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4.2 Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI)

b. Study on certain aspects of regional or minority language protection and identification of good practices in member States

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Introduction

The Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) is mandated to steer the Council of Europe's intergovernmental work to promote equality for all and build more inclusive societies that offer effective protection from discrimination and hate, ensure equal participation in political and public life for all without discrimination on any ground, and where diversity is respected. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has tasked CDADI to draft a study "on recurrent problematic areas in the field of regional or minority language protection and identification of good practices in member States." This study provides an opportunity for governments of member States to explore the gaps in this field and, by building on the good practices identified, to better support regional or minority language protection.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ("the Charter"), which is the only legal instrument worldwide for the promotion of the public use of these languages, has been ratified by 25 states¹ and signed by a further eight states;² five states are under pending post-accession commitments to ratify it.³

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ("the Framework Convention") contains linguistic rights for persons belonging to national minorities. It has been ratified by 39 states⁴ and applies also in Kosovo*.⁵

In most member States, not only those which have ratified the aforementioned treaties, minority languages have been traditionally used and are being promoted either in the framework of the Charter and/or the Framework Convention, or as part of national policies, legislation and practice.

This study addresses two key areas in this field: the use and protection of minority languages in new and social media and in education; and the implementation of the Charter, updating existing Charter ratifications and achieving new ratifications.

Methodology

CDADI appointed a working group to support the drafting of this study. The working group adopted a call for responses⁶ addressed to the member States, participants and observers of CDADI. This call for responses sought to take stock of the situation, determine trends, and identify good practices concerning the protection of regional and minority languages. Overall, 26 member States⁷ and one observer⁸ contributed a response, and some member States provided further information to support the drafting of this study.⁹

Regarding the call for responses, of those received from member States, three (12%) noted that there were no regional or minority languages in the state; one (4%) noted that they had nothing further to add to the monitoring cycles of the Charter and the Framework Convention; one noted that they had been unable to complete the call for responses; one (4%) did not respond to the questions; and three (12%) did not respond to the questions regarding new, social and digital media.

Of the 25 states that have signed and ratified the Charter, responses were received from 19 (76%); of the eight states who have signed but not ratified the Charter, four (50%) responses were received.

Of the 38 states¹⁰ that have signed and ratified the Framework Convention, 26 (68%) responses were received.

¹ Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom. It also applies in the Isle of Man.

² Azerbaijan, France, Iceland, Italy, Malta, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, and Portugal.

³ Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and North Macedonia.

⁴ Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

⁵ All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

⁶ The Call for responses appears at Appendix I of this Study.

⁷ As at 18 July 2024, the following member states of the Council of Europe responded to the call for responses: Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom.

⁸ As at 18 July 2024, the following observer to CDADI responded to the call for responses: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI).

⁹ In a small number of cases, information from the responses to the call for responses and monitoring reports has been supplemented by clarifications received directly from governments or from their websites.

¹⁰ The Russian Federation had signed and ratified the Framework Convention and withdrew from it in 2024.

The working group also agreed to contact a number of member States to conduct short interviews on the topics of updating ratification instruments and encouraging ratifications.

The drafting of chapter I of this study was assisted by Professor Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones. The drafting of chapter II of this Study was assisted by Professor Emyr Lewis.

Chapter I: Use of minority languages in new, social and digital media

I. Background

1. The potential of new, social and digital media

The importance of media for regional or minority languages is recognised in international frameworks, charters and guidelines¹¹, academic studies, policy provision at several levels of government as well as in bottom-up calls from language speakers themselves for media in regional or minority languages.

The media have two universal functions: to create a "public sphere"¹² (or "imagined community"¹³) for the regional or minority language, where information is shared and matters of concern can be discussed, and to contribute to the culture and representation of the regional or minority language.

In addition, there are three contextual functions that are particularly significant in the case of regional or minority languages. These are (a) raising the status and visibility of regional or minority languages within the territory in which they are spoken, as well as in other parts of the state, and across international frontiers including with users who are no longer living in the area where the language is traditionally used; (b) increasing literacy, facilitating inter-comprehension across dialect forms, contributing to the creation and dissemination of neologisms and standard versions of the language; and (c) developing an economic sector that adds value to regional or minority language skills and that supports other connected activities (for example, education and training, performing arts, and community events).¹⁴

Definition of new, social and digital media

The term "new, social and digital media" is used in this report.¹⁵ Individually, the terms can be defined as follows:

- "New media" refers to digitally delivered, interactive multimedia content available on a range of platforms (websites, blogs, social media platforms, digital games).
- "Social media" refers to platforms or applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and with each other in virtual communities or networks.
- "Digital media" refers to all forms of media content that are produced, distributed and consumed in digital formats, including digital broadcasting and e-books.

In its composite form, the term "new, social and digital media" can be used to refer to forms of online, multimedia content that are created by a range of producers, distributed on different platforms and are consumed with varying levels of interaction on the part of their users.

¹¹ Article 11 of the Charter; Article 9 of the Framework Convention; OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities; Tallinn Guidelines on National Minorities and the Media in the Digital Age, February 2019; Jones, E.H.G., Lainio, J., Moring, T., Resit, F. (2019) *New technologies, new social media and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* Strasbourg: Council of Europe. (Europarat (Hg.): Neue Technologien, neue soziale Medien und die Europäische Charta der Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen, mit Beiträgen von Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones, Jarmo Lainio, Tom Moring and Fatma Resit, 2019).

¹² The concept of the 'public sphere' in the context of the media can be defined as 'the sphere of private people coming together as a public'. Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* [1962] translated into English as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. by Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence 1989: 27).

¹³ See Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities* London: Verso.

¹⁴ See Jones, E.H.G. (2007) 'The Territory of Television' in Cormack, M & Hourigan, N. *Minority Language Media: Concepts, Critiques and Case Studies* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters pp 199-211.

¹⁵ Selection of works consulted: Flew, Terry (2003) *New Media an Introduction* Oxford University Press; Jones, E. H. G., Lainio, J. (Ed.), Moring, T., & Resit, F. (2019). *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages—New technologies, new social media and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Report for the Committee of Experts*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe; Leah Lievrouw and Brian Loader (eds) (2020) *Routledge Handbook of Digital Media and Communication*; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/cdmsi-and-expert-committees>.

New, social and digital media can contribute to the universal and contextual functions, increasing the use of regional or minority languages in the media. They also have the *potential*, given the correct conditions, to extend and enhance these functions and to bring additional benefits to regional or minority languages, due to their accessibility and participatory connectivity.

Increasing the capacity to produce and disseminate media content

New, social and digital media have lowered the financial, technical and regulatory barriers to entry. This has led to the emergence of *three* sectors or constituencies¹⁶ that now regularly produce and disseminate new media content: an enhanced media sector, not only traditional or legacy media (broadcasters, newspapers, magazines, etc.) but also new media entities, digital native content producers, etc.; second, individuals (previously, user-generated content); and third non-media sector entities whose primary mission is in another sector (e.g. health, hospitality, education, local administration, sports, etc.). Searchability and discoverability of content is contingent upon algorithms, and the regional or minority language content may not always be visible to its potential users. However, the capacity to produce media in regional or minority languages by the two new sectors can only be fulfilled if the correct conditions exist: individual speakers of regional or minority languages are often bilingual or multilingual and have the skills to communicate using a state, or global language; and non-media sectors may not be required to use or may not be permitted to use the regional or minority languages in their social media output and engagement.

Increasing the potential of productive use of regional or minority languages

The participatory¹⁷ environments of new, social and digital media *can* create the conditions to increase the productive use of regional or minority languages (i.e. speaking and writing), especially in informal registers, as well as the receptive use (i.e. listening and reading) through interaction between regional or minority language users across different platforms. The simple one-to-many model of mass media communication is now complemented by one-to-one, many-to-one and many-to-many models.¹⁸ Wikibased platforms (Wikipedia, etc.) as well as other social media platforms rely on "collective intelligence"¹⁹ and "participatory culture"²⁰ in order to produce content. These cultural phenomena have been present in many regional or minority languages before the advent of new, social and digital media in order to sustain volunteer and grassroots engagement as well as connected community activity.

There are, of course, risks that the correct conditions – such as accessible digital connectivity, digital literacy and digital linguistic infrastructure – are not always present in all territories and among all demographic sectors.

Increasing the potential of use of regional or minority languages among younger generations

The popularity of new, social and digital media among young people²¹ (see, for a more detailed analysis, section III.7 in this chapter) can increase the potential for this demographic to use regional or minority languages in online communication, which can in turn lead to higher levels of youth engagement with regional or minority languages and with regional or minority language culture (and reference points). It can also lead to the creation of regional or minority language youth culture and identity formation, leading to regional or minority languages becoming more relevant to younger generations, who might be at risk of losing connection to them. Youth engagement with regional or minority languages beyond the education system²² is extremely important to sustain and strengthen regional or minority languages.

¹⁶ See Jones, E.H.G. (2025/forthcoming) 'Actuality, Hospitality and Health: the significance of the three-sector media model for minoritized language communication' MIDAS blog <https://www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/midas/significance-of-the-three-sector-media-model-for-minoritized-language-communication>.

¹⁷ See for example Jenkins, H. (2008) *Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

¹⁸ See for example Flew, Terry (2009) Democracy, participation and convergent media: case studies in contemporary online news journalism in Australia. *Communication, Politics & Culture*, 42(2), pp. 87-109.

¹⁹ Jenkins, H. (2008) *Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

²⁰ Jenkins, H. (2008) *Convergence Culture: where old and new media collide*. New York: New York University Press.

²¹ For the terminology "young people", see for example, Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people's access to rights, as well as more generally, the website for the Council of Europe's Youth policy where it is stated that the Council of Europe youth sector "works to empower young people across Europe to embrace, promote, and benefit from the core values of human rights."

²² See for example Ó Riagáin, P., Vila i Moreno, F. X., & Williams, G. (2008) *Young People and Minority Languages: Language use outside the classroom*. Dublin: Centre for Language, and Communication Studies Trinity College; Special Commission of The Basque Language Advisory Board To Promote Basque In The Digital Environment (2020) *The Digital Environment of the Basque Language: Recommendations 2021-2024*. Gasteiz: Eusko Jaurlaritza.

Increasing the diversity of the media content available in regional or minority languages

Social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, etc.) can increase the diversity of media content available in regional or minority languages. The low barrier to entry, and new categories of players, mean that niche content can be produced and communities of interest or identity can be served in the regional or minority language. Greater diversity of content available in the regional or minority language allows for individuals belonging to communities of interest or identities to connect with the regional or minority language. This is more difficult to achieve in a linear broadcasting environment, with a limited number of channels and resources.

Increasing access to media in regional or minority languages beyond the territory and traditional speaker groups

Social media platforms can facilitate access and contribution to media content in regional or minority languages (subject to regulatory compliance) by speakers and learners located outside the traditional territory as well as by heritage speakers and learners in other regions or countries. This adds to the size and skillset of the regional or minority language, and its capacity to produce social media content. Additionally social media platforms and applications can be used to facilitate cross-border access to media content.²³

Increasing regional or minority language learning through the media

The expansion of digital and social media content has enabled the production and dissemination of new Language Learning Tools, including global apps (e.g. Duolingo), regional or minority language-produced apps and other digital platforms. These can support adult regional or minority language learning as well as supporting learners in statutory and non-statutory education, and can complement other language learning resources.

Increasing access to archive material and cultural memory

Social media platforms, digital archives and wiki/open resources can enable regional or minority language culture and traditions to be documented, safeguarded for future generations, accessed by citizens and contributed to by them, and repurposed for new cultural products.

Enhancing the Digital Linguistic Infrastructure²⁴

Digital linguistic resources and infrastructure are increasingly important to ensure functionality in contemporary digital lives as well as for future language sustainability. These include automated translation, speech to text technologies, voice recognition, as well as artificial intelligence (AI) tools.²⁵ Enhanced use of digital and social media can contribute to the development of the digital linguistic infrastructure of regional or minority languages as well as provide contexts in which they can be used. These technologies carry risks – such as the proliferation of misinformation, digital exclusion, etc. – across all languages, and regional or minority languages are no exception.²⁶

²³ See for example Volger, J. (2025) <https://www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/midas/south-tyrol-and-cross-border-broadcasting-from-illegal-antennas-to-streaming-apps>.

²⁴ See for example, Report on language equality in the digital age, prepared by the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament, available at https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0228_EN.html,

²⁵ See Council of Europe (ed.): Facilitating the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages through artificial intelligence, prepared by Miriam Gerken, 2022; Europarat (Hg.): Die Umsetzung der Europäischen Charta der Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen mithilfe von künstlicher Intelligenz, verfasst von Miriam Gerken, 2022;

²⁶ For a more detailed overview of the risks that new technologies and artificial intelligence can pose for non-discrimination and equality, including in the field of regional or minority language protection, see for example, F. Zuiderveen Borgesius, *Discrimination, artificial intelligence, and algorithmic decision-making* (2018), commissioned by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the *Study on the impact of artificial intelligence systems, their potential for promoting equality, including gender equality, and the risks they may cause in relation to non-discrimination*, adopted by CDADI and the Gender Equality Commission in 2023, as well as the forthcoming work of the Committee of Experts on Artificial Intelligence, Equality and Non-discrimination of the Council of Europe on a draft Committee of Ministers recommendation on Equality and Artificial Intelligence (due by the end of 2025).

2. The contribution of new, social and digital media to language learning in regional or minority languages

There are three ways of acquiring language proficiency in a heritage regional or minority language where there is discontinuity of intergenerational language transmission: education (from kindergarten to education programmes for adults), socialisation (including work-based interaction) in territories or networks where the regional or minority language is widely used, and auto-didactic activities, including the use of social media content and language learning platforms. In general, it is considered that 200 guided hours²⁷ are required to advance from one level to the next within the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#). This is contingent on factors such as learner attitude and motivation, linguistic distance between the regional or minority language and the other language(s) spoken by the learner, and access and exposure to an enabling linguistic environment, including opportunities to use the regional or minority language in daily life.

The traditional or legacy media, especially regional or minority language audiovisual broadcasting, play an important role in bringing visibility to regional or minority languages and exposure to content in regional or minority languages beyond the speaker community. This is achieved through cultural content such as contemporary and traditional music, coverage of festivals, soaps and drama series, children's programmes, as well as through factual content such as documentary, magazine programmes, news and current affairs, and in particular sport. Adult learners and so-called "non-regional or minority language speakers" are constituent audiences for regional or minority language broadcasters, with subtitling in regional or minority languages and in other languages being provided in linear broadcasting and in online content.

In comparison to other sectors, the weight of the media lies in the exclusivity of its content, the availability of its content, and the connectivity of content. These aspects are augmented by new, social and digital media. In this respect, the media complement other language domains (such as education, contact with authorities, culture, economic and social life) to enhance exposure to language, creating auto-didactic and guided learning opportunities and encouraging positive attitudes towards the regional or minority languages. Language competence, language attitudes and language use are closely connected and increase simultaneously.

3. The co-dependency between traditional and new, social and digital media

At present, there is a co-dependency between traditional or legacy media and new, social and digital media in regional or minority languages. The following phenomena can be observed in the processes of digitalisation:

- Convergence of traditional print and traditional broadcast media in digital and social media, with broadcasters producing text-content, and print media entities producing audio and audiovisual output;
- Digital First Strategies, where digital and social media platforms take precedence over linear or print output;
- Full or complete migration of traditional media entities (such as newspapers) to digital only entities;
- Adoption of traditional outputs and formats by digital entities, e.g. printed books originating from blogs, vinyl records produced alongside digital music platforms (e.g. Spotify, SoundCloud), and youtubers becoming TV presenters.

There is an important **economic** co-dependency between traditional/legacy media and new, social and digital media, in particular where business models have been developed on principles of public service investment, advertising revenue or user subscription for a physical, printed object.

This co-dependency is also seen in the context of **talent development** where traditional media, especially audiovisual media (television broadcasting) invest in developing social media talent in regional or minority languages, through a combination of nurturing newcomers to the field and encouraging players such as influencers to use regional or minority languages in their social media content.

²⁷ <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/How-long-does-it-take-to-learn-a-foreign-language.pdf>.

The balance across the medium and long term depends on the development of the digital technology infrastructure – including access to algorithmic data – and sustainable business models. Several early theorists²⁸ of **new, social and digital media** envisaged that the internet would emancipate marginalised groups, including regional or minority language speakers or communities, as mass media would become increasingly fragmented into smaller networks of interests or segments, and the economic, technological and regulatory barriers to entry would be substantially diminished. However, some of the early optimism²⁹ did not materialise as hoped, and the inequalities of the analogue world continued in a digital environment. Although new, social and digital media have led to new opportunities for regional or minority languages, many of these barriers are still present today.

Arguments are being put forward, even by broadcasters in state language,³⁰ to democratise the access to algorithmic data currently owned and used by global conglomerates so that audiences can be brought nearer to public service broadcasters' content and nudged into participation. As digital media consumption becomes more individualised through social media, online and non-linear platforms, there are concerns that public service content becomes increasingly difficult to find. The public service model has contributed significantly to the development of the regional or minority language media environment. The vast majority of professional regional or minority language³¹ media continue to operate in this model.

4. Advantages for the authorities

Notwithstanding the risks³² associated with the use of communication technologies across all languages, the advantages for the authorities in promoting the use of regional or minority languages as well as the official language(s) of the state in new, social and digital media can be categorised as follows: it improves the digital and linguistic skills of their citizens and workforce who are regional or minority language users and learners, through the active use of regional or minority languages (using their productive and receptive language skills) in digital and social media; it creates cultural production and resources through crowdsourced activities (Wiki, etc.); it provides additional opportunities to learn the language through apps and social media platforms, connecting to broader education and learning strategies; it fulfils obligations and compliance with legal instruments; it safeguards heritage and cultural memory, through online and crowdsourced documentation and archives for future generations; it strengthens the sustainability of regional or minority languages for the future, through higher levels of youth engagement with the regional or minority languages, more diverse content and plurality of voices, raising the prestige and visibility of the regional or minority language and enhancing social cohesion; it extends strategic complementarity across different sectors – e.g. health, education, local administration – through integrated social media presence and engagement; and it further develops digital linguistic infrastructure for regional or minority languages, along with automated technology tools and AI, which can improve efficiency of services in other sectors (e.g. local administration, education, etc.).

These can be achieved through a combination of investment on the part of the authorities and other agencies, as well as the individual and collective efforts of regional or minority language users, learners and supporters.

²⁸ See for example Negroponete, N. (1995) *Being Digital* New York: Vintage Books, Crystal. D. (2001) *Language Death* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁹ See for example David Crystal (2001) *Language Death* 'But with the Internet, everyone is equal. The cost of a Web page is the same, whether the contributor is writing in English, Spanish, Welsh, or Navajo' p189.

³⁰ See for example Stephens, E. C. (2024) 'Everything must change' Prix Italia/EBU, Torino, Italy in relation to the BBC. <https://www.rai.it/prixitalia/news/2024/08/2024-Prix-Italia-BBC-Lecture-c7cf834a-52da-4baf-afb2-b2a7847f28f9.html> or <https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/speeches/prix-italia-lecture-dame-elan-closs-stephens>.

³¹ See Jones, E. H. G., Lainio, J. (Ed.), Moring, T., & Resit, F. (2019). *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages—New technologies, new social media and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Report for the Committee of Experts*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. See also

https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-charter-regional-or-minority-languages/home/-/asset_publisher/VzXuex45jmKt/content/hot-off-the-press-new-media-new-technologies-the-charter?inheritRedirect=false.

³² Some risks can be mentioned, including excessive use of screen technology during childhood and teenage years; digital divides and digital exclusion within societies due to poor digital infrastructure and access to digital skills; proliferation of misinformation and fake news, including in democratic processes; etc. See, in this respect, the work of the specialised Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDSMI).

II. Stocktaking

1. Availability of new, social and digital media to support the realisation of this potential

Some of the potential (or goals) listed in chapter I. sections 1 and 2 can be achieved using available social media platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, etc., as well as through bespoke websites and apps.

All categories of producers (media, individuals and non-media) use a combination of social media platforms to communicate with target audiences, primarily based on target age and social media platform preference. Services aimed at younger people are more likely to use TikTok than Facebook, and *vice versa* for services for older users. TikTok³³ was the most downloaded app worldwide in 2024, followed by Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Temu (Shop like a Billionaire), Telegram, CapCut (video editing), Snapchat and Threads.

It is important to note that the use of regional or minority languages on new, social and digital media are more effective when digital linguistic infrastructure and language resources can support their use, such as automated translation (on platforms such as Facebook), speech to text technology (to produce automated subtitles), spell checkers and predictive texting (to assist writing and drafting quickly).

AI powered tools and devices rely heavily on digital linguistic infrastructure. Regional or minority languages with little or no digital linguistic infrastructure risk further marginalisation and low levels of sustainability in the future.

2. Use of regional or minority languages in new, social and digital media

Several regional or minority languages are present across all new, social and digital media platforms, many of which are present as kin-state languages (e.g. German, Hungarian, Swedish, etc.) with some content in certain platforms produced by regional or minority language users. Some non-kin state languages (Welsh, Basque, Frisian, etc.) have high levels of presence across many new, social and digital media platforms. The quantity, quality and diversity of content can vary widely from regional or minority language to regional or minority language. The online vitality of regional or minority languages is connected to the overall linguistic vitality, as measured by different indices as developed by various organisations³⁴ and experts, (e.g. intergenerational language transmission, language status and prestige, the use and presence of the regional or minority language in education, administration and key economic sectors, etc.).

Some social media platforms, such as Facebook, allow the use of some regional or minority languages in their interfaces, whereas others, such as X, Instagram or TikTok have not been as open to facilitating their use as interface languages. In some cases these interfaces have been translated by regional or minority language users in crowdsourcing endeavours, such as the case for Welsh. Although YouTube is the most prevalent social media site among all ages, the interface language is only available in kin-state regional or minority languages, Catalan, Basque and Galician.

3. Use by age group

Digital connectivity and social media use varies by age group and across European countries. Overall, younger generations are far more active on social media than older generations, though in some northern European countries, up to 90% of people over 65 regularly use smartphones and digital devices. This figure may be below 30% in some southern European countries at present, yet the percentages are rising.³⁵ There is little evidence to suggest that individuals using regional or minority languages have distinct digital habits to the rest of the population in the state or region where they live, though it should be noted that some regional or minority languages are spoken in rural areas, where the density of the population is low and where digital infrastructure may be weaker than in urban settings.

³³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1285960/top-downloaded-mobile-apps-worldwide/>.

³⁴ See Jones, E.H.G. (2013) 'Minority Language Media, Convergence Culture and the Indices of Linguistic Vitality' in E.H.G. Jones and E. Uribe-Jongbloed (eds) *Social Media and Minority Languages: Convergence and the Creative Industries* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters. pp. 58-74.

³⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/edn-20210517-1>.

There are also differences in the social media platforms used in different countries/languages and across age groups, with the notable exception of YouTube, which is used by all. In the case of younger users, aged under 30/35 years old, the most prevalent platforms are YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp. For older users, aged over 30/35 years old, the most prevalent platforms are YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram. In the case of children, although social media platforms are generally restricted to people over 13 years of age, many European children start using smartphones and social media around nine years of age. It should be noted that there are initiatives to reduce the use of digital screens and social media among children and young people, including disallowing the use of smartphones in schools (as well as in the classroom) in order to improve community cohesion, reduce bullying and anti-social behaviour.

III. Practices within Council of Europe member States

Good practices of member States in promoting the use of regional or minority languages can be seen across new, social and digital media in many different regional or minority languages. Many such practices could be identified through the answers to the CDADI call for responses.

Some of examples of good practice in the use of regional or minority languages in new, social and digital media, as reported in the CDADI call for responses, monitoring reports and academic research, include:

Introducing special or calendar initiatives to enhance the social media presence of a regional or minority language on special days or during specific dates

This is a practice that is used by a range of regional or minority languages across different states, including *Plattdeutsch* or Low German (Germany,³⁶), Roma week (Italy,³⁷), Ulster Scots Language Week (the United Kingdom³⁸), the Basque *Euskaraldia*³⁹ (Spain and France), *Frisian*⁴⁰ (the Netherlands), etc.

Some of these are organised and funded by different levels of government, others are partnerships between governments and regional or minority language organisations, and some are initiatives of regional or minority language groups.

Research into the effect of “calendar initiatives” suggest that these create temporary surges in the use of regional or minority languages on social media among many participants and can also lead to longer lasting changes in some individuals’ use of regional or minority languages on social media.

Facilitating the creation of content on new, social and digital media aimed specifically at young people

Many public service media are required (sometimes through regulatory arrangements) to provide programmes and content aimed specifically at children. Given the high percentage of young people regularly using social media applications, there are a number of examples of good practice that focus on content creation in regional or minority languages specifically aimed at young people. There are also examples of interventions to develop social media “influencers” in regional or minority languages or encouraging such influencers to use regional or minority languages.⁴¹

These include the Welsh language *Hansh* content which is commissioned by S4C broadcaster⁴² (the United Kingdom), the Galician *#Digochoeu* produced by TVG (Spain), *Plattfluencers* and *Plattbeats* (Germany⁴³), the requirement in SRG licences in Switzerland (⁴⁴) to include the production of material for young people.

³⁶ CDADI call for responses.

³⁷ CDADI call for responses.

³⁸ CDADI call for responses.

³⁹ <https://euskaraldia.eus/es/>.

⁴⁰ Jongbloed-Faber, L. (2021). Frisian on social media: the vitality of minority languages in a multilingual online world. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. LOT. <https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20210903j>.

⁴¹ The Catalan Government supports bursaries to produce video in Catalan or Occitan for social media. <https://govern.cat/salaprensa/notes-premsa/603542/govern-impulsa-primera-vegada-ajuts-creadors-contingut-catala-nous-ajuts-publicacions-cultural>.

⁴² <https://www.s4c.cymru/en/entertainment/hansh/>.

⁴³ CDADI call for responses.

⁴⁴ CDADI call for responses.

Implementing measures to support the transition of traditional media into new, social and digital media, increasing digital and regional or minority language skills of citizens and creating new digital resources

Section I.3 in this chapter identified four specific pathways and strategies currently being undertaken in the medium term as traditional media transition to more digital models. There are examples of good practice across a range of countries including funding for digitalization (regional or minority languages in Austria), web presence and increased social media content for public radio in regional or minority languages in Armenia, Media Support Funds to incentivize content creation regional or minority languages in Lithuania, and funding for digital training. Other examples of upskilling citizens include the *Hackathon* (Estonia⁴⁵) and Media Literacy training in regional or minority languages in Croatia.

Facilitating transfrontier communication and exchange

Articles 11.2 and 14(a) of Charter refer to the "direct reception of radio and television broadcasts from neighbouring countries" and to "'foster[ing] contacts between the users of the same language in the states concerned in the fields of culture, education, information, vocational training and permanent education". There are some examples of good practice in facilitating transfrontier communication and exchange in the field of new, social and digital media, such as regional or minority languages in Romania⁴⁶, between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland⁴⁷ (Irish).

Including new, social and digital media in regional or minority languages in legislation, regulatory arrangements and development of codes of practice

New, social and digital media have not yet been incorporated into legislation in many countries, such as the Media Act 2008 (the Netherlands). More recent legislation, such as Media Act 2024 (UK) include references to new, social and digital media and recognise traditional broadcasters as online audiovisual content providers. The linear broadcasting responsibilities (or quotas) for content in regional or minority languages are also relevant for online platforms.

Enhancing language learning opportunities

Traditional media in regional or minority languages have often supported language learning through programmes and online content and websites. There are examples of good practice across many states of using social media platforms and language learning apps for regional or minority languages across several target age groups, such as PlattinO (Germany⁴⁸), Cornish (the United Kingdom).

Providing services in regional or minority languages in other sectors through new, social and digital media in regional or minority languages

There are examples of public bodies providing services (e.g. health, local administration) through new, social and digital media, including content such as short videos to promote and encourage fostering children⁴⁹, or to access specific grants in order to decarbonise houses⁵⁰, where direct links can be accessed in order to engage with the content and seek further advice or information. In some cases this is required, especially where the regional or minority language is co-official (e.g. Swedish in Finland), or it can be regulated, as is the case with public bodies under the Welsh Language Standards (the United Kingdom).

⁴⁵ CDADI call for responses.

⁴⁶ CDADI call for responses.

⁴⁷ The Belfast Agreement (1998) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/619500728fa8f5037d67b678/The_Belfast_Agreement_An_Agreement_Reached_at_the_Multi-Party_Talks_on_Northern_Ireland.pdf, p. 20.

⁴⁸ CDADI call for responses.

⁴⁹ Maethu Cymru / Foster Wales <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulkDAm2gDN0>.

⁵⁰ Digarbon Cymru / Decarbonise Wales <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwGe7VrK67o>.

Other evidence shows that a range of services are provided in regional or minority languages across different sectors through new, social and digital media. These include public transport apps and associated social media alerts in Basque and Catalan⁵¹ (Spain) and are more likely to take place in conditions where the regional or minority languages are co-official, or in border areas with kin-states.

Creating new agencies and new digital media in regional or minority languages to enhance social cohesion in multilingual unified information spaces

There are instances of new, social and digital media content being created in regional or minority languages in order to enhance social cohesion in the democratic public sphere and to contribute to multilingual, unified information spaces. This includes supporting the development of journalistic content in kin-state regional or minority languages (e.g. Russian in Estonia⁵²).

Creation of news agencies in regional or minority languages is also reported (e.g. Romansh news in Switzerland⁵³).

Making arrangements to collate statistical data to monitor the use of regional or minority languages in new and social media

Very little information is available on arrangements to collate statistical data to monitor the use of regional or minority languages in new and social media.

Some studies use the number of Wiki pages as a measure of linguistic vitality (e.g. *Baromètre des langues dans le monde*, France⁵⁴). The ELE and ELE 2 projects,⁵⁵ established following the European Parliament Resolution "[Language equality in the digital age](#)⁵⁶" (September, 2018) studied the linguistic digital infrastructure of 80 languages, providing more than 40 recommendations.

Conclusion

As noted in Section I.1 in this chapter, new, social and digital media content is produced and disseminated by three constituencies: the media sector, individuals and non-media sectors. States can encourage the use of regional or minority languages by all three constituencies using a combination of different measures, bearing in mind the independence of media and the freedom of private language use. Building on the answers to the call for responses, the measures that member States can take to encourage the use of regional or minority languages by all three constituencies can be summarised as follows:

1. Creating favourable digital linguistic environments, investing in open source or free to use digital infrastructure, to facilitate the use of regional or minority languages on new, social and digital media by the media sector, individuals and non-media sectors;
2. Upskilling the digital and regional or minority language skills of citizens to encourage the use of regional or minority languages on new, social and digital media, to enhance social cohesion and create crowdsourced resources;
3. Encouraging partnerships across sectors (media, education, local administration, health, etc.) and with individuals and organisations to promote digital and social media production and dissemination in regional or minority languages;
4. Providing investment for content creation in regional or minority languages in order to increase plurality and diversity of media landscape;
5. Connecting new, social and digital media content in regional or minority languages with educational programmes and initiatives in schools; enhancing digital and media literacy skills;
6. Working with social media entities and technology companies to facilitate and increase the use of regional or minority languages on their platforms, including interface languages and in-built language tools; access to algorithms and increase discoverability of regional or minority language content;

⁵¹ TMB app of Barcelona Metropolitan Transport
<https://www.tmb.cat/ca/barcelona/tmb-app-t-mobilitat#iss=https%3A%2F%2Fauth.tmb.cat%2Fauth%2Frealms%2Ftmb>.

⁵² CDADI call for responses.

⁵³ CDADI call for responses.

⁵⁴ <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/Thematiques/langue-francaise-et-langues-de-france/Agir-pour-les-langues/Innover-dans-le-domaine-des-langues-et-du-numerique/Soutenir-et-encourager-la-diversite-linguistique-dans-le-domaine-numerique/Barometre-des-langues-dans-le-monde-2022>.

⁵⁵ <https://european-language-equality.eu/>

⁵⁶ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2019_433_R_0008

7. Including regional or minority languages in research, monitoring and regulatory frameworks at state or regional level in order to improve data and identify problems as well as good practice.

IV. Recommendations

Policy recommendations on how member States should promote the use of regional or minority languages in new, social and digital media involve a series of strategic, interconnected approaches. These include improving data collection on the use of new, social and digital media in regional or minority languages at the appropriate levels of government. In turn, this should improve detail and robustness of data and information provided in monitoring processes of the Charter and the Framework Convention.

Regular exchange of information and good practice should take place between policy makers, institutions, practitioners and other social media entities – such as civil society organisations who use regional or minority languages – in order to encourage transfer of knowledge and achieve better understanding of current trends. This could take the form of a working group on the use of regional or minority languages in social media platforms, focusing on shared issues such as the development and analysis of interventions aimed at increasing the use or engagement of regional or minority languages on social media among specific demographic groups, identifying innovative linguistic practices in social media content, or addressing challenges around data, etc.

Mechanisms should be developed to democratise or facilitate access to algorithms and algorithmic data in order to assist the discoverability of regional or minority language content on new, social and digital media platforms by regional or minority language speakers and learners. The content in regional or minority languages should be able to find its way easily and without obstruction to its potential users, in addition to the speakers and learners of regional or minority languages proactively searching for regional or minority language content and discovering it on their own initiative. Investment, or continued investment, in public service media in regional or minority languages is necessary in order to provide continuity of content production and stability of structure and environment for regional or minority language media. This also includes support for the required digitalization transition to new, social and digital media platforms, operating with sustainable business models.

It is also necessary to support the continued development of digital linguistic infrastructure, digital language tools and Artificial Intelligence tools and applications in regional or minority languages. These are important building blocks upon which digitalised communication can be developed.

Programmes to increase digital skills of regional or minority language speakers and learners should be supported or established, so that they can contribute to content creation as well as engage in the benefits of digitalization. Specific, targeted intervention should be implemented in order to encourage and facilitate the participation of young people in new, social and digital media engagement in regional or minority languages. This demographic is highly active on such platforms and regional or minority languages must be present and part of their socialization at this stage in their lives.

New, digital and appropriate social media content for children and for schools should be considered in a diverse range of themes, supporting educational goals and identity development. Adequate provision for learning regional or minority languages using new, social and digital media platforms for all ages should also be ensured.

New, social and digital media in regional or minority languages should be included to the obligations of entities required to provide services in regional or minority languages, across a range of sectors such as health, education, public administration and other fields such as those outlined in the Charter.

Chapter II: Teaching of regional and minority languages and of history and culture reflected by these languages

It is widely recognised that the field of education is crucial for the promotion and protection of regional and minority languages. This encompasses both study of the language itself and education through the medium of the language. There are several reasons for this. For example, it is through education that those who do not speak a language can learn it (with positive benefits for regional or minority language preservation see [Thematic Commentary No. 1 on Education under the FCNM](#)), and that those who are proficient in the language can acquire knowledge and learning about the world as well as the literacy and other linguistic skills which are essential for the use of the language in contemporary society. More generally, promoting bilingual, multilingual and plurilingual skills also fosters mutual respect, and appreciation of the diversity of society as explained in Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the importance of plurilingual and intercultural education for democratic culture.

As with so much else in the field of regional or minority languages, the circumstances and needs of different languages in terms of education will be different in different states. The needs of an official language of state X which is a widely spoken regional or minority language in state Y will be radically different from those of another regional or minority language in state Y, which has no kin-state and has a small number of speakers. In some states, there is a long-established tradition of well-organised and well-resourced regional or minority language education for all or some regional or minority languages, in others regional or minority language education has been historically excluded. States should act in the light of the specific circumstances and needs of languages.⁵⁷

This Chapter explores two key aspects of the field of education in relation to regional or minority languages. First, the monitoring by member States of the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching in and of regional or minority languages⁵⁸ and secondly measures taken to ensure the teaching of history and culture which are reflected by those languages.⁵⁹

While these aspects are reflected in provisions of the Charter and Framework Convention, this chapter is not confined to considering states which have ratified those instruments or (in the case of the Charter) relevant Part III obligations. As previously mentioned, the Call for responses requesting information was sent by the CDADI Secretariat to all member States of the Council of Europe. To the extent that the responses or periodical or monitoring reports indicated that measures had been taken, it has been taken into account, even where there is no ratification (see for instance the examples of monitoring the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages in Croatia and Northern Ireland in the UK). Similarly, where recommendations are made, they are addressed as guidance for consideration by all states that are members of the Council of Europe, regardless of whether and to what extent they have ratified the Charter and the Framework Convention.

I. Member state actions to monitor the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages

1. Background

The field of regional or minority language education, is one that calls for clear policies and plans. It also calls for giving to those who are in charge of or empowered to implement those policies and plans adequate resources to do so.

⁵⁷ The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages recognises this variety of circumstances and needs in a number of ways. The provisions of Part II (which apply to all regional or minority languages within the state) apply 'according to the situation of each language' (Art 7 prefatory words) and almost all provisions of Article 8 in Part III (which relates to education) apply 'according to the situation of each of these languages' (Art 8.1 prefatory words).

⁵⁸ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Article 8 Education - (1) With regard to education, the Parties undertake, within the territory in which such languages are used, according to the situation of each of these languages, and without prejudice to the teaching of the official language(s) of the State, (i) to set up a supervisory body or bodies responsible for monitoring the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages and for drawing up periodic reports of their findings, which will be made public.

It is worth noting that while this obligation relates to teaching of regional or minority languages rather than **in and of** regional or minority languages, the latter expression is used in this study, since regional or minority languages-medium education is a highly significant context in which many regional or minority languages are taught.

⁵⁹ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Article 8 Education - (1) With regard to education, the Parties undertake, within the territory in which such languages are used, according to the situation of each of these languages, and without prejudice to the teaching of the official language(s) of the State, (g) to make arrangements to ensure the teaching of the history and the culture which is reflected by the regional or minority language.

See also Article 7.3 of the Charter and Article 6.1 of the Framework Convention, both described below.

Policies and plans for regional or minority language education, and the extent to which they are being successfully implemented, are proper matters for public scrutiny, comment and report. This is no different from any other field of governmental activity. It is part of transparent governance in a democratic society.

Setting up a supervisory body which performs such a monitoring and reporting role is an option which states may choose under the Charter.⁶⁰ This arises from the "fundamental importance of teaching and, more specifically, the school system for the preservation of regional or minority languages".⁶¹ The task can be undertaken by a new or existing body⁶² and this may be either independent or an education authority body,⁶³ provided it is supervisory in nature (and therefore sufficiently at arm's length from those implementing the policy) and publishes regular reports. Where states have established bodies for the purpose of advising the authorities on matters pertaining to regional or minority languages, such bodies can fulfil this function.⁶⁴ Chapter 3 of this study deals in detail with such advisory bodies, but it is worth noting here that this is a good way of engaging representatives of regional or minority language speakers in developing regional or minority language education. As the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ("the Committee of Experts") has explained "It is advisable to involve representatives of the users of these languages in the work of such (a) body/bodies; as they have additional insight in the relevant experience of pupils and parents."⁶⁵

The monitoring should evaluate and analyse the measures taken and the progress achieved regarding regional or minority language education, with the purpose to identify effective methods, and areas where additional efforts are needed. Reports should contain *inter alia*, information on the extent and availability of education, developments in language proficiency, teacher supply and the provision of teaching materials.⁶⁶

It should be emphasised that the responsibilities of such a body go beyond the customary role of school inspectors. Its focus is on establishing or developing regional or minority language teaching. In other words, it considers not only the quality of the educational provision and the achievement of students, but also what has been done by the authorities to establish or develop regional or minority language teaching and the extent to which this is succeeding.⁶⁷

This role can nevertheless be fulfilled as **part of** the work of school inspectors and can be a useful way of raising awareness of and support for regional or minority language education as well as drawing issues to the attention of the authorities. For example, in the UK relation to Irish in Northern Ireland, The Education Training Inspectorate produces inspection reports that include the progress and quality of Irish language education. These reports influence educational policy and are published periodically. Positive outcomes have been seen in the increased number of students taking Irish at both primary and secondary levels. The situation for regional or minority language teaching can be different for different languages, even in the same state. Some may be embarking on regional or minority language education for the first time, others making progress with existing arrangements. In line with the flexibility to implement according to the situation of each language, different mechanisms may be appropriate for different languages. So for instance in Romania, there are slightly different arrangements put in place by the relevant authorities for monitoring languages protected under Part III of the Charter.⁶⁸

Reports should be produced regularly in order to "provide the opportunity to assess minority language education over time, thereby making it possible to adjust methods and measures according to the experiences acquired through the reports."⁶⁹

⁶⁰ Article 8.1.i provides for states parties: to set up a supervisory body or bodies responsible for monitoring the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages and for drawing up periodic reports of their findings, which will be made public.

⁶¹ Charter Explanatory Report para 88.

⁶² See for example, Seventh Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Germany MIN-LANG(2022)7, para 19.

⁶³ Charter Explanatory Report para 88.

⁶⁴ Charter Explanatory Report para 88.

⁶⁵ Fifth Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Czechia MIN-LANG(2024)4, para 38

⁶⁶ Seventh Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Germany MIN-LANG(2022)7, para 19

⁶⁷ '[M]easures taken' and the extent to which this is succeeding 'progress achieved' in the words of Article 8.1.

⁶⁸ Third Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Romania MIN-LANG(2023)13, *passim*.

⁶⁹ Fifth Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Slovenia MIN-LANG(2021)11, para 23.

2. Illustrative review of current practice

Drawing together information from the responses to the CDADI call for responses, the Committee of Experts reports, state periodical reports, the following overview can be given:

In **Austria**, responsibility for monitoring and reporting on regional or minority language education lies with the relevant Bundesländer where the languages are used. In Carinthia and Burgenland, the Directorates of Education (*Bildungsdirektionen*) annually publish reports regarding the minority school system (*Jahresberichte zum Minderheitenschulwesen*). As well as presenting detailed statistics about the numbers of students within different modes of regional or minority language education, these reports also give details of projects underway aimed at promoting and developing regional or minority language education.⁷⁰

Croatia provides an example of a state which has not adopted Article 8.1.i of the Charter but which nevertheless carries out regular monitoring and reporting about regional or minority language education. It has reported that the Directorate for National Minorities within the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth deals with planning, monitoring and improving regional or minority language education. The Ministry's annual report on the implementation of the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities includes information and data about regional or minority language education.⁷¹

In relation to Swedish education in **Finland**, a number of monitoring arrangements have been in place over the years, but these lacked regular publication of reports. The National Board on Education monitors the teaching of Swedish and draws up periodical public reports.⁷² Within the Board there is a permanent department for duties related to education in Swedish. The Board has a broad remit "to be in charge of developing education falling under its mandate, promote effectiveness in education and monitor how education is organised" and has the right to obtain information from other authorities pertinent to the execution of its duties.⁷³

In **Germany**, the arrangements vary between the Länder which are responsible for regional or minority language education.

Within the Land of Lower Saxony, the Lower Saxony State Education Authority reports about regional or minority language education to a monitoring committee. This committee is responsible for monitoring all aspects of the Land's compliance with Charter obligations and is made up of one representative each from the Lower Saxony Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs (chairing member), the Lower Saxony Ministry of Science and Culture, the Lower Saxony State Chancellery, the sub-regional entities and regional associations and the Lower Saxony Heritage Association. This committee submits a written report to the Lower Saxony Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs at the end of each year and can submit proposals for further implementation. These annual reports are published.⁷⁴

In the Land of Saxony-Anhalt, the Working Group for Low German at the State Chancellery and Ministry for Culture meets at least once a year, enabling a discourse between Stakeholders with a strong focus on measures in the field of education. It is unclear however whether it monitors steps taken and progress achieved and whether it produces and publishes reports.⁷⁵

In the Land of Schleswig-Holstein, a coordination office for regional and minority languages has been established at the Institute for Quality Development at Schools to coordinate all activities in the framework of Schleswig-Holstein's action plan on language policy.⁷⁶ The goal is to ensure the flow of information and to monitor the implementation of state-wide standards. As reported by Germany in its 6th Charter periodical report, this office had the task to develop an appropriate monitoring procedure. No up-to-date information is available on this initiative.

⁷⁰ CDADI call for responses.

⁷¹ CDADI call for responses.

⁷² Fifth Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Finland CM(2018)114 MIN-LANG(2018) para 146.

⁷³ Finnish National Board of Education Act (182/1991) Sections 2.1, 4.1 and 7.

⁷⁴ CDADI call for responses, Sixth periodical report of Germany presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2018)PR1, p. 118; Seventh periodical report of Germany presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2021)PR4, Page 209.

⁷⁵ Sixth periodical report of Germany presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2018)PR1, p. 118.

⁷⁶ Sixth periodical report of Germany presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2018)PR1, p. 118.

In **Norway** the Sámi Education Council, which is part of the Sámi Parliament, monitors the education in Sámi and produces various teaching materials in Sami.⁷⁷ Embedding monitoring within an elected body such as this is a good way of securing transparent democratic scrutiny.

Norway also provides an interesting example of one-off monitoring in its eighth periodical report on the Charter.⁷⁸ The Office of the Auditor General of Norway's conducted a survey covering the period 2015-18 of Sami pupils' right to education in North, Lule and South Sami. The purpose of the study was to determine whether Sami pupils receive a good and equal programme for teaching of and in Sami, and how government instruments are geared to ensuring such an offer. The survey covers the period 2015–2018. It concluded that out a shortage of Sami teaching materials detracted from the teaching offered, and that weaknesses in the organisation and execution of distance learning resulted in inequalities in the teaching programmes offered to the pupils. Norway's report states that the Ministry of Education and Research will follow this up.

In **Romania** as explained above there are slightly different practical arrangements for monitoring education in different languages. This is carried out in relation to (1) Bulgarian by one inspector and one methodical teacher; (2) Croatian by an inspector who also covers other regional or minority languages in Caraş-Severin; (3) Czech by two inspectors in Caraş-Severin and Mehedinţi counties; (4) Hungarian by two inspectors.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the Romanian government reports that "the school inspectorates include in their annual reports on the state of education in the respective county and in Bucharest, information or even a standalone section on the state of the education provided for the persons belonging to national minorities or relevant information thereof. The reports are public and available on the school inspectorates' websites."⁸⁰ These reports inform the annual national report on the state of the pre-university education in Romania prepared by the Ministry of Education. This report is published on the ministry's website and includes a section dedicated to the education provided to persons belonging to national minorities.⁸¹ Romania provides the following examples of positive outcomes resulting from the monitoring process: "the approval of functioning of classes/study groups for the education in the mother tongue of a national minority when the number of pupils is lower than the minimum number (threshold) provided by law, the extension of education in the language of persons belonging to national minorities to further educational levels or types of education in accordance with the demands expressed by the national minorities and the provision of mother tongue teaching for additional national minority languages."⁸²

In **the Slovak Republic**, monitoring of regional or minority language education is undertaken by the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities, which is a permanent advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic in the area of implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The members of the Council are representatives of all 15 national minorities in the Slovak Republic and representatives of the State administration. The Council is headed by the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, and the Deputy Chair is the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for National Minorities.⁸³

In **Spain** different arrangements exist within different autonomous communities where regional or minority languages are used.

In the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, a purposeful, structured approach has been taken to teaching in and of the Basque language at all stages of education.⁸⁴ Basque education is, in effect, mainstreamed within the policy of the autonomous community in a way which means that its development and progress achieved are embedded as matters of continuous public and official concern, with monitoring and reporting being a "given". That this is so can be seen from the depth of detail contained in the Charter Periodical reports from Spain, including longitudinal data showing development and trends across time.

⁷⁷ First Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Norway ECRML(2001)6, para 66.

⁷⁸ Eighth periodical report of Norway presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2020)PR3, p. 19.

⁷⁹ Third Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Romania MIN-LANG(2023)13, pages 43, 48 and 50 respectively.

⁸⁰ These words appear both in comments by the Romanian government in the Third Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Romania MIN-LANG (2023)13, and in the CDADI call for responses.

⁸¹ CDADI call for responses.

⁸² CDADI call for responses.

⁸³ In addition, there is a Council of the Minister of Education of the Slovak Republic for National Education. The Council is an advisory body of the Minister of Education for the field of education and training of members of national minorities. The role of the Minister's Council is to monitor the state of education of members of national minorities. The members of the Council, in addition to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, are representatives of the Hungarian, German, Romani, Ruthenian and Ukrainian national minorities.

⁸⁴ See ECRML Periodical Reports from Spain and Evaluation Reports of the Committee of Experts on Spain *passim*

Progress achieved is measured through the Basque Institute for Evaluation and Research, which carries out annual or biannual diagnostic evaluations to measure the degree of acquisition of Basque communication skills by all pupils in the fourth year of Primary Education and second year of Compulsory Secondary Education. Each school implemented an improvement plan based on the results obtained by students in the various skills measured. End-of-stage sample evaluations are also carried out in the sixth year of Primary Education and fourth year of Compulsory Secondary Education and include Basque language skills.⁸⁵

In Catalonia, in respect of Catalan, in its 6th Charter Periodical Report⁸⁶ Spain reported "There are several public and private bodies in Catalonia that monitor teaching in Catalan from the viewpoint of both assessing the quality of the education system and controlling public services, and compliance with language policy legislation so as to guarantee the follow-up of all the measures envisaged above". Two examples of one-off reports are given, one from the Council for the Evaluation of the Catalan Education System and one from the *Sindic de Greuges* (the ombudsman in Catalonia).

Also in Catalonia, the same periodical report gives the following information about Aranese: "various institutions are responsible for overseeing the progress made in Aranese language teaching: the *Conselh Generau de Aran*, the Education Department of the Catalan Regional Government, and the Directorate General for Language Policy of the Catalan Regional Government."⁸⁷

It is not clear, however, whether any body produces and publishes regular monitoring reports on the steps taken and progress achieved in Catalan or Aranese education.

In relation to the Balearic Islands, Spain's 6th Charter Periodical report states⁸⁸: "The Institute for the Evaluation and Quality of the Education System of the Balearic Islands is the coordinating, consultative and technical body of the Education and Vocational Training Department of the Regional Government that carries out analyses and external evaluations of the Balearic Islands' educational system. Only the report referring to the 2017-2018 academic year includes data on the level of language communication skills (in English, Castilian and Catalan) on completion of the primary and compulsory secondary education stages." COMEX has found however that existing bodies responsible for monitoring the progress achieved in the teaching of Catalan do not produce in practice regular periodic reports on the situation of Catalan.⁸⁹

In Galicia, the Inspectorate for Education is in charge of monitoring the application of the legislation concerning the use of the Galician language. However, its periodic reports do not seem to be published.⁹⁰

In **Sweden** the Swedish Schools Inspectorate can decide to carry out school inspections regarding all minority languages or a particular minority language. It has for instance carried out a thematic supervision of the right to mother tongue tuition in national minority languages in grades 7–9. While this one-off approach does not provide the required regular reporting and monitoring, nevertheless Sweden reports that "[T]he results of the inspection can influence minority language education. The Swedish School Inspectorate has, for example, reviewed the information submitted by school education providers to students and guardians about the right to mother tongue education. Another example is a review about the availability of teachers and teaching in the national minority languages."⁹¹

In relation to Romansch and Italian in **Switzerland** in the Canton of Graubünden / Grischun / Grigioni, the school inspectorate of the Office for Compulsory School and Sport is responsible for the implementation of and compliance with cantonal regulations and quality standards; periodic evaluation of schools; advising teachers, school administrators and local school authorities on matters of teaching, school planning and further education. As part of its supervisory function, the school inspectorate also regularly monitors Romansch and Italian-language education, including how the use of the language in the individual subjects is organised, and the level of language proficiency. It is also responsible for approving special timetable regulations for municipalities located at the language border.

⁸⁵ Sixth periodical report of Spain presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2023)PR9, p. 65

⁸⁶ Sixth periodical report of Spain presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2023)PR9, p. 84

⁸⁷ Sixth periodical report of Spain presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2023)PR9, p. 104

⁸⁸ Sixth periodical report of Spain presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2023)PR9, p. 144

⁸⁹ Sixth Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Spain MIN-LANG(2024)17, para 254

⁹⁰ Sixth Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Spain MIN-LANG(2024)17, para 282

⁹¹ CDADI call for responses.

The school inspectorate's evaluation reports, which cover a period of four to five years, are published on the website of the Office for Compulsory School and Sport. If the school inspectorate identifies shortcomings, these are listed in the report.⁹²

In the **United Kingdom** the arrangements are fundamentally different between the various regional or minority languages.

In relation to the Welsh language, annual monitoring of education happens as part of the strategy which the Welsh Government is by law obliged to have setting out how they propose to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language generally. The annual reports contain considerable detail about progress made and initiatives being developed in education. The UK authorities reported in 2023 that "robust governance arrangements are in place for the delivery of Cymraeg 2050 within Welsh Government and externally. The Cabinet conducts regular discussions on the progress of the strategy and their contribution to its delivery. The Cymraeg 2050 Programme Board is made up of senior civil servants across the Welsh Government. The Board meets quarterly, or more often if required, to provide invaluable scrutiny and challenge, advice, leadership and assurance on the delivery of Cymraeg 2050."

Furthermore, each education authority in Wales is obliged to have a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) approved by the Welsh Government and to report annually on its implementation.

The UK also reports that "Internal and external monitoring groups have also been established to monitor the implementation of various strategies for example The Welsh in education workforce plan."⁹³

In relation to Gaelic in Scotland, His Majesty's Inspectors, alongside Education Scotland, supervise the quality of Gaelic-medium schools, although the focus is on school attainment, rather than the progress in Scottish Gaelic competence.⁹⁴

The case of Northern Ireland is interesting since the UK has not chosen the relevant Charter provision here. Nevertheless, the UK authorities report that "the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) monitors the teaching of the Irish language within the regular school system. With regard to Ulster Scots, monitoring is less formalised, with oversight often falling under the remit of the Ulster-Scots Agency (Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch), which is an autonomous public body... The ETI produces inspection reports that include the progress and quality of Irish language education. These reports influence educational policy and are published periodically. Positive outcomes have been seen in the increased number of students taking Irish at both primary and secondary levels. Ulster Scots: While specific measurable outcomes are less clear, there has been an increase in cultural activities and educational resources supporting the Ulster Scots language."⁹⁵

3. Analysis and General Conclusions

Considering state responses to CDADI's call for responses as well as information from Council of Europe monitoring bodies and additional research, there is a mixed picture. The described practices vary greatly in terms of the level of information and detail, but certain conclusions can be drawn. Most states do monitor regional or minority language education or some aspects of it to a greater or lesser degree. Certain states do so as a routine part of annual monitoring of the education system generally or as part of routine school inspection. Others have in place bespoke arrangements focused only on regional or minority language education generally or on individual languages.

Taking account of the approach taken and comments made by the Committee of Experts in connection with supervisory bodies, it is helpful to consider the following checklist in considering the nature and extent of monitoring of progress in teaching in and of regional or minority languages.

⁹² 'Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action contained in the Committee of Experts' eighth evaluation report on Switzerland' MIN-LANG(2023)21 paras 12 to 15.

⁹³ Sixth periodical report of the United Kingdom presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2023)PR8.

⁹⁴ Sixth periodical report of the United Kingdom presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2023)PR8

⁹⁵ CDADI call for responses

- **Nature and autonomy of body:** Where is it institutionally located? How autonomous is it from or within the education authority?
- What **means of investigation** does it have?
- **Representation of speakers:** Are bodies or associations of the regional or minority language users represented in it?
- **General or specialised:** Is it specialised on teaching in/of a particular regional or minority language?
- **Levels of education covered:** Does it supervise all levels of regional or minority language education?
- **Extent of Monitoring:** Does it supervise all organisational aspects of minority language education (notably curriculum, basic and further training of teachers, educational materials, funding) and the language competence achieved by pupils?
- **Regular publication of reports:** Does it publish monitoring reports? At what intervals does it do so? Are they discussed with bodies or associations representing the regional or minority language users?
- **Effectiveness of Monitoring:** How effective is the supervisory body? Do its findings influence minority language education?

Nature and autonomy of institution: It is not always clear the extent to which the bodies responsible for monitoring and reporting are supervisory in nature. This means that they are at least independent of those who are responsible for implementing regional or minority language education policy in practice. This does not mean that they must be legally distinct entities, provided the governance arrangements are sufficiently robust to allow those monitoring to assess what is happening and comment on it objectively and transparently, in other words that their comments are the subject of unedited public reports. Certain states refer to school inspectors (who are by nature independent from education providers) as being responsible for monitoring regional or minority language education, namely Romania, Sweden, Spain (in relation to Galician in Galicia), Switzerland (in relation to Romansch in Graubünden/Grischun/Grigioni) and the UK (in relation to Irish in Northern Ireland). Other states refer to arm's length bodies, operating across the whole territory or part of it, such as the National Board on Education in Finland and the Monitoring Committee in the Land of Lower Saxony in Germany. The Working Group for Low German in Saxony Anhalt seems also to be an arm's length body, but this group has yet to formulate how it will carry out its monitoring work. In certain states, the responsibility is said to be that of a government department or a body affiliated to it. This is the case in Austria (at the level of the Directorates of Education of the relevant Länder), Croatia (Directorate for National Minorities in the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth) and the Slovak Republic (Government Council of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities). While precise details are lacking about the governance of these arrangements, they appear to operate with a sufficient degree of independence. In certain cases, where responsibility for regional or minority language education is in the hands of regional governments that have strong policies to promote and protect regional or minority languages, monitoring progress is embedded as a matter of course in the business of government, as in the case of the Basque language in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country in Spain, and the Welsh Language in Wales in the UK. In Norway, the Sámi Education Council, which monitors education in Sámi is clearly independent from those implementing education policies, since it is part of the Sámi Parliament.

Means of Investigation: There is scant direct information about the means of investigation afforded to the various monitoring bodies. There was no evidence of access to information being obstructed or denied. In those cases where there are strong policies for the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages, there is clear evidence of an abundance of information being available to inform the monitoring and reporting process. In the case of Swedish in Finland, the relevant body has a statutory right to receive information from other authorities.

Representation of Speakers: Certain monitoring bodies include representatives of speakers of regional or minority languages, namely the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities and (it seems) the Monitoring Committee in the Land of Lower Saxony in Germany which includes representatives of regional associations and the Lower Saxony Heritage Association. The Sámi Parliament in Norway by its very nature includes representatives of speakers of Sámi languages. It is unclear to what extent other bodies include *representatives* of speakers of regional or minority languages, even though they will include speakers of the languages. So for instance, in Romania, the education inspection arrangements for each regional or minority language include speakers of the relevant regional or minority language, and the governments of both the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country in Spain, and Wales in the UK operate bilingually (in Basque and Spanish, and in Welsh and English respectively).

General or specialised: Where monitoring bodies operate across an area (whether state-wide or within a particular territory) which is home to more than one regional or minority language, then they will tend to cover all languages. That is the case for instance for Sweden, Croatia, Graubünden/Grischun/Grigioni in Switzerland and the Slovak Republic (but not Finland where the relevant body covers Swedish only). More commonly, bodies operate in respect of specific languages within specific territories, whether they be education inspectors (such as in Romania) or otherwise (such as in Spain or the UK).

Levels of education covered: The distinctions between levels of education vary from state to state. It is therefore useful to use the general categories covered by Article 8.1.a to 8.1.f of the Charter, namely pre-school, primary, secondary, technical and vocational, university and other higher education and adult and continuing education. There is scant precise information available, but it is a reasonably safe assumption that, where monitoring takes place through education inspectors it covers at least both primary and secondary education, and that this will hold true of other types of monitoring. The evidence from Spain's periodical reports includes detailed statistics about other levels of education, which suggests that a degree of monitoring takes place.

Extent of monitoring: The extent of what is monitored varies considerably between and within states, and in many cases the full extent is not clear. Regular detailed, strategic monitoring and reporting as envisaged by the Committee of Experts (to include such matters as teacher training, resources and materials, planning) can be seen in certain cases such as Basque in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country in Spain and Welsh in Wales in the UK. Detailed monitoring of this sort also occurs on a one-off basis (see examples from Sweden and Norway above). In other cases, while the extent is not as well defined, it seems clear that monitoring and reporting in many cases goes beyond the mere reporting of statistics (eg Austria, Graubünden/Grischun/Grigioni in Switzerland) and that those monitoring are able to make recommendations for improvement (e.g. Romania, the Slovak Republic, Lower Saxony in Germany). As for monitoring linguistic skills and competence, this is expressly stated to be the role of the education inspectors in respect of Gaelic in Scotland in the UK and is a key component of monitoring in the case of the Basque language in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country in Spain.

Regular Publication of Reports: Here again there is a mixed picture. The illustrative review of current practice above points to instances where either there is no regular publication or no adequate information available. Where there is publication, it tends to be yearly. No information is available of the extent to which such reports are discussed with representatives of speakers, but it is reasonably safe to assume, in those cases where there are strong civil society organisations engaged with regional or minority languages, that these will respond to such reports.

Effectiveness of monitoring and reporting: As mentioned above, certain states confirm that monitoring and reporting can lead to suggestions for improvement, and certain states have provided examples of positive outcomes from the monitoring and reporting process (Romania, Norway, Northern Ireland in the UK). There is however little detailed explanation of the processes by which the outcome of monitoring is taken into account by those charged with implementing regional or minority language education policy.

4. Recommendations

A structured approach needs to be taken to teaching in regional or minority languages, given the fundamental importance of education for their protection and promotion. This means that the relevant authorities must plan thoroughly for the delivery of such education, including the provision of sufficient resources such as schools, teachers, equipment and teaching materials. Doing this, and progress achieved in doing it, are matters which should be kept under regular review through objective and transparent monitoring. In line with the flexibility to implement according to the situation of each language, different mechanisms may be appropriate for different languages.

The use of the word "supervisory" in the text of the relevant Article in the Charter implies the requirement of a degree of separation between those responsible for monitoring on the one hand and those responsible for planning and delivery on the other. Such separation will of course be the case where the monitoring body is independent of the education authorities. The Charter's Explanatory Report indicates that "an education authority body" can fulfil the monitoring role.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Para. 88

In such a case, it is suggested that there should be adequate governance arrangements to ensure a suitable degree of separation between the people who are monitoring and the people who are implementing. Education inspectors may be suitable provided their monitoring considers broader aspects of planning and delivery of teaching regional or minority languages, and is not confined to the inspection of individual schools.

As emphasised by the Committee of Experts, the monitoring work of the body should “evaluate and analyse the measures taken and the progress achieved regarding regional or minority language education, with the purpose to identify effective methods, and areas where additional efforts are needed. Reports should contain *inter alia*, information on the extent and availability of education, developments in language proficiency, teacher supply and the provision of teaching materials.”⁹⁷

Consequently, the work of the body should cover all levels of education, as well as related matters such as teacher training and educational materials. The monitoring body should have the necessary expertise and knowledge to enable this to happen, including input from speakers of the relevant regional or minority language(s), which should ideally be provided by representatives of speakers participating in the monitoring work. The relevant body should have unimpeded access to the information it needs in order to make an assessment of development and progress achieved and to prepare its reports.

Regular reports of the monitoring should be prepared and made public in order to ensure transparency about how regional or minority language education is developing and to enable well-informed public discussion about regional or minority language education, including feedback to the authorities. The authorities should engage in discussion with speakers of regional or minority languages in the light of the monitoring so as to make adjustments as necessary.

II. Measures taken by member States to ensure the teaching of history and culture associated with regional or minority languages

1. Background

Both the Charter and the Framework Convention impose a minimum requirement for teaching, study and learning of all regional or minority languages (articles 7.1.f, 7.1.g and 7.1.h of the Charter; Article 14 of the Framework Convention). The Charter’s menu system under Part III also enables states to choose in respect of specific regional or minority languages detailed undertakings relating to education in those regional or minority languages (Article 8).

In addition to teaching in and of regional and minority languages, education has another essential role to play in promoting mutual respect and understanding.

Both the Charter and the Framework Convention contain obligations which bind all states parties to take measures to ensure this happens.⁹⁸ In the case of the Charter, the obligation in Article 7.3 is to ensure “the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to regional or minority languages among the objectives of education and training provided within their countries”. Under the Framework Convention, Article 6.1 provides: “The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and co-operation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons’ ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media.”

The need for respect, understanding and tolerance for linguistic diversity is universal, so these obligations are not confined to the areas where the language is traditionally used but apply across the whole territory of the state.

Teaching the history and culture associated with regional or minority languages, therefore, as well as being beneficial for speakers and learners of regional or minority languages, can be seen as part of the task of fostering respect, understanding and tolerance which underpins so much of the Council of Europe’s work.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Seventh Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Germany MIN-LANG(2022)7, para 19

⁹⁸ Charter Article 7.3, Framework Convention Article 6.1.

⁹⁹ See, by way of illustrative example, United around our values - Reykjavík declaration (2023), a declaration of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe: ‘We reaffirm our commitment to developing mutual understanding among the peoples of Europe and reciprocal appreciation of our cultural diversity and heritage(...) As we work to promote the rights of the child, we underline the importance of education to give children and young people the necessary references to grow up embracing our democratic values in culturally diverse societies and take an active part in the protection of our cultural heritage. We also stress the important role that the Council of Europe is playing to promote and protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.’

Under the Charter's menu system, it is possible for states to choose an undertaking, within the territory in which such languages are used, namely Article 8.1.g of the Charter:

"to make arrangements to ensure the teaching of the history and the culture which is reflected by the regional or minority language."

As with Article 7.3, this obligation is not confined to teaching regional or minority language speakers and learners. The Committee of Experts has consistently observed that the undertaking extends to those who are not speakers of the regional or minority language.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, in the Framework Convention, Article 12 provides:

"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. Practice within Council of Europe member States

The responses to the CDADI call for responses¹⁰¹ have revealed a wide range of approaches and practices across member States.

Many states in their responses refer to the teaching of history and culture of or relating to national minorities, rather than regional or minority languages. For the purpose of this report it is assumed that the former includes the latter.

The following parts of this report highlight different approaches, identifying three different models which exist across member States, giving examples. All examples are taken from the responses to the CDADI call for responses unless indicated otherwise. The review is limited by the responses received and other material which is available in state periodical reports and monitoring reports under the Charter and the Framework Convention. CDADI has already published a comprehensive review of the position relating to the Romani language in its recent mapping study: "Identifying good practices in Council of Europe member States in relation to the representation of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials",¹⁰² and this report does not seek to replicate that study, though reference is made to the situation relating to the Romani language in certain States.

The models are not necessarily mutually exclusive, with many coexisting in parallel. There are also other examples which are not reflected in these models, for example where education of history or culture reflected by regional or minority languages is assured by voluntary community groups (for example, Sunday schools) supported by the state. This is relatively common, especially in those states (or territories within states), or in relation to those regional or minority languages, where public provision of regional or minority language education is scarce, undeveloped or non-existent. Such voluntary education frequently includes teaching about the history and culture associated with the regional or minority language. So, for example, in Armenia and Estonia there appears to be a good deal of such provision which receives financial support from the state. This has not been included as a standalone model in this Study, in the absence of embedding within mainstream education, curricula, etc., though it is a practice which can be built upon.

MODEL 1: Teaching history and/or culture reflected by regional or minority languages is part of a curriculum for all students which applies across the whole territory of the state

This model corresponds most closely to Article 7.3 of the Charter since it covers both speakers and non-speakers of regional or minority languages and all territories within the state, regardless of whether or not any regional or minority languages are used there.

¹⁰⁰ First Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Spain ECRML(2005)4, para 492: 'This normally entails including elements of the history and culture which is reflected by the regional or minority language in the national curriculum, or at least in the curriculum for Castilian-speaking pupils within the territories concerned (see the second evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the implementation of the Charter by Croatia, ECRML(2005)3, para. 100).'

¹⁰¹ Of 18 July 2024.

¹⁰² See Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials and Questions and Answers. See also, Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the active political participation of national minority youth.

Austria reports that new curricula for primary, secondary and grammar schools were issued in 2023. Principle 6 of the new curricula states:

“Among other things, pupils should learn that learning and mastering several languages is of crucial importance for the formation of individual identity, participation in society and culture as well as coexistence in a multilingual world. In particular, the language, culture and the respective history of the six autochthonous national minority groups in Austria should be addressed in the classroom in accordance with the National Minority Act (*Volksgruppengesetz*) and an awareness of the rights and protection of minorities should be created.”

Romania reports that, in addition to specific courses “History and Traditions of the national minority” and “Music Education of the national minority” which are part of education delivered to members of a national minority (it seems that this is both in the relevant minority language and in Romanian), there is provision, both mandatory and optional, for all students:

“Relevant topics on national minorities are also covered by the 4th, 8th and 12th grade syllabus of the core subject History, which is studied by all pupils irrespective of the language of teaching. In high school, pupils can also choose to study the optional subject the History of National Minorities in Romania in the 10th grade.”

Sweden reports:

“In the introductory parts of the curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and the leisure-time centre, it is stated that the school must be responsible for ensuring that every student, after completing compulsory school, has acquired knowledge of the national minorities (Jews, Roma, Sami, Sweden Finns and Tornedalians) culture, language, religion and history.”

Ukraine reports:

“The curricula of general secondary education reflect the cultural and historical aspects of the peoples living on the territory of Ukraine. Subjects that are mandatory for study, such as “History of Ukraine,” “World history,” “Geography,” “Foreign literature,” “Musical art,” “Fine art,” give children the opportunity to get acquainted with the cultural wealth of different peoples.”

Ukraine also mentions courses of “History of Ancient Greece and the Greeks of Ukraine” and “Culture of Greece, Greek folk dances” which are taught in general secondary education institutions.

Serbia reports that Article 3 of The Law on Textbooks:

“Introduces the National Reader, as a mandatory teaching material for all students of elementary and secondary schools who attend classes in Serbian. The National Reader is used with a view to developing a personal and national identity, developing a sense and feeling of belonging to the Republic of Serbia, respecting and fostering the Serbian language and the mother tongue, the tradition and culture of the Serbian people and the national minorities in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, developing interculturality.”

Serbia explains that the National Readers for grades 1 and 2 and for grades 3 and 4 have now been completed, published, and distributed to pupils. In the coming period, the remaining volumes will be successively prepared and issued for the other grades. Each volume will contain age-appropriate material relating to the history and culture of national minorities prepared by national councils of national minorities in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Serbia also explains that within secondary education, students can ‘increase their knowledge on the evolution of language – the development of the language in society, which includes knowledge on the languages of national minorities and their origin.’ It is unclear, however, whether this possibility exists for all students or only for those who are members of a national minority.

Serbia also gives some details about the teaching of the history of the Roma people which applies throughout its territory.

Lithuania seems to have a model which applies to all students across its territory. **Croatia** seems to be working towards such a model as are (1) **the Czech Republic** for primary schools, (2) **Italy** limited to Roma¹⁰³.

MODEL 2: Teaching history and/or culture reflected by regional or minority languages is part of a curriculum which applies to all students, regardless of language of instruction and of whether those students are speakers or learners of the regional or minority language, in a territory in which the language is used

This model corresponds to Article 8.1.g of the Charter, applying to all students within the territory where the regional or minority language is used.

In **Germany**, this model can be found in several Länder.¹⁰⁴ For instance, in respect of Danish in Schleswig-Holstein. As reported in Germany's 7th Charter Periodical Report (2022) "At Schleswig-Holstein's public schools, the subject-specific requirements for the subjects of history, geography and Danish and the relevant guidelines provide a framework for teachers to address the history and culture of the recognised minorities in Schleswig-Holstein, in particular the Danish minority."¹⁰⁵

This is a model which applies across the board in **Spain**, where autonomous communities are in charge of education within their territories.¹⁰⁶

In the **United Kingdom**, within Wales this applies to the history of Wales,

"The study of Welsh history is both explicit and compulsory for schools and settings and at all stages – this requires learners to have a consistent exposure to the story of Wales in order for these schools and settings to fulfil their duties."

They explain that this includes the history of the Welsh language and culture:

"Our vision for Welsh history in the Curriculum for Wales, is for all of our citizens, including young people, to understand how history, language, diversity and culture have shaped Wales", and that the history of Wales "should be embedded across the curriculum".

In the **Netherlands**, such arrangements seem to be planned in relation to Frisian culture within the province of Friesland as part of *Taalplan Frysk 2030* (Frisian Language Plan 2030):

"Part of *Taalplan Frysk* is the goal that all schools in the province of Fryslân will offer the learning standards for the field of learning "Frisian language and culture" by 2030 and that no full or partial exemptions will be needed by that time. Another objective is to offer the 'Frisian language and culture' field of learning to the maximum extent permitted by law, i.e. at all levels of secondary education and in all years."

MODEL 3: Teaching history and/or culture reflected by a regional or minority language is offered as part of regional or minority language education (Model 3A) and/or offered to members of the National Minority associated with the regional or minority language (Model 3B)

This model can exist in parallel with one of the previously mentioned models, or on its own. If it is offered on its own (without Model 1 or Model 2 being taught in parallel), those who do not speak the regional or minority language or who are not learning the relevant regional or minority language (in the case of Model 3A) and/or who do not belong to the relevant national minority (in the case of Model 3B) do not get taught about the history or culture relating to the regional or minority language.

¹⁰³ Sixth Report submitted by Italy Pursuant to Article 25, para. 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities ACFC/SR/VI(2024)004 pp. 133 and 142.

¹⁰⁴ Seventh periodical report of Germany presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2021)PR4, passim.

¹⁰⁵ Seventh periodical report of Germany presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter MIN-LANG(2021)PR4, p. 101.

¹⁰⁶ For example, for Catalan in Catalonia, see First Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Spain ECRM(2005)4, para. 215, and for Basque in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, see Second Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on Spain (2008) 5, paras. 561-564.

An example of parallel provision is given by **Romania** (see above) where in addition to the state-wide history lessons about national minorities, pupils belonging to national minorities studying in their regional or minority language also study “the History and Traditions of the national minority” and “Music Education of the national minority” respectively, specific for each national minority for whom teaching in mother tongue is provided, and these are available also to members of the national minority studying in Romanian.

Similarly, in **Sweden**, Sami culture and history are taught in Sami schools as well as being part of general education across the state.

In the **United Kingdom** in relation to Irish in Northern Ireland, it is reported that:

“Irish Language: History and culture relating to the Irish language are integrated into the curriculum at Irish-medium schools (Gaelscoileanna). It is often taught both as a separate subject and within broader subjects like history, literature, and geography.”

In **Croatia**, where there is not yet state-wide provision for all 22 national minorities, 11 national minorities, including Italian, Serbian and Roma have such provision, and **Estonia** has plans to introduce such provision in future for members of National minorities.

Brief Analysis

Looking across the three models, there is widespread teaching of the history and culture associated with regional or minority languages. Nevertheless, Model 1, which involves promoting understanding throughout the territory of the state, appears to be relatively rare and occurs where it is mandated through curricula. In Austria, Romania and Sweden it happens in both primary and secondary education. In other states where there is clear evidence, it is confined to either primary (Croatia) or secondary (Ukraine). The extent and depth of what is taught is not described in detail, but both Romania and Serbia offer students the choice in secondary education of studying the topic in greater depth. In respect of Models 2 and 3, which are defined either territorially or in terms of who is taught, provision appears to be across both primary and secondary education generally, and greater in detail and depth than for Model 1. In certain cases it is taught as a stand-alone topic, in others integrated into other subjects such as history (e.g. in Schleswig-Holstein in Germany) and in certain cases both (e.g. for Irish in Northern Ireland in the UK). There is no clear evidence of how the training of teachers covers teaching the history and culture associated with regional or minority languages nor of the extent to which bodies or associations representing the users of the given language are involved in the preparation of the curricula and the educational materials. There is scant evidence about teaching materials, but the developing National Reader project in Serbia gives an interesting example of embedding the history and culture associated with regional or minority languages in core materials to be studied by all students.

3. Recommendations

Given the importance of fostering universal respect, understanding and tolerance for regional or minority languages as part of building an inclusive and diverse society, it is advisable that all member States make arrangements for ensuring that the teaching of history and culture associated with regional or minority languages is part of the objectives of mainstream education throughout their territory at both primary and secondary level. At this level, students should at least be made aware of the existence of regional or minority languages and the basic facts of their historical and current presence within the state as well as being provided with material illustrating the contemporary use of the language and its associated culture, for instance through video clips. Ideally, opportunities should be available for those interested to pursue more detailed studies.

Within a territory where a regional or minority language is used, there should be appropriate teaching, study and learning of the regional or minority language itself. This should include or coincide with teaching about the history and culture associated with the regional or minority language. In such a territory also, those who do not speak the regional or minority language and are not learning it will nevertheless regularly encounter the regional or minority language and its speakers as part of their everyday experience. In such circumstances the need for mutual respect, understanding and tolerance requires more than a passing or superficial familiarity with the language, its history and culture.

Consequently, it is recommended that education within those territories should do more than raise awareness and include adequate substantive information about the regional or minority language and study of its history and culture.

In all cases, adequate textbooks and other teaching resources should be made available and the topic should be included in teacher training.

Speakers of regional or minority languages should be consulted about the content of such provision and to the extent possible involved in its design and creation.

Chapter III: Advisory bodies on implementation of the Charter and their work

I. Background

According to Article 7.4 of the Charter, state parties are encouraged to establish bodies, if necessary, for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to regional or minority languages. With the ratification of the Charter, states parties have committed to fully implement all the undertakings they have entered into regarding their regional or minority languages. In its long-standing monitoring, the Committee of Experts has observed in some cases the need for more proactive, structured action on the basis of the Charter undertakings among states parties and emphasised that the undertakings need to be implemented in practice. Advisory bodies can play a key role in the implementation of Charter undertakings.

The Charter's particular nature lies in the fact that its undertakings constitute obligations for the authorities whose implementation must not be left to the initiative of national minority associations or depend on their grant/project applications. According to Article 7.1.c of the Charter, the authorities take, on their own initiative,¹⁰⁷ "resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them"; this provision applies to all regional or minority languages. The Committee of Experts stressed that "[m]ost undertakings under the Charter [...] require more than simply allowing public and private bodies to make use of minority languages. They [...] require positive action from the authorities to promote the use of these languages. The Charter clearly implies an obligation to take proactive measures in order to ensure systematically the rights of minority language speakers."¹⁰⁸

To operationalise this principle, the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers have recommended states parties to design and implement a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter for each regional or minority language.¹⁰⁹ Taking into account the specific situation of the language concerned, a strategy should be based on language planning and should *inter alia* set quantified growth targets on language transmission in families, on the number of children enrolled in minority language education, on language use outside the family and the classroom in the domains covered by the Charter, and on the total number of language speakers and users.¹¹⁰

The strategy's action plan should contain concrete implementation measures regarding each undertaking and the related monitoring recommendations in policies, legislation and practice and specify the administrative responsibilities and the timeframe.¹¹¹ Implementation measures and outcome indicators may, apart from the wording of the treaty provisions themselves, also be derived from their interpretation in the Committee of Experts evaluation reports and commentaries on the Charter published or supported by the Council of Europe,¹¹² as well as from monitoring recommendations. This conceptual guidance from the Council of Europe provides a template for an action plan.

¹⁰⁷ See e.g. Second evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Bosnia and Herzegovina, ECRML(2016)3, para. 18; Fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Denmark, ECRML (2014)9, para. 26; First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, ECRML(2011)5, para. 24.

¹⁰⁸ Third evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the Slovak Republic, ECRML (2013)1, para. 38. See also First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, ECRML(2011)5, para. 32; Explanatory Report of the Charter, para. 61.

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. Second evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, ECRML(2015)7, para. 54; Sixth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the Slovak Republic, MIN-LANG(2025)12, para. 7; Recommendation CM/RecChL(2024)3 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Czechia, No 2.

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Hungary, ECRML(2013)6, para. 31; Third evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Hungary, ECRML(2007)5, p. 37, para. C.

¹¹¹ See e.g. First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Bosnia and Herzegovina, ECRML(2013)5, para. 45; Fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Denmark, ECRML(2014)9, para. 26.

¹¹² Woehrling, Jean-Marie : La Charte européenne des langues régionales ou minoritaires : un commentaire analytique, Editions du Conseil de l'Europe 2006/Woehrling, Jean-Marie: The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: a Critical Commentary, Council of Europe Publishing 2006; Nogueira López, Alba/Ruiz Vieytes, Eduardo J./Urrutia Libarona, Iñigo (eds.): Shaping language rights - Commentary on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in light of the Committee of Experts' evaluation, Regional or Minority Languages No. 9, Council of Europe Publishing 2012; Boysen, Sigrid/Engbers, Jutta/Hilpold, Peter/Körfigen, Marco/Langefeld, Christine/Rein, Detlev/Richter, Dagmar/Rier, Klaus (Hg.): Europäische Charta der Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen - Handkommentar, Dike-Verlag AG, Zürich 2011.

In addition, the Council of Europe has advised on implementation measures in meetings with representatives of authorities and the linguistic groups (Charter Implementation Roundtables, since 2009). Since the Charter contains several obligations for regional and local authorities, it is important that the state authorities involve them regarding the strategy and action plan and provide them with the necessary guidance.¹¹³ Finally, implementation of the strategy and action plan needs to be ensured through adequate funding.¹¹⁴

Article 7.4 of the Charter, which also applies to all regional or minority languages, addresses the institutionalised dialogue of authorities and groups using regional or minority languages in language policy. It provides that “[i]n determining their policy with regard to regional or minority languages, the Parties shall take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the groups which use such languages. They are encouraged to establish bodies, if necessary, for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to regional or minority languages.” The Committee of Experts has emphasised the importance of establishing such advisory bodies comprising representatives of the competent authorities and the linguistic group. It stressed, in particular, that the bodies should specialise in a regional or minority language and the Charter, and meet sufficiently often. This would enable them to design a strategy and action plan as well as to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the measures contained therein.¹¹⁵ The Advisory Committee has addressed this matter more generally in the context of Article 15 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities.¹¹⁶

Against this background, this chapter will examine what kind of advisory bodies in the field of regional or minority language promotion some member States have set up and how they contribute to the implementation of the Charter.¹¹⁷ On this basis, good practices will be identified. In light of the replies to CDADI’s call for responses, advisory bodies in the following states will be examined: Armenia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom.

II. Practices within Council of Europe member States

1. Armenia

a. Council on National Minorities

The Council on National Minorities was established as a consultative body by a decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia¹¹⁸ (paragraph 2). It is made up of members representing state administration bodies and non-governmental organisations engaged in the realisation of the rights of national minorities of Armenia, the preservation of their national identity, and the development of culture. A non-governmental organisation with at least five years of legal registration and representing a national minority has the right to present a candidate for membership (paragraph 3). The Council discusses issues related to national minorities of Armenia, expresses its position on them, and develops relevant proposals (paragraph 4). Other persons invited by the Chair of the Council may participate in its sessions (paragraph 5). The Council is appointed for a term of two years. It convenes sessions at least once every four months and can hold extraordinary sessions.¹¹⁹

The Council considers a wide range of issues with regard to national minorities. In April 2025, the regular session of the Council addressed issues related to the training of teachers and other specialists in the languages of Armenia’s national minorities, as well as the inclusion of children from national minority communities in the annual State-run summer camp program.

¹¹³ See e.g. First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Bosnia and Herzegovina, ECRML(2013)5, para. 45; Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Czechia, ECRML(2024)4, para. 13.

¹¹⁴ See e.g. Third evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Hungary, ECRML(2007)5, para. 13.

¹¹⁵ See e.g. First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, ECRML(2011)5, para. 32; Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Czechia, ECRML(2024)4, paras. 11, 18-19.

¹¹⁶ Article 15 reads: “The Parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them.” Furthermore, when establishing an advisory body, the right of individuals to choose freely to be treated or not to be treated as a member of a national minority should be taken into account.

¹¹⁷ In 2023, the Committee of Ministers instructed the steering committees to carry out, at regular intervals, an examination of conventions for which they have been given responsibility, in order to, among other things, propose ways of improving the visibility, impact and efficiency of such conventions. See Terms of Reference of Intergovernmental Structures – List of Conventions, CM(2023)132-final.

¹¹⁸ Decree of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia “On Establishing the Council on National Minorities and Approving its Composition” of 3 May 2019, No. 486-L.

¹¹⁹ See Rules of Procedure of the Council on National Minorities, modified on 9 April 2024, paras. 3-4.

Commentary

The Council on National Minorities is an advisory body whose mandate goes beyond the promotion of all or individual regional or minority languages. In addition, the Prime Minister's decree establishing the Council does not specify the individual national minorities which would be permanently represented in the Council. Rather, a national minority can be represented in the Council if there is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to it which has been registered for at least five years. The Republic of Armenia's draft Law on National Minorities contains a list of the country's national minorities¹²⁰ and, if adopted, could contribute to providing certainty and sustainability in this regard. The Council has no explicit mandate to deal with the Charter. It may in principle discuss the implementation of the Charter as part of its work related to national minorities and develop a strategy and action plan ("relevant proposals") for the application of the Charter to each regional or minority language and contribute to its co-ordination and monitoring. A scheduling of a sufficient number of annual and extraordinary sessions would allow the Council on National Minorities to bring forward such work. As national minority associations are not necessarily specialised in language promotion, measures to strengthen their capacity with regard to the Charter would be sensible. External experts on regional or minority languages ("other persons") could additionally support the work on the Charter.

b. Public Council on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities adjunct to the Human Rights Defender

The Public Council on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities adjunct to the Human Rights Defender was established by a Decision of the Human Rights Defender of the Republic of Armenia in 2023.¹²¹ It operates as an advisory body whose scope of activities and procedural rules were established by the aforementioned Decision.

This Decision also provides that the Public Council is formed by representatives of state and local authorities, public organisations that carry out activities in the field of protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and independent specialists with the necessary experience in this field. Persons who are not members of the Public Council may be invited to its meetings, including representatives of international organisations such as the Council of Europe.

The Human Rights Defender carries out activities aimed at the protection and promotion of the rights of national minorities in various way. In particular, the Human Rights Defender may highlight issues concerning the implementation of international obligations and submit proposals to the competent authorities regarding their solution. These proposals may relate to the development and application of sectoral policy, legislation and practice. The Public Council supports the implementation of these activities. Its meetings are convened at least once or twice a year, and extraordinary sessions may be convened as necessary.

Amendments and changes have been made to the Law "On the Human Rights Defender". The provisions on the functions of the Human Rights Defender to promote the alignment of legislation and its application in the Republic of Armenia with international human rights standards were codified. This includes conducting studies and undertaking continuous monitoring of the conformity of Armenia's legislation and its application with international human rights standards, as well as promoting the ratification of, and accession to, international treaties by the Republic of Armenia, and the harmonisation of national legislation and its application with international obligations undertaken by the Republic of Armenia. At the same time, consistent with the provisions of the aforementioned Constitutional Law, relevant regulations have been incorporated into the decree on the establishment of the Council.

In accordance with these, the Council aims to assist the Human Rights Defender in the study and continuous monitoring of the conformity of Armenia's legislation and its application with international legal standards related to the field, in order to support the continuous development of the sector and the effective realisation of the rights of national minorities.

¹²⁰ Article 3(2) of the draft Law on National Minorities provides that the national minorities in the Republic of Armenia are Assyrians, Belarusians, Germans, Yezidis, Poles, Jews, Greeks, Russians, Georgians, Ukrainians and Kurds.

¹²¹ By Decision No. 101-A of the RA Human Rights Defender of 27 November 2023 and in accordance with Article 33(1) of the RA Law "On the Human Rights Defender".

Commentary

As an advisory body to the Human Rights Defender, the Public Council deals with the promotion of the rights of national minorities in general, including linguistic rights. While it is not specialised in advising the authorities on the promotion of all or individual regional or minority languages and has no explicit mandate to deal with the implementation of the Charter, its general mandate to make proposals in policy, legislation and practice for the "resolution" of "issues" relating to international obligations enables the Public Council in principle to propose a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to each regional or minority language and to contribute to its co-ordination and monitoring. The representatives of the authorities and national minorities in the Public Council could, in principle, carry out this work. As national minority associations are not necessarily specialised in language promotion, measures to strengthen their capacity with regard to the Charter would be necessary. In this context, it is positive that a representative of the Council of Europe could participate in meetings and advise on the strategy and action plan. A scheduling of a sufficient number of annual and extraordinary meetings would enable the Public Council to design, co-ordinate and monitor strategies and action plans for the implementation of Armenia's Charter undertakings regarding the different regional and minority languages.

2. Austria

In Austria, advisory councils for each national minority have been established at the Federal Chancellery. Meetings are attended by representatives of the national minority, political parties, relevant regional authorities and, if applicable, representative of the federal government, a federal minister or a regional government.¹²² Two advisory councils foresee the possibility to invite "information providers and experts" to attend the discussion on specific agenda items in their rules of procedure.¹²³ Depending on the advisory council, meetings are organised either at least twice¹²⁴ or at least four times per year.¹²⁵

The advisory councils advise the federal government and the federal ministers in matters concerning the national minorities and may also advise the regional governments if they are requested to do so by the latter. They shall safeguard and represent the cultural, social and economic interests of the national minorities and shall be consulted in particular before the enactment of legal provisions and on general plans in the field of promotion that affect the interests of the national minorities. In addition, they may submit proposals for improving the situation of the national minorities and their members.¹²⁶

Commentary

The advisory councils are dedicated to an individual national minority and also the cultural interests of that minority, which may cover its language. In this framework, each advisory council may make proposals to the authorities, which could include the design of a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to a regional or minority language. The advisory councils are divided into curiae and comprise of individuals who are nominated by political parties, national minority associations and the church or religious communities. In addition, external experts on the promotion of regional or minority languages could attend discussions of the advisory councils. A sufficient number of meetings would allow for the design, co-ordination and monitoring of strategies and action plans.

¹²² In accordance with §2(2) of the rules of procedure of the advisory councils on the Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Roma, Slovak and Slovenian minorities (Geschäftsordnung des Volksgruppenbeirates für die kroatische Volksgruppe; Geschäftsordnung des Volksgruppenbeirates für die tschechische Volksgruppe; Geschäftsordnung des Volksgruppenbeirates für die ungarische Volksgruppe; Geschäftsordnung des Volksgruppenbeirates für die Volksgruppe der Roma; Geschäftsordnung des Volksgruppenbeirates für die slowakische Volksgruppe; Geschäftsordnung des Volksgruppenbeirates für die slowenische Volksgruppe). The rules of procedure on the Croatian, Hungarian and Slovenian national minorities mention representatives of relevant *Land* authorities explicitly.

¹²³ In accordance with the rules of procedure of the advisory councils on the Croatian minority (§4(4)) and the Slovenian minority (§4(2)).

¹²⁴ In accordance with §1(3) of the rules of procedure of the advisory councils on the Czech, Hungarian, Roma and Slovak minorities.

¹²⁵ In accordance with §1(3) of the rules of procedure of the advisory councils on the Croatian and Slovenian minorities.

¹²⁶ In accordance with §3(1)-(2), Bundesgesetz über die Rechtsstellung der Volksgruppen in Österreich (Volksgruppengesetz) (Federal Act on the Legal Status of the National Minorities in Austria).

3. Czech Republic

a. Government Council for National Minorities

In accordance with Article 1(1) of its statute, the Government Council for National Minorities “is a permanent advisory and initiative body of the Government on issues concerning national minorities and their members and the protection of minority languages”. It comprises a member of the government or the President of the Government, the Government Commissioner or Commissioner for Human Rights as well as representatives of central Government bodies (e.g. ministries and the Government Office), national minorities,¹²⁷ local governments, other relevant institutions and experts (Article 3(2) and (3) of the statute).

The Government Council “shall in particular [...] monitor the Czech Republic's national implementation of its international obligations with regard to the rights of members of national minorities, in particular those arising from the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities [...] and] the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages [...]” (Article 2(2)a). Furthermore, it “ensures the preparation of Government measures concerning the rights of members of national minorities in the Czech Republic” and “prepares recommendations for the Government or for ministries or other administrative authorities to meet the needs of members of national minorities, particularly in the areas of education, culture and media, the use of the mother tongue, and social and cultural life” (Article 2(2)a, b, e).

The Government Council can establish committees as “permanent working bodies of the Council, whose task is to deal with sub-issues within the Council's area of competence, where this is necessary for its work” (Article 6(1)), and that can “prepare documents and proposals for partial and systemic measures for the Council” (Article 6(2)a). In addition, working groups may be set up as temporary bodies for a period not exceeding two years. Their task is to deal with partial issues within the Government Council's area of competence, if necessary for its work (Article 7(1)). Working group meetings are held “as required” and take place “informally” (Article 7(4)). In 2019, the Government Council established a working group in charge of preparing the acceptance of additional undertakings under the Charter (Part III) for German. Following the entry into force of this measure in 2024, the Government Council renewed the working group in 2025 to deal with implementation measures. At present, the working group is discussing the “Strategy and Action Plan for implementing the Czech Republic's undertakings to promoting the German language in accordance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages”.¹²⁸

The Chair of the Government Council may request the co-operation of external collaborators who are experts or professionals in a particular relevant field and not members. An external collaborator may participate in the Government Council, a committee or a working group as a permanent guest or as a guest on a particular issue (Article 8(1)-(2)). In practice, the Government Council meets four times per year.

Commentary

The Government Council for National Minorities is explicitly mandated to act as a Government advisory body on the implementation of the Charter and the Framework Convention and may initiate and prepare Government measures in the field of minority languages. A Government measure could be a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to a regional or minority language, and a Government Council committee, which is entitled to “prepare documents and proposals”, could be the permanent structure needed. In practice, the task of preparing and implementing an action plan has been given to a Government Council working group, which is, unlike committees, a temporary structure. As national minority associations are not necessarily specialised in language promotion, measures to strengthen their capacity with regard to the Charter would be appropriate. In addition, external experts on the promotion of regional or minority languages could be invited to meetings and advise on a strategy and action plan. As far as the frequency of meetings is concerned, it would be sensible that the relevant structure meets, at least in the early phases of design and implementation, more often than the Government Council (four times per year).

¹²⁷ The number of members per national minority is one or two. A national minority qualifies for two members in the Council if it meets at least two of the following criteria: i) The minority language is protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, ii) The minority has at least 10,000 members according to the latest census (including the counting of two nationalities), iii) The minority has more than 75,000 members according to the latest census (including the counting of two nationalities).

¹²⁸ See Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Czechia, ECRML(2024)4, para. 13.

The draft strategy and action plan for implementing the Charter for German is based on the individual undertakings and, if adopted, could make an effective contribution to implementing the treaty and serve as a model example. It would be sensible to transform the working group in a permanent structure, such as a committee, and task it with co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the strategy and action plan.

b. Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs

In accordance with its statute, the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs “is a permanent advisory and initiating body of the Government in the area of promoting equality, inclusion and participation of the Roma minority” (Article 1(1)). It comprises a member of the Government or the President of the Government, the Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs, representatives of central government authorities, local authorities, institutions (e.g. Director of the Museum of Romani Culture), civil society and academia (Article 3(2)-(3)).

In the context of its work “in the area of Roma integration” (Article 2(2)a), the Government Council “approves long-term and medium-term Roma integration strategies” (Article 2(2)c). The Strategy of Roma equality, inclusion and participation (Roma Integration Strategy) 2021-2030, which was adopted in 2021, refers to the Charter and monitoring recommendations and describes the situation of Romani, but it does not formulate measures to implement the Charter provisions applying to this language.¹²⁹

Like the Government Council for National Minorities, the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs may set up committees as permanent working bodies “whose task is to deal with sub-issues within the Council's area of competence” (Article 6(1)) and that may “prepare documents and proposals for partial and systemic measures for the Council” (Article 6(2)a). In addition, it may establish working groups as temporary bodies, whose task is to deal with partial issues within the Government Council's area of competence, if necessary for its activities (Article 8(1)).

The Chair of the Government Council may request the co-operation of external collaborators who are experts or specialists in a particular relevant field and who are not members of the Government Council. The person concerned may participate in meetings of the Government Council, a committee or a working group as a permanent guest or as a guest on a particular issue (Article 9(1)-(2)). In practice, the Government Council meets four times per year. It is supported by a dedicated secretariat.

Commentary

The Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs is not explicitly mandated to deal with the promotion of the Romani language or the implementation of the Charter. Nevertheless, the fact that the Roma Integration Strategy 2021-2030 covers Romani in a general way suggests that the Government Council's general mandate in the area of Roma integration would allow it to design a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to Romani, for example as separate documents for the period until 2030 and as a part of a new Roma Integration Strategy for the subsequent period. In addition, the Government Council has obvious experience in the preparation of strategies and action plans. The Government Council's members represent stakeholders that are relevant for such a process. Furthermore, the Government Council has a permanent secretariat that could ensure the sustainability of the work. As regards Government Council committees, the participation of external experts and professionals, and the frequency of meetings, reference can be made to the observations made concerning the Government Council for National Minorities (see above).

4. Germany

a. Implementation Conference on the Charter and the Framework Convention

Germany's Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs organises usually once a year an “Implementation Conference” on the Charter and the Framework Convention.

The Implementation Conference is not an advisory body in the formal sense, but deals with matters relevant in accordance with Article 7.4 of the Charter. Its working methods, which are not based on a particular legal provision, have evolved in practice. The Implementation Conference serves to co-ordinate the preparation of the German state reports on the implementation of both treaties and to discuss selected recommendations made by the Committee of Experts on the Charter and the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention. Participants are, among others, representatives of relevant federal and *Länder* authorities as well as the umbrella organisations of the national minorities and the users of regional or minority languages. The Council of Europe regularly receives an invitation to participate in the Implementation Conferences.

¹²⁹ Strategy of Roma equality, inclusion and participation (Roma Integration Strategy) 2021-2030.

Commentary

The Implementation Conference is dedicated to the Charter and the Framework Convention as well as to implementing recommendations of the monitoring bodies. Furthermore, the participants represent the authorities and associations that are relevant for the implementation of the treaties. It is also a commendable practice that a Council of Europe representative is usually invited to attend. At the same time, the Implementation Conference does not deal with individual regional or minority languages, and it addresses only a limited number of recommendations. One meeting per year would not seem sufficient to design, co-ordinate and monitor language-specific strategies and action plans.

b. Advisory committees for national minorities at federal level

Advisory committees for individual national minorities have been set up at federal level. In general, they comprise members of the federal government as well as representatives of the federal authorities, the authorities of the *Länder* where the national minority resides, the national minority,¹³⁰ and members of the federal parliament.¹³¹ The advisory committees may deal with all matters of federal policy and of cross-*Land* significance.¹³² External experts may be invited to meetings of the advisory committees.¹³³ Meetings are organised as needed, but at least once per year.¹³⁴

Commentary

Most of the observations made concerning the advisory councils in Austria (see above) apply also to the advisory committees in Germany. However, the fact that the mandate of the advisory committees is limited to federal policy and matters of cross-*Land* significance raises the question of whether these bodies alone could actually work on a comprehensive strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to a regional or minority language. It would also appear that the advisory committees do not meet at the frequency needed to design, co-ordinate, implement and monitor strategies and action plans.

c. Structures and work at the level of the *Länder*

As most of Germany's obligations under the two treaties fall into the competences of *Länder*, conceptual work concerning the implementation of these obligations has been carried out primarily at this level. Some *Länder*, such as the Free State of Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, have adopted documents concerning the promotion of their regional or minority languages which refer to the Charter in general.

Specific reference to Charter undertakings and provisions of the Framework Convention is made in the "Second state plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language" of the *Land* of Brandenburg. The *Land* government has prepared this (entirely bilingual) action plan in co-operation with various representatives of the users of Lower Sorbian, including the Council for Affairs of Sorbs/Wends at the *Land* Parliament.¹³⁵ It adopted the action plan in 2022 as a basis for language policy action for Lower Sorbian. As an instrument for both state and civil society action, the action plan aims to have a steering effect beyond administrative action and to also encourage associations and institutions to refer to its measures when planning their own projects. The action plan is conceptually based on strategic language planning and conceived as an intermediate step on the way to an integrated, holistic revitalisation concept for Lower Sorbian. Its measures aim, among other things, to increase language prestige, visibility, awareness of language rights, acceptance of language use, confidence to use the language in public (including in the presence of non-speakers) and opportunities to do so in order to create an environment in which Lower Sorbian speakers also use the language and those interested are motivated to learn, use and pass on the language. With regard to each measure, the action plan describes the details, states overall and detailed objectives, the language planning areas concerned, target groups, measurement criteria (indicators), deadlines, administrative responsibilities and the legal bases. The overarching, long-term target to be achieved is that Lower Sorbian is used as a means of communication in all areas of life.

¹³⁰ See § 2(1) of the respective rules of procedure: Geschäftsordnung des Beratenden Ausschusses für Fragen der friesischen Volksgruppe in Deutschland beim Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat; Geschäftsordnung des Beratenden Ausschusses für Fragen des sorbischen Volkes beim Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat; Geschäftsordnung des Beratenden Ausschusses für Fragen der dänischen Minderheit beim Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat; Geschäftsordnung des Beratenden Ausschusses für Fragen der deutschen Sinti und Roma beim Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat.

¹³¹ See § 2(1) of the rules of procedure.

¹³² See § 1 of the rules of procedure.

¹³³ See § (4) of the rules of procedure.

¹³⁴ See § 5(2) of the rules of procedure.

¹³⁵ The Council's members belong to the Sorbian people and are nominated by its associations. It advises the *Land* parliament in all matters under discussion that may affect the rights of Sorbs and their national identity, see Law on the Rights of the Sorbs (Wends) in the *Land* of Brandenburg (Gesetz zur Ausgestaltung der Rechte der Sorben (Wenden) im Land Brandenburg) (§5); Rules of Procedure of the Brandenburg *Land* Parliament (Geschäftsordnung des Landtages Brandenburg) (§89(1)). The Council for Affairs of Sorbs/Wends is not specifically dealing with the "Second state plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language".

As the legal bases, provisions of the Charter, the Framework Convention and/or national legal provisions are specified. The action plan as a whole indicates around two-thirds of the Charter undertakings and the provisions of the Framework Convention as one of the legal bases for measures. The undertakings in the media sector are not covered.¹³⁶

Commentary

The “Second state plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language” systematically takes into account those Charter undertakings that correlate with the current language planning of the Lower Sorbian linguistic group and the *Land* of Brandenburg. To ensure full and effective implementation of the Charter, it would be desirable that the state plan is extended to cover all Charter undertakings as well as monitoring recommendations.

5. Slovak Republic

In 2024, the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities was established as a direct advisory body to the government through the transformation of the former Committee of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups. It held its inaugural meeting on 27 January 2025.

The Government Council comprises representatives of relevant authorities and institutions as well as national minorities. Within the Government Council, there is a Chamber of National Minorities, which is composed of only the representatives of the national minorities. The Chair of the Government Council is the Prime Minister, and the Deputy Chair is the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for National Minorities.

In accordance with its statutes (Article 2(1)), “[t]he Council is a permanent expert, advisory, co-ordinating, consultative and initiative body of the Government of the Slovak Republic [...] on issues concerning national minorities, ethnic groups and their members [...], with emphasis on the rights of persons belonging to national minorities”. In particular, “[t]he Council is the permanent expert body for the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages [...] in accordance with Article 7(4) of the Language Charter and for the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities [...] in accordance with Article 15 of the Framework Convention” (Article 2(3)). It “monitors compliance with [... *inter alia*] the Framework Convention [and] the Language Charter” and “emphasises the recommendations of independent institutions active in the field of the rights of national minorities, expert bodies and institutions of [... *inter alia*] the Council of Europe [...]” (Article 3(1)). As regards the monitoring procedures concerning the two Council of Europe treaties, the Government Council shall “take a position on the national implementation of the Slovak Republic’s [...] obligations arising [*inter alia*] from the Framework Convention and the Charter,” “take note of the draft reports on the implementation of the [... *inter alia*] Framework Convention and the Charter” and “provide assistance to the relevant central government bodies in the preparation of reports on the [... *inter alia*] Framework Convention and the Charter” (Article 3(4)a, b, d). In addition, the Chamber of National Minorities “provides assistance to the Council of Europe in the evaluation of reports to the monitoring mechanisms of international conventions on the rights of national minorities” (Article 5(4)d).

In the Government Council, “permanent or temporary working groups [...] may be set up to deal with issues relating to individual national minorities in various fields, with a view to taking a representative view of the minority concerned. [...]” (Article 6(1)). The head of the working group may also invite external experts to work in the working group. The Government Council is to meet at least twice a year, but its members may initiate an extraordinary meeting.

Commentary

The Government Council of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities is explicitly mandated to act as government advisory body in accordance with Article 7.4 of the Charter and Article 15 of the Framework Convention and to take into account the recommendations made by the respective monitoring bodies. Under its mandate relating to the implementation of the Charter it could advise on the design, adoption and co-ordination of implementation measures. Given that the statutes explicitly foresee the possibility to set up permanent working groups on individual national minorities, the design and co-ordination of language-specific strategies and action plans is possible.

¹³⁶ See 2. Landesplan zur Stärkung der niedersorbischen Sprache - Maßnahmen der Brandenburger Landesregierung/2. Krajny plan k zmócnjenju dolnoserbskeje rěcy - Napšawy Bramborskego krajnego kněžarstwa, in particular pp. 2, 4, 8, 14, 16, 18. It is an update of the first *Landesplan* which was adopted in 2016.

As national minority associations are not necessarily specialised in language promotion, measures to strengthen their capacity with regard to the Charter would be advisable. In addition, external experts on the promotion of regional or minority languages could be invited to such a working group and advise on a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to a regional or minority language. A sufficient number of meetings would be necessary to carry out work on a strategy and action plan in an effective manner.

6. United Kingdom

The British-Irish Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (1998) regarding Northern Ireland provides that several subject areas would be identified for co-operation and implementation for mutual benefit under the aegis of the North South Ministerial Council. In some subject areas, co-operation is implemented by means of North South Implementation Bodies operating at a cross-border or all-island level. One of them is the Language Body¹³⁷ which consists of two separate and largely autonomous agencies: *Foras na Gaeilge* (for Irish) and *Tha Boord O Ulstèr-Scotch* (for Ulster Scots).

The statutory functions of *Foras na Gaeilge* include an explicit reference to the Charter, namely “facilitating and encouraging [the] use [of Irish] in speech and writing in public and private life in the south and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand”.¹³⁸

In the context of the promotion of Irish, *Foras na Gaeilge* advises administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors and undertaking research.

It involves Irish language organisations through two bodies: the Partnership Forum and the Language Development Forum. The objective of the Partnership Forum is to ensure that six “Lead Organisations”, each of which is in charge of a particular area of promoting Irish, plan their work in conjunction with each other and with *Foras na Gaeilge*. The Partnership Forum meets at least four times a year, and more frequently as considered necessary. The Language Development Forum represents local language interest groups funded by *Foras na Gaeilge* and aims at getting the views and advice of the linguistic group.¹³⁹

Foras na Gaeilge is further in charge of undertaking supportive projects and grant-aiding bodies and groups, supporting Irish-medium education and the teaching of Irish, undertaking research, promotional campaigns, and public and media relations, and developing terminology and dictionaries.

Commentary

Foras na Gaeilge is dedicated to the promotion of an individual regional or minority language (Irish) and has a precise mandate to promote it in accordance with the Charter. It advises authorities, but also other stakeholders relevant for the promotion of Irish and involves various Irish language organisations in the design of language policy. In addition to policy advice, it carries out activities of its own to promote Irish and supports other organisations in doing so. As an agency, it works permanently on the fulfilment of its mandate. *Foras na Gaeilge* would be well placed to design a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to Irish, but it has not yet undertaken such work.

III. Factors supporting the implementation of the Charter alongside the work of advisory bodies

1. EU funding instruments

The provision of sufficient financial means is another aspect of contributing effectively to implementing the Charter, including the measures conceived by advisory bodies. Several EU funding instruments can be and are being used to support the national implementation of certain undertakings under the Charter and measures contained in related strategies and action plans.¹⁴⁰ This is the case of the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), InvestEU, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance, Erasmus+, Creative Europe and Horizon Europe.

¹³⁷ The statutory authority for the Language Body is the establishing legislation i.e. the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 and the British-Irish Agreement Acts, as amended from time to time (subsequent amendments in 2002, 2005 and 2006).

¹³⁸ In accordance with Part 5 of the North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

¹³⁹ See *Foras na Gaeilge*'s website.

¹⁴⁰ See e.g. concerning Horizon Europe £2.5m Revive project to help preserve Cornish language, 19 January 2025.

An integrated approach may be chosen that co-ordinates measures supported by several funding instruments.

2. Council of Europe activities in other fields suitable for supporting states parties in the implementation of the Charter

Some activities of the Council of Europe in fields other than regional or minority languages/national minorities may support states parties in the implementation of the Charter. For example, the Council of Europe's European Youth Foundation supports projects and operations of youth-led non-governmental organisations that empower youth leaders to promote Council of Europe standards. Several organisations that support regional or minority languages, including Youth of European Nationalities, have already been awarded grants on topics related to national minorities and identity formation. The projects support young people to gain the knowledge, skills, and networks necessary to participate in political processes and promote their linguistic and cultural identities. For example, a project supported by the EYF as part of the Roma Youth Council of Ukraine's strategic action plan provided young Roma with basic knowledge about rights and youth participation. Participants developed and implemented a campaign based on the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on Roma youth participation,¹⁴¹ gaining practical experience and skills under mentorship. Projects supported by the European Youth Foundation could hence inform young users of regional or minority languages of the standards enshrined in the Charter (Article 6), train them on promoting its implementation, including in the framework of advisory bodies and strategies and action plans (Article 7.1.c), or raise their awareness of any youth-related undertaking of this treaty.¹⁴²

European Heritage Days, a Joint Programme with the EU, is a pan-European initiative across 48 states, promoting tangible and intangible heritage in line with the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention). Each year, the programme explores heritage through a thematic lens. In 2026, the theme will be "Heritage at Risk", bringing special attention to vulnerable cultural expressions. In this framework, the programme will propose concrete actions for integrating the heritage reflected by regional or minority languages into national and local European Heritage Days programmes across participating states. The organisation of these actions will in turn contribute to the implementation of different provisions of the Charter.

IV. Conclusions: Good practice in member States

According to article 7.4, state parties are encouraged to establish bodies, if necessary, for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to regional or minority languages. As noted in the commentaries above, the bodies described display different characteristics which are necessary for an advisory body to effectively advise the authorities on all matters pertaining to regional or minority languages, and in particular the implementation of this treaty through the development and implementation of strategies and action plans for the different languages and undertakings. These good practices are listed below and, when combined, form an institutional and substantive outline for the establishment of an advisory body responsible for the Charter undertakings.

Specialisation in a specific regional or minority language

Certain advisory bodies specialise in a specific regional or minority language. By way of example, *Foras na Gaeilge* in Ireland/the United Kingdom is an agency mandated *inter alia* to promote Irish as a regional or minority language in Northern Ireland, United Kingdom. Advisory bodies dedicated to an individual national minority such as the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs in the Czech Republic, the advisory councils in Austria and the advisory committees in Germany could constitute good practice if they also specialise in the regional or minority language used by the respective national minority.

Specialisation in the Charter and the monitoring recommendations

Examples include the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities, explicitly mandated to act as government advisory body in accordance with Article 7.4 of the Charter and Article 15 of the Framework Convention and to take into account the recommendations made by the respective monitoring bodies. Another example is *Foras na Gaeilge*, which is explicitly mandated to promote Irish in Northern Ireland in accordance with the Charter. The Implementation Conferences on the Charter and the Framework Convention in Germany are *inter alia* dedicated to the implementation of monitoring recommendations. Finally, the Government Council for National Minorities in the Czech Republic is explicitly mandated to act as government advisory body on the implementation of the Charter and the Framework Convention.

¹⁴¹ Recommendation CM/Rec(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Roma youth participation.

¹⁴² See Aleksandra Oszmiańska-Pagett: The protection of children's rights under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), Council of Europe 2016.

Co-operation with the Council of Europe

At the Implementation Conferences on the Charter and the Framework Convention in Germany, there is a regular practice of inviting a Council of Europe representative. The Government Council of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities is mandated to support the Council of Europe in monitoring the application of the Charter and the Framework Convention. Additional advisory bodies could invite an external expert to meetings, especially the Public Council on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities adjunct to the Human Rights Defender in Armenia.

Frequent meetings

For example, *Foras na Gaeilge* is an agency which works permanently on the fulfilment of its mandate. Also, its Partnership Forum meets as often as necessary and at least four times a year.

Designing, co-ordinating, implementing and monitoring a strategy and action plan for the application of the Charter to a regional or minority language

One example is the Government Council for National Minorities in the Czech Republic, which is preparing the adoption of the “Strategy and Action Plan for implementing the Czech Republic’s undertakings to promoting the German language in accordance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” (not yet adopted at the time of writing). In Germany, the *Land* of Brandenburg has adopted a “Second state plan to strengthen the Lower Sorbian language” (strategy and action plan that takes Charter undertakings into account).

Implementing activities that promote a regional or minority language

For example, the activities of *Foras na Gaeilge*, which is mandated to carry out itself activities/projects promoting Irish and to provide grants for this purpose to other organisations.

V. Recommendations

In order to promote regional or minority languages, and in particular to establish bodies for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to such languages in accordance with Article 7.4 of the Charter, it is recommended to:

1. establish, if necessary, for each regional or minority language used in the respective member state, a permanent advisory body which is mandated to advise the authorities on all matters pertaining to the promotion of this language, including, where applicable, the implementation of the Charter and the recommendations made by the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers during the monitoring procedure;
2. give the advisory body a mandate to design a strategy and action plan for the promotion of the language, and where applicable the application of the Charter to the language, to co-ordinate their adoption and implementation by the authorities, to monitor their achievements, especially any increase in the use of the language, based on outcome indicators and socio-linguistic data, and, if needed according to the findings of such monitoring, to strengthen the targets and measures foreseen in the strategy and action plan;
3. define in the strategy quantitative and qualitative targets concerning an increase in the number of speakers and users of the language;
4. indicate in the strategy’s action plan, with regard to each field covered and where applicable each provision of the Charter and the related Council of Europe monitoring recommendations, specific implementation measures in policies, legislation and practice and specify the administrative responsibilities and the timeframe for executing each measure;
5. use the Council of Europe’s conceptual guidance (including where applicable its guidance pertaining to the interpretation of the treaty provisions and monitoring recommendations) as a template for drawing up the strategy and action plan;
6. consider extending, if applicable, the strategy and action plan to the linguistic provisions of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;
7. apply to relevant funds and financial instruments of the EU and other institutions to support the implementation of the strategy and action plan;
8. provide that the advisory body comprises representatives of the state, regional and local authorities (and where applicable those in charge of implementing the Charter), the group using the language, the media, other stakeholders from the fields covered and equality bodies to ensure effective cross-sectoral consultation and co-ordination;

9. consider inviting external experts on the promotion of regional or minority languages to participate in the advisory body's meetings;
10. support capacity-building concerning regional and minority languages and where applicable the Charter for representatives of the group using the language to promote their active participation in all stages of the advisory body's work;
11. provide that the advisory body meets regularly and as frequently as necessary to fulfil its mandate;
12. provide the advisory body with the staff and financial resources required to ensure its continuous work and the fulfilment of its mandate;
13. consider entrusting the advisory body also with the organisation of activities promoting a regional or minority language.

Chapter IV: Updating ratification instruments on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

I. Background

In the Charter, the undertakings concerning the promotion of regional or minority languages are contained in two parts. Part II (Article 7) contains the treaty's "objectives and principles" which constitute the minimum level of promotion and therefore apply to each regional or minority language in the state party. Part III (Articles 8-14) contains a list of specific undertakings in various areas of public life. States parties decide to which of its regional or minority languages Part III shall apply. The choice of languages to be covered by Part III must not be arbitrary or discriminatory and serve the purpose to promote the use of the language. In addition, states decide which Part III undertakings shall apply to each selected language. While the selection of undertakings for a language should at least reflect its current situation in policies, legislation and practice, it may also go beyond the status quo to set medium- and long-term development targets for that language.

A consequence of this approach is that the Charter opens up the possibility of accepting additional undertakings over time: Article 3.2 provides that a state party may, at any time, notify the Secretary General of the Council of Europe that it accepts undertakings of the Charter not already specified in its ratification instrument or that it will apply Part III to other regional or minority languages, i.e. to languages currently covered only by Part II. The Charter allows states parties only to accept additional undertakings, but not to lower the level of promotion in accordance with the ratification instrument. Several states parties have already applied the aforementioned procedure in accordance with Article 3.2 since the entry into force of the Charter in 1998. The Committee of Ministers has supported the idea that states parties consider taking on additional obligations under the Charter while guaranteeing acquired rights in the field of minority language promotion.¹⁴³

During its monitoring work, the Committee of Experts noted with regard to some states parties that the undertakings selected at the time of ratification did not fully reflect the situation of regional or minority languages, including improvements in their situation that have occurred since ratification, so that the Charter cannot serve as a tool for a tailor-made language policy. It invited all states parties to regularly review the level of protection and to update the ratification instruments in accordance with the procedure set out in Article 3.2. In recent years, several states parties have implemented the Committee of Experts' recommendations and updated their ratification instruments in co-operation with the Council of Europe, including the United Kingdom, acting for the Isle of Man (2020), Norway (2021),¹⁴⁴ and the Czech Republic (2024), which were commended by the Committee of Experts.

This chapter will provide an overview of current procedures in states parties and, where possible, indicate the undertakings which could be accepted by these States.

¹⁴³ See CM/AS(2018)Rec2118-final - "The protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in Europe" - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2118 (2018) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2018 at the 1321st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies), para. 3.

¹⁴⁴ On 10 September 2025, Norway notified the Council of Europe that it has accepted additional Part III undertakings with regard to North Sami.

II. Current procedures within States parties

1. Czech Republic

Moravian Croatian is a regional or minority language in the Czech Republic covered by Part II of the Charter. Its name was not mentioned in the ratification instrument deposited by the Czech Republic in 2006. In 2015, the Czech authorities informed the Committee of Experts that they considered to mention Moravian Croatian in the ratification instrument, which the Committee of Experts welcomed.¹⁴⁵ In 2025, the authorities informed CDADI that the government is expected to decide about the additional declaration to the ratification instrument soon. Furthermore, in 2024, the Committee of Experts had observed that aspects of the Czech legislation pertaining to the use of regional or minority languages before judicial authorities go beyond the current level of the Czech Republic's ratification and invited the authorities to consider accepting the corresponding undertaking (Article 9.1.a.i) for all the languages protected under Part III of the Charter.¹⁴⁶ There is no information as to whether the Czech Republic will include that undertaking in its planned declaration concerning Moravian Croatian.

2. Denmark

In its evaluation reports on Denmark adopted since 2010, the Committee of Experts noted that the Charter undertakings chosen by Denmark for German do not adequately reflect the situation of that language, including in the fields of judicial authorities, administrative authorities and media, and encouraged the authorities to accept additional undertakings "in a more ambitious manner".¹⁴⁷ The Committee of Experts further noted that "[s]uch a step would contribute to further raise the awareness and appreciation of German as a minority language and once again confirm the commitment of Denmark to minority language protection and promotion in the spirit of the Charter."¹⁴⁸ At a Charter Implementation Roundtable held in Copenhagen in 2011, representatives of the Danish authorities, the *Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger* (BdN, umbrella association of the German minority) and the Council of Europe discussed a list of additional undertakings that could be accepted by Denmark. In 2019, the BdN submitted an updated list of undertakings to the authorities. Denmark and Germany included the extension of Denmark's ratification instrument as the first point in the Joint Action Plan for Future German-Danish Co-operation signed in 2022.¹⁴⁹ In 2023, the Danish authorities informed the Committee of Experts that effective steps were taken to prepare the deposit of Denmark's declaration to the ratification instrument to the Council of Europe, also using information received from the Council of Europe on the selected undertakings.¹⁵⁰ The Committee of Experts welcomed the preparatory measures and encouraged the Danish authorities to complete this process before 1 September 2025.¹⁵¹

In a statement published in March 2025, the BdN regretted that the process had still not been finalised despite several years of preparation. In June 2025, the Danish authorities informed CDADI that they had no timeline for the notification of the Council of Europe.

3. Germany

In 2021, the parliament of the *Land* of Brandenburg asked the *Land* government to examine which further undertakings under the Charter could be accepted for Lower Sorbian and Low German. After examination in consultation with regional or minority language organisations, the *Land* government submitted a report to the *Land* parliament which proposed the acceptance of further undertakings for Lower Sorbian and Low German under the Charter. In 2023, the *Land* parliament asked the *Land* government to ask the Federal Ministry of the Interior to initiate the notification procedure with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Following this initiative, the Federal Ministry of the Interior consulted the other *Länder* as to whether they are also willing to accept additional undertakings for any regional or minority language. The government of the Free State of Saxony agreed to examine the matter for Upper Sorbian, but has not yet completed this process. The Federal Ministry of the Interior will finalise the national procedure once it has received the final decision by the Free State of Saxony and expects that the Council of Europe will be notified of the extension of the ratification instrument at the end of 2025 or in 2026.

¹⁴⁵ See Third evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the Czech Republic, ECRML(2015)6, para. 41.

¹⁴⁶ See Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Czechia, ECRML(2024)4, para. 41.

¹⁴⁷ See Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Denmark, CM(2017)117, para. 8; Fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Denmark, ECRML(2014)9, para. 13; Third evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Denmark, ECRML(2011)1, para. 13.

¹⁴⁸ Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action in the fifth monitoring cycle for Denmark, MIN-LANG(2020)13, para. 20.

¹⁴⁹ Joint Action Plan for Future German-Danish Co-operation.

¹⁵⁰ Articles 8.1.ai, bi, ci; 9.1.a.ii, a.iii, a.iv, b.ii, c.ii, d; 10.1.a.iii, b, c, 2.a, b, g, 3.c, 4.b; 13.2.b.

¹⁵¹ See Sixth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Denmark, MIN-LANG(2023)23, para. 5.

The German authorities informed CDADI that the main reason for Brandenburg's initiative to extend its undertakings under the Charter has been the fact that this *Land* had already been implementing measures exceeding its present obligations. Moreover, the authorities are ready to commit themselves to greater regional or minority language promotion in the medium and long term. According to the federal authorities, extending the obligations under the Charter by updating the ratification instrument generally improves consistency between implementation practice and legal obligations. It also makes efforts to promote regional or minority languages more visible to the general public in the state and internationally. In addition, it guarantees more sustainable promotion for regional or minority languages, which in the view of the authorities should not only be the aim of states parties, but is very important above all from the perspective of the speakers of these languages.

4. Netherlands

In 2008, experts from the University of Groningen published a feasibility study¹⁵² about the possible application of Part III of the Charter to Low Saxon. The study had been commissioned by the Low Saxon speaking Provinces of Drenthe, Groningen and Overijssel as well as the Low Saxon speaking municipalities of Ooststellingwerf and Weststellingwerf (Province of Fryslân) and drawn up in close consultation with the umbrella association of the users of Low Saxon speakers. It reached the conclusion that policies, legislation and practice concerning Low Saxon already comply with at least 37 Part III undertakings. In 2009, the regional and local authorities concerned endorsed the study's findings (including the suggested list of undertakings) and asked the state authorities to apply Part III to Low Saxon. However, as the state authorities and the regional and local authorities have not reached an agreement on this matter, the Committee of Experts encouraged the Dutch authorities to continue the dialogue with the Low Saxon speakers about the possible application of Part III.¹⁵³ In 2022, the Committee of Experts also invited the Dutch authorities to explore the possibility of accepting new undertakings in the field of media for Frisian.¹⁵⁴

In 2024, the Province of Limburg announced that it will strengthen the promotion of Limburgish with a view to preparing for the extension of the application of Part III of the Charter to Limburgish in 2030. To this effect, the provincial authorities plan to intensify the application of Part II of the Charter (through measures in the fields of childcare, education, awareness-raising and support to the language organisation *Hoes veur 't Limburgs*) and to establish an action committee in charge of advising the provincial government on the preparation for the application of Part III.¹⁵⁵ The state authorities informed CDADI that they are open to consider supporting the initiative of the Province of Limburg. They also stated that it could be envisaged to choose not only Charter undertakings that have already been implemented, but also undertakings that will only be implemented in the medium or long term, and that it could be considered to apply different undertakings to the individual varieties of Limburgish. The authorities would welcome it if the Council of Europe could support the selection of undertakings by providing legal advice.

5. Poland

During all monitoring cycles, the Committee of Experts has observed that Poland could have selected additional undertakings under the Charter for languages such as Belarusian, German and Lithuanian, which are used by a relatively high number of speakers in particular geographical areas where they make up a considerable share or the majority of the local population. This observation concerned in particular undertakings in the fields of court proceedings (Article 9.1), local branches of the state authorities (Article 10.1) and public services (Article 10.3). The Committee of Experts therefore repeatedly invited the Polish authorities to consider extending the ratification instrument.¹⁵⁶

6. Serbia

In the course of monitoring, the Committee of Experts found that the undertakings which had been chosen by Serbia did not adequately reflect the policies, legislation and practice with respect to all minority languages. In particular, it noted that the authorities take measures relevant in accordance with undertakings under Part III of the Charter not yet ratified, both regarding languages covered by Part III and languages covered only by Part II. In addition, Serbia applies only Part II to languages whose situation is comparable, and in some fields

¹⁵² Nedersaksisch waar het kan.

¹⁵³ See Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the Netherlands, ECRML(2016)4, paras. 19-21; Fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the Netherlands, ECRML(2012)6, paras. 9-10.

¹⁵⁴ Articles 11.1.g and 11.1.e, see Seventh evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the Netherlands, MIN-LANG(2022)19, para. 30.

¹⁵⁵ See Provincie zet vol in op Deil-III-erkenning veur de Limburgse taal in 2030, www.limburg.nl, 6 November 2024.

¹⁵⁶ See Fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, MIN-LANG(2023)11, para. 13; Third evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, MIN-LANG(2021)15, para. 6; Second evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, ECRML(2015)7, para. 26; First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Poland, ECRML(2011)5, para. 23.

more favourable, than the situation of some languages also covered by Part III. Representatives of the speakers of languages covered only by Part II have repeatedly expressed an interest in Part III promotion of their languages. In 2007 (first monitoring cycle), the Serbian authorities stated that the implementation of the Charter is a process which can result in the specification of additional languages to which its Part III will apply and that such steps will be considered as soon as the languages currently covered by Part II only have been introduced in education. During all monitoring cycles, the Committee of Experts encouraged the authorities to pursue the envisaged steps.¹⁵⁷

In the meantime, teaching in and of all regional or minority languages in Serbia has been introduced in education. In 2023, the Committee of Experts encouraged the Serbian authorities to review the level of protection of the regional or minority languages under the Charter, to bring the level of commitment in line with policies, legislation and practice, and to extend the ratification accordingly in conformity with the procedure set out in Article 3.2.¹⁵⁸ At a Charter Implementation Roundtable held in Belgrade in 2025, representatives of the authorities, national minorities and the Council of Europe discussed, among other things, the possible extension of Serbia's ratification, particularly regarding the readiness of national authorities to consider, in the future and in line with available capacities and circumstances, extending the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 3.2 of the Charter. In general, the authorities emphasise that Serbia's ratification of the Charter is characterised by the goal to apply an equal level of protection to the regional or minority languages.

7. Slovak Republic

In 2025, the Committee of Experts noted that the Slovak Republic has taken measures concerning several regional or minority languages (Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Hungarian, Polish, Romani, Ruthenian, Ukrainian) that are relevant in accordance with Charter undertakings not ratified for them. The Committee of Experts welcomed these measures and encouraged the Slovak authorities to consider ratifying the undertakings concerned.¹⁵⁹

8. United Kingdom

In 2024, the UK Government received an application from Cornwall Council concerning the application of Part III of the Charter to Cornish. Furthermore, in 2025, it received an application from the Government of the Crown Dependency of Jersey, which is not part of the United Kingdom, regarding the extension of the application of the Charter to the territory of Jersey and the application of Part III to Jerriais. In both cases, lists of undertakings proposed to be accepted were submitted to the UK authorities.

The UK authorities informed CDADI that they are considering these applications and noted that the processes are slightly different for each, given the applicants are different types of administrations (an English local authority in the case of Cornwall and a crown dependency in the case of Jersey).

9. Croatia

Croatia is also considering the question whether to make a new declaration to its ratification instrument on the Charter. However, this case differs from those described above in that it does not concern the procedure under Article 3.2. When ratifying the Charter in 1997, Croatia made the reservation¹⁶⁰ "that (...) the provisions of Article 7, paragraph 5, of the Charter shall not apply." Article 7.5 covers the promotion of "non-territorial languages". In Croatia, Romani is the only non-territorial language within the meaning of the Charter and is excluded from promotion under this treaty due to the reservation.¹⁶¹ Ever since, the Committee of Experts and other representatives of the Council of Europe, including the Commissioner for Human Rights, have repeatedly encouraged Croatia to withdraw the reservation in accordance with the procedure in Article 21.2 of the Charter.¹⁶² In 2013, the Croatian authorities informed the Council of Europe that they would implement

¹⁵⁷ See Fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Serbia, CM(2018)144, para. 36; Third evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Serbia, ECRML(2016)1, para. 18; Second evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Serbia, ECRML(2013)3, para. 18; First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Serbia, ECRML(2009)2, para. 32.

¹⁵⁸ Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Serbia, MIN-LANG(2023)3, paras. 6-8.

¹⁵⁹ Bulgarian: Article 9.1.ai; Croatian: Article 9.1.ai; German: Articles 8.1.cii, 9.1.ai, 9.3, 10.1.b, 10.1.c, 10.2.a; Hungarian: Article 9.1.ai; Polish: Article 9.1.ai; Romani: Articles 9.1.ai, 9.3, 10.1.b, 10.1.c, 10.4.b; Ruthenian: Articles 9.1.ai, 10.1.b, 10.1.c; Ukrainian: Articles 8.2, 9.1.ai, 10.1.b, 10.1.c; see Sixth Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on the Slovak Republic, MIN-LANG(2025)12, paras. 6, 27, 79, 88, 98, 117, 130, 143.

¹⁶⁰ In 2023, the Committee of Ministers instructed the steering committees to draw the attention of member states to reservations which impact substantively on the effectiveness of the implementation of conventions, see Terms of Reference of Intergovernmental Structures – List of Conventions, CM(2023)132-final.

¹⁶¹ See Seventh evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, MIN-LANG(2024)5, para. 9 (footnote 3); Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, ECRML(2015)2, paras. 7-16.

this recommendation. In 2023, the authorities confirmed again that the reservation would be withdrawn, without providing a timeline. The Committee of Experts maintained its view that withdrawing the reservation would be a very commendable step taken in the spirit of the Charter, allowing for a more structured protection and promotion of Romani, and called on the Croatian authorities to complete the respective procedure without further delay.¹⁶³ Croatia has informed CDADI that interministerial discussions regarding the withdrawal of the reservation are planned for the second half of 2025. They will involve the Ministry of Judiciary, Public Administration and Digital Transformation (in charge of the Charter), the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth, and the Government Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities.

Conclusions

Experience with the implementation of the Charter shows that the question of updating ratification instruments in accordance with Article 3.2 arises in many states parties, in particular when the level of protection of certain languages commendably improves over time. Several states have launched the procedure on their own initiative and some states have repeated it at a later date on the basis of positive experience. With regard to other states, the Committee of Experts has noted that their policies, legislation and practice in relation to individual languages do comply with undertakings not yet ratified or would allow Part III of the Charter to be applied to languages promoted only by Part II. In the case of several states, procedures for updating ratification instruments have been ongoing for more than a decade.

The undertakings ratified should be selected in such a way that they generate momentum for the further development of the languages they apply to. By updating their ratification instruments and setting long-term goals, states demonstrate their political commitment to the sustainable development of their regional or minority languages. In practical terms, updating the ratification instrument increases consistency between practice and undertakings and is, not least, a means of showcasing national good practice. Several states have co-operated with the Council of Europe during the process or would welcome such co-operation, which may cover advice on the procedure, the identification of undertakings which the state party already complies with, the scope of individual undertakings and the technical modalities of selecting additional undertakings from the Charter's "menu".

III. Recommendations

In order to support the effective promotion of regional or minority languages, it is recommended to:

1. regularly review whether the level of protection and promotion of each regional or minority language under the Charter reflects its specific needs and situation in policies, legislation and practice, including improvements in its situation as may have occurred since ratification;
2. where required according to the results of such a review, accept additional undertakings under the Charter in accordance with the procedure set out in its Article 3.2 to adapt the level of promotion of the language under this treaty to its situation and to set medium and long-term promotion targets;
3. carry out dialogue processes and procedures for the acceptance of additional undertakings under the Charter in a timely fashion and complete the procedures which are already under way soon;
4. consider requesting assistance from the Council of Europe to facilitate the identification of undertakings that could be accepted by them.

¹⁶² See Seventh evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, MIN-LANG(2024)5, para. 9; Sixth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, MIN-LANG(2019)18, para. 7; Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, ECRML(2015)2, paras. 7-8; Fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, ECRML(2010)9, paras. 85-86; First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, ECRML(2001)2, para. 46.

¹⁶³ See Seventh evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Croatia, MIN-LANG(2024)5, para. 9.

Chapter V: Encouraging ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

I. Background

Since the early years of the Charter's implementation, the Committee of Ministers has regularly underlined the importance of this treaty as an essential tool for the promotion and the protection of regional or minority languages in numerous areas of public life and its important role in improving minority protection in Europe, stressing that it would be desirable that the principles contained in the Charter be applied throughout the continent.¹⁶⁴ The Committee of Ministers has therefore “called upon those Council of Europe member States which have not yet ratified the Charter to do so, in particular those States which undertook to ratify the Charter when acceding to the Council of Europe.”¹⁶⁵ The Committee of Ministers has instructed CDADI and the other steering committees to carry out, at regular intervals, an examination of some or all of the conventions for which they have been given responsibility, in co-operation, where appropriate, with the relevant convention-based bodies, in order to identify any operational problems or obstacles to ratification of the relevant conventions; draw the attention of member States to reservations which impact substantively on the effectiveness of their implementation; and encourage States to regularly examine the possibility and/or desirability of becoming a Party to Council of Europe conventions.

The Committee of Ministers has also highlighted the importance of support by the Council of Europe to the preparation of ratification. It stressed that the Council of Europe “engages with the relevant national authorities in order to promote ratification of the Charter by raising awareness, providing legal advice and building capacity”, for example through the Council of Europe’s Action Plan for Georgia (2016-2019). Mention was also made of the Council of Europe’s Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova (2017-2020), which supported the application of the standards of the Charter in pilot municipalities, and bilateral meetings with national authorities outside the framework of action plans.¹⁶⁶

The Committee of Ministers’ continuous political support notwithstanding, the most recent ratification of the Charter, which was facilitated by the Council of Europe, dates back to 2010, and the most recent signature to 2021. Against this background, the present chapter provides an overview of the preparatory measures for ratification taken by member States that have signed the Charter, have undertaken to sign and ratify it, have co-operated with the Council of Europe on this matter and/or have ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.¹⁶⁷ Three states having signed the Charter will not be covered. Iceland and Malta signed the treaty on 7 May 1999 and 5 November 1992, respectively. However, no regional or minority languages are used in these states. In addition, the Russian Federation’s signature of 10 May 2001 has been suspended since 16 March 2022. San Marino, which has ratified the Framework Convention, will not be covered as no regional or minority language is used in its territory.

II. Preparations for ratification of the Charter within Council of Europe member States

1. Albania

When acceding to the Council of Europe, Albania committed itself to signing and ratifying the Charter.¹⁶⁸ Albania has not yet signed the treaty. In 2014 and 2019, the Council of Europe supported the Albanian authorities in the selection of the undertakings of the Charter which Albania could ratify. This assistance was provided as part of the European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey.

¹⁶⁴ See CM/Cong(2011)Rec286-final - “Minority languages – an asset for regional development” – Recommendation 286 (2010) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 July 2011 at the 1118th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), para. 3.; CM/AS(2011)Rec1944-final - “The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” – Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1944 (2010) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 July 2011 at the 1118th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), para. 2; CM/AS(2004)Rec1623-final - Rights of national minorities - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1623 (2003) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 15 December 2004 at the 909th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), para. 3; see also CM/AS(2018)Rec2118-final - “The protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in Europe” - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2118 (2018) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2018 at the 1321st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), para. 3; CM/AS(2004)Rec1623-final - Rights of national minorities - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1623 (2003) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 15 December 2004 at the 909th meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), para. 3. Furthermore, the Committee of Ministers has instructed the steering committees to draw the attention of member states to relevant conventions for which they have been given responsibility, see Terms of Reference of Intergovernmental Structures – List of Conventions, CM(2023)132-final.

¹⁶⁵ CM/Del/Dec(2023)1470/10.2a.

¹⁶⁶ CM/AS(2018)Rec2118-final - “The protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in Europe” - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2118 (2018) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 4 July 2018 at the 1321st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies), para. 3.

¹⁶⁷ For a full list of declarations made at the time of signature of the Charter, see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=declarations-by-treaty&numSte=148&codeNature=0>.

¹⁶⁸ See Parliamentary Assembly Opinion 189 (1995), para. 17.11.

In 2023, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities “appreciate[d] the co-operation between the Albanian authorities and the Council of Europe regarding the ratification process”. In light of the work done so far and requests of representatives of national minorities for ratification, the Advisory Committee “encourage[d] the authorities to sign and ratify promptly” the Charter.¹⁶⁹

2. Azerbaijan

When acceding to the Council of Europe, Azerbaijan committed itself to signing and ratifying the Charter by 25 January 2002.¹⁷⁰ Azerbaijan signed the treaty on 21 December 2001

The Council of Europe has offered Azerbaijan support with the preparation of ratification on several occasions. In 2011, a proposal for an EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme on facilitation of ratification was submitted to the authorities, but no decision has been taken. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe invited Azerbaijan to take advantage of the legal assistance provided by Council of Europe experts with a view to drawing up an instrument of ratification.¹⁷¹ In 2012, representatives of the Council of Europe and the authorities discussed an expert proposal for a draft ratification instrument.¹⁷² In 2015, the Council of Europe proposed to the authorities to set up an inter-ministerial working group on ratification and, already prior to ratification, to simulate the application of the treaty in pilot municipalities.¹⁷³

The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention has called on Azerbaijan in opinions to comply with its post-accession commitment and ratify the Charter.¹⁷⁴ In 2024, “[t]he Advisory Committee, with a view to promoting minority cultures and languages as part of Azerbaijan’s cultural heritage and cultural diversity, encourage[d] again the authorities to ratify the [...] Charter.”¹⁷⁵

3. Bulgaria

Bulgaria has not signed the Charter. In 2020, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention noted that the Charter is “a treaty designed to protect traditionally used minority languages as part of Europe’s cultural heritage. It contains practical promotional measures for minority languages in different fields and could help the authorities to promote in a structured way the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to develop their language and culture as essential elements of their identity. The Advisory Committee [was] not aware of principal objections in Bulgaria to considering ratifying this Council of Europe treaty, encourage[d] the authorities to explore this matter[, and ...] invite[d] the authorities to consider ratifying” the Charter.¹⁷⁶ In 2024, the Advisory Committee considered that ratification “could help the authorities to promote in a structured way the languages spoken by persons belonging to national minorities, including numerically smaller ones. Ratification of the Language Charter would also help to provide conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to develop their respective languages and cultures as essential elements of their identity, thereby contributing to the implementation of the Framework Convention.” Therefore, “[t]he Advisory Committee continue[d] to encourage the authorities to sign and ratify the [Charter] with a view to promoting minority cultures and languages as part of Bulgaria’s cultural heritage and cultural diversity.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁹ See Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Albania, ACFC/OP/V(2022)1, paras. 76, 79, 81.

¹⁷⁰ See Parliamentary Assembly Opinion 222(2000), para. 14(1)e.

¹⁷¹ See Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly December 2011 Communication, Doc. 12881, 16 March 2012, section 3.1.2.

¹⁷² See European Centre for Minority Issues (ed.): Ready for ratification. A Handbook with twenty proposed instruments of ratification, Volume 1, Flensburg 2011, pp. 28-29. The handbook lists the languages that correspond to the definition of “regional or minority languages” contained in the Charter and indicates which provisions of the Charter correspond in whole or in part to provisions of national legislation. On the basis of the linguistic and legal situation, it makes a proposal for a ratification instrument, listing the provisions of the Charter that are recommended for ratification and the languages to be covered by them.

¹⁷³ See Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the Parliamentary Assembly Communication, Doc. 13993, 2 March 2016, section 3.1.2.

¹⁷⁴ See Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Azerbaijan, ACFC/OP/IV(2017)006, para. 69; Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on Azerbaijan, ACFC/OP/III(2012)005, para. 89.

¹⁷⁵ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Azerbaijan, ACFC/OP/V(2024)1, paras. 64, 66.

¹⁷⁶ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Bulgaria, ACFC/OP/IV(2020)001Final, paras. 67, 69.

¹⁷⁷ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Bulgaria, ACFC/OP/V(2024)2, paras. 73, 75.

4. Estonia

Estonia has not signed the Charter. In 2009, the Council of Europe organised a seminar on ratification of the Charter in co-operation with representatives of the Estonian authorities, the Parliament and national minorities.¹⁷⁸ Following this event, the European Centre for Minority Issues, in co-operation with the Council of Europe, published a proposal for a ratification instrument in 2011.¹⁷⁹ In 2022, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention noted that the Charter is “a treaty designed to protect traditionally used minority languages as part of Europe’s cultural heritage. It provides promotional measures for historical minority languages in different fields and could help the authorities to promote in a structured way the conditions necessary for persons belonging to relevant national minorities to develop their language and culture as essential elements of their identity.” Therefore, “[t]he Advisory Committee ask[ed] the Estonian authorities to consider ratifying the [Charter].”¹⁸⁰

5. France

France signed the Charter on 7 May 1999. Its declaration handed to the Secretary General on the same day specifies the undertakings of the Charter that France wished to apply. However, in June 1999, the Constitutional Court declared that some aspects of the Charter were contrary to the French Constitution. In 2008, a provision recognising that the regional languages are part of the heritage of France (Article 75-1) was added in the constitution. In 2014, a constitutional bill was adopted by the National Assembly to ratify the Charter. However, the text was rejected by the Senate in 2015. In 2014, 2015 and 2021, several local and regional authorities, in agreement with the state authorities and in co-operation with the Council of Europe, adopted their own charters to promote their respective regional language, which contained practices based on the Charter already implemented by France in accordance with national legislation.

6. Georgia

When acceding to the Council of Europe, Georgia committed itself to signing and ratifying the Charter by 27 April 2000.¹⁸¹ Georgia has not yet signed the treaty.

The Council of Europe and Georgia have jointly organised awareness-raising activities on the Charter from 1999. In 2013, the authorities asked the Council of Europe for support in identifying undertakings for a draft ratification instrument, thereby following the encouragement made by the Secretary General to accept legal expertise by the Council of Europe.¹⁸² This work was carried out by a Georgian high-level inter-ministerial commission on the Charter and Council of Europe experts in the same year.¹⁸³ In order to further prepare the ratification of the Charter and its implementation, the Council of Europe/EU project “Civic Integration of National Minorities in Georgia and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” was included in the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2013-2015 and implemented from 2015 to 2017.¹⁸⁴ A follow-up project was included in the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2016-2019.¹⁸⁵

In 2019, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention noted that the Charter had been due for ratification since 2000. It further observed that legal advice had been provided and awareness-raising activities had been carried out during the last years. Against this background, the Advisory Committee “regret[ted] that Georgia [had] however still neither signed nor ratified” and “invite[d] the authorities to comply with their pre-accession commitment and to ratify the [Language] Charter.”¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸ See Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly, December 2009 Communication, Doc. 12300, 21 June 2010, section “Signatures and ratifications”.

¹⁷⁹ See European Centre for Minority Issues (ed.): Ready for ratification, op. cit., pp. 49-50.

¹⁸⁰ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Estonia, ACFC/OP/IV(2021)5, paras. 81, 83. See the similar recommendation in: Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Estonia, ACFC/OP/IV(2015)002, para. 70.

¹⁸¹ See Parliamentary Assembly Opinion 209 (1999), para. d.

¹⁸² See Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly, Communication, Doc. 13436, 3 March 2014, para. 3.1.3.

¹⁸³ See Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly, Communication, 2 March 2016, Doc. 13993, para. 3.1.3.

¹⁸⁴ See the description of the project activities in: Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly, Communication, 18 April 2018, Doc. 14530, para. 4.1.

¹⁸⁵ European Union and Council of Europe Partnership for Good Governance project “Protecting national minorities and minority languages in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Belarus”, co-funded by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe (awareness-raising and capacity building), see Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly, Communication, 26 April 2021, Doc. 15276, para. 36.

¹⁸⁶ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on Georgia, ACFC/OP/III(2019)002, paras. 107, 110.

In 2024, the Advisory Committee “consider[ed] that [...] ratification could help the authorities to promote in a structured way the languages spoken by national minorities, including numerically smaller ones, and help to provide conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to develop their respective languages and cultures as essential elements of their identity, thereby contributing to the implementation of the Framework Convention.” Therefore, the Advisory Committee “encourage[d] the authorities to finally sign and ratify” the Charter.¹⁸⁷

7. Ireland

Ireland, which has ratified the Framework Convention, has not signed the Charter. The Council of Europe is ready to support Ireland, as any other member state, with the preparation of ratification, which the authorities are currently examining.

8. Italy

Italy signed the Charter on 27 June 2000. During the last legislatures of the Italian parliament, several draft laws on ratification of the Charter were presented and discussed in committees. However, the respective parliamentary procedure was never completed before the end of each legislature. In the present 19th legislature, draft laws on ratification were presented again. Draft Law No. 12 (13 October 2022) essentially reproduces the text of the draft law proposed by the government since the 16th legislature (Chamber Act No. 5118), which was adopted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies on 9 May 2012.¹⁸⁸ In addition, Draft Law No. 230 (25 October 2022) largely reproduces the text approved by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies on 16 October 2007.¹⁸⁹ In 2022, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention “encourage[d] the authorities to finalise the ratification process.”¹⁹⁰

9. Latvia

Latvia, which has ratified the Framework Convention, has not signed the Charter. The Council of Europe has offered Latvia support with the preparation of ratification, but no relevant joint activities have been carried out to date.¹⁹¹

10. Lithuania

Lithuania has not signed the Charter. In 2013, following a proposal made by the Council of Europe to the Lithuanian authorities, a parliamentary hearing and meetings between representatives of the Council of Europe and various ministries and state bodies were held in Lithuania to discuss the possible ratification of the Charter, including an expert proposal for a draft ratification instrument,¹⁹² and the establishment of a dedicated inter-ministerial working group. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention “welcome[d] this development and encourage[d] Lithuania to ratify the Charter.”¹⁹³ Furthermore, the Secretary General “encouraged [Lithuania] to ratify the Charter so as to further consolidate its minority legislation and enable the country to play an active role in the Charter mechanism at European level.”¹⁹⁴ In 2024, the Advisory Committee “consider[ed] that being a party to the Charter would support Lithuania in further developing its legislation, policy and practice regarding the use of minority languages and thereby support the implementation of several articles of the Framework Convention. [...] The Advisory Committee encourage[d] the authorities to sign and ratify the [Charter] with a view to promoting minority cultures and languages as part of Lithuania’s cultural heritage and cultural diversity.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁷ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Georgia, ACFC/OP/IV(2023)2, paras. 57, 60.

¹⁸⁸ Legislatura 19^a - Disegno di legge n. 12 on the initiative of Senators Unterberger and Durnwalder.

¹⁸⁹ Legislatura 19^a - Disegno di legge n. 230 on the initiative of Senators Rojic and Alfieri. A third draft law was presented, but contains various technical errors as regards the ratification instrument (Disegno di legge n. 423, 19 December 2022).

¹⁹⁰ See Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Italy, ACFC/OP/V(2021)11, para. 79.

¹⁹¹ As regards the linguistic and legal situation in Latvia in light of the Charter, see European Centre for Minority Issues (ed.): Ready for ratification, op. cit., pp. 76-84.

¹⁹² See European Centre for Minority Issues (ed.): Ready for ratification, op. cit., pp. 90-92.

¹⁹³ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Third Opinion on Lithuania, ACFC/OP/III(2013)005, para. 67.

¹⁹⁴ Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the Parliamentary Assembly Communication, Doc. 13436, 3 March 2014, section 3.2.3; see also Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the Parliamentary Assembly Communication, Doc. 13993, 2 March 2016, section 3.2.4.

¹⁹⁵ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Lithuania, ACFC/OP/V(2024)3, paras. 80, 82.

11. North Macedonia

When acceding to the Council of Europe, the (then) “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” committed itself to ratifying the Charter by 9 November 1996¹⁹⁶ and signed it on 25 July 1996. In 2009, the authorities organised awareness-raising events on the Charter for representatives of national minorities and informed them that they would ratify the treaty soon.¹⁹⁷ Against this background, the Secretary General stated that “the Council of Europe stands ready to assist the authorities ... in their final preparations for accession to the treaty.”¹⁹⁸ In 2011, an expert proposal for a ratification instrument was published.¹⁹⁹ The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention also “invite[d] the authorities to consider ratifying the [Charter]” in 2022. In particular, it noted that the Charter is “a treaty designed to protect traditionally used minority languages as part of Europe’s cultural heritage [that] contains practical promotional measures for minority languages in different fields and could help the authorities to promote in a structured way the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to develop their language and culture as essential elements of their identity.”²⁰⁰

12. Portugal

Portugal signed the Charter on 7 September 2021, taking the first step towards fulfilling the wish expressed by representatives of the Mirandese speakers since 2004 for the signing and ratification of this treaty.²⁰¹ The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention has also called on the authorities to sign and ratify the Charter.²⁰²

13. Republic of Moldova

When acceding to the Council of Europe, the Republic of Moldova committed itself to ratifying the Charter by 13 July 1996.²⁰³ It signed the treaty on 11 July 2002.

In the period 2007-2010, the Council of Europe, in co-operation with the national authorities, organised a series of awareness-raising activities in different parts of the country through which representatives of the speakers and users of the regional or minority languages, local authorities and other relevant stakeholders were informed of the Charter.²⁰⁴ In 2011 and 2012, the Council of Europe supported a working group comprising representatives of different ministries, national minorities, and Moldovan and Council of Europe experts to carry out the technical and legal preparation of ratification (draft ratification instrument).²⁰⁵ In 2016, the authorities agreed to a proposal from the Council of Europe to support the ratification process also through capacity building activities in pilot municipalities. This proposal was included in the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2017-2020²⁰⁶ and implemented as part of the EU/Council of Europe Partnership for Good Governance project “Protecting national minorities and minority languages in Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Belarus”.²⁰⁷

In 2023, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention considered that “a ratification of the Charter could help the authorities to promote in a structured way the languages spoken by national minorities, including numerically smaller ones, and help to provide conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to develop their respective language and culture as essential elements of their identity, thereby contributing to the implementation of Article 5 of the Framework Convention.” The Advisory

¹⁹⁶ See Parliamentary Assembly Opinion 191(1995), para. 10(4).

¹⁹⁷ Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly, December 2009 Communication, Doc. 12300, 21 June 2010, section “Signatures and ratification”.

¹⁹⁸ Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly December 2011 Communication, Doc. 12881, 16 March 2012, section 3.1.6.

¹⁹⁹ See European Centre for Minority Issues (ed.): Ready for ratification, op. cit., pp. 139-140.

²⁰⁰ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on North Macedonia, ACFC/OP/V(2021)10, paras. 51, 53.

²⁰¹ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fourth Opinion on Portugal, ACFC/OP/IV(2019)002, para. 16.

²⁰² See Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on Portugal, ACFC/OP/IV(2019)002, para. 20.

²⁰³ See Parliamentary Assembly Opinion 188(1995), para. 11.h.

²⁰⁴ As mentioned in the 2010 SG report (under “Signatures and ratifications”): Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Biennial report by the Secretary General to the Parliamentary Assembly, December 2009 Communication, Doc. 12300, 21 June 2010.

²⁰⁵ See Fourth report submitted by the Republic of Moldova pursuant to Article 25 (2) of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ACFC/SR/IV(2015)005, pp. 20-21.

²⁰⁶ See Council of Europe Action Plan to support democratic reforms in the Republic of Moldova 2013 – 2016, Progress Report, p. 21; Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2017-2020, p. 11.

²⁰⁷ Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (2018-2020) Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the Parliamentary Assembly Communication, Doc. 15276, 26 April 2021, para. 37.

Committee further noted that national minority representatives support a speedy ratification process and “encourage[d] the authorities to pursue and finalise the ratification process.”²⁰⁸

In 2024, the European Commission also pointed out that the Republic of Moldova needs to complete the ratification procedure.²⁰⁹ In accordance with the National Strategy for Strengthening Interethnic Relations (2017-2027), the Moldovan authorities continue efforts to examine the possibility of ratifying the Charter, including the institutional capacities, implementation mechanisms, and associated costs at both the central and local levels.

Conclusions

The above review gives the following overall picture of preparation for ratification in member States of the Council of Europe. Parliamentary ratification initiatives are under way in Italy. When acceding to the Council of Europe, Albania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, North Macedonia, and the Republic of Moldova committed to signing and ratifying the Charter. Of those, Azerbaijan, North Macedonia, and the Republic of Moldova have signed the Charter. France, Italy and Portugal have also signed the Charter. Council of Europe support for preparation of ratification has been received by Albania, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova (including in the framework of Council of Europe/EU joint programmes), Estonia and Lithuania. The EU supports the Council of Europe's efforts to promote further ratifications of the Charter.

III. Recommendations

In order to assist those Council of Europe member States which have not yet ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in the effective promotion of their regional or minority languages and to ensure that the principles contained in this treaty are applied throughout the continent, it is recommended that their governments:

1. implement the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to ratify the Charter, in particular those states which undertook to do so when acceding to the Council of Europe;
2. carry out dialogue processes and procedures for the ratification of the Charter within a reasonable timeframe and make every effort to ensure that the ratification procedures already under way can be completed without further delay, in particular in cases where states have received assistance from the Council of Europe;
3. consider requesting assistance from the Council of Europe to facilitate the preparation of the ratification instruments, where applicable within the framework of Council of Europe action plans.

²⁰⁸ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Fifth Opinion on the Republic of Moldova, ACFC/OP/V(2023)3, paras. 83, 87.

²⁰⁹ Republic of Moldova 2024 Report, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions on EU enlargement policy, p. 33.

Appendix

Call for responses of CDADI members, participants and observers regarding the study on recurrent problematic areas in the field of regional or minority language protection and identification of good practices in member States

This short call for responses seeks to identify:

1. Measures taken by member States to support the use of regional or minority languages in new and social media;
2. Measures taken by member States (a) to monitor the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages (Article 8.1.i of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148, the Charter))²¹⁰ and (b) to ensure the teaching of history and culture reflected by these languages (Article 8.1.g of the Charter)²¹¹;
3. What kind of strategic and/or advisory bodies in the field of regional or minority language protection have been set up by member States, how they work; and
4. What good practices exist in these areas which might be shared among member States.

Background

By its Terms of Reference for 2024-2027, the CDADI is tasked with preparing a Study on recurrent problematic areas in the field of regional or minority language protection and identification of good practices in member States. Five areas have been identified for this Study to explore.

The first two areas are the use of regional or minority languages in new and social media; and monitoring the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages and ensuring the teaching of history and culture reflected by these languages. With regard to the first, media in regional or minority languages make an important contribution to learning and maintaining these languages but are often insufficiently available. New and social media can complement the existing offer in traditional media at relatively low cost and appeal especially to the younger generation. With regard to the second, several states parties of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages ("the Charter") have undertaken to establish supervisory bodies to monitor minority language education and produce reports, but face challenges implementing this obligation. The same applies where states have undertaken to ensure the teaching of the history and culture related to these languages. Both issues are also relevant under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM).

A third important topic relates to advisory bodies on implementation. The implementation of the Charter depends on regular and institutionalised dialogue between authorities, regional or minority language users and the Council of Europe. The Charter encourages states parties to establish advisory bodies for all matters pertaining to minority languages. These advisory bodies are a suitable forum for discussing measures implementing the Charter and the monitoring recommendations. They could also be useful in the context of the FCNM.

The first meeting of the Working Group took place on 22 May 2024. During this meeting, it was suggested that member States, participants and observers should be given the opportunity to share recent developments in their countries where they wish to do so, in order to facilitate this first step in preparing the Study. The CDADI Bureau approved this methodology, stressing the need to stagger the sending of calls for responses across different CDADI deliverables in order to ease the workload.

²¹⁰ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Article 8 Education - (1) With regard to education, the Parties undertake, within the territory in which such languages are used, according to the situation of each of these languages, and without prejudice to the teaching of the official language(s) of the State, (i) to set up a supervisory body or bodies responsible for monitoring the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages and for drawing up periodic reports of their findings, which will be made public.

²¹¹ European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Article 8 Education - (1) With regard to education, the Parties undertake, within the territory in which such languages are used, according to the situation of each of these languages, and without prejudice to the teaching of the official language(s) of the State, (g) to make arrangements to ensure the teaching of the history and the culture which is reflected by the regional or minority language.

Call for responses

You are invited to answer the following questions by **2 September 2024**.

Responses are invited from all member States where regional and minority languages exist, regardless of whether they are Parties to the Charter and/or the FCNM.²¹²

To avoid duplication of work, member States which are Parties to the Charter and/or the FCNM are asked to report only information which is not already contained in their latest report on the implementation of the Charter and/or the FCNM.

1. With regard to new and social media:
 - a. Are there any new and social media using regional or minority languages in your member State, and if so, which media, and in which language or languages? You are invited to share any further information which you may have about their use, for example, age range of users or types of new or social media, which platforms, websites and apps, and the kinds of institutions, organisations, companies or associations involved in the production and dissemination. In particular:
 - i. What are the most common new and social media used across the State and are these available in the regional or minority languages?
 - ii. Are there any media organisations (companies, institutions and associations) using regional or minority languages in their new and social media output, and if so, in which languages and which kinds of content?
 - iii. Are there any public institutions or administrations using regional or minority languages in their new and social media output, and if so, in which languages?
 - b. What initiatives are taken by the authorities in your member State to encourage and support the use of regional or minority languages in new and social media? In particular:
 - i. Are there any arrangements to collate statistical data to monitor the use of regional or minority languages in new and social media, and if so, how often are the reports published?
 - ii. Are there any regulatory requirements on public bodies and the media sector to use regional or minority languages in new and social media?
2. With regard to education:
 - a. Are there any initiatives taken by the authorities in your member State to monitor the measures taken and progress achieved in establishing or developing the teaching of regional or minority languages (Article 8.1.i of the Charter)? If so:
 - i. Are such initiatives specific to each particular regional or minority language?
 - ii. Which body is responsible for this monitoring? Is it independent? Is it autonomous from, or within, the regular school inspectorate?
 - iii. What are the (measurable) outcomes of the initiative? Does it influence regional or minority language education? Are reports produced and published? If so, how frequently?
 - b. Are there initiatives taken by the authorities in your member State to support the teaching of history and culture reflected by particular regional or minority languages (Article 8.1.g of the Charter)? If so, you are invited to share any further information which you may have, for example, information relating to the types of schools at which history and culture relating to particular regional or minority languages are taught, whether they are taught as a separate subject or as part of other subjects, and whether specific educational (teaching and learning) materials exist for these topics.

²¹² Non-states Parties may wish to respond on the basis of: Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, where applicable in conjunction with Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention or with Article 1 of Protocol No. 12 to the Convention; non-binding standards of the Venice Commission in the field of the protection of national minorities; and/or ECRI General Policy Recommendations nos. 7 and 14 and country monitoring reports.

3. With regard to advisory bodies, is there a specialised body (or bodies) in your state which advises the authorities on all matters relating to the promotion of each regional or minority language? If so, to what extent is this body involved in drawing up, with regard to the relevant language, a strategy and an action plan for implementing the individual provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and/or the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and/or the recommendations of the related monitoring procedure(s)?