



Republic of Serbia
Ministry for Human and
Minority Rights and
Social Dialogue



Okrugli sto o implementaciji povodom petog evaluacionog izveštaja Komiteta stručnjaka za Evropsku povelju o regionalnim ili manjinskim jezicima | **Tryezë e rrumbullakët** mbi zbatimin e raportit të pestë të vlerësimit të Komitetit të Ekspertëve të Kartës Evropiane për Gjuhët Rajonale ose të Pakicave | **Okrugli sto o implementaciji** povodom petog evaluacijskog izvještaja Komiteta stručnjaka za Evropsku povelju o regionalnim ili manjinskim jezicima | **Kulatý stůl** k páté hodnotící zprávě Výboru expertů Evropské charty regionálních a menšinových jazyků | **Runder Tisch** zur Umsetzung des fünften Prüfberichts des Sachverständigenausschusses der Europäischen Charta der Regional- oder Minderheitensprachen | **Kerekasztal** a Regionális vagy Kisebbségi Nyelvek Európai Chartája Szakértői Bizottságának ötödik értékelő jelentése ajánlásainak végrehajtásáról | **Implementation Roundtable** on the fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Beograd, 5. Februar 2025 | Belgrade, 5 February 2025

Palata Srbije, Bulevar Mihajla Pupina 2, istočni ulaz, 1. sprat, sala 129
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Implementation Measures

Reference documents:

[Fifth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Serbia](#), MIN-LANG(2023)3
[Recommendation CM/RecChL\(2023\)4 of the Committee of Ministers](#) on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Serbia

I. Use of Bosnian in the broadcast media, by administrative authorities and in other fields

Topics proposed by the National Council of the Bosniak Minority

1.

Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 2:
support the extension of the use of minority languages in broadcasting and new media, in order to achieve a diverse and sustainable offer that encourages learning and using the language

Further recommendation by the Committee of Experts:

c. Provide for the broadcasting of public radio and television programmes in Bosnian.

Issue: Discrimination against Bosniaks in the media space

- Unacceptable omission of the Bosnian language from the public service: Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), which all citizens of Serbia finance through a mandatory subscription fee, has been ignoring the right of Bosniaks to have a program in the Bosnian language for years. Bosniaks regularly pay their subscription fee, but receive nothing in return. This deficiency directly handicaps us and violates equality, because other peoples in Serbia have programs in their own languages. This is a blatant example of institutional discrimination. A drastic example of this behavior is the response of the RTS Program Board, which, to the legal and legitimate request of the Bosniak National Council to establish

a Bosnian language editorial office, responded in an extremely brazen and unprofessional manner that "there is no Bosnian language", and thereby denied Bosniaks as a people.

- Absence of an editorial in Bosnian language: RTS has editorial offices in several languages of national minorities, but there is no editorial office in Bosnian. For years, we have been sending requests and holding meetings with the RTS management to point out the need for an editorial office and program in Bosnian, but our appeals have been ignored. We consider this not only irresponsible but also harmful to the multicultural and multiethnic character of Serbia.

- Providing sustainable mechanisms for achieving public interest in the field of information in the Bosnian language

- Financing information in the Bosnian language from the state and local government budgets

- Absence of the Bosnian language in all national media: no nationally broadcast media in Serbia, including commercial television and public service, broadcasts content in the Bosnian language. This is not only discriminatory, but also completely unacceptable for a country that has committed itself to respecting the rights of national minorities.

Measures:

1.1 The authorities organise within 5 months a meeting with the National Council of the Bosniak Minority to discuss the following proposals for measures made by the national council:

1.1.1 Formation of a professional newsroom in the Bosnian language: Radio Television of Serbia must establish a newsroom with an editor and journalists who will create content that focuses on the problems, culture, education and identity of Bosniaks. We do not accept that the newsroom serves only to translate news that is not relevant to our community. The goal is to create quality programming that will reflect the real needs of Bosniaks.

1.1.2 Introduction of programs in the Bosnian language on the national frequency: Bosniaks must have the right to hear news, cultural programs, educational content and other programs in their own language, as other minorities do. Ensuring equal treatment of the cultural heritage of the Bosniak people on public service.

1.1.3 More dedicated projects for the Bosnian language in information: It is necessary for the relevant ministries to directly support the implementation of a larger number of purpose-designed projects for information in the Bosnian language. This is the only way to implement the Bosnian language through the media, until appropriate editorial departments and programs are established in national media.

1.2 The name "Bosnian language" is used to designate the language of the Bosniaks in Serbia, in accordance with the Law on Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

2.

Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 5:

include content about each minority language and its culture in curricula, teacher training and educational materials in mainstream education and encourage the mass media to raise awareness about it in reporting and journalist training.

Recommendation for immediate action by the Committee of Experts:

b. Include content about the Bosnian language and culture in curricula, teacher training and educational materials in mainstream education and encourage the mass media to raise awareness about it in reporting and journalist training.

Measures:

2.1 Changes to educational curricula that will take into account the needs of minority peoples in the field of education with the aim of preserving their national identity by removing from the existing curricula all content that discriminates against minorities and questions or denies their national identity, and by integrating the content of the national group of subjects into the curricula, with an incentive for content that contributes to the promotion of multiculturalism and interethnic respect and tolerance.

3. Further recommendation by the Committee of Experts:

b. Facilitate the publication by local authorities of their official documents also in Bosnian.

Measures:

3.1 The authorities organise within 5 months a meeting with the National Council of the Bosniak Minority to discuss the following proposals for measures made by the national council:

3.1.1 Ensure that personal documents, certificates and other official documents (birth certificates, diplomas, identity cards) are available in the language of minorities in areas where minorities are significantly represented.

3.1.2 Improve e-Government to include the possibility of communication in minority languages.

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

Concerning broadcast media: see the background information in section V.

Concerning awareness-raising: “28. Against this background, the Committee of Experts calls on the Serbian authorities to ensure that curricula, teacher training and educational materials in mainstream education (schools primarily attended by pupils from the majority population) provide basic, but concrete information about each regional or minority language, in particular by mentioning them individually and indicating the territories where they have been traditionally used, the basics of their history and culture and examples of the contributions of their speakers to the cultural heritage of Serbia. ...”

Concerning official documents: “43. Several municipalities where minority languages are in official use have translated some documents into these languages (Art. 10.2.d), for example parts of their websites. In order to promote a more comprehensive implementation of this undertaking, the national and provincial authorities could compile existing translated standard forms and make them available to all municipalities. Furthermore, translated forms should be published on the municipal websites rather than being produced or handed out only upon individual request by minority language users.”

II. Use of Albanian by administrative authorities

Topics proposed by the association “The Future”

1. Recommendation for immediate action by the Committee of Experts:

a. Encourage Albanian speakers to use their language in contacts with local branches of the national authorities and facilitate the drafting of documents in Albanian by these authorities.

Issue: Translation and publishing of official documents, including administrative forms, in Albanian. All official documents, including laws, regulations, municipal decisions, and budgets, must be translated into Albanian; forms for birth, marriage, death certificates, and other official documents should be available in Albanian.

Measures:

1.1 The authorities organise within 5 months a meeting with the association “The Future” to discuss the following proposals for measures made by the association:

1.1.1 Create a team of translators at the municipal, district (Pčinja district), and regional levels (KKSH area)

1.1.2 Publish the documents on the official websites of municipalities and institutions

1.1.3 Translate and distribute bilingual forms

1.1.4 Set up digital systems for applications in Albanian

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Public Administration, municipalities, National Council of the Albanian Minority

Deadline: End of 2025

Issue: Recruitment of bilingual staff in administration. Public offices should have staff who speak Albanian fluently to ensure effective services for Albanian-speaking citizens

Measures:

1.1.5 Introduce Albanian language proficiency as a criterion for recruitment in local and central administrations

1.1.6 Train existing staff for communication in Albanian

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Labor and Local Self-Government, municipalities, National Council of the Albanian Minority

Deadline: March 2025

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

“39. In 2022, the Serbian authorities made the census questionnaire available in *inter alia* all languages covered by the Charter. The Committee of Experts considers this measure as very relevant for the use of minority languages in the field of administration and welcomes the inclusion of languages covered only by Part II of the Charter. However, in order to fulfil Article 10.1.c, the national authorities need to provide more examples of documents available in relevant minority languages. Furthermore, with the partial exception of Hungarian, minority languages have not been used in oral or written submissions to local branches of the national authorities (Art. 10.1.aiv). With regard to Romani and Ukrainian, the aforementioned undertakings cannot even be considered formally fulfilled as they need to be introduced into official use in additional municipalities. The Committee of Experts notes that both undertakings fall into the competence of the national authorities themselves, which facilitates their implementation. It invites the national authorities to take the necessary practical steps such as the identification and/or recruitment of staff in such authorities able to work in minority languages, the creation of translation capacity and the encouragement of the local population to use minority languages in oral and written communication with the authorities concerned.”

III. Use of Hungarian by administrative and judicial authorities and in other fields

Topics proposed by the National Council of the Hungarian Minority

1. Recommendation for immediate action by the Committee of Experts:

a. Encourage Hungarian speakers to use their language in contacts with local branches of the national authorities and facilitate the drafting of documents in Hungarian by these authorities.

Issue: Serbian Post – trouble in delivering mail addressed in Hungarian

Measures:

1.1 Amending Article 48 of the General Terms and Conditions for the Provision of Universal Postal Service in the Public Enterprise “Post of Serbia” Belgrade (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 126/2021 and 115/2023), allowing for the use of addresses in minority languages without the obligation to add the address in Serbian

1.2 Creation of a multi-lingual address registry containing addresses in minority languages

1.3 Implementation of internal procedures for sorting and distributing letters and parcels addressed in minority languages

1.4 Training and education of staff on the newly implemented procedures

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Public Information and Telecommunication; Public Enterprise “Post of Serbia”, National Councils of National Minorities

Deadline: end of 2025 for first implementation, following that continuously

Issue: Cadaster – not registering contracts concluded and notarised in Hungarian, or registering them with large (multi-year) delays

Measures:

1.5 Full implementation of the deadlines set in the Procedure of Registration in the Cadastre of Real Estate and the Cadastre of Infrastructure Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 41/2018, 95/2018, 31/2019, 15/2020, and 92/2023)

1.6 Allocation of adequate funds for translation of documents concluded according to the provisions of the Official Use of Language and Script Act

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, Republic Geodetic Authority

Deadline: March 2025 for first implementation, following that continuously

Issue: Tax Administration – in certain branches where Hungarian is in official use, the use of Hungarian is not available in the state Tax Administration.

Measures:

1.7 Implementation of internal procedures for the official use of minority languages and documents created in languages in official use in the administrative procedures where the Tax Administration is the competent authority, pursuant to the Official Use of Language and Script Act

1.8 Training and education of staff on the newly implemented procedures

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Finance, Tax Administration

Deadline: March 2025 for first implementation, following that continuously

2. Further recommendation by the Committee of Experts:

c. Facilitate further publication by local authorities of their official documents also in Hungarian.

Measure:

2.1 Implement the official use of minority languages (Hungarian) within the e-government system

Responsible institutions: The Office for Information Technologies and eGovernment, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, local self-governments

Deadline: end of 2025 for first implementation, following that continuously

3. Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 3: strengthen the use in of the minority languages the judiciary and administration

Issue: The amended Criminal Procedure Act is a potential threat. While the rights of Hungarians to be tried in Hungarian is intact, their right to a translator/interpreter could possibly be brought into question according to the proposed act.

Measures:

3.1 The authorities will organise within 5 months a meeting on the effects of the amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act on minority language proceedings and translation/interpretation, with participation of the competent state and provincial authorities, courts, bar associations and National Councils of National Minorities

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Justice, Provincial Secretariat for Education, Regulations, Administration and National Minorities – National Communities

4. Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 2:

support the extension of the use of minority languages in broadcasting and new media, in order to achieve a diverse and sustainable offer that encourages learning and using the language

Issue: Media funding inadequate, calls for proposals are either late, media funding is not regular but rather *ad hoc*, since the media privatisation. This is felt by the minority media to an even greater extent than the Serbian language media, i. e. the Hungarian language programmes are cut first.

Measures:

4.1 Full implementation 2023 Public Information and Media Act regarding the funding of private content producers and broadcasters through public call for proposals

4.2 Increased funding for the calls for proposals for projects of private content producers and broadcasters

Responsible institution: Ministry of Public Information and Telecommunication

Deadline: March 2025

5.

Further recommendation by the Committee of Experts:

b. Include content about the Hungarian language and culture in curricula, teacher training and educational materials in mainstream education and encourage the mass media to raise awareness about it in reporting and journalist training.

Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 5:

include content about each minority language and its culture in curricula, teacher training and educational materials in mainstream education and encourage the mass media to raise awareness about it in reporting and journalist training.

Issue: Inadequate representation in Serbian language mass media, not systematic

Measure:

5.1 Creation of a standing working group comprising of representatives of two public broadcasters, National Councils of National Minorities, the competent ministry with the aim of increasing the representation of all minority languages covered by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Serbian language mass media

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Public Information and Telecommunication, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Public Dialogue

Deadline: June 2025

6. Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 4:

strengthen the capacity of the national councils of national minorities to effectively promote the minority languages in public life

Measure:

6.1 Increase in funding of all national minority councils concerned by the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Responsible institutions: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Public Dialogue

Deadline: end of 2025

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

Concerning awareness-raising in the media: "58. As in the previous monitoring cycles and similar to the field of education (see para. 27), it is not clear how the Serbian authorities encourage the mass media to raise awareness of the individual minority languages among the majority population (Art. 7.3). This obligation does not as such concern broadcasts in minority languages, which are not specifically addressed to the majority population, but media primarily addressing the majority population. To this

end, the Serbian authorities should encourage the relevant mass media to include in their reporting regular basic information about each regional or minority language, including news and current activities related to their users. Reporting about individual languages also contributes to addressing stereotypes that may exist with regard to the users of some languages.”

Concerning administrative authorities: see the background information in sections I. and II.

Concerning broadcast media: see the background information in section V.

Concerning the capacity of national councils: see the background information in section VII.

IV. Use of German in bilingual education and raising awareness of this language

Topics proposed by the National Council of the German Minority and Deutsche Stiftung

1.

Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 1: promote, in consultation with representatives of the minority language users concerned, the extension and/or provision of bilingual education in Czech, German, Romani and Ukrainian.

Recommendation for immediate action by the Committee of Experts:

a. Provide bilingual education with German at pre-school, primary and secondary levels in Sombor, Subotica and Novi Sad as well as in additional municipalities where German is traditionally used.

Issue: The most important question is bilingual education. It would be better if it could start again in Year 1 of primary education, and with several lessons in German. At the moment it starts in sixth grade and 30% of 5 subjects are in German. It causes difficulties at the end of the course because the level of language skills is not high enough. / Die wichtigste Frage ist der bilinguale Unterricht. Es wäre besser, wenn es wieder ab der ersten Klasse der Grundschule laufen könnte, und mit mehreren Stunden für die deutsche Sprache. Momentan fängt es in der sechsten Klasse an, und 30% von 5 Fächern sind auf Deutsch. Es macht Schwierigkeiten am Ende der Schulung, weil das Niveau der Sprachkenntnisse nicht hoch genug ist.

Measures:

1.1 The Ministry of Education encourages the introduction of bilingual education in German and Serbian (or another language), as the ministry stated it in its document prepared for the Implementation Roundtable. The Ministry of Education is ready to support the National Council of the German Minority, Deutsche Stiftung and the relevant schools in the introduction of bilingual education, also in view of the lack of capacity of the national councils of the smaller national minorities (lack of staff, underfunding).

1.1.1 The Ministry of Education, the National Council of the German Minority and Deutsche Stiftung jointly identify and approach pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools that are willing to submit an application for the introduction of bilingual education in 2025. Specifically, in each of the cities of Sombor, Subotica, Novi Sad, Belgrade, Vrbas, Vršac, Plandište, Stara Pazova and Temerin, one pre-school, one primary school and one secondary school will be identified to ensure the local continuity of bilingual education from pre-school to secondary school (including the implementation of bilingual education from the first year of primary school).

1.1.2 The schools selected in accordance with measure 1.1.1 shall prepare and submit applications for the introduction of bilingual education in regular cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the National Council of the German Minority and Deutsche Stiftung before 1 December 2025. The proportion of lessons in German should be 45% of the total teaching time. In pre-school education, the requirement that at least 50% of parents must agree to the introduction of bilingual education is not applied, as it is not compatible with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

1.2 The National Council of the German Minority submits proposals for new textbooks in German, also taking into account imports from abroad.

2. Further recommendation by the Committee of Experts:

b. Include content about the German language and culture in curricula, teacher training and educational materials in mainstream education, including teaching German as a foreign

language, and encourage the mass media to raise awareness about it in reporting and journalist training.

Measure:

2.1 Inclusion of content on the German history and culture in Serbia, as contained in the curriculum for the subject 'German with elements of national culture', also in the curriculum for teaching German as a foreign language

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

- On bilingual education: "17. Bilingual pre-school education is organised with Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Hungarian, Romanian, Ruthenian and Slovak.⁸ At primary level, bilingual education is available with Bulgarian and German,⁹ and bilingual secondary education with German.¹⁰ However, bilingual education with German is locally not continuous from pre-school to secondary school and is lacking in different parts of Vojvodina.

18. Several minority languages are taught in the framework of the elective subject/programme "mother tongue with elements of national culture" for two hours per week in primary education ... Only this educational model is being applied to Bunjevac, Czech, Macedonian, Romani, Ukrainian and Vlach, which are neither used as the main medium of instruction nor taught bilingually. In this context, it must be borne in mind that one of the purposes of minority language education in accordance with the Charter is to lead to the degree of fluency and competence which enables the learner to use the language in public life, including in the fields covered by Serbia's ratification of the Charter. It should also support and encourage language transmission within the family. Therefore, as the Committee of Experts observed in the previous monitoring cycles, teaching a minority language for only two hours per week does not meet the requirements of the respective Charter provisions (Art. 7.1.f, 8.1.biv, 8.1.civ, 8.1.div),¹¹ especially where the minority language is not a well-established language relying on a strong speaker community and transmission in families. In light of the information received from various sources, the Committee of Experts is aware that pupils attending the subject "mother tongue with elements of national culture" do not acquire proficiency in the minority language. ... The Committee of Experts invites the authorities to apply a model that ensures reaching proficiency in the minority language. ...

19. Some minority languages are not used at certain levels of education at all (pre-school education: Bunjevac, Czech, Macedonian, Romani, Ukrainian, Vlach; secondary education: Czech, Macedonian, Romani, Ukrainian, Vlach; vocational education: e.g. Ruthenian, Ukrainian). In certain cases, there is a lack of availability and continuity of minority-language education at pre-school, primary and secondary levels in a larger geographical area or in a particular municipality (e.g. concerning Czech in Bela Crkva, Ukrainian in Sremska Mitrovica and bilingual education with German).

20. In light of the observations made above, the structural shortcomings in minority language education identified in the previous monitoring cycles by and large persist. During the on-the-spot visit, representatives of the speakers of Czech, German and Ukrainian expressed interest in extended minority language education in order to promote a more active use of their languages. ... As noted above, the situation of these languages in education cannot be adequately improved in the framework of the subject "mother tongue with elements of national culture". ... At present, only the model of bilingual education meets the minimum requirements of the respective Charter provisions. The Committee of Experts therefore invites the Serbian authorities to extend and/or provide bilingual education in Czech, German, Romani and Ukrainian at pre-school, primary and secondary levels and to promote this educational model to the users of other languages covered only by Part II. It refers in this context also to the Committee of Ministers' recommendation of 2021 to promote bilingual education, which the latter made concerning the application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Serbia.¹²"

- On awareness-raising: "28. Against this background, the Committee of Experts calls on the Serbian authorities to ensure that curricula, teacher training and educational materials in mainstream education (schools primarily attended by pupils from the majority population) provide basic, but concrete information about each regional or minority language, in particular by mentioning them individually and indicating the territories where they have been traditionally used, the basics of their history and culture and examples of the contributions of their speakers to the cultural heritage of Serbia. In the specific case of German, such teaching content should also be included in the teaching of German as a foreign language."

V. Use of Vlach, Ruthenian and other minority languages in the broadcast media

Vlach

Topic proposed by the association Gergina

1. Recommendation for immediate action by the Committee of Experts: b. Promote the use of Vlach in the public broadcast media.

Issue: There are no broadcasts in Vlach on public service TV and radio. This issue is regulated by the Law on Public Information (Article 13), the Law on National Councils of National Minorities (Article 21), the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities (Article 17), and the Statute of the National Council of Vlachs, but legal regulations are not respected. The "Gergina" Association sent a letter to the Chief Editor of RTS on December 25, 2023. / Na javnom servisu ne postoje emisije na vlaškom jeziku, na televiziji i na radiju. Zakonom o javnom informisanju (član 13.), Zakonom o nacionalnim savetima nacionalnih manjina(član 21.), Zakonom o zaštiti prava i sloboda nacionalnih manjina(član 17.) i Statutom Nacionalnog saveta Vlaha je regulisana ova problematika, ali se pravna regulativa ne poštuje. Udruženje Gergina je uputilo dopis glavnom i odgovornom uredniku RTS-a, 25.12.2023.godine, odgovor još nismo dobili.

Measure:

1.1 The authorities will within 5 months facilitate a meeting between the association Gergina and RTS concerning the launch of the broadcasting of television and radio programmes in Vlach.

Ruthenian and other minority languages

Topic proposed by the National Council of the Ruthenian Minority

2. Recommendation CM/RecChL(2023)4 of the Committee of Ministers, Nr. 2: support the extension of the use of minority languages in broadcasting and new media, in order to achieve a diverse and sustainable offer that encourages learning and using the language

Issue: There is a TV and radio program in the Ruthenian language on Radio Television of Vojvodina, but as it is a public service, it is subject to a ban on employment, and as a result, minority newsrooms have a reduced program production capacity due to the retirement of employees.

Measures:

2.1 The employment ban was lifted and additional funds are made available for the broadcasting of programmes in minority languages.

2.2 Consider extending the broadcast duration of the television and radio programmes in the other minority languages on RTV.

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

"51. Most languages covered by the Charter are used in public television and/or radio programmes (Art. 11.1.a.iii, 7.1.d) broadcast by Radio Television of Vojvodina (RTV) or Radio Television of Serbia (RTS). ... In spite of the positive overall picture, the Committee of Experts reiterates its observation made in previous monitoring cycles that the duration of some radio and television programmes in minority languages is too short to make an impact on the promotion of the languages concerned and to encourage their use. There remains a need to extend the duration of such programmes and to broadcast them on a more regular basis.

52. The RTV and RTS broadcasts in minority languages are complemented by private television and/or radio programmes produced by local broadcasters (Art. 11.1.b.ii, 11.1.c.ii, 7.1.d). Most languages covered by the Charter are used in such local programmes, but often as "secondary" languages. Whereas the Committee of Experts has not received precise information about the broadcast duration and intervals of these local programmes concerning each minority language, it understands the term "secondary" languages as meaning a rather limited duration. Moreover, it is necessary to apply annually for the launch or continuation of such programmes. As a result, the private/local media landscape is

frequently changing, which creates uncertainty for the promotion of the minority languages. Privatisation of the media in 2015 and 2016 significantly reduced the level of information in minority languages.¹⁶ ...

54. The Committee of Experts underlines again that television and radio broadcasts in a minority language are of particular importance for the promotion of the language. They not only provide information in the minority language, but also increase the level of exposure to the language in addition to its use in the family and/or in school. This supports the learning or practice of the language and its development, which is particularly relevant for languages which are no longer or only to some extent used in families. Broadcasts in a minority language also raise the prestige and functionality of the language, which may encourage people to learn or transmit it. It is therefore essential to ensure an adequate broadcasting duration, regularity and accessibility of the programme, which can be facilitated by the internet. In order to reach out to the linguistic group as a whole, the broadcasts should cover content from various genres such as local and national news, entertainment and culture, and address different generations, including children and young people to support language transmission.¹⁷

55. Against this background, the Committee of Experts reiterates its recommendation made in the previous monitoring cycle that the Serbian authorities should develop, for each minority language, a comprehensive broadcast media plan. This plan should take stock of the existing public and private broadcasts on radio and television in the given language, including broadcasts which can be received from abroad, and identify which programmes need to be extended and/or complemented with new broadcasts. The plan's overall goal should be to reach a total combined broadcast duration which can make an effective contribution to the promotion of the language and which informs the audience of local news in different areas where the language is traditionally used."

VI. Voluntary introduction of minority languages into official use in municipalities

Recommendations for immediate action by the Committee of Experts:

b. Encourage the introduction of Romani into official use in additional municipalities so as to facilitate the application of the Charter.

b. Encourage the introduction of Ukrainian into official use in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and additional municipalities so as to facilitate the application of the Charter.

Further recommendations by the Committee of Experts:

c. Encourage the introduction of German into local official use so as to facilitate the application of the Charter.

c. Encourage the introduction of Macedonian into local official use in Central Serbia so as to facilitate the application of the Charter.

d. Encourage the introduction of Romanian into local official use in Central Serbia so as to facilitate the application of the Charter.

Issue: Voluntary introduction of minority languages into official use in municipalities where the respective national minority does not reach 15% of the population.

Measures:

1. The national authorities and the provincial authorities of Vojvodina as well as the respective national councils of national minorities shall jointly identify and approach municipalities that may be willing to voluntarily introduce the minority language concerned into official use, including the municipality of Kula, which has undertaken to apply Article 10.2.a of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to Ukrainian and German.

2. The national authorities and the provincial authorities of Vojvodina support the respective national councils of national minorities in applying for the introduction of the official use of their minority language in the municipalities identified in accordance with measure 1., also in view of the lack of capacity of the national councils of the smaller national minorities (lack of lawyers and linguists).

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

“9. At the deposit of its instrument of ratification in 2006, Serbia and Montenegro stated that it would apply the Charter in areas in which the regional or minority languages are in official use. The Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts (Art. 11.1) provides that on the territory of local self-government units where members of national minorities live traditionally, their language and script *can* be in equal official use. The (voluntary) introduction into official use may be decided irrespective of the number of persons belonging to a national minority or related percentage thresholds. However, a municipality *must* introduce a minority language into official use if persons belonging to the respective national minority reach 15% of the local population (Law on the Official Use of Languages and Scripts, Art. 11.2). The fact that the 15% threshold in general is too high for the purpose of the Charter has in practice been mitigated by decisions of municipalities to introduce minority languages into official use on a voluntary basis, even in cases where the number of persons belonging to a national minority was very low. Most languages covered by the Charter have so far been introduced into official use in the municipalities where they have been traditionally used.

10. The introduction of a minority language into official use in a municipality or a settlement (*naselje*) of a municipality has considerable importance for its promotion far beyond the matters covered by Articles 9 and 10. In practice, municipalities having introduced a minority language into official use support it also in the fields of education, media, culture and cross-border co-operation. For the Part II languages, which are mentioned in Serbia’s periodical reports but not in the ratification law and instrument, such a step also constitutes an explicit legal confirmation of their status as minority languages (Art. 7.1.a). In addition, the national council of a national minority whose language is in local official use receives higher funding from the state. National councils are *inter alia* in charge of official use of the given minority language and supposed to perform the function of advisory bodies in accordance with Article 7.4 for all languages covered by the Charter.

11. The Committee of Experts is pleased to note that the process of introducing minority languages into official use has continued and accelerated during the period under review. In 2019, the municipalities of Bač and Mionica decided that Romani shall be in official use in the settlements of Vajska (Bač) as well as Nanomir and Tolić (Mionica). The city of Belgrade took a similar decision regarding the settlement of Sokolovo. Vlach has been introduced into official use in twelve settlements of the municipality of Petrovac na Mlavi. In 2021, the city of Subotica introduced Bunjevac into official use. The aforementioned decision by the municipality of Kula to voluntarily apply additional or stronger Part III undertakings comprised Article 10.2.a which covers official use of a minority language within all aspects of a local authority.⁵ While these decisions constitute commendable progress, additional municipalities where minority languages, including Romani and Ukrainian, have been traditionally used still need to introduce them into official use. Therefore, in line with its recommendations made in the previous monitoring cycles, the Committee of Experts invites the Serbian authorities to continue encouraging municipalities to introduce minority languages into official use so as to facilitate the application of the Charter.”

VII. Adoption of language-specific strategies and action plans on the implementation of the Charter

Measures:

1. The municipality of Kula is encouraged, with the support of the Council of Europe, to draw up and implement an action plan on the implementation of its undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (local charter).
2. National councils of national minorities are encouraged to draw up action plans on the implementation of the Charter in relation to their language.
3. The national authorities are willing to discuss the action plans developed by the national councils of national minorities in accordance with measure 2. and to consider consolidating these action plans and the action plan of the municipality of Kula (see measure 1.) with the planned activities in the action plan for the exercise of national minority rights that is under development, also in order to facilitate their reporting to the Council of Europe.

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

Concerning mechanisms for the implementation of the Charter: “68. In light of the information obtained during the on-the-spot visit, the Committee of Experts notes that the capacity of national councils of

national minorities to effectively promote the minority languages in public life remains limited. In particular, the national councils are underfunded and understaffed and hence not able to fully perform the role of advisory bodies on minority language policy in conformity with Article 7.4. Moreover, their politicisation and representativeness remain subject to debate.²⁰ The Committee of Experts therefore reiterates that the Serbian authorities should continue to empower the national councils of national minorities so as to make them an effective partner in implementing the Charter. This process needs to be accompanied by a considerable strengthening of their budgetary capacity as well as by regular guidance and encouragement concerning relevant action. The adoption of joint action plans based on the Charter may be an effective way of institutionalising the co-operation regarding the implementation of this treaty. Furthermore, some minority languages are also used by citizens not belonging to the national minority to which the minority language is related. Such users are not represented in the national councils, but may have formed associations of teachers or journalists that can make useful contributions to the promotion of the minority language. In determining their policy regarding each minority language (Art. 7.4), the authorities should therefore also take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by such users and develop links between them and the users belonging to the respective national minority (Art. 7.1.e).”

VIII. Possibilities of extending Serbia's ratification of the Charter

Recommendation by the Committee of Experts:

The Committee of Experts encourages the Serbian authorities to review the level of protection of the minority languages under the Charter, to bring the level of commitment in line with legislation, policy and practice, and to extend the ratification accordingly in conformity with the procedure set out in Article 3.2.4

Measure:

1. The national authorities are willing to consider 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, including consideration of accepting the commitments of the Kanjiža/Magyarkanizsa and Kula municipalities (local charters) at national level and mentioning the languages currently covered at national level only by Part II of the Charter in the law on ratification of the Charter/ratification instrument.

Background information (excerpt from the 5th evaluation report):

“6. Serbia has ratified the same undertakings in respect of all Part III languages. Furthermore, it applies Part II to languages whose situation is comparable, and in some fields more favourable, than the situation of some languages also covered by Part III. In light of statements received from representatives of the users of minority languages, the Committee of Experts in the previous monitoring cycles noted that the undertakings which had been chosen by Serbia, in particular those in education and the media, did not adequately reflect the policies, legislation and practice with respect to all minority languages.

7. In 2021, the municipality of Kanjiža/Magyarkanizsa (Autonomous Province of Vojvodina) adopted a decision (*odluka*) to apply additional or stronger Part III undertakings falling into its competences to Hungarian, reflecting the actual local situation of this language.³ An event to mark the adoption of this first “local Charter” in Serbia was attended by representatives of the national, provincial and several local authorities as well as the Committee of Experts. The municipality of Kula (Vojvodina) adopted a similar decision concerning Hungarian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian and German in 2022. Following applications by national councils of national minorities (see para. 67), other municipalities in Vojvodina are preparing the adoption of comparable decisions concerning additional minority languages. During the on-the-spot visit, representatives of the users of different minority languages stated again that the Charter provisions applying to their languages did not reflect the latter’s actual situation and underlined the importance of the aforementioned initiatives.

8. The Committee of Experts welcomes the dynamic approach at the level of municipalities to the application of the Charter and the good co-operation between the authorities and the users of minority languages, which also raises awareness of the Charter in general and builds capacity to implement it. As far as the national level is concerned, the Committee of Experts notes that the periodical reports contain information about the substance of Part III undertakings not yet ratified and the promotion of Part II languages in fields of public life covered by Part III. The developments at local and national levels are clear indications that the overall situation of the minority languages in Serbia has improved since

the ratification of the Charter. In the first monitoring cycle, the Serbian authorities indicated that they will consider reviewing their ratification instrument once the situation of minority languages has improved. During the last years, several states parties have updated their instruments of ratification to reflect improvements in the situation of their minority languages and to set medium- and long-term improvement targets, which the Committee of Experts commended. The Committee of Experts also encourages the Serbian authorities to review the level of protection of the minority languages under the Charter, to bring the level of commitment in line with legislation, policy and practice, and to extend the ratification accordingly in conformity with the procedure set out in Article 3.2.4“