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EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

Information Document
on the implementation of the
Recommendations for Immediate Action
based on the 6th monitoring cycle

Submitted by Cyprus

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on December 2022

Response of the Republic of Cyprus to Recommendations for Immediate Action as Contained in the Sixth Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the Republic of Cyprus

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus submits the Information on the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action included in the Sixth Evaluation Report by the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Government of the Republic is fully committed to continuing the fulfillment of the recommendations/ obligations arising from the ratification of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

Armenian

In regard to the recommendations for immediate action by the Committee of experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Armenian in Cyprus

a) Facilitate training of teachers of Armenian

Armenian Language is taught and safeguarded **in Armenian Nareg Schools**. The schools are fully subsidized by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth hereafter referred to as MoESY. The MoESY also encourages, facilitates, and fully subsidizes the organisation of training seminars of Armenian language teachers that work in the Armenian Nareg Schools.

More specifically, the Armenian Schools Committee in collaboration with the Principal of the schools and the Ministry of Education organized school- based teacher training and development for two weeks, for the Armenian teachers who teach at the Nareg Schools (Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol) and the Nareg Gymnasium.

For the academic year 2021-2022 the teacher trainer was Mrs Kohar Kandaharian from Lebanon. Two training sessions were held during the weeks of 15-19 November 2021 and 23-27 May 2022 where seminars and workshops were organised and classroom observations took place for all classes taught in Armenian. The aims of the bi-annual training and development weeks were: to mentor and monitor the work of newly appointed teachers of Armenian language; to improve teaching methodology in line with research based techniques; to promote critical thinking skills through teaching of Armenian language, Armenian History and other subjects taught Armenian; and, to evaluate and monitor the goals set for the improvement in the quality of teaching at the Nareg Schools. For the current school year 2022-2023 the teacher trainer is Mrs Kohar Kandaharian from Lebanon. One training session was held

during the week of 5- 11 December 2022 were the main goal was to upgrade the curricula of Armenian Language and of Armenian History as well as to mentor and monitor newly appointed teachers. Moreover, during the training teachers of Armenian language participated in a seminar entitled “promoting critical thinking amongst students of primary education”.

Armenian language is being taught in upper secondary education since September 2021, in one Lyceum in Nicosia, where a significant number of students that belong in the Armenian Religious Group is enrolled. As teacher professional development constitutes an important educational policy of the MoESY, professional development opportunities, were created by the inspectors of Secondary General Education. The teacher of the Armenian language as well as teachers of other languages, participated both in the school year 2021-2022 and in the current school year 2022-2023, teacher professional development courses, via seminars and pedagogy meetings at schools of secondary education.

Teacher professional development has been organised in the form of interactive seminars, being delivered by the Inspector of the Armenian language Dr Katerina Konstantinides-Vladimirou at specific times of the school year. The seminars that have taken place during the school year 2021-2022 and have been delivered or are in progress till the end of the school year 2022-2023 revolve around the following topics:

Formative assessment: Through a two-way communication teachers gain knowledge about the meaning of formative assessment, and of how to turn theory into praxis in their professional career. Formative assessment is about how feedback gained through students’ performance can lead to the improvement of teaching practices. It is also about differentiation of learning, and student assessment based on assessment criteria.

The new student evaluation policy: Teachers are informed about the new student assessment policy which has introduced exams in the educational system, and students of High schools are examined at the end of each of the two terms in several lessons, Armenian amongst them. The new policy includes the evaluation of students' oral performance taking the 60% of their overall assessment, and evaluation of students' exam performance taking the 40% of their whole assessment.

Methodology of teaching: Teachers attend a series of training seminar sessions about the structure of an effective lesson, and the way a lesson is best delivered. The themes covered refer to the basic stages of an effective lesson, namely warm-up stage, development stage, and closure stage. Methods of teaching which can be used at each stage of the lesson are discussed: brainstorming techniques, communicative, interactive and dialogue approaches, hermeneutic techniques and critical thinking practices. Examples of several teaching approaches, e.g. inductive and deductive methods, are always given, and teachers voice their questions and gain answers.

Pedagogy: Teachers raise their awareness about pedagogical teaching practices for teaching is emotional practice, and they are provided with examples of how the goal of education, that is the improvement of learning outcomes can become a reality when students develop, during lessons, their knowledge, but also skills, such as problem-solving, decision making, critical thinking, stances and behaviours of a democratic citizen, values and emotions.

Producing Effective Tests: Teachers are guided about how to produce tests for students taking the exams in the Armenian language. The emphasis has been placed on the development of the skills of reading and understanding, listening and understanding, and writing. Guidance is provided as to how to create the different types of exercises, e.g. Multiple Choice exercise for comprehension

purposes, True/False exercises, and Grammar-Syntax exercises. The techniques for each type of exercise have been analysed extensively.

Exams and student assessment: Teachers gain knowledge about how to effectively correct students' exam papers taken at the end of the terms. Turning theory into practice, teachers have actual tests to correct and discuss difficulties been faced.

Language Development: This training seminar aims at raising teacher awareness about the development of students' thinking process, the development of students' skill of communication and externalisation of perspectives, thoughts and feelings, as well as the development of students' psychology, that is emotional development and socialization. Practices of how to develop teacher-student rapport and emotional support are discussed.

b) Promote study and research on Armenian at university level;

MoESY is committed in preserving and promoting the language, tradition and culture of the Armenians of Cyprus. In this context, the MoESY in close collaboration with the Representative of the Armenians and the speakers themselves is going to launch a new project during 2023, called CARMELA. The CARMELA project will be submitted by the University of Cyprus through the Cyprus Research Centre of the MoESY and it will be supervised by Professor Marilena Karyolemou of the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, of the University of Cyprus.

The main objective of the CARMELA research project is, amongst other, the creation of an Archive of Oral Tradition (hereafter Archive) with digitized audio-visual material collected through individual interviews with members of the Armenian religious group. The data collected will aim to capture the life and experiences of the community for the past century or so by collecting

information on cultural, religious and other traditions, on the history of the community as well as on language and language practices.

The project results from the firm conviction that the digitization of various aspects of intangible cultural heritage is a priority for all states, especially for those with religious, linguistic, or ethnic minority groups on their territory, both because we need to document various aspects of lesser known and lesser visible communities, especially as far as their cultural specificities, language and language practices (especially for Western Armenian), the way they define and distinguish themselves and because such a position is an indication of a democratic and healthy society that recognizes and respects the historical presence, timeless contribution and specific characteristics of all its constituent groups.

The research will be completed in two parts: in the first part, the choice of interviewees will take place with the help of the office of the Armenian Representative in the house of Representatives. Then interviews will be conducted according to a thematic protocol that will include both general and specific topics and, finally, the initial processing of collected data –i.e. the thematic transcription, detailed summaries, meta-data, etc., – as well as the creation of short videos on various aspects of the community with extracts from the interviews will be completed. In the second part, selected data concerning various cultural aspects of the community will be analyzed and processed with the aim to make them available and accessible to the academia, the general public and the Armenian themselves.

The creation of an Archive of Oral Tradition for the Armenian religious group of Cyprus complements the Archive of Oral Tradition for Cypriot Maronite Arabic established by the MoESY since 2013 as part of the revitalization of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. The two Archives are conceived as an act of recognition of the two indigenous communities. They aim to strengthen their

position and raise their visibility in the context of modern Cypriot society. At the same time, in its full development, the Archive will be the main source of information for the Armenian religious group and, in addition to the oral data, will also contain other material, ex. bibliography, teaching material, language resources, etc.

At the department of History and Archaeology of the University of Cyprus, in the module, "The Medieval History", it is examined amongst others, the case of Armenian that immigrated to the Latin Kingdom of Cyprus, from Syria, in the course of Muslim conquests in Syria and Palestine. Moreover, in the "Modern History Module" a special reference is made to the Armenians and the Armenian Millet in the context of Ottoman reform movement. A presentation is made of the commercial Armenian diaspora and a brief reference to the Armenian revolutionary movement in the beginning of the 20th century. Lastly, in the module "Modern Greek and Cypriot History: History of Cyprus (1878-1974)", references are made to the different phases of the Armenian immigration to Cyprus between 1915-1922, the establishment and the activity of the Melkonian School, the Armenian presence in Cyprus during the British rule, and the Armenian neighborhood in «Victorias» street. In the respective module for the Cypriot Constitution of 1960 reference is made to the religious group of the Armenians and their parliamentary representation.

Cypriot Maronite Arabic

In regard to the recommendations for immediate action by the Committee of experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Cypriot Maronite Arabic in Cyprus

- a) **Introduce a scheme for the basic and further training of teachers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic.**

The Annual Summer Language Camp in occupied Kormakitis was held during the summer of 2021-2022. The University of Cyprus organized a training seminar for the teachers that participate in the Camp. The seminar aimed to offer native speakers or speakers with a good knowledge of CMA the necessary background knowledge in language teaching and pedagogy to help them fulfil their duties as CMA teachers for children and youth during the Summer Linguistic Camp that took place in occupied Kormakitis from 31 July to 2 August 2022 for children ages 5-11 and from 7 to 12 August 2022 for children and youth ages 12-16. The contents of the seminar were organised according to the following three sub-sections:

1. Teaching an endangered language. The main objective of this section was to introduce teachers to the structural, social and psycholinguistic specificities of teaching a severely endangered language, the difficulties they will encounter while using the teaching material that has been prepared and the strategies they can use to foster children's interest and awareness about what it means to learn an endangered language.

2. Description and analysis of CMA structural properties, orthographic rules, standardisation of writing. In this section the main aim was to help participants realise the structural properties of their language in order to be able to teach it effectively. As per our observations most of the speakers were

not aware of the structural properties of their language because they were all literate in Greek and illiterate in CMA. We therefore helped them realize and understand the points of similarity/dissimilarity between CMA and Greek. In this section we also provided participants with basic information about the writing system and the conventions of writing as presented in the Orthographic guide *Aşşik pkyiniçtep il-san telna?* We offered several examples of complex orthographic representations and their solutions. The aim here was to familiarise participants with the concepts of “orthographic convention” and “iconicity of language”, help them understand that ‘what you hear is not necessarily what you write’ and offer to them the necessary knowledge to be able to deal with complex orthographic cases.

3. Teaching methodology and didactics, language teaching and technology.

The aim of this section was to introduce participants to basic knowledge as far as the communicative method was concerned, and how the grammatical knowledge is organized according to communicative events. Basic notions of sociolinguistic approaches in education and language learning and the concept of language literacy in endangered languages were also introduced. Among other things, the participants were introduced to gaming and its uses in language teaching methodology as well as to instances of non-formal teaching. Participants were introduced to the use of electronic and digital tools and they were guided to actively use digital environments for a successful teaching of CMA.

Ultimately the participants were able to use the textbook *Sanna A1* for children prepared by the research team of the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in 2021; selected the activities they needed to achieve the goals of the 2022 Linguistic camp; prepared their own lesson sketches in order to learn how to

manage teaching time and tasks; finally, used digital tools and environments to boost language teaching and learning.

The MoESY in close cooperation and consultation with the Representative of the Maronites in the House of the Representatives and the research team of the MoESY responsible for the revitalization of CMA is examining the possibility of introducing a new scheme for further training of teachers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

b) Introduce pre-school education in Cypriot Maronite Arabic and teaching of this language in secondary education.

Agios Maronas Pre-Primary and Primary Schools which are fully funded by the MoESY operate also as an optional all-day school. CMA has been taught during the afternoon timetable in Agios Maronas Primary school. Since October 2022 the teaching of CMA has been also extended in the Pre-Primary school of Agios Maronas. More specifically two groups of pupils, the first group of children aged 4-5 years old (8 children) and the second group of children aged 5-6,5 years old (15 children), attend lessons of CMA once a week. Moreover, children of Pre-Primary school, participated in Sanna Camp, that was held in occupied Kormakitis from 31 July to 2 August 2022.

Students of Secondary Education participated in lessons organised by the office of the Representative of the Maronites in the House of the Representatives at occupied Kormakitis, during school year 2021-2022. Moreover, students of Secondary Education participated in Sanna Camp2022 that was held in occupied Kormakitis from 31 July to 2 August 2022. As from October 2020, an online course of CMA for students and young university graduates has been financed by the University of Cyprus. Since fall 2022, this course is taking place under the Language Centre of the University of Cyprus and is subsidized by the University of Cyprus.