to education for Roma children and equal education outcomes for them, and cautions strongly against taking measures that may compromise continued progress or even go backwards.

### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee strongly encourages the authorities to pursue their efforts to improve the integration and achievements of Roma pupils in school. Continuity beyond primary education, successful completion of secondary education and reducing absenteeism, as well as increased access of Roma to university education, should remain key objectives for the authorities at all levels and the efforts made in this field should be regularly monitored to ensure that the outcomes achieved match these objectives.

It calls on the authorities to assess the impact of budget cuts in the field of education on the equal access to education of Roma, and emphasises in this context that austerity measures should not have the effect of depriving these children of equal access to quality education or directly or indirectly reducing their chances of completing school.

It again urges the authorities to investigate the reasons for the persisting concentration of Roma pupils in schools located in disadvantaged areas and with lower educational outcomes, in order to eliminate such practices. In so doing, the authorities at all levels should ensure that admission criteria and performance assessment are not implemented in a manner that discriminates against Roma pupils or leads to their concentration in some schools or classes.

#### Intercultural education

As the Advisory Committee noted in its Third Opinion, bearing in mind that limited progress had yet been achieved in including Roma in textbooks and teaching materials, in 2010 the Institute of Roma Culture published a manual designed to improve the teaching of Roma culture as part of the upper-level primary school curriculum, increase the knowledge and awareness of all primary school children regarding Roma culture, and counteract stereotypes. The Advisory Committee welcomed this publication and emphasised the importance of ensuring the dissemination of adequate information on the Roma identity and culture in Spain's education system.

The Advisory Committee notes with interest that the Operational Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma People 2014-2016 includes lines of action to promote the inclusion of specific training on Roma culture in teacher training courses, to ensure that Roma culture and history are included in textbooks, to support schools in promoting cultural diversity and including Roma culture in their curricula and to support the inclusion in university curricula of subjects covering cultural diversity. However, it regrets that few specific actions appear to have been identified at this stage that could serve to give effect to these goals. The Advisory Committee nonetheless notes with interest that some new materials have been added to the CREADE virtual resource centre for cultural diversity in education since 2012 and that the "Roma in Spain: History and Culture" subject continues to be offered at the University of Alcalá de Henares (see above, comments on Article 5). In Barcelona, a pilot programme to promote education on equality and non-discrimination is being run in fifteen schools in the 2014/15 and 2015/16 school years.

Despite these steps, Roma representatives stress that at present, and in contrast with the teaching that school students receive about the origins of nations recognised in the Spanish Constitution, Roma culture remains largely absent from textbooks and school curricula, and Roma are insufficiently involved in designing materials including information on their culture. As a result, Roma culture is scarcely visible as a part of Spanish culture as taught in schools. They also point to a general lack of teachers adequately trained in this field, meaning that the materials that do exist are not used effectively. The Advisory Committee is also concerned that the suppression of the compulsory subjects Education for Citizenship and Human Rights at primary level and Civic and Ethical Education at secondary level, in favour of the mainstreaming of these questions in the general school curriculum, will in practice lead to the disappearance of human rights education from schools.

The Advisory Committee again underlines the importance of progressing rapidly in this area, as the promotion of mutual respect and understanding as well as a sense of a common cultural heritage at the earliest ages is key to combating prejudice and racism in society. It moreover emphasises that seeing themselves reflected on an equal footing and as an integral part of Spanish society in textbooks could

indirectly contribute to the fight against the disproportionate dropout rate of Roma children from school.

### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee strongly recommends that better use be made of existing materials aimed at increasing the knowledge and awareness of all children about Roma identity and culture as an integral part of Spanish culture. It recommends that the authorities continue to support, with effective Roma participation, the development of further such materials and their effective use in practice. The authorities at all levels should intensify their efforts to promote respect for as well as effective management of diversity in early education.

It further recommends that human rights education again be specifically included in the school curriculum.

“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

*Adopted on 24 February 2016*

### Article 12 of the Framework Convention

#### Integrated education

#### *Present situation*

According to most interlocutors, divisions in the education system as observed in previous Opinions have significantly intensified in recent years with the number of monolingual schools increasing. Over 75% of all monolingual schools use the Macedonian language, with the remainder using mainly Albanian. There are two schools with Turkish as the language of instruction. The majority of the multilingual schools teach in the Macedonian and Albanian languages. While at secondary school level roughly 40% of schools are multilingual, many of them operate in shifts or use separate buildings so that interaction between pupils of different language backgrounds is in fact very limited. According to data collected and surveys made in 2011, only some 10% of primary school students belonging to the two main groups have a realistic opportunity to ever interact with each other in the school environment. The Advisory Committee is deeply concerned about this situation. According to most observers, it has become worse since 2011, despite the fact that the comprehensive government strategy “Steps towards Integrated Education in the Education System of the Republic of Macedonia” was adopted in 2010 with the support of the OSCE. While a variety of projects appear to have been implemented to promote interaction and dialogue among students of different backgrounds, many with international funding, no comprehensive budget was ever allocated for the implementation of the Strategy and no co-ordinated efforts were made to address the situation beyond the implementation of extracurricular project activities.

The Advisory Committee welcomes the efforts made by civil society, with international support, to introduce bilingual teaching methodology as a pilot exercise in now 13 mixed schools. According to its interlocutors and the school it visited in Gostivar, the concept of offering voluntary activities in a completely bilingual environment where children playfully learn with and about the other community is highly sought after by children and their parents. Teachers commend in particular that the concept and

its teaching modules are developed to suit the national curriculum at both primary and secondary school level, thereby facilitating its implementation and applicability in daily school life. The Advisory Committee is pleased to note information that the concept has been well received by the Minister of Education and may be adopted as a basis for further and more comprehensive efforts to promote an integrated education system where students learn in diverse environments and on the basis of respect for and interest in the other. It is deeply concerned, however, by the overall impression amongst civil society and international observers that in the absence of comprehensive efforts to create an integrated education system, the number of mixed schools may further decline, also as a result of the increased development of segregated neighbourhoods in a number of municipalities (see also Article 15).

Furthermore, the portrayal of non-majority communities in textbooks and the curriculum remains a source of concern according to civil society and national minority representatives. National minorities and their longstanding history in the country are reportedly sparingly mentioned and, if so, often through rather negative or stereotyped images. Selective efforts made to remove particularly offensive sections from the history textbook, for instance, have led in a number of cases to the omission of mention of the respective minority, rather than to a revision of the text in agreement with the minority concerned. It is in particular of concern in this regard that the information contained in the curriculum and in textbooks used in the various language schools appears ethnically based thereby further contributing to societal divisions and possibly thwarting future efforts to promote shared opinions and interaction. There is thus still very little intercultural content in the education system, with insufficient attention paid to the promotion of human and minority rights awareness or respect for linguistic and religious diversity. The Advisory Committee reiterates its standing position that the promotion of multilingual schools in diverse societies requires teachers who are actively recruited from both majority and minority groups and appropriately trained to teach in multilingual and diverse environments. Such training should be comprehensively available to teachers as well as to school administrators, but is particularly important for the teaching of history and religion in order to ensure that multiple perspectives are adequately and respectfully accommodated.

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to prioritise the formation of an integrated education system and to allocate adequate resources, both human and financial, as well as continued political and methodological supervision and support to promote mixed school and classroom environments.

It further urges them to ensure that teachers and staff of all schools are effectively trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and promote intercultural respect and understanding in schools, and that textbooks and school curricula adequately reflect and appreciate the ethnic and linguistic diversity in the country.

#### Equal access to education

##### *Present situation*

Access to education for Roma children remains problematic for a variety of reasons. Despite governmental and non-governmental efforts made to enhance the enrolment of Roma children in preschools, their attendance rate is still low compared to the rest of the population, as parents are often not able to pay the monthly fees for preschools. In addition, there is a lack of sufficient preschools, in particular in areas where Roma live in substantial numbers. While the overall number of Roma children enrolled in primary school has increased, so has the number of Roma-only classes in primary schools

according to most observers, and there are completely segregated schools. Placement appears to be left to the school administrators and parents without co-ordinated efforts to address the phenomenon of segregation (see also Article 4). Moreover, the number of Roma children in special schools remains disproportionately high despite efforts in recent years to change the practice of testing children without the presence of their parents and without any interpretation being provided. A review (“re-categorisation”) of the cases of 234 Roma children, who were placed in special schools seemingly without the necessary procedures having been followed, was ongoing at the time of the visit of the Advisory Committee, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. It remains unclear to what extent the Ministry of Education has developed a comprehensive policy response to prevent such practices in the future, such as the introduction of more culturally sensitive testing of school aptitude in the Romani language and closer supervision of placement decisions at local level.

The Advisory Committee was further informed that the quality of education for Roma children generally remains inferior in comparison to the rest of the population. Some 95% of Roma children attend Macedonian language schools but are not offered language tutorials despite the fact that many of them speak Romani at home. A project that trained 30 Roma mediators with the necessary language skills to assist children in their school work was reportedly successful in liaising between schools and Roma communities, thereby preventing discouragement and dropout, which continues to affect mainly Roma girls. However, only two of the skilled mediators were subsequently employed by schools and the recently adopted Roma Integration Strategy is reported to contain plans to employ only some “assistants”, with reduced competencies. The particular socio-economic exclusion of many Roma families which has a detrimental effect on the attendance rate and achievement in school of many Roma children appears still not to be sufficiently taken into account. In addition, Roma children often continue to face prejudice and hostility at schools, which is made worse by inappropriate and biased portrayal of Roma in textbooks (see above). The Advisory Committee welcomes, however, that scholarships for Roma students to enrol in secondary and university education are still available as a result of Roma Education Fund (REF) funding, which is highly appreciated by the community and used by an increasing number of young men and women. While Roma continue to be considerably under-represented at secondary and higher education level, it is further pleased to note reports that the proportion of Roma students who completed primary school and are moving on to secondary level has substantially increased in recent years.

#### *Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to comprehensively address the disproportionately frequent placement of Roma children in special schools and in separate classes. Placement in regular schools and in mixed classes must be the rule and effective supervisory mechanisms put in place to prevent contrary practice at local level.



United Kingdom  
*Adopted on 25 May 2016*

Article 12 of the Framework Convention

### Equal access to education

#### *Present situation*

The Advisory Committee is pleased to note that, according to the data provided by the authorities, in the period under examination there has been a progressive reduction in the achievement gaps of children belonging to national and ethnic minorities in England, with the exception of still notable shortcomings for Black Caribbean and Pakistani children. Pupils of Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage are the lowest performing ethnic groups. Overall, permanent or fixed exclusion from school of pupils belonging to minorities reduced. The Special Education Needs programme was overhauled to target support to disadvantaged pupils through financial incentives such as the Pupil Premium and Early Years Pupil Premium, which channelled additional funding to schools to improve pupils' attainment. Although not ethnically adjusted, in line with the overall integration policy, the authorities assess these programmes as benefiting disproportionately pupils from Black and minority communities. Ofsted monitors how the funds are used, and it concluded that the effectiveness of programmes improved, although it is too early for a thorough impact assessment. The Advisory Committee is, however, aware of the scepticism expressed by its interlocutors that the funding ultimately is used by schools to specifically support pupils belonging to minorities.

The Advisory Committee observes similar patterns in Scotland and Wales, where certain ethnic groups achieve high rates of attainment (e.g. Chinese in Wales attain an average of 77.8% at age 16 compared with a national average of 51.7% in 2011-13), and some ethnic minority groups do under-perform. Gypsy and Traveller children and youth continue to experience barriers to learning and therefore currently underperform quite significantly compared to other groups. Specific programmes targeting national and ethnic minorities (such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge, the Traveller Education Programme in Scotland and the Travelling Together online curriculum in Wales) aim to improve the educational attainment of these groups. The Attainment Scotland Fund and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant in Wales provide funds to tackle ethnicity-related underachievement, including language learning.

#### *Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to effectively monitor the measures adopted to guarantee equal access to, and enhance achievements of, pupils belonging to national and ethnic minorities, with particular attention to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma children to ensure they are not left behind.

#### *Northern Ireland*

The Advisory Committee is concerned that education in Northern Ireland continues to be divided along religious lines, whereby most children attend predominantly Protestant or Catholic schools. It further notes that the number of pupils attending integrated schools remains very limited (6% in 2014/15), while more progress has been accomplished through the Shared Education approach launched in 2011.

The Sharing in Education programme, which is part of the broader “Together Building A United Community” strategy, aims to build bridges between schools from different communities and provide opportunities for children and young people from different communities to learn together and to encourage collaborative work across educational providers. It also notes a Shared Education Bill pending in the Assembly, aimed at providing a legislative definition of shared education and entrusting the Department of Education (DENI) with facilitating it. Interlocutors of the Advisory Committee emphasised that sharing in education has the potential to improve educational access and attainment for pupils from a diverse range of religious and racial backgrounds and has an important role to play in advancing cohesion and integration. According to the same interlocutors, it should cover all groups protected under Section 75 of the 1998 Northern Ireland Act, and it should be made a duty on the Executive to facilitate sharing education. This should be reflected in the curriculum.

The Advisory Committee notes that, since disaggregated data are not available in Northern Ireland, it is not possible to discern which minority ethnic and/or newcomer groups are more successful. However, it was a shared opinion of its interlocutors that Traveller and Roma children were the lowest performers, with very low achievement and higher drop-out rates. To redress the situation, DENI published the “Traveller Child in education action framework” in 2013 and created the Traveller Education Support Service, whose delivery plan for 2015/16 has set targets for key priority areas: attendance, attainment and parental engagement. The Advisory Committee understands, however, from interlocutors that the outcomes of these measures are modest, and Travellers’ access and achievement rates in education remain highly problematic and not monitored. A general policy of “Supporting newcomer pupils” seeks to assist children, in particular from national and ethnic minorities, who need support in settling into a new school, community and culture, especially where there are language barriers. Although there has been little formal research on the experience of Roma pupils, anecdotal evidence suggests exceptionally high levels of educational disadvantage, exacerbated by low levels of English language proficiency, social exclusion and poverty. Roma children benefit from double funding as both Travellers and Newcomers, but doubts were again expressed about how effectively these funds reach their objective since they are part of the overall school budget and do not specifically follow the target recipients.

Finally, the Advisory Committee heard of concerns by minorities’ representatives in Northern Ireland that English learning for EAL (English as an Additional Language) in schools is mainly carried out by full immersion and that there are no targeted measures for pupils integrating into school at secondary level. ESOL programmes – English for Speakers of Other Languages – targeting adults belonging to minorities and migrants are available free of charge to all those who meet the residence requirements in Northern Ireland, including ethnic minorities. Minorities’ representatives expressed, however, serious concerns about how college-provided ESOL courses for adults are organised, since they often do not match the need of the potential beneficiaries in terms of scheduling and costs (non-EU and non-asylum seekers/refugees would be subject to higher fees).

#### *Recommendations*

The Advisory Committee encourages the Executive to adopt legislation directing the Department for Education to enhance shared education.

It also calls on the Executive to monitor the Traveller Education Support Service to ensure that access and attendance of Traveller children to education is effective and that funds provided to schools in relation to children belonging to ethnic minorities are used to improve their attainment.

Textbooks, other teaching materials and teacher training

*Present situation*

Sparse information was received by the Advisory Committee about initiatives, curricula, textbooks and other teaching materials reflecting diversity in society as well as the history and presence of national and ethnic minorities in the country. Education Scotland, the Scottish Government's Executive Agency in charge of developing education, focused on equality and diversity and published best practices put in place by schools. Wales elaborated guidance to celebrate diversity in schools and an online curriculum resource on Gypsies and Traveller history and culture aimed at providing a more relevant cultural curriculum and breaking down prejudice and stereotyping. Textbooks have been revised to reflect better the historical reality of Wales. In Northern Ireland, teacher training to enhance shared education is deemed necessary by interlocutors to increase schools' participation. The Advisory Committee recalls that state parties shall ensure the promotion of intercultural understanding, knowledge of minorities and respect for diversity in school curricula. It also deems it essential that all teachers be adequately trained to promote respect for different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and to promote inclusion and dialogue in the classroom and throughout daily school routines, including extracurricular activities.

*Recommendation*

The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that, in co-operation with minority groups, curricula, textbooks and other teaching materials reflect appropriately the ethnic diversity and historical presence of all national and ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom. Staff of all schools shall be effectively trained to accommodate diversity in the classroom and promote intercultural respect and understanding in schools.