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EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

Information Document
on the implementation of the
Recommendations for Immediate Action
based on the 5th monitoring cycle

Submitted by Austria

Information of the Republic of Austria on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

I. Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)3 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Austria

1. Take further steps towards a structured policy for the protection and promotion of all minority languages, especially in Vienna and Styria.

The Republic of Austria is fully committed to the protection of the languages of the six autochthonous national minorities and the obligations arising under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Consequently, the government program 2020-2024 has dedicated an extensive chapter to the preservation of the national minority groups and their languages, from which numerous points were implemented in cooperation with the representatives of the national minority groups in the last years. At this point, reference is also made to the measures, which were outlined in the previous state reports and Austria's comments to the fifth Evaluation Report on Austria by the Committee of Experts from March 2023.

On a federal level the Federal Chancellery's funding attributed to the national minority groups, which was doubled up to almost € 8 million in 2021, continues to provide financial support for a diverse range of projects, which promote language preservation, also in Vienna and Styria. In Vienna, for example, the Komenský school, which is the biggest recipient of the Federal Chancellery's national minority funding, covers the demand for teaching in Czech and Slovak. Furthermore, the Komenský school also provides elementary education in Hungarian. The Komenský School teachers' salaries are funded by the Province of Vienna for elementary school and by the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF) for secondary school.

Another approach to further strengthen and promote minority languages, especially in the provinces, is the 15a agreement on elementary education pursuant to the Austrian Federal Constitution. This agreement explicitly anchors the national minorities and their languages and ensures that measures to promote the languages of the recognised national minorities are eligible for funding. This applies to elementary educational institutions that offer a national minority group language.

In Vienna, the first-language tuition (Erstsprachenunterricht), which is also open to the members of the national minorities, continues to offer teaching of Croatian, Romani, Slovak, Slovenian, Czech and Hungarian as an optional exercise in primary and secondary schools. The aim is to strengthen the pupils' language skills in their first, second or family language. Through the lessons the respective language is consolidated and educational language skills are increasingly developed. Reading and writing skills are also taught. The first language tuitions thus contribute to the development of a multilingual identity.

In Styria, a cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of Education and the Education Directorate for Styria has been organizing networking meetings for Styrian and Slovenian schools of all school types since 2016. The focus is on cooperation opportunities, current educational topics and mother tongues. The initiative's vision is described as follows:

"We believe that connections among Styrian schools in Slovenia and Austria can build bridges between us through exchange of knowledge about our culture, language, school system, curriculum, teaching and learning methods. Our common goal is to improve classroom practice and to promote Styrian-Slovenian cooperation in good neighbourly relations."

Since spring 2022, several institutions, including the "Artikel VII Kulturverein Pavelhaus", the Education Directorate for Styria and the University of Maribor have been working on the further professionalization and visibility of the Styrian-Slovene education cooperation.

2. Take measures to ensure that a sufficient number of trained teachers for minority language education is available, in particular for pre-school education.

Continuous efforts are being made to increase the number of trained teachers for minority language education. Information about the opportunity to train as a teacher in the languages of national minorities is also available during regular student counselling sessions and public relations work at universities and universities of teacher education. It is also integrated into the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) career information system.

In September 2023 at a meeting of the Carinthian Dialogue Forum for the mixed-language region,¹ a resolution addressing the establishment of a working group consisting of representatives of the Federal Government, the provinces and the autochthonous national minorities was passed unanimously. Its aim is inter alia to develop the legal and content-related basis for high-quality bilingual and multilingual education in the languages of the national minorities (from day-care centers to universities) and to consider the urgently needed measures in the field of education, supervision and language skills in line with the international and national provisions and obligations. In March 2024, a further meeting of the Dialogue Forum was held in the presence of the Federal Minister of Education, Science and Research, at which it was decided to set up the aforementioned working group. It is expected to be able to report on the results of the working group in the next state report.

The University College of Teacher Education Burgenland offers the possibility of teacher education for bilingual teaching in the national minority languages Burgenland-Croatian and Hungarian. As part of the Bachelor's degree for teaching at the primary level, it is possible to choose the focus area “multilingualism and intercultural education” and to focus on bilingual teaching in Burgenland-Croatian and Hungarian. Teachers who are already in active service can attend classes to attain the additional qualification for bilingual teaching in Burgenland-Croatian and Hungarian as well. The teaching program for middle schools can be studied for Burgenland Croatian and Croatian. Additionally, numerous beginner and intermediate language classes in the Burgenland minority languages are offered in order to provide students with the possibility to gain and expand language competencies in the national minority languages. These measures all aim towards the goal of raising the language competencies of teachers in the minority languages in order to educate a sufficient amount of teaching staff in the minority languages.

Numerous projects are launched in Styria to raise awareness of and interest in the national minority languages. These projects often also aim for tight cooperation with Slovenian schools and, for example, provide interested Austrian teachers with job shadowing opportunities in Slovenian schools.

¹ The Dialogue Forum is composed of all members of the Carinthian Provincial Government, the representatives of all parties represented in the Carinthian provincial parliament, six mayors from the mixed-language districts and the representatives of the Slovene national minority, i.e. one representative of the 'Einheitsliste' and one representative each from the representative organizations NSKS, SKS and ZSO.

3. Promote awareness throughout the country of the minority languages and cultures as an integral part of the cultural heritage of Austria in mainstream education and in the media.

Austria is strongly committed to supporting the preservation of its national minorities and their languages, also through informing the majority population. Examples are the day of the national minorities in the Austrian Parliament, the Parliament's Dialog Platform and the exhibition about and presentation of the national minorities in the House of Austrian History (HdGÖ). For the main exhibition of the HdGÖ "Neue Zeiten: Austria since 1918", the museum established mediation work as an important part of the information resource for visitors. Information from these mediators is available at the "Welcome Desk" for personal exchange. In addition, three themed routes of the main exhibition have been set up, which can be followed via audio guides. The audio guides are also available on the web platform. A project supported by the Federal Chancellery of Austria and the Chairmen's Conference of the National Minorities with the HdGÖ in 2022 made it possible for the themed trails and these audio guides to be translated into the languages of the six national minorities. Visitors can now use the audio guides in Burgenland-Croatian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian as well as Romani.

The government program 2020-2024 contains the commitment to increased visibility of the national minorities within the public broadcasting medium ORF. This was enforced e.g. by the launch of the magazine "WIR | Češi, Hrvati, Magyarok, Roma, Slováci, Slovenci", which has been broadcast nationwide on channel ORF III fortnightly in the languages of all national minorities with German subtitles since September 2022. This nationwide broadcast ensures that the national minorities are brought more prominently into the focus of society.

The increased funding for national minorities by the Federal Chancellery, adopted in 2021, further led to the creation of a separate funding approach to support media of the national minorities. This allowed for the funding of one "lead medium" per minority group, selected by the respective National Minorities Advisory Council. This secures the media supply of the national minorities and helps to increase the visibility of their languages. Funding is not limited to print media, but can also be applied for other periodical (online) media. By the end of the year 2022 all national minorities have a designated lead medium as displayed in the following table:

National Minority	Lead medium	Print	Digital
Bgld Croats	<i>Hrvatske Novine</i>	weekly	Onlineportal ²
Czechs	<i>Videňské svobodné listy</i>	fortnightly	Onlineversion ³
Hungarians	<i>Rólunk. Ausztria Magyar Oldalai</i>		OnlineMedium ⁴
Roma	<i>Radio Mora</i>		Onlineradio ⁵
Slovaks	<i>Pohlady</i>	quarterly	Onlineversion ⁶
Slovenes	<i>Novice</i>	weekly	Onlineportal ⁷

In the field of education, a successful travelling exhibition titled "The Austrian Minority School System – Linguistic Diversity with a History" was designed to encourage members of the national minority groups, but also the majority society, to reflect on their own roots and identities and to highlight the opportunities that arise from the ability to communicate in several languages. This exhibition was developed in addition to regional language portfolios and competence descriptions for the languages of the national minority groups.⁸

Furthermore, the European educational website www.romasintigenocide.eu is available in 12 languages (including two Romani dialects). The website provides information about the genocide of the Roma and Sinti during the Second World War and current cultures of remembrance. In this way, the website contributes to awareness raising regarding minority languages and cultures. The website is funded by the BMBWF and managed by ERINNERN:AT, the Holocaust Education program of the BMBWF, implemented by the Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation (OeAD). In addition, ERINNERN:AT offers further training on the topic and has set its annual focus of 2024 on the topic of the genocide of Roma and Sinti.⁹

The new middle school curricula introduced for the school year 2023/24 explicitly mention the national minority groups and their commitment to education about their culture and

² <https://hrvatskenovine.at/> (2024/08/22)

³ <https://viden-vsl.at/> (2024/08/22)

⁴ <https://rolunk.at/> (2024/08/22)

⁵ <https://www.radio-mora.at> (2024/08/22)

⁶ <https://www.slovaci.at/pohlady.html> (2024/08/22)

⁷ <https://www.novice.at/> (2024/08/22)

⁸ <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulpraxis/ba/sprabi/minderheitenschulwesen.html> (2024/08/22)

⁹ <https://www.erinnern.at/themen/jahresthema-2024-genozid-an-den-roma-sinti> (2024/08/22)

role as part of Austrian history and culture, as well as the teaching of their languages. As part of this implementation, these curricula were also translated into Slovenian.

The Federal Chancellery further supports numerous intercultural projects through its Intercultural funding approach to increase knowledge about the history and culture of the national minorities among the majority population and to break down prejudice.

In Vienna, the promotion of cultural awareness and linguistic diversity among minority communities is of paramount importance to the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna (MA 7). The financial support provided by the Department for Cultural Initiatives aims at fostering projects within minority communities – including those of the national minorities - and represents commendable steps towards promoting inclusivity and preserving cultural heritage.

In the province of Burgenland a wide variety of media offers for and of the national minorities exist: newspapers, (online-) magazines, publications and radio as well as TV programs form an integral part of the public broadcasting company's ORF Burgenland program. These offers contribute to creating awareness of the national minorities' languages and culture and educate the majority population about the national minorities as well as create possibilities for intercultural exchange. In Burgenland, as well as in Carinthia, the Minority School Acts secure adequate education in the national minority languages for Croats, Slovenes and Hungarians. Additionally, in Burgenland there are also offers for Romani speakers. Detailed information can be found in the previous state reports.

4. Take practical measures for the use of the Burgenland-Croatian, Hungarian and Slovenian languages before the relevant judicial and administrative authorities.

The Federal Ministry of Justice promotes the use of the Slovenian language before the courts and encourages legal professionals to develop and nurture their legal language skills. It therefore supports a project of legal professionals producing a new edition of the legal dictionary German–Slovenian from 1996, “Wörterbuch der Rechts- und Wirtschaftssprache” by Paul Apovnik and Ludwig Karničar or an equivalent online dictionary database. The project is still in an early stage but will be consequently supported.

To ensure bilingual jurisdiction in Carinthia in the long term, all job advertisements for the Carinthian courts include an additional requirement for the knowledge of Slovenian as particularly desirable. The same applies to Burgenland, where knowledge of the languages of the national minorities is an advantage for employment within the Burgenland administration and is increasingly becoming part of job descriptions.

Furthermore, over 80 bilingual online forms, which can be accessed through district administrative authorities' websites and via the central website "amtsweg.gv.at" are available in Carinthia. The Carinthian Academy of Administration also offers a workshop on using the official language, Slovenian. The National Minority Office of Carinthia continuously translates official forms into Slovenian and publishes them on their homepage together with a glossary of administrative terminology in Slovenian. The Carinthian Chamber of Agriculture launched a service point offering counselling in the Slovenian language. It is being headed by a Slovenian-speaking person and is supported by the Carinthian National Minority Office in terms of translation works.

The BMBWF offers online forms in Czech, Hungarian, Slovak, and Slovenian and the Federal Ministry of Finance provides online forms in five of the six languages of the national minorities, including Burgenland Croatian, Hungarian, and Slovenian.

Thanks to the Federal Chancellery's digitalization initiative within the funding for national minorities, the languages of the national minorities are also increasingly present on a formal digital level. Due to this particular funding approach, numerous municipality websites were updated and developed bilingually.

II. Recommendation for immediate action pursuant to the fifth evaluation report on Austria by the Committee of Experts of the European Charta for Regional or Minority Languages (MIN-LANG(2023)2)

1. Take steps to strengthen the use of Burgenland-Croatian and Hungarian in education, including by providing a sufficient number of teachers and the necessary teaching materials.

The BMBWF (partly with the support of the Austrian Language Competence Centre in Graz) launched a number of initiatives in order to increase the quality and attractiveness of bilingual teaching. These include the renewal of the curricula in the field of minority schools (including curricula for Croatian, Slovene and Hungarian for the (bilingual) primary schools, for the lower secondary level as well as curricula for the Slovene grammar school in Klagenfurt and the bilingual federal secondary school in Oberwart) which have been in force since the school year 2023/24. They further include the translation of the nationwide school entry screening into the national minority languages Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian and the operationalization of a dialogue platform (Minority School Forum) which takes place once a year and includes stakeholders from all national minorities in Carinthia and Burgenland.

Additionally, the BMBWF supports projects aiming at raising awareness. For example, in relation to iKMPLUS¹⁰, instruments for formative competence measurement (competence checks) are being developed for the minority languages Slovene, Croatian, and Hungarian for quality assurance and the further development of language teaching in the minority school system. These instruments are to be used at the 3rd and 4th as well as 7th and 8th school levels.

As already mentioned above under section I.2. the University College of Teacher Education Burgenland (PPH Burgenland) offers students the opportunity to acquire the qualification for bilingual teaching in Burgenland-Croatian and/or Hungarian both in the area of training and further education. In the bachelor's degree program for primary school teachers, students can specialize in "Multilingualism and Intercultural Education" and can also choose

¹⁰ Individuelle Kompetenzmessung plus

the specialization “Bilingual Teaching Croatian or Hungarian” or obtain additional qualification for bilingual teaching as part of the university course “Bilingual Teaching German/Burgenland-Croatian or German/Hungarian”. Secondary school teachers can study the teacher-training course for Burgenland-Croatian, taking into account both language varieties - Burgenland-Croatian and Croatian.

In addition, various beginner and advanced language courses are offered in the Burgenland languages of the national minority groups. The students—as on-going teachers—have the opportunity to build up their language skills in Burgenland Croatian or Hungarian or to expand their existing language skills (e.g., intensive language courses in Burgenland Croatian/Hungarian and summer language courses in Burgenland Croatian).

Additionally, the PPH Burgenland launches numerous campaigns to raise awareness, sensitize and institutionalize an open understanding of multilingualism and increase the visibility of the national minority languages. The signage of the PPH is for example entirely multilingual in five languages, including Burgenland-Croatian and Hungarian. Information material is provided in these languages and special attention is also paid to multilingual events.

2. Take measures to strengthen the use of Burgenland-Croatian/Slovenian in administration in practice, including the publication of documents, in particular at local level.

Please refer to the information provided above under section I.4.

3. Promote awareness throughout the country of the Burgenland-Croatian/Czech/Hungarian/Slovenian/Slovak language and Romani and culture as an integral part of the cultural heritage of Austria, in mainstream education and in the media.

Please refer to the information provided above under section I.3.

4. Ensure sustainable and sufficient funding for the Komenský School.

The Komenský School is a private school with a public charter. The BMBWF not only finances the Komenský schools' salary costs for teaching staff, which amounts to around € 3.2 million per year, but also specific projects, e.g. € 1 million for building work, € 120,000 for the construction of a gymnasium, and € 5,000 for digitalization. Furthermore, a large part of the Federal Chancellery's national minority funding earmarked for the Czech and Slovak national minority goes towards maintaining the school. This way, additional specific projects can be conducted, e.g., reconstruction or daycare projects in the national minorities' languages.

A continuous constructive dialog between the Federal Chancellery and the BMBWF with the representatives of the school association ensures both the continued existence of the school and the high quality of its education.

5. Increase the frequency and duration of Hungarian language television programmes and ensure sufficient financial support to the main newspaper published in Hungarian.

The public broadcasting service ORF provides radio and television programs, terrestrial and via satellite, as well as on the Internet and in teletext including a wide range of services for all six national minority groups. In accordance with its special mandate pursuant to § 5 of the ORF Act, it has continuously expanded and optimized the range of programs for national minorities in radio and television over the last few years.

The presence of the languages of the Austrian national minorities is already relatively high, with about 100 broadcasting hours per year on TV and about 4,000 hours on radio, not including repeat broadcasts.¹¹

For example, the magazine "WIR | Češi, Hrvati, Magyarok, Roma, Slováci, Slovenci", which has been broadcast nationwide on ORF III fortnightly in the languages of all national minority groups with German subtitles since September 2022, is an example of the continuous expansion of presence during the reporting period.

¹¹ For further details see the ORF Annual Report 2022, https://zukunft.orf.at/rte/upload/2023/veroeffentlichungen/jb_2022_final.pdf.

Since 2021, the Federal Chancellery's funding scheme for national minorities includes a separate funding approach for one lead medium per national minority group. The Hungarian lead medium "Rólunk. Ausztria – Magyar Oldalai" of the Burgenländisch Ungarischen Kulturverein was designated by the national minority advisory council of the Hungarian national minority. As a lead medium it receives a total amount of € 195,000 for the years 2024/2025. This also includes financial support for the social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube as well as project-related personnel and fee costs. The two-year funding period enables the funding recipient to better plan the use of financial resources. Via the national minorities' funding approach also additional media projects can be funded on a regular basis in order to further increase the usability and visibility of the Hungarian language in media.

6. Strengthen the teaching of Romani at all levels of education.

In Austria exists a great variety of numerous different spoken dialects of the Romani language. Promoting language courses and language teaching for the Romani language at all levels is, therefore, an ambitious undertaking, and its use as a language of instruction from elementary to tertiary education is almost impossible to implement effectively.

Nevertheless, Austria is making significant efforts to provide appropriate teaching for Romani speakers. In Burgenland, for example, it is possible to attend Romani lessons at the elementary school in Oberwart in the form of a free lesson (freie Übung), which is taught with the help of the online platform Skooly that offers digital learning materials to help teach the language in a playful way. This platform contains videos and learning tasks at different levels and allows all primary school pupils in Burgenland to learn Romani.

While Austria is willing to offer further courses, also at higher educational level, so far the number of registrations to existing courses has been too low. Therefore, Austria is increasing efforts to raise awareness for the importance of the language among its speakers. For example, the National Roma Contact Point at the Federal Chancellery organized the 31st Roma Dialogue Platform in January 2024 on the topic of "The Romani language – Language and Identity" and used the example of Burgenland Romani to shed light on how important language can be for the identity of speakers beyond its everyday functions.

Furthermore, the BAfEP Oberwart and PPH Burgenland impart knowledge of and about the Romani language to their students as part of their training in order to recognize all of a

child's linguistic abilities in order to integrate Romani, at least indirectly, into the educational process. This approach ensures that this knowledge is applied and passed on and, therefore, increases the acceptance and appreciation of Romani as an official language of Burgenland. This approach is also chosen in the hope of spreading more awareness of the importance of the language and increasing the registration numbers for Romani language teaching offers in the future.

Additionally, Austria funds and supports regular language learning courses and offers for Romani through several federal funding possibilities. These offers are often provided and carried out by Roma associations and take place either as independent courses or in the form of afternoon and learning support.

In Vienna for example, Romani lessons are offered by the Language Support Center of the Vienna Education Directorate. Registration for these courses is possible via a registration form in Romani. In this context, the work and reading book for first language lessons in Romani in the Gurbet dialect for elementary education "Me sem khate! – I am here!" was recently published. This textbook joins the existing range of teaching materials in a total of six Romani dialects: in Arli, Kalderaš, Lovara and Servika Romani for primary and secondary levels in A1 and partly A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Teaching; and in Lovara Romani additionally for the tertiary education sector.

These materials were developed as part of the Council of Europe's QualiRom project. Following on from the [romani] project, the University of Graz, has been offering language courses in Romani since the 2022/23 academic year.

In Burgenland, another approach in order to strengthen Romani teaching, among other things, was the founding of "Forum4Burgenland" for the Burgenland languages of the national minorities. It was launched at the Private University College of Teacher Education Burgenland (PPH). This forum is the result of a joint initiative by the PPH Burgenland, the Directorate of Education and the Burgenland national minority groups of Hungarians, Roma and Burgenland Croats and aims at intensifying and institutionalizing existing cooperation in the future (for more information see under section II.1).