



Strasbourg, 20 September 2001

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European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER IN LIECHTENSTEIN

Report of the Committee of Experts on the Charter

adopted on 9 February 2001 and

presented to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

in conformity with Article 16 of the Charter

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages provides for a control mechanism to evaluate how the Charter is applied in a State Party with a view to, where necessary, making Recommendations for improvements in its legislation, policy and practices. The central element of this procedure is the Committee of Experts, established in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter. Its principal purpose is to report to the Committee of Ministers on its evaluation of compliance by a Party with its undertakings, to examine the real situation of the regional or minority languages in the State and, where appropriate, to encourage the Party to gradually reach a higher level of commitment.

To facilitate this task, the Committee of Ministers adopted, in accordance with Article 15.1, an outline for the initial periodical report that a Party is required to submit to the Secretary General. The report should be made public by the State. This outline requires the State to give an account of the concrete application of the Charter, the general policy for the languages protected under its Part II and in more precise terms all measures that have been taken in application of the provisions chosen for each language protected under Part III of the Charter. The Committee's first task is therefore to examine the information contained in the initial periodical report for all the relevant regional or minority languages on the territory of the State concerned.

The Committee's role is to evaluate the existing legal acts, regulations and real practice applied in each State for its regional or minority languages. It has established its working methods accordingly. The Committee gathers information from the respective authorities and from independent sources within the State, so as to attempt to obtain a just and fair overview of the real language situation. After a preliminary examination of an initial periodical report, the Committee submits, if necessary, a number of questions to each Party to procure supplementary information from the authorities on matters it considers insufficiently developed in the report itself. This written procedure is usually followed up by an "on-the-spot visit" of a delegation of the Committee to the respective State. During this visit the delegation meets bodies and associations whose work is closely related to the use of the relevant languages, and consults the authorities on matters that have been brought to its attention. This information-gathering process is designed to enable the Committee to better evaluate the application of the Charter in the State concerned.

Having concluded this process, the Committee of Experts adopts its own report. This report is submitted to the Committee of Ministers together with suggestions for recommendations that the latter could decide to address to one or more Parties as may be required.

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Chapter 1 Background information

1. The Principality of Liechtenstein signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter referred to as the Charter) on 5 November 1992 and deposited its instrument of ratification on 18 November 1997. The instrument of ratification is attached as Appendix I of this report. The Charter entered into force for Liechtenstein on 1 March 1998. The authorities of Liechtenstein published the text of the Charter in the national law gazette, Landesgesetzblatt.

2. In accordance with Article 15.1 of the Charter, Liechtenstein presented its initial periodical report to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 1 March 1999. The report was adopted by the Parliament of Liechtenstein and the Private Office of the Government as a public document.

3. This report was adopted by the Committee of Experts on 7 February 2001.

1.1 The work of the Committee of Experts

4. The Committee of Experts took note of the initial periodical report of Liechtenstein, which reflects the Principality's particular situation of having no regional or minority languages within the meaning of the Charter.

5. However, with a view of maintaining the consistent evaluation of the Committee for all the Parties, the Committee enquired how the authorities had published the text of the Charter and whether the initial periodical report itself had also been made public. These two requirements are considered by the Committee as fundamental, even if no regional or minority languages exist in a State Party. The Committee has satisfied itself that there are no regional or minority languages traditionally used in Liechtenstein.

1.2 Particular issues arising in the evaluation of the application of the Charter in Liechtenstein

6. German is the official language in Liechtenstein as stipulated in Article 6 of the Constitution of 1921. At the time of ratification of the Charter by Liechtenstein it was declared that no regional or minority languages in the sense of the Charter exist on the territory of the State. Liechtenstein ratified the Charter in order to underline the importance it attaches to the Charter as an instrument for the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage and to contribute to the entry into force of the Charter. In this way, Liechtenstein has emphasised the need to preserve and cultivate the cultural diversity of Europe.

7. As the Charter is not applicable to any regional or minority languages in Liechtenstein, the Committee has not considered it necessary to perform its normal information gathering procedures to the same extent as it has done in relation to other Parties.

Chapter 2 Findings of the Committee

The Committee compliments Liechtenstein on the commitment and European solidarity it has demonstrated by ratifying the Charter.

The Committee has concluded that, in the light of the particular situation whereby in Liechtenstein no regional or minority languages are spoken on its territory, it will not propose to the Committee of Ministers to forward any recommendations to the Principality of Liechtenstein.

The Committee would be glad if the Committee of Ministers would express to the Government of Liechtenstein its appreciation of the valuable contribution it has made to the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in Europe by its ratification and active contribution to the promotion of the Charter.

The government of Liechtenstein was invited to comment on the content of this report in accordance with Article 16.3 of the Charter. No comments were sent to the Council of Europe Secretariat.

The Committee of Experts did not submit any proposals to the Committee of Ministers for recommendations to be addressed to Liechtenstein.

The Committee of Ministers examined the present report on 5 September 2001.

APPENDIX I

INSTRUMENT OF RATIFICATION



Liechtenstein :

**Declaration contained in the instrument of ratification deposited on 18 November 1997
- Or. Fr.**

The Principality of Liechtenstein declares in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 2, and in accordance with Article 3, paragraph 1, of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of 5 November 1992, that there are no regional or minority languages in the sense of the Charter in the territory of the Principality of Liechtenstein at the time of ratification.

Period covered: 01/03/98 -

The preceding statement concerns Article(s): 2, 3
