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# SEVENTH EVALUATION REPORT ON CYPRUS

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Committee of Experts of  
the European Charter  
for Regional or  
Minority Languages

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Adopted on 19 November 2024

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

To facilitate this task, the Committee of Ministers adopted, in accordance with Article 15, paragraph 1, an outline for periodical reports that a party is required to submit to the Secretary General. This outline requires the state to give an account of the concrete application of the Charter, the general policy for the languages protected under Part II and, in more precise terms, all measures that have been taken in application of the provisions chosen for each language protected under Part III of the Charter. The Committee of Experts' first task is therefore to examine the information contained in the periodical report for all the relevant regional or minority languages on the territory of the state concerned. The periodical report shall be made public by the state in accordance with Article 15, paragraph 2.

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

Having concluded this process, the Committee of Experts adopts its own report. Once adopted by the Committee of Experts, this evaluation report is submitted to the authorities of the respective state party for possible comments within a given deadline. A confidential dialogue may, at this stage, be requested by this state party. The final evaluation report is made public, together with the comments, if any, which the authorities of the state party may have made. This document is then transmitted to the Committee of Ministers for the adoption of its recommendations to the state party, on the basis of the proposals for recommendations contained in the evaluation report.

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## Executive Summary

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages entered into force in Cyprus in 2002 and applies to the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages under Part II (Article 7).

The Government of Cyprus and all relevant state authorities have been assuming their responsibilities under the Charter and continued to support the minority language speakers throughout the seventh monitoring cycle. Considering the state budget, the overall financial support of the state authorities is well-structured and comprehensive. The Government continued to fund language learning and teaching activities at all levels of education, including through financing relevant school boards, school activities, annual summer camps and other related events. Equally, it continued to finance the maintenance of school buildings and the existing cultural institutions. Moreover, it supported the creation of new facilities where minority languages can be used, including the opening of the Kormakitis Centre for Co-operation that now hosts the annual summer camp for Maronite children, as well as the Kormakitis Primary School for Maronite children in the historical village of Kormakitis, located in the area not under the effective control of the Government of Cyprus. Consultation with representatives of the speakers of the protected languages, as well as their elected Representatives in the House of Parliament is regular and fruitful, and their opinions are taken into account in designing state policies and implementing state obligations under the Charter. The Government of Cyprus continued to be engaged in raising awareness about the Armenians and Maronites, their history, culture and language in the Cypriot society.

The Armenian language protected in Cyprus is Western Armenian. It has been a language of instruction in pre-school, primary and lower secondary education for many years. Efforts were increased during the current monitoring cycle to expand the teaching of Armenian both in terms of school hours and to upper secondary education.

Cypriot Maronite Arabic is in danger of extinction. It continued to be only taught at primary school level, in limited hours and on a voluntary basis. Extending its teaching both in hours and to all levels of education is currently difficult, due to the lack of trained teachers. The Cypriot Government has been working to support efforts, also financially, to preserve this ancient language with a non-written, oral tradition. The implementation of the research programme on Cypriot Maronite Arabic, called the Action Plan for the Revitalisation and Empowerment of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, continued and has been supported by the state authorities. However, more decisive and urgent measures are needed in order to achieve the revitalisation of this language.

The scientific research programmes of the University of Cyprus, aiming at creating an Oral Tradition Archive for both the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages through recording living memories, cultural and linguistic practices, attitudes, skills and competences of the speakers, are commendable and could constitute a good basis for the creation of a Chair of Armenian, as well as of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at the University. The start of a study programme in this context could be seen as an opportunity to develop a comprehensive teacher training programme.

Efforts in training teachers both for Armenian and for Cypriot Maronite Arabic should be further strengthened in general. The situation is urgent, in particular for Cypriot Maronite Arabic, where the active involvement and close cooperation of the representatives of the speakers of the protected languages and the state authorities are crucial both in short and longer term.

The Government of Cyprus supports raising awareness of the two protected languages, as well as the history and culture of the Armenians and Maronites in Cyprus. This is important and should be extended to other fields, including media presence.

This seventh evaluation report by the Committee of Experts is based on the political and legal situation prevailing at the time of the Committee of Experts' on-the-spot visit to Cyprus in June 2024.

## Chapter 1 The situation of the regional or minority languages in Cyprus – Recent developments and trends

1. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter referred to as “the Charter”) is a treaty of the Council of Europe which places obligations on its states parties to protect and promote the country’s traditional minority languages in all fields of public life: education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges. Cyprus signed the Charter on 12 November 1992 and ratified it on 26 August 2002. The Charter entered into force in Cyprus on 1 December 2002 and applies to Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic. Both languages are covered by Part II (Article 7).

2. States parties are required to submit reports every five years<sup>1</sup> on the implementation of the Charter. The Cypriot authorities submitted their seventh periodical report on 1 February 2024.<sup>2</sup> This seventh evaluation report of the Committee of Experts is based on the information contained in the periodical report, additional information received from the authorities and statements made by representatives of the speakers of the minority languages during the on-the-spot visit (6-7 June 2024) and/or submitted in written form pursuant to Article 16 (2) of the Charter. During the on-the-spot visit and the present reporting cycle the gender equality aspect was taken into account.

3. In its evaluation of the implementation of the Charter in Cyprus, the Committee of Experts has borne in mind that the Cypriot authorities are not in a position to exercise effective control over all of its national territory and cannot ensure the application of the Charter in areas not under its control. Consequently, all information and data presented in the evaluation report concern the government-controlled areas.

4. Chapter 1 of this evaluation report focuses on the general developments and trends regarding the regional or minority languages in Cyprus and the situation of these languages. It examines, in particular, the measures taken by the Cypriot authorities to respond to the recommendations made by the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers at the end of the sixth monitoring cycle and also highlights new issues. Chapter 2 provides a detailed overview of the state of implementation of each undertaking by Cyprus in respect of the given language as well as the recommendations addressed to the Cypriot authorities. On the basis of its evaluation, the Committee of Experts proposes, in Chapter 3, recommendations to the Committee of Ministers to be addressed to the Government of Cyprus, as provided in Article 16 (4) of the Charter. The Committee of Experts encourages the Cypriot authorities to translate this report into the regional or minority languages with a view to supporting the authorities, organisations, advisory bodies and persons concerned in the process of fully implementing the Charter, in accordance with Articles 6 and 7.4.

5. This seventh evaluation report is based on the political and legal situation prevailing at the time of the Committee of Experts on-the-spot visit to Cyprus in June 2024. This report was adopted by the Committee of Experts on 19 November 2024.

### 1.1 General developments in policies, legislation and practice concerning the regional or minority languages in Cyprus

6. At the time of the on-the-spot visit of the Committee of Experts the results of the census of October 2021 were not yet available.<sup>3</sup> The Constitution of Cyprus recognises three religious groups<sup>4</sup>, two of which have protected languages under the Charter (i.e. the Armenian and the Maronite). According to data available from the 2011 population and housing census, there are 5 000 Maronites (75% live in Nicosia, 15% in Limassol and 5% in Larnaca) and 3 500 Armenians (60% live in Nicosia, 20% in Larnaca, 15% in Limassol and 5% in Paphos) living in the Republic of Cyprus.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Article 15.1 of the Charter provides that states parties submit periodical reports every three years. However, following the entry into force of the reform of the monitoring mechanism of the ECRML on 1 July 2019, states parties are now to submit their reports every five years instead of every three years. See Committee of Ministers Decisions “Strengthening the monitoring mechanism of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” ([CM/Del/Dec\(2018\)1330/10.4e](#), para. 1.a.).

<sup>2</sup> [MIN-LANG \(2024\) PR 1](#).

<sup>3</sup> The Government of Cyprus issued a press release on the final results of the 2021 census on 9 August 2024, however no data was shared publicly on the religious groups. See: [Census of Population and Housing 2021: Final Results - gov.cy \(www.gov.cy\)](#). According to the information received from the Cypriot authorities, data on ethnic groups, religion and language from the 2021 Census is currently being analysed. The authorities aim to disseminate them on the website of Cyprus Statistical Service by the end of 2024. It is important to note that the questions on religion and ethnic groups were optional, in line also with [the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities \(Fifth opinion on Cyprus \(ACFC/OP/V\(2019\)002\)](#), paragraph 54.) and the [subsequent resolution \(CM/ResCMN\(2021\)3\) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe](#).

<sup>4</sup> Religious groups, as defined in Art. 2 (3) of the Constitution of Cyprus, are treated as national minorities for the purposes of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities., See also: [First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Cyprus \(ECRML\(2006\)3\)](#), paragraphs 16-17; and [Seventh periodical report by the Republic of Cyprus \(MIN-LANG \(2024\) PR 1\)](#), paragraph 3, footnote 1.

<sup>5</sup> See: [Fifth opinion on Cyprus of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities \(ACFC/OP/V\(2019\)002\)](#), paragraph 46, footnote 29.

7. The implementation of the Charter falls within the authority of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (hereinafter “the MoESY”). The MoESY is in regular contact with the relevant state authorities, representatives of the Armenian and the Maronite religious groups, respective school principals and other stakeholders, including NGOs, also in the preparation of the seventh periodical report. In addition, the MoESY regularly uses the opportunity of communicating on their website on matters relevant to the protection of regional or minority languages. The Committee of Experts acknowledges the close co-operation and constructive dialogue between the speakers and the state authorities, and the role the MoESY plays in this respect, which was also confirmed during the on-the-spot visit by all interlocutors.

### ***Resolute action to promote the regional or minority languages***

8. Cyprus protects and promotes its recognised regional or minority languages, namely Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic, by implementing its international obligations in the framework of the Charter.<sup>6</sup> Considering the state budget, a well-structured and comprehensive financial support is allocated to promote both languages mainly through education and cultural activities. However, a stronger language protection policy within institutions is needed for the successful revitalisation of the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language. The Government of Cyprus supported the creation of new facilities during the current monitoring cycle, where minority languages can be used, including the opening of the Kormakitis Centre for Co-operation<sup>7</sup> as well as the Kormakitis Primary School.<sup>8</sup> However, efforts should be stepped up to achieve tangible results, in particular to increase the number of speakers and their proficiency in Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

9. The historical villages of the Maronites (Asomatos, Ayia Marina, Karpasha and Kormakitis) are located in the area not under the effective control of the Government of Cyprus. The revitalisation of Cypriot Maronite Arabic is ongoing, including through the opening of the Kormakitis Primary School. The ongoing research for the protection and revitalisation of Cypriot Maronite Arabic contributes considerably to the recognition of the cultural significance of the language. The MoESY allocates every year approximately €25 000 to support the scientific work carried out by the researchers, in accordance with the Action Plan for the Revitalisation of the Cypriot Maronite Arabic and the decisions of the national Committee of Experts.<sup>9</sup> The research is now in its eleventh phase. In the framework of a new Action Plan for the period of 2024-2027, interviews with native speakers living in Kormakitis; analysis and description of the language at the level of syntax and morphology; and developing of pedagogical material will continue. The opening of the Archive of Oral Tradition (or a part of it) to the public is envisaged. A storybook with illustrations of narratives from the Archive of Oral Tradition is also being prepared for publication. The preparation and publication of an Anthology of texts in Cypriot Maronite Arabic (“Sanna”) by Maronite authors and poets is planned. Teachers’ training should be a central action of the next three-year phase with a structured training programme. This action responds to the need to have younger members of the Maronite religious group taking over the teaching of the language.<sup>10</sup> Lastly, a family language policy intervention was also highlighted during the on-the-spot visit, aiming at raising awareness about the importance of language transmission and educating parents and grandparents on how to achieve transmission of a severely endangered language. The Committee of Experts welcomes the efforts of the state authorities. It however is of the view that the state authorities should further increase efforts, including financially, to effectively revitalise this language, in order to increase the number of speakers.

10. In the past, the Commissioner to the Presidency for Humanitarian Affairs and Overseas Cypriots (Presidential Commissioner), appointed by the President of the Republic of Cyprus and directly accountable to him, was responsible for the co-ordination of policy making and the implementation of issues related to the recognised religious groups in Cyprus. According to the information received from the speakers during the on-the-spot visit, meetings were organised on a regular basis with the Representatives of the Religious Groups in the House of Representatives, their religious leaders, the representatives of the speakers, associations and other organised groups.<sup>11</sup> The Presidential Commissioner co-ordinated and facilitated actions of all governmental bodies, visited the Armenian and Maronite schools, attended cultural events and raised awareness of the religious groups through publications and speeches. The education of children was

<sup>6</sup> Pursuant to Article 169.3 of the Constitution of Cyprus, the Charter has, in view of that Constitutional provision, become part of the domestic law of the Republic of Cyprus with superior force to any other domestic law (Law 39(III)/1993). See: [Initial periodical report of the Republic of Cyprus \(MIN-LANG/PR \(2005\) 1](#)), 2005, paragraph 10, and [First evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on Cyprus \(ECRML \(2006\) 3](#)), paragraph 1.

<sup>7</sup> The Centre hosts now the annual Maronite summer camp.

<sup>8</sup> The Kormakitis Primary School became operational in April 2024. The education in the school is in Greek, and Cypriot Maronite Arabic is only taught as an optional language.

<sup>9</sup> Cypriot Maronite Arabic, or “Sanna” to its speakers, is a ‘severely endangered language’ registered in the [UNESCO Atlas of the world’s Languages in Danger](#). In 2008, the Republic of Cyprus recognised Cypriot Maronite Arabic as a regional or minority language under Part II of the Charter and established a Committee of Experts at national level to make recommendations for its protection and revival. Work is ongoing, including in the context of the Action Plan for the Revitalisation and Empowerment of Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

<sup>10</sup> According to the information received during the meeting with state authorities, this shall be financed through a separately allocated budget.

<sup>11</sup> See: [Presidential Commissioner | Mission](#)

given high priority in the Presidential Commissioner's work. The Committee of Experts was informed that, at the time of the on-the-spot visit, it was unclear whether the current Presidential Commissioner was still actively in charge of the religious groups.<sup>12</sup> The Representatives of the Armenian and Maronite Religious Groups (as well as the Representative of the Latin Religious Group) have requested in a joint letter to the President the clarification of the situation, as the overseeing and facilitating role of the Presidential Commissioner is key in advancing on a number of issues relevant to the everyday lives of the religious groups. The Committee of Experts was informed that as a result, on 25 October 2024, the President of the Republic of Cyprus appointed a Coordinator of Religious Groups in the Office of the Presidential Commissioner.<sup>13</sup> The Committee of Experts welcomes this recent development and encourages the Cypriot authorities, in particular the newly appointed Coordinator, to continue the good practice of the past as referred to by the speakers and the Representatives of the Religious Groups as a matter of priority.

### ***Use of the regional or minority languages in education***

11. Parents can enrol their children as of 4 months to 3 years old in the Armenian nursery in Nicosia, called the Nanor Armenian Childcare Centre. It operates in Armenian and currently hosts 14 children. Children from 3 to 6 years of age can continue their education in Armenian in the Nareg<sup>14</sup> Kindergarten and Pre-primary school. Three Nareg Armenian primary schools, in Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol respectively welcome children between 6 and 12 years of age and offer education in Armenian.<sup>15</sup> In addition, Armenian language lessons are also offered in Paphos once a week on Sunday mornings in a public primary school.<sup>16</sup> A secondary school, the Nareg Gymnasium, located also in Nicosia, offers a three-year curriculum<sup>17</sup> after which pupils continue their remaining years of secondary education in public schools. Following the decision of the Council of Ministers,<sup>18</sup> since September 2021, Armenian is also taught in upper secondary education in the Archbishop Makarios III Lyceum in Nicosia, a public school, where pupils who graduate from the Nareg Armenian Gymnasium or pupils of Armenian descent can continue learning Armenian. The programme includes teaching Armenian language and literature in all three grades of Lyceum.<sup>19</sup> In the first year, Armenian is taught three or four times per week (depending on the semester), for 45 minutes each, while in the second and third (last) year it is taught four times per week for 45 minutes each. It is important to note that learning in and of Armenian is open to all pupils in Cyprus but offered only in these schools. The Armenian language is also taught in the Adult Education Centres of the MoESY, where the lessons are offered free of charge since 2023.<sup>20</sup>

12. In the 2023-2024 school year, in total 47 children were enrolled in pre-schools (35 in Nicosia, eight in Larnaca and four in Limassol); 127 children in primary schools (87 in Nicosia, 17 in Larnaca and 23 in Limassol); and 27 children in lower secondary school (gymnasium – 27 in Nicosia). The Committee of Experts was informed that as education in Armenian at secondary level exists only in Nicosia, four pupils from Larnaca commute to Nicosia to be able to continue their education in Armenian. Commuting from Limassol, however, is difficult due to the distance and the lack of transportation for pupils. Parents would be in general interested to enrol their children from other cities as well after finishing Nareg Primary Schools, but the daily transportation is a problem. State authorities are encouraged to increase their efforts in supporting the enrolment of Armenian children from other cities in the Nareg Gymnasium in Nicosia.

13. The Committee of Experts was informed about the plan to convert the Nareg Schools to full day schools, finishing at 4 pm in the afternoons instead of 1:30 pm as per current practice, allowing them to increase the time learning and using the language. Negotiations are ongoing on this issue with the MoESY, with the aim of teaching longer hours as of September 2025 at the latest.

<sup>12</sup> In a follow up exchange, authorities confirmed that the current Presidential Commissioner continues to be in charge also of the religious groups.

<sup>13</sup> See: [The President of the Republic appointed Kyprianos Louis as Co-ordinator of Religious Groups \(newscyprus.eu\)](https://www.newscyprus.eu/en/news/2024/10/25/president-appoints-coordinator-of-religious-groups).

<sup>14</sup> The Nareg schools are teaching Western Armenian, history and culture, thus cultivating a sense of belonging and ensuring that the next generations of Armenians are highly proficient in speaking, writing and understanding Armenian.

<sup>15</sup> Except for Greek and English languages, and in the last three years science, history of Cyprus and geography of Cyprus, which are taught in Greek.

<sup>16</sup> According to the information received, the duration of each class is 45 minutes. During the academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22, classes were divided according to three age groups (5-8; 9-12 and 13-20). The classes were interrupted during the Covid-19 quarantine periods (March – May 2021 and January – March 2022). Lessons in Paphos resumed at the start of the 2022-23 academic year for two groups (one group for under 10-year-olds and one for over 10-year-olds). The MoESY finances the programme with approximately €5 000 per year.

<sup>17</sup> Equivalent to the first 3 years of Greek secondary schools.

<sup>18</sup> Number of decision 91.791

([http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm.nsf/All/7A4DAA347CAAD4E1C225879C0030EC70/\\$file/91.791.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm.nsf/All/7A4DAA347CAAD4E1C225879C0030EC70/$file/91.791.pdf?OpenElement) – available only in Greek).

<sup>19</sup> Pupils of Armenian descent that attend this programme are exempted from Religious Education and French language classes. In order to provide the possibility to learn French also for these pupils, as of the current school year (2024-2025), pupils enrolled in the Armenian language and literature programme can attend French lessons free of charge at State Institutes of Further Education in the afternoon (see Council of Ministers Decision n.997/2024 of 23 August 2024).

<sup>20</sup> A group of seven participants attends the course.



14. All activities of the Nareg Schools are fully financed by the MoESY through the Nareg School Board.<sup>21</sup> The MoESY also fully finances the Armenian courses available in the Adult Education Centres and partly finances the Nanor Armenian Childcare Centre, as well as the Nareg Summer School.<sup>22</sup>

15. Teaching materials are ordered online and delivered by the MoESY before the start of the school year, free of charge. Textbooks are currently ordered either from the United States of America or from Lebanon and are fully financed by the MoESY. These materials are revised in Cyprus, in order to adapt the content of the books printed in the diaspora to the Cypriot context and/or when the history and heritage of the Armenians in Cyprus are not sufficiently covered. The objective is to develop a comprehensive curriculum, adapted to the needs of the Cypriot Armenian children, which is suitable to the Cypriot context and publish teaching materials in Cyprus accordingly. To this end, a project is proposed under the EU's Erasmus programme with teachers from Cyprus, France, Greece and Lebanon. These aims are in line with the previous recommendations of the Committee of Experts,<sup>23</sup> and state authorities are encouraged to support them, including financially.

16. In the previous monitoring round, the Committee of Ministers recommended Cyprus **“to provide teacher training for Armenian”** as a matter of priority.<sup>24</sup> During the on-the-spot visit, the Committee of Experts was informed that teacher training is provided in the Nareg Armenian Schools<sup>25</sup> in Nicosia with the assistance of the University of Cyprus. Two training sessions are organised per year led by Western Armenian native speaker(s) from Lebanon. The cost of these trainings is budgeted in the yearly budget of the school and fully financed by the MoESY. In order to obtain work visa, trainers from abroad are obliged to undertake Greek lessons, which they do during their stay.

17. The shortage of teachers has been a problem since the closing of the Nicosia based Melkonian Institute<sup>26</sup> in 2005. There is an increasing interest from young Armenian-speaking teachers from Lebanon to settle in Cyprus. Three teachers from Lebanon were hired recently and the Armenian School Board also invests in their recruitment. The latter is a complex effort, as those teachers who come with their families from Lebanon (or elsewhere from abroad), need to be able to manage their everyday life financially. Possibilities for spouses to work are limited, both because of legal constraints and language barriers. Unless both parents work, salaries do not cover the living costs in Cyprus and teachers are obliged to go back to their home countries. Although the funding has been secured by the state authorities through the Armenian School Board for the teachers, immigration and visa issues hamper the process with the additional problem that foreign teachers often do not speak Greek. A comprehensive strategy could be developed by the state authorities, involving the Representative of the Armenian Religious Group, the Principal of the Nareg School and representatives of the School Board to address this issue.

18. Although the speakers and the Representative of the Armenian Religious Group continued to advocate for the establishment of a Chair of Armenian Department in the University of Cyprus and the Committee of Experts in the past urged the state authorities to step up efforts in this respect,<sup>27</sup> there is still neither a Chair nor a study programme in place. The Cypriot authorities have been examining this possibility and according to the information received, 250 to 300 hours of teaching programme would be needed to be set up, including a language teaching part and a pedagogical part. In addition, developing appropriate material takes a lot of time and requires staff and additional financial support. As previously recommended by the Committee of Experts,<sup>28</sup> and in line with the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers **“to promote study and research on Armenian at university level”**,<sup>29</sup> state authorities need to consult with the relevant representatives of the Armenian speakers in order to start a study programme in Armenian and

<sup>21</sup> The MoESY allocated €1 204 854 last school year for the operational expenses of the Nareg Schools, based on the budget presented by the School Board.

<sup>22</sup> The Nanor Childcare Centre is partly financed by the Office of the Armenian Representative and the MoESY (€20 000), and the Nareg Summer Schools are partly financed by parents and the MoESY.

<sup>23</sup> See: [Sixth evaluation report \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#), paragraph 13.

<sup>24</sup> See: Recommendation [\(CM/RecChL\(2022\)1\)](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Cyprus.

<sup>25</sup> See: <http://www.hayem.org/en/nareg-school>.

<sup>26</sup> The Melkonian Educational Institute was an internationally recognised Armenian private school in Nicosia, providing bilingual Armenian-English secondary education. It had existed for over 70 years and was closed down in 2005. The Cypriot authorities have contacted the Armenian General Benevolent Union (located in New York, USA), the owner of the establishment, but its position concerning the closure of the school remained unchanged. The Committee of Experts was informed by the Representative of the Armenian Religious Group in the House of Parliament that the owner intends to sell the building. See references on the Melkonian Educational Institute in the [First evaluation report \(ECRML \(2006\) 3\)](#) paragraphs 88-91.; the [Third evaluation report \(ECRML \(2012\) 2\)](#) paragraph 61, footnote 6. and the [Fourth evaluation report \(ECRML \(2014\) 8\)](#) (paragraph 45.) of the Committee of Experts on the Charter.

<sup>27</sup> See: [Sixth evaluation report on Cyprus \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#), paragraph 16 and recommendation “b” for immediate action, page 13.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>29</sup> See: Recommendation [\(CM/RecChL\(2022\)1\)](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Cyprus.



to support its setting up, including financially, as well as the establishment of a Chair of Armenian Department at the University of Cyprus.

19. Cypriot Maronite Arabic continues to be taught at the Agios Maronas Pre-primary and Primary School in Nicosia as an optional course one afternoon per week for 40 minutes, after the regular school hours have finished. Currently 33 pupils are enrolled<sup>30</sup> in these afternoon classes and receive language education from a competent teacher, who commutes from Kormakitis, where he works as a full-time teacher in the recently opened Kormakitis Primary School. The MoESY finances both the running of the schools and the operational costs of the five buses transporting the pupils to the Agios Maronas Pre-primary and Primary School. Both the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe have been calling on the Cypriot authorities throughout multiple cycles **“to strengthen and extend the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic”**, as a matter of priority.<sup>31</sup> Speakers confirmed that there would be interest to increase the frequency and length of the classes, but there has been a shortage of teachers of the language for years. There are currently four teachers in the Agios Maronas Primary School, including its Principal, who are of Maronite origin, but none of them are trained to teach the language. While in its sixth evaluation report, the Committee of Experts urged the Cypriot authorities to take resolute action in this matter,<sup>32</sup> without addressing the shortage of trained teachers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, strengthening of the teaching of the language, including more hours per week, as well as introducing the teaching during morning classes seem to be currently unrealistic. In line with the recommendation of the Committee of Experts made in its sixth evaluation report, as well as the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers adopted in this context **“to provide teacher training for Cypriot Maronite Arabic”**,<sup>33</sup> the Cypriot authorities are urged to step up efforts, in co-operation with the relevant representatives of the speakers, to address the shortage of trained language teachers, both in short and long term, and in a comprehensive manner.

20. Teachers of Maronite origin in the Agios Maronas Pre-Primary and Primary School are engaged daily in raising awareness and promoting the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language and culture through everyday school activities, such as cultural, religious<sup>34</sup> and sports events, or by posting signs and flyers in Cypriot Maronite Arabic. New teaching materials based on the findings of the research of the Archive of Oral Tradition were produced and approved by the Curriculum Development Unit of the Pedagogical Institute, providing a broader insight into the history and culture of the Maronites to all students in the framework of religious education, history and geography.<sup>35</sup> The Committee of Experts welcomes this development. However, it recalls the relevant recommendation formulated in its sixth evaluation report,<sup>36</sup> and encourages the authorities to translate the materials, in close co-operation with the speakers, into Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

21. Cypriot Maronite Arabic language and culture are also taught in the Annual Language Summer Camp (the “Sanna Camp”), where around 100 children are enrolled each year (98 children in 2023), with half of them staying in the camp and half (the younger ones) commuting daily. Until this year, four classes took place per day with the help of 20 teachers and group leaders. The camp takes place every August in Kormakitis, and, since 2023, in the Kormakitis Centre for Co-operation. As the venue allows for sleeping and eating facilities, it provides for more comprehensive socialising. In 2024, the summer camp took place for one week, separating primary and secondary level children in two groups. Teaching is based on the developed pedagogical materials, which has proven to be very useful. There is an idea to further increase the length of the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic language and culture to four weeks and strengthening the activities to a summer school instead of a camp. While the MoESY has been covering the costs of the currently organised “Sanna Camps”,<sup>37</sup> additional financial support would be needed for that plan to materialise in 2025. The Committee of Experts welcomes the plan to increase the length of the summer camp and expand its activities to a summer school. It encourages the Cypriot authorities to support the realisation of this plan, also financially, and to promote it to children and parents belonging to the Maronite religious group.

<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that learning Cypriot Maronite Arabic is open to all pupils of Cyprus, however only available in the Agios Maronas Primary School.

<sup>31</sup> See: [Fifth evaluation report \(CM\(2018\)34\)](#), [Sixth evaluation report \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#) and Recommendation [\(CM/RecChL\(2022\)1\)](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Cyprus.

<sup>32</sup> See: [Sixth evaluation report \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#), paragraph 23.

<sup>33</sup> See: Recommendation [\(CM/RecChL\(2022\)1\)](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Cyprus.

<sup>34</sup> A mass is organised in the Maronite church opposite of the school three times a year and the Maronite priest teaches catechism once a month in the school.

<sup>35</sup> See: [https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/40/maronitiki\\_koinotita\\_arxi\\_me\\_efxes\\_enotita\\_1\\_sel\\_09\\_09\\_27.pdf](https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/40/maronitiki_koinotita_arxi_me_efxes_enotita_1_sel_09_09_27.pdf);  
[https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/239/maronitiki\\_koinotita\\_giortazoume\\_pascha\\_enotita\\_4\\_sel\\_55\\_71.pdf](https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/239/maronitiki_koinotita_giortazoume_pascha_enotita_4_sel_55_71.pdf);  
[https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/42/maronitiki\\_koinotita\\_giortazoume\\_xristougenna\\_enotita\\_2\\_sel\\_28\\_37.pdf](https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/42/maronitiki_koinotita_giortazoume_xristougenna_enotita_2_sel_28_37.pdf);  
[https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/241/maronitiki\\_koinotita\\_oi\\_agioi\\_ton\\_maroniton\\_enotita\\_3\\_sel\\_38\\_54.pdf](https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/sd/241/maronitiki_koinotita_oi_agioi_ton_maroniton_enotita_3_sel_38_54.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> See: [Sixth evaluation report \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#), paragraph 22.

<sup>37</sup> €12 750 per year.

22. The MoESY also supports financially (€6 000) the Summer Programme for young Maronites operated by the Maronite Church Committee in Limassol, as well as the Summer Programme for young Maronites operated by the Office of the Maronite Representative, in the Kormakitis Centre for Cooperation (€5 000).

23. The teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic is also provided at the Adult Education Centres on demand. The programme is free of charge for the participants since 2023.<sup>38</sup> However, the Committee of Experts was informed that there are currently no adults interested in enrolling in this programme. A more intensified promotion of the programme, both by the state authorities and the speakers, could help to attract interest.

24. Teaching materials are developed based on the results of the work conducted in the framework of the Action Plan for the Revitalisation and Empowerment of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. A1 level teaching materials and a printed textbook<sup>39</sup> are used for pupils of 6-13 years of age, attending the weekly afternoon classes. In addition, a story book containing ten stories in Cypriot Maronite Arabic, extracted from the recorded archive and life today of the Maronite villages, was finalised and was piloted during the 2024 Summer Camp. It is currently in the process of publishing. Teachers expressed the need for more teaching materials and flashcards. A1 level teaching materials for adults and A2 level teaching materials for children are currently being finalised and expected to be published by the end of 2024. The Committee of Experts was informed that preparation of teaching materials for pre-school children is underway.

25. According to the information received, there is still only one qualified teacher of Cypriot Maronite Arabic in Cyprus, who is a full-time teacher in the Kormakitis Primary School.<sup>40</sup> It has been difficult for years to find suitable young teacher candidates who would be willing not only to improve their language skills, but also to take up the task of teaching the next generations relatively quickly. In the opinion of the Representative of the Maronite Religious Group expressed during the on-the-spot visit, the 10-day language teaching course organised every summer and financed by the MoESY could be a short-term solution. The aim of this course is to train Cypriot Maronite Arabic speakers to teach the language. There are two to three young teachers who already speak the language but are not confident in teaching it. Representatives of the speakers all agree, however, that a long-term solution requires a clearly defined strategy. According to the Committee of Experts, this could be achieved with the establishment of a Chair at the University of Cyprus and by building on the ongoing successful scientific research project. A predictable professional career cycle with adequate job and financial security is key to a sustainable model.

26. Cypriot Maronite Arabic is not taught at university level. There could be a possibility to create a Chair by building on the ongoing successful research project at the University of Cyprus aiming at creating the Archive of Oral Tradition of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. The Committee of Experts has been encouraging the state authorities to take steps in order to promote study of and research on Cypriot Maronite Arabic at university or equivalent institutions in its recommendations of both the fifth and sixth monitoring cycle, despite the acute shortage of teachers. The Committee of Experts welcomes the results of the ongoing research programme and, in this context, encourages the state authorities to seize this opportunity and strengthen their efforts, including financially, to create a Chair and a full study programme at the University of Cyprus for Cypriot Maronite Arabic. The Committee of Experts also encourages the state authorities to benefit from the fact that Cypriot Maronite Arabic attracts the interest of linguists and researchers worldwide and that it is an important source of reference for linguistic and ethnographic research in the broader Mediterranean region.

### ***Use of the regional or minority languages in the media***

27. In its past two evaluation reports the Committee of Experts, as well as the Committee of Ministers recommended Cyprus **“to strengthen the presence of Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic in broadcasting”**,<sup>41</sup> as a matter of priority, especially in television, including an offer for children.<sup>42</sup>

28. The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) radio station RIK 2 continues to broadcast a one-hour daily radio programme and news bulletin in **Armenian** from 5pm to 6pm (repeated between 5am and 6am the next morning), which covers literature, music, religion, content for children, health and news from Cyprus and the Armenian diaspora worldwide, hence both in English and Western Armenian. These programmes are prepared and presented by Armenian speakers, and there are plans to include pupils of the Nareg Schools. During their meeting with the Committee of Experts, the representatives of the speakers confirmed that there would be both interest and enough material to exceed the current timeframe of broadcasting or

<sup>38</sup> Costs would be covered by the MoESY.

<sup>39</sup> The “Sanna book”.

<sup>40</sup> Relevant legislation concerning the appointment of teaching staff for the Kormakitis Primary School is being revised by the MoESY. The aim is to recruit Maronite teachers who reside in the village.

<sup>41</sup> See: Recommendation [\(CM/RecChL\(2022\)1\)](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Cyprus.

<sup>42</sup> See: [Sixth evaluation report \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#), p. 13 and 15. and [Fifth evaluation report \(CM\(2018\)34\)](#).

provide for the possibility for audio on demand. Every year the Armenian Christmas and Easter services are broadcast live.

29. At present there is no regular presence of Armenian on television. The Committee of Experts was informed during the on-the-spot visit that CyBC is considering a news bulletin in Armenian, based on the content of the daily radio programme, pending funding. In addition, based on the regular radio presence, content would be available for a one-hour television programme to be broadcast at the end of the year. As it was the case during the previous on-the-spot visit in July 2021, the speakers emphasised that they would like to see more children's programmes to make Armenian more appealing to them.

30. The magazine "Artsakank" is a well-known newspaper for the Armenian community. Its print version was discontinued in 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is still missed by the elderly population. Two online magazines are currently available through Facebook, the Artsakank Media<sup>43</sup>, a continuation of the previous printed newspaper, and the "Gibrahayer".<sup>44</sup> "Gibrahayer" is partly financed by the Ministry of Interior<sup>45</sup> and is available in Armenian, Greek and English. These electronic newspapers became very popular to all generations as they cover all main topics of interest (news, culture, sports, events, etc.) for the religious group, including the younger generation, and they are up to date in content. The Artsakank Media has also content in English, targeting a wider audience than the Cypriot Armenian community. One editor and one cameraman work for the newspaper together with four advisors, supporting the every-day running of the newspaper on a voluntary basis. This online magazine does not receive funding from the Ministry of Interior.

31. The radio programme called "The voice of the Maronites" continued to be broadcast by CyBC in Greek. The duration of the programme was increased from 30 minutes to 90 minutes per week this year. The programme includes interviews, religious and traditional music and songs in **Cypriot Maronite Arabic** occasionally. Consideration is given to involve native speakers from Kormakitis to promote the language by telling stories of their everyday life. Another idea is to involve native speakers to tell stories in Cypriot Maronite Arabic to children. The Committee of Experts welcomes these initiatives. It invites the relevant state authorities to engage with the representatives of the speakers, in particular Maronite youth and children, to better understand their wishes and needs.

32. Following the success of the television series called "Galateia",<sup>46</sup> which contains Cypriot Maronite Arabic words and phrases incorporated into the Greek dialogues, a project was initiated by its creators, supported by both the MoESY and the Ministry of Culture for a new TV series. The "Maronite" would present the real-life story in Kormakitis starting in 1924, through 24 episodes in three seasons. The aim is to increase the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic in the new series to 70% (with only 30% in Greek). Being a more comprehensive project than the "Galateia", substantial funding is needed.<sup>47</sup> Other than this, there is no television programme in Cypriot Maronite Arabic, even though speakers recognise the importance of attracting more attention to the language, especially of children and youth. Beside raising awareness in general, television programmes are key to teach children the language. State authorities are therefore invited to strengthen their support, including financially, to broadcast Cypriot Arabic Maronite programmes on the state television. In this context, the authorities could further consider supporting financially the new television series' project, also through the state television financing, a pre-condition to apply for EU funds according to the speakers in charge of the project. Financial support allocated to other television programmes, in particular targeting children audience, would also be important.

33. The Maronites of Cyprus have their own publications. "The "Maronite Press" is published by the Representative of the Maronites in the House of the Representatives. In addition, the Maronites continued to maintain their own web page,<sup>48</sup> promoting Cypriot Maronite Arabic through cultural events, reports, up-to-date information and other topics relevant to the Maronite culture. These publications are all in Greek, containing only sometimes the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language. The Ministry of Interior provided the Maronite community with €10000 annually in the period 2020-2023 for publication purposes.<sup>49</sup> In 2023, the Ministry of Interior additionally granted the amount of €1 020 to the "Movement for the Relief and Welfare of Maronites" for the publication of a newspaper called "The Community of Maronites".<sup>50</sup>

<sup>43</sup> [Artsakank Media | Nicosia | Facebook](#).

<sup>44</sup> [Gibrahayer EMagazine - Ἡ γῆ τῶν μαρωνιτῶν | Strovolos | Facebook](#).

<sup>45</sup> €3 984 was allocated in 2023 and €3 140 in 2024.

<sup>46</sup> The series were broadcast on "Sigma TV", a private television channel.

<sup>47</sup> Information received by the Committee of Experts during their meeting with the Representative of the Maronite Religious Group and the scriptwriter of the series. The idea for "The Maronite" was submitted for the international festival Series Mania (Lille, France) and it was selected amongst hundred ideas to be presented during the festival's Writer Campus.

<sup>48</sup> See: <https://kormakitis.net/>.

<sup>49</sup> The maximum amount available for publications is €51 000 per year for the three religious groups.

<sup>50</sup> The newspaper is written in Greek and Cypriot Maronite Arabic and is used in multiple occasions.

34. As referred to in paragraph 27 of the current report, in its earlier recommendations both the Committee of Experts, and the Committee of Ministers pointed out the need **“to strengthen the presence of Armenian and Cypriot Arabic Maronite in broadcasting”**. The Committee of Experts proposed structural amendments and improvements for the minority language programmes in media, to which state authorities, including CyBC, were open.<sup>51</sup> State authorities, as well as the CyBC, are encouraged to reach out to children and the youth, in designing such television programmes.

### ***Use of the regional or minority languages in cultural activities and facilities***

35. As of 1 September 2022, the Department of Modern and Contemporary Culture of the Deputy Ministry of Culture (DMoC)<sup>52</sup>, in close consultation with the Representatives of the Religious Groups, implements the Grand-aid Scheme for the Cultural Activities of the Religious Groups.<sup>53</sup> The scheme aims at providing incentives for the promotion and dissemination of the history and culture of the Armenian and the Maronite religious groups of Cyprus through quality cultural activities (literature, theatre, music, cinema, folklore, dance, visual arts). All the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus who belong to the three religious groups are eligible to apply for funding under this scheme, either individually or as part of a group or organisation. Compared to the previous practice, the applicants do not need to pass their applications through the Office of the Representative of the relevant Religious Group. There has also been a gradual increase of the funds from €50 000 in 2019 and 2020; €60 000 in 2021 and 2022; €80 000 in 2023, to €83 287 in 2024. Both individuals and organisations can apply, and 60% of the approved budget is granted immediately.<sup>54</sup> While these are welcomed developments, as the €83 287 per year fund covers the costs of all three religious groups, state authorities are encouraged to increase further their financial support in the future, as well as to allocate a specific budget to activities related to each language. The possibility of applying for such funds will also be promoted within the Armenian and Maronite youth. The Committee of Experts reiterates its request to the authorities to assess the effectiveness of the evaluation process and report on it in the next periodical report.<sup>55</sup>

36. The Ministry of Interior, as the competent authority for the protection of national minorities, has a policy of providing annual financial support to the Armenians and Maronites for publications of their choice.<sup>56</sup> Beside the financial support, the Ministry of Interior, if requested, makes its expertise available to create more informational materials in co-operation with the representatives of each religious group.

37. On 18 March 2022, on the occasion of the International Mother Language Day, the pupils of Dasoupolis Lyceum that attend the Armenian language programme, in collaboration with their teacher, participated in a school event dedicated to the Armenian language. The event aimed at promoting awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and presenting and strengthening the Armenian language. In addition to the representatives of the MoESY, the Representative of the Armenian Religious Group in the House of Representatives and members of the Armenian religious group, the event was also attended by pupils from Nareg Armenian Gymnasium.

38. A children's church choir performing in Armenian continued to be an important institution for the practice of the Armenian language, as well as cultural activities, involving the young generations, based on Armenian traditions. Plays and folklore dances are performed by children in the Armenian language. Pupils of the Nareg Schools participate in presenting short stories in Armenian and Greek to non-speakers as well. Cultural activities that are performed to celebrate the Armenian Christmas are broadcast by CyBC.

39. Kormakitis is the historic village of the Maronites, where Cypriot Maronite Arabic is traditionally spoken. It has become one of the venues of cultural activities such as the celebration of St. George's Day, the patron saint of Kormakitis. The event has been organised under the auspices of the Presidential Commissioner. During the celebrations, people sing songs, dance traditional dances and read poetry in Cypriot Maronite Arabic. The event is also broadcast by CyBC. Since its inauguration in 2023, the Kormakitis Centre for Co-operation has hosted most of the events. The experience of having such a centre is very positive and clearly shows the importance of meeting in person in the place of origin. In addition to the “Sanna Camp”, the centre hosts cultural and religious events throughout the year. Its construction was financed partly through European Union funds and its running costs are covered by the Cypriot authorities.

<sup>51</sup> See: [Sixth evaluation report](#), paragraph 30.

<sup>52</sup> The Deputy Ministry of Culture has been established on 1 July 2022, by Law 55(I)/22.

<sup>53</sup> The Grant-aid Scheme for the Cultural Activities of the three religious groups of Cyprus was launched in 2019 to promote the regional and minority languages as an expression of cultural wealth more effectively.

<sup>54</sup> The scheme shall only cover specific expenses, which are clearly indicated on the relevant table of the Regulations document of the scheme. The applications which aim to score between 70-80/100, receive 70% of their approved expenses with a ceiling of €5 000, those scoring 81-90/100, receive 80% of their approved expenses with a ceiling of €8 000 and those scoring 91-100/100, receive 90% of their approved expenses with a ceiling of €10 000.

<sup>55</sup> See: [Sixth evaluation report \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#), paragraph 32.

<sup>56</sup> The maximum amount available for publications is €51 000 per year for the three religious groups. No additional funds can be granted. Between 2020-2023, the request of the religious groups for funding did not exceed the maximum amount available.



40. The cultural significance of Cypriot Maronite Arabic is also recognised and promoted in Agios Maronas Pre-Primary and Primary School. The choir of the primary school sang songs in Cypriot Maronite Arabic during the Christmas celebration in 2022, and the choir of the pre-primary school performed during a Fun Fair in May 2023.

41. Both the Armenian and the Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages continued to be promoted each year also through the well-established interschool co-operation, by addressing different themes through different educational projects with an intercultural perspective. Such projects were organised and hosted by the Agios Maronas Primary School, supported by the MoESY, and with the participation of the Nareg Armenian Schools.<sup>57</sup> For the school year 2023-2024, emphasis was given on intangible culture, including practices, traditions, knowledge and skills that communities pass through generations. The project entitled "In our places", was organised by the Agios Maronas Primary School, in co-operation with the Nareg Armenian School, one rural school and one village school. It was funded and promoted by the Deputy Ministry of Culture and included activities on oral traditions, performing arts (dancing), traditional craft, as well as social practices (traditional games) and traditional food. During the final presentation, interaction was done with people from the Maronite Religious Group using Cypriot Maronite Arabic. Cypriot Maronite Arabic was also used during the period of preparation of the project by the children.

### ***Use of the regional or minority languages in transfrontier exchanges***

42. The Armenians in Cyprus have good co-operation with Armenia and the Armenian diaspora. Through bilateral relations, regular meetings with officials and/or religious leaders of both Armenia and Lebanon have been held in recent years. This international co-operation has tangible results, as many of the textbooks, teacher manuals and journals come from Lebanon. Teacher training is provided in the Nareg Armenian School by a trainer from Lebanon two times per year.<sup>58</sup> To strengthen and deepen their co-operation on diaspora affairs, on 24 June 2022, Cyprus, Greece and Armenia signed a Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding with emphasis on the active participation of the expatriate youth as one of the top priorities. Moreover, focus has been on further development of co-operation through the implementation of specific initiatives involving the diaspora in countries such as France, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia, where the three countries have well-organised diaspora communities. In this context, joint events have been organised, dedicated to national holidays or memorial days. The pupils of the Nareg Primary Schools collaborated with Armenian schools in Lebanon and France, including by corresponding in Western Armenian, aiming at promoting co-operation among young Armenians in the diaspora in Armenian.

43. The Maronites of Cyprus have very strong bonds with the Maronites of Lebanon and have connections with the Holy See due to their religion. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus supports people-to-people contacts, in particular through co-operation between churches and between schools. Through bilateral relations, regular meetings with officials and/or religious leaders of Lebanon were held. During these meetings specific joined actions and programmes were decided to be organised in the near future, also in the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the Presidential Commissioner on 13 September 2022, on diaspora issues.<sup>59</sup>

44. In 2021-2022 the Agios Maronas Primary School participated in the 8th Panhellenic Student Competition "Cyprus, Greece, Diaspora: educational bridges". The school submitted a fiction film entitled "An angelic child, our memories unite..."<sup>60</sup> and was awarded the first prize. The film was the result of the co-operation and partnership of four schools: the Agios Maronas Primary School in Cyprus, the First Primary School of Lykovrisi in Greece, the Greek School of St Andreas-Birmingham and the Greek School of St Andreas in Weston-super-Mare in the United Kingdom. The film aimed at highlighting the timelessness of culture in these three countries. It was inspired by the discovery of a fragment of a fresco in the ruins of a church in the historic Maronite village of Kormakitis. Cypriot Maronite Arabic was used in the film by the pupils of Agios Maronas Primary School, thus increasing the visibility of the language also abroad.

### ***Awareness of the regional or minority languages in society***

45. The general school curricula are regularly updated based on the results of the scientific research on the culture and history of the religious groups. In the framework of the continuous Educational Reform for the Subject of History, in the 2021-22 school year, the MoESY proceeded to reform the curricula of Secondary General Education. In this context, separate teaching periods about the religious groups were

<sup>57</sup> See: [Seventh Periodical Report presented by the Republic of Cyprus \(MIN-LANG \(2024\) PR1\)](#), paragraphs 22 and 127.

<sup>58</sup> It is complemented by mentoring and evaluation of the Principal of the Nareg Schools and funded by the MoESY through the Armenian School Board's yearly budget.

<sup>59</sup> See: [Ανακοινωθέντα Αρθρο - ΠΙΟ](#) and [Cyprus, Greece and Lebanon sign MoU on Diaspora issues in Beirut \(cna.org.cy\)](#).

<sup>60</sup> [Ταινία Μυθοπλασίας: "Ένα παιδί αγγελικό, τις μνήμες μας ενώνει..." \(youtube.com\)](#).

included in the history course.<sup>61</sup> Pupils of lower secondary level (gymnasium) are asked to explain when and under what conditions the religious groups arrived and settled in Cyprus and discuss their contribution to social, economic and cultural development. Pupils in the upper secondary education (lyceum) examine the change in the demographic composition of the religious groups from the time they settled in Cyprus until the present day, the provisions of the Cyprus Constitution, such as the election of a representative for each religious group in the House of Representatives, and their rights.

46. In 2022, the book “Agia Marina, the memories give hope” was published by the Association of Agia Marina Skyllouras “Epistrofi” (“Return”). The book is dedicated to the Maronite village of Agia Marina Skylloura<sup>62</sup> and includes testimonies of village inhabitants, rare photographic material, as well as information concerning daily customs and events. The book was presented in November 2022 in Nicosia. The publication and the presentation of the book were subsidised by the Department of Modern and Contemporary Culture of the Deputy Ministry of Culture.

47. In collaboration with the MoESY and the Department of Modern and Contemporary Culture of the Deputy Ministry of Culture, the Hamazkayin Cultural and Educational Society and the Office of the Representative of the Armenian Religious Group organise each year a cultural event where Armenian language is used. These events, always presenting a different theme, are financially supported by the MoESY.<sup>63</sup> They are very popular and are attended by many outside of the Armenian religious group. Under the patronage of the Deputy Minister of Culture and the Representative of the Armenian Religious Group in the House of Representatives, this year’s event took place in the Nicosia Municipal Theatre, on 11 May 2024, with the participation of the Hamazkayin “Kousan” Choir (Lebanon) and adult as well as children dance groups of Cyprus, such as the Hamazkayin “Sipan” Dance Group and the Dance Groups of “Ani” (Paphos), “Kilikia” (Limassol) and the “Nanor Juniors” (Nicosia).

48. In the framework of their policy of promoting the cultural wealth of Cyprus, as well as the values of coexistence and respect for multiculturalism, the Cyprus Radio and Television Authority (CRTA) and the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) continue to broadcast programmes specifically for the religious groups of Cyprus. These programmes include several elements regarding the religion, history, language and culture of the Armenians and the Maronites.

49. In order to promote the identity and culture of the religious groups and provide overall awareness of the general public about their history, religion, values and contribution to the Cypriot society, the MoESY, in close collaboration with the Representatives of the Religious Groups in the House of Representatives, the Presidential Commissioner and the CyBC, produced 15 short films/videos on the history, culture, language and traditions of the religious groups. Five videos were dedicated to the Armenian religious group, while four short films/videos highlight the history, culture, language and traditions of the Maronites. Two videos were dedicated to the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language and were prepared in co-operation with the members of the research team working on its revitalisation. The videos were presented on 19 November 2021 during a joint press conference<sup>64</sup> and have been broadcast several times since on the CyBC Channel 1 and Channel 2. The 15 short videos were also presented in the framework of history teaching to children in primary and secondary education and were posted on the website of the MoESY.<sup>65</sup>

50. CyBC, in close co-operation with the Armenian Religious Group, presented a documentary dedicated to the Melkonian Educational Institute within the TV Programme “Χρονογράφημα, Chronografima”. The documentary explored the history of the Melkonian Educational Institute and its cultural and educational significance for the Armenians in general and for the Armenians of Cyprus in particular. The documentary was broadcast several times by CyBC on its channels 1 and 2 and is available online on the CyBC’s webpage.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, the Press and Information Office, in close co-operation with the Armenian Representative in the House of Representatives and the MoESY, intends to publish a book dedicated to the Melkonian Educational Institute. The 400 pages luxury edition will include both photos and texts and is expected to be published by the end of 2024 in three languages: Armenian, English and Greek. It will also be available online.

<sup>61</sup> See: [Όλες οι τάξεις \(schools.ac.cy\)](https://schools.ac.cy/).

<sup>62</sup> Located in the area not under the effective control of the Government of Cyprus.

<sup>63</sup> [Seventh Periodical Report of the Republic of Cyprus \(MIN-LANG \(2024\) PR1\)](#), paragraph 17.

<sup>64</sup> See the press release from PIO: [Ανακοινωθέντα Άρθρο - PIO](#).

<sup>65</sup> See useful information/material: <https://istom.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/yliko/chrisimo-yliko/5-chrisimo-yliko/136-oles-oi-taxeis>.

<sup>66</sup> See: [Χρονογράφημα 06/11/22 \(rik.cy\)](#) or [Το #Χρονογράφημα συναντάει την Αρμένικη κοινότητα της Κύπρου μέσα από μια περιδιάβαση στο “Μελκονιάν”](#). Γυρίζουμε το χρόνο πίσω -οξύμωρο- εκεί, όπου... | [By Χρονογράφημα | Facebook](#).



51. The Committee of Experts was also informed of the production of a series of one-hour documentary films on the Maronite religious group in Cypriot Maronite Arabic.<sup>67</sup> The first documentary was broadcast by Alfa TV, a private channel of Pancyprian coverage in the popular TV programme “24 hours”, and it was filmed in Kormakitis in January 2023. It presents the history of Maronites, contributes to enhance the visibility of this religious group to the wider public, including the importance of preserving their language, also through interviews with people still living in the historic villages. There is a 25-minute version available to be broadcast in schools,<sup>68</sup> and an 11-minute version was produced specifically for the Euronews, subtitled in English.

52. The CyBC, in close collaboration with the Representative of the Maronite Religious Group in the House of Representatives and the MoESY, broadcast a short documentary entitled “Sanna – Our language” on 30 April 2024.<sup>69</sup> A shorter version is available at the website of the MoESY, at the history page of Secondary General Education.<sup>70</sup> It is accessible to all teachers. The documentary deals with the effort made to save Cypriot Maronite Arabic by the Cypriot authorities, linguists, teachers and native speakers. Efforts to provide visibility to Cypriot Maronite Arabic are also supported at school level. In the framework of the sixth Archaeological, Ethnographic, Historical Film Festival and the sixth cycle of the Co-Education programme in 2022-23, supporting the production of school and university documentaries, a group of children of foreign background<sup>71</sup> in the Agios Vasilios Gymnasium in Nicosia produced a ten-minute documentary about Cypriot Maronite Arabic with the help of their teachers. The documentary was awarded the first prize by the Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO, and it was presented to several schools all over Cyprus.<sup>72</sup> The Committee of Experts welcomes these developments and the support given by the state authorities to implement these activities. In line with its previous recommendation, it recommends broadcasting of these programmes with subtitles in Greek, Armenian or Cypriot Maronite Arabic respectively, with the aim to raise awareness of these languages in the majority population.<sup>73</sup>

53. The MoESY, in collaboration with the Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies of the University of Cyprus, has launched a school competition for the creation of logos for the Archive of Oral Tradition for Cypriot Maronite Arabic and the KARMELA Archive. The competition is meant to raise awareness about the history and culture of the religious groups and encourage pupils to make a creative representation of them. The logo that will be chosen will receive an award at a ceremony in 2024.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Consultation with the language groups***

54. The representatives of both the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic speakers confirmed their fruitful co-operation both with state authorities, services and educational institutions (universities, schools), as well as with the Representatives of the Religious Groups in the House of Representatives. Meetings are regular and actions are taken to better support and promote their requests and/or to try to resolve issues that affect them. Suggestions of the speakers are taken into consideration and the implementation of their proposals of cultural or educational nature depend mainly on the financial resources of the state budget. All measures of the state authorities take into consideration the needs and wishes of the religious groups in Cyprus, by fully respecting their traditions and characteristics. Priority is given to education, where financial support is provided by the MoESY, based on a yearly budget and in a predictable manner, through the respective school boards. The speakers were consulted in the course of the preparation of the seventh periodical report. The Committee of Experts welcomes the particularly good co-operation between the speakers and the state authorities, in particular the MoESY.

55. The youth organisations of the three religious groups are members of the General Consultative Body (GSC) of the Cyprus Youth Board, which is a semi-governmental organisation responsible for advising the government on youth issues. According to the information received from the state authorities, as members of the GSC, they receive immediate and regular information on various actions and mobility opportunities in Cyprus and abroad, funding for actions, as well as invitations to participate in consultations and discussions.

<sup>67</sup> The avant-premiere of the documentary “The Cypriot Maronites” took place at K-CINEPLEX cinemas in Nicosia in May 2022 and was attended by more than 200 people, including members of the Maronite religious group, government officials, members of the House of Representatives and the Diplomatic Corps. Both the realisation of the documentary and the event were organised and supported by the Office of the Representative of the Maronite Religious Group in the House of Representatives. The event was also financially supported by the Department of Modern and Contemporary Culture of the Deputy Ministry of Culture.

<sup>68</sup> According to the information received, this will also be available on the website of the MoESY as of September 2024.

<sup>69</sup> See: [Ντοκιμαντέρ Μεγάλου Μήκους \(rik.cy\)](https://rik.cy) and the link to the press release: [Πρώτη προβολή ντοκιμαντέρ «Sanna - Η γλώσσα μας» \(paideia-news.com\)](https://www.paideia-news.com).

<sup>70</sup> See: [Θρησκευτικές Ομάδες \(Μαρωνίτες - Sanna - Η γλώσσα μας\) \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com).

<sup>71</sup> The group consisted of children from Moldova, Bulgaria, Iran, Congo, Pakistan and Syria that attended an intensive language programme for learning Greek as a second language.

<sup>72</sup> [St. Vasilios Gymnasium - SANNA on Vimeo](https://www.vimeo.com).

<sup>73</sup> In line with the Committee of Experts recommendation in its [sixth evaluation report \(MIN-LANG \(2021\) 16\)](#), paragraph 44.

<sup>74</sup> According to the information received from the MoESY after the on-the-spot visit, proposals were submitted only for the KARMELA Archive, the award ceremony of which took place on 6 November 2024 at the University of Cyprus. The delegation of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities, conducting their monitoring visit in the country, was also invited to the event.

While they are eligible to submit applications to the National Funding Programme "Youth Initiatives", their role could be further strengthened and better targeted to raise awareness among the youth about the history, culture and language of these religious groups. Furthermore, state authorities are encouraged to actively involve the youth representatives of the religious groups in discussions relevant to the effective promotion of learning, teaching and researching both Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages.

## 1.2 The situation of the individual regional or minority languages in Cyprus

### Armenian – Part II language

56. The Armenian language protected in Cyprus is Western Armenian. It has been a language of instruction in pre-school, primary and lower secondary education for many years. Following a Council of Ministers Decision,<sup>75</sup> since the school year 2021-2022, Armenian has been also taught in upper secondary education in one lyceum in Nicosia, where pupils belonging in the Armenian religious group are enrolled. Teaching materials in Armenian are imported from Lebanon and the United States of America. Efforts are ongoing to produce teaching material in Cyprus, reflecting the local context and needs both in teaching and in reading, especially for the young generation. There is still no study programme of Armenian at the university level. The fact that the Nanor nursery and the Nareg Schools at all levels in Nicosia are located very close allows not only for the children to socialise, but also for parents and other members of the religious group to meet and speak in Armenian. Ceremonies, events and sports days are organised within and between the Nareg Schools, where pupils perform in Armenian, reciting poems, singing and acting in theatrical plays, or simply meet, play and interact in Armenian. In addition to everyday classes, children are encouraged to speak Armenian during school breaks. The Nareg Summer School takes place every year for four weeks in July, accommodating 30 children of ages 3 and a half to 12 years old, with the opportunity to play, learn and interact in Armenian.

57. The use of Armenian in public and private radio and television has not improved in the current monitoring cycle. The CyBC is planning to broadcast new TV spots in Armenian that may improve the situation. Due to the discontinuation of the printed version of the magazine "Artsakank", the speakers were left without regular printed news in Armenian and only online (social media) news portals are available today. These are rich in content and up-to-date information and aim at reaching a wider public, including youth. The acceptance and tolerance towards Armenians and their language in the society are commendable, which reflects the efforts of the state authorities, who provide significant financing to both the education and the cultural activities of the Armenian community.

58. On 1 December 2022, the University of Cyprus launched a new research project called KARMELA, in collaboration with the speakers and the MoESY, to be completed by 30 November 2024. One of its main objectives is the creation of an Archive of Oral Tradition for Armenian, based on the experience of the work conducted on the Archive of Oral Tradition for Cypriot Maronite Arabic. The first phase of the project, which concerns the collection of data through interviews in Armenian with the speakers, has been completed in April 2024, the second phase is ongoing. The oral and audio-visual data recorded will be made public along with the results of the linguistic and cultural research work. While the project is not a linguistic project but rather a reconstruction of individual trajectories, the oral data recorded will allow researchers to conduct a comprehensive thematic and linguistic analysis of Western Armenian in collaboration with the *Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales* in Paris (France).<sup>76</sup>

### Cypriot Maronite Arabic – Part II language

59. Cypriot Maronite Arabic is a severely endangered minority language. The vast majority of Maronites no longer live in their traditional area and are scattered throughout the Republic of Cyprus. There is a clear generation gap in the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, with the language being mainly spoken by the older generation. There seems to be a full generation of Cypriot Maronite Arabic speakers missing, who would use the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language in their everyday life and would transmit it to their children. The level of language competence varies among the speakers but continues to weaken within younger generations. The optional course available at the Agios Maronas Primary School is not enough to keep the language alive or to increase the motivation to learn it. While the Committee of Experts acknowledges the ongoing efforts to develop teaching materials and textbooks, it encourages the representatives of the speakers and the MoESY to find ways of formal recognition of language proficiency (e.g. through a certificate) already at primary school level, to increase motivation and interest in continuing learning and investing in the language as of young age. Representatives of the speakers also underlined the interest of children in cultural education (theatre, songs, events). Cypriot Maronite Arabic is taught for the younger generation every August in the Annual Summer Language Camp in Kormakitis. This educational scheme is

<sup>75</sup> Council Decision n. 91791;

[http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm.nsf/All/7A4DAA347CAAD4E1C225879C0030EC70/\\$file/91.791.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm.nsf/All/7A4DAA347CAAD4E1C225879C0030EC70/$file/91.791.pdf?OpenElement).

<sup>76</sup> [Inalco | Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales](#)

also financed by the MoESY and has become popular within the Maronite religious group, including young Maronites, to preserve their culture and to learn their language. Teacher training is also organised in Kormakitis every July.

60. A new phase of the Action Plan for the Revitalisation and Empowerment of Cypriot Maronite Arabic (2021-2023) was launched and completed during the current monitoring cycle. In this framework, the linguistic research programme aiming at creating an Archive of Oral Tradition for Cypriot Maronite Arabic has been continuing and is now completing its eleventh phase. Its content will serve as a basis to design and develop new teaching materials for children and adults. Textbooks at A2 level for children and A1 for adults are being developed. In addition, an illustrated story book with narratives from the Archive will be prepared during 2024, based on more than 190 hours of conversations and stories in Cypriot Maronite Arabic recorded and collected in the Archive so far. The whole revitalisation process has been carried out in close co-operation with and active collaboration of the speakers and the scientific work will be continued based on the recent achievements. These initiatives supported by the state are important for the preservation and revitalisation of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. However, efforts should be stepped up to engage the younger generation in order to achieve tangible results, in particular to increase the number of speakers and their proficiency in Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

## Chapter 2 Compliance of Cyprus with its undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and recommendations

### 2.1 Armenian

#### 2.1.1 Compliance of Cyprus with its undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages concerning the protection and promotion of Armenian

Symbols used to mark changes in the evaluation compared to the previous monitoring cycle:

↗ improvement ↘ deterioration = no change

The Committee of Experts considers the undertaking*:					
Article	Undertakings of Cyprus concerning Armenian <sup>77</sup>	Fulfilled	partly fulfilled	formally fulfilled	not fulfilled
<b>Part II of the Charter</b>					
<i>(Undertakings which the state must apply to all regional or minority languages within its territory)</i>					
<b>Art. 7 – Objectives and principles</b>					
7.1.a	recognition of Armenian as an expression of cultural wealth	=			
7.1.b	ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of Armenian	=			
7.1.c	resolute action to promote Armenian	=			
7.1.d	facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of Armenian, in speech and writing, in public life (education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, transfrontier exchanges) and private life		=		
7.1.e	• maintenance and development of links, in the fields covered by this Charter, between groups in the state using Armenian • establishment of cultural relations with other linguistic groups	=			
7.1.f	provision of forms and means for the teaching and study of Armenian at all appropriate stages		=		
7.1.g	provision of facilities enabling (also adult) non-speakers of Armenian to learn it	=			
7.1.h	promotion of study and research on Armenian at universities or equivalent institutions				=
7.1.i	promotion of transnational exchanges, in the fields covered by this Charter, for the benefit of Armenian	=			
7.2	eliminate any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of Armenian	=			
7.3	promote mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country promote the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Armenian among the objectives of education and training encourage the mass media to include respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Armenian among their objectives	=			
7.4	take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the group which uses Armenian establish a body for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to Armenian	=			

\* The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages evaluates the compliance of states parties with their undertakings under the Charter as follows:

**Fulfilled:** Policies, legislation and practice are in conformity with the Charter.

**Partly fulfilled:** Policies and legislation are wholly or partly in conformity with the Charter, but the undertaking is only partly implemented in practice.

**Formally fulfilled:** Policies and legislation are in conformity with the Charter, but there is no implementation in practice.

**Not fulfilled:** No action in policies, legislation and practice has been taken to implement the undertaking.

<sup>77</sup> In order to facilitate readability, the provisions of the Charter appear here in a shortened and simplified form. The complete version of each provision can be consulted on the website of the Treaty Office: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/> (treaty No. 148).

**No conclusion:** The Committee of Experts is not in a position to conclude on the fulfilment of the undertaking as no or insufficient information has been provided by the authorities.

### **2.1.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Armenian in Cyprus**

The Committee of Experts recommends the Cypriot authorities to comply with all undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages which are not considered “fulfilled” (see under 2.1.1 above), as well as to continue to comply with those that are fulfilled. In doing so, the authorities should take particular account of the recommendations set out below. The recommendations by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter in Cyprus<sup>78</sup> remain valid in their own right. Recommendations made in the monitoring procedure of the Charter aim to support the authorities in the implementation process.

#### **I. Recommendations for immediate action**

- a. Facilitate the training of teachers of Armenian.**
- b. Step-up efforts to support the creation of a Chair of Armenian, as well as to start a study programme in Armenian building on the already developed research programme at the University of Cyprus.**
- c. Promote the use of Armenian in television and newspapers, both online and printed and develop a media offer for children and youth.**

#### **II. Further recommendations**

- d. Provide information on the activities carried out by the newly appointed Coordinator of Religious Groups in relation to the protection of Armenian.
- e. Support, including financially, the production of textbooks and other teaching material in Armenian in Cyprus, in close co-operation with the representatives of the speakers and practitioners involved in Armenian language education.
- f. Strengthen the teaching of Armenian in secondary education, in particular in upper secondary education.

<sup>78</sup> [CM/RecChL\(2006\)3](#); [CM/RecChL\(2009\)5](#); [CM/RecChL\(2012\)1](#); [CM/RecChL\(2014\)7](#); [CM/RecChL\(2018\)1](#); [CM/RecChL\(2022\)1](#). See also the relevant recommendations contained in the [Committee of Ministers' Resolution CM/ResCMN\(2021\)3](#) of 13 January 2021 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Cyprus.

## 2.2 Cypriot Maronite Arabic

### 2.2.1 Compliance of Cyprus with its undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages concerning the protection and promotion of Cypriot Maronite Arabic

Symbols used to mark changes in the evaluation compared to the previous monitoring cycle:

↗ improvement ↘ deterioration = no change

The Committee of Experts considers the undertaking*:					
Article	Undertakings of Cyprus concerning Cypriot Maronite Arabic <sup>79</sup>	fulfilled	partly fulfilled	formally fulfilled	not fulfilled
<b>Part II of the Charter</b> <i>(Undertakings which the state must apply to all regional or minority languages within its territory)</i>					
<b>Art. 7 – Objectives and principles</b>					
7.1.a	recognition of Cypriot Maronite Arabic as an expression of cultural wealth	=			
7.1.b	ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of Cypriot Maronite Arabic	=			
7.1.c	resolute action to promote Cypriot Maronite Arabic		↗		
7.1.d	facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, in speech and writing, in public life (education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, transfrontier exchanges) and private life		=		
7.1.e	maintenance and development of links, in the fields covered by this Charter, between groups in the state using Cypriot Maronite Arabic establishment of cultural relations with other linguistic groups	=			
7.1.f	provision of forms and means for the teaching and study of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at all appropriate stages		=		
7.1.g	provision of facilities enabling (also adult) non-speakers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic to learn it	=			
7.1.h	promotion of study and research on Cypriot Maronite Arabic at universities or equivalent institutions		=		
7.1.i	promotion of transnational exchanges, in the fields covered by this Charter, for the benefit of Cypriot Maronite Arabic		=		
7.2	eliminate any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic	=			
7.3	promote mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country promote the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Cypriot Maronite Arabic among the objectives of education and training encourage the mass media to include respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Cypriot Maronite Arabic among their objectives	=			
7.4	take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the group which uses Cypriot Maronite Arabic establish a body for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to Cypriot Maronite Arabic	=			

\* The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages evaluates the compliance of states parties with their undertakings under the Charter as follows:

**Fulfilled:** Policies, legislation and practice are in conformity with the Charter.

**Partly fulfilled:** Policies and legislation are wholly or partly in conformity with the Charter, but the undertaking is only partly implemented in practice.

**Formally fulfilled:** Policies and legislation are in conformity with the Charter, but there is no implementation in practice.

**Not fulfilled:** No action in policies, legislation and practice has been taken to implement the undertaking.

**No conclusion:** The Committee of Experts is not in a position to conclude on the fulfilment of the undertaking as no or insufficient information has been provided by the authorities.

<sup>79</sup> In order to facilitate readability, the provisions of the Charter appear here in a shortened and simplified form. The complete version of each provision can be consulted on the website of the Treaty Office: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/> (treaty No. 148).



## Changes in the evaluation compared to the previous monitoring cycle

61. The Committee of Experts welcomes the steps taken by the state authorities during the current monitoring cycle. However, it underlines that more decisive efforts are needed to effectively revitalise this language, in order to increase the number of speakers and proficiency in Cypriote Maronite Arabic (see above paragraphs 8, 9, 20 to 26, 61 and 62). It therefore considers the undertaking in Article 7.1.c. only partly fulfilled.

### 2.2.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Cypriot Maronite Arabic in Cyprus

The Committee of Experts recommends the Cypriot authorities to comply with all undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages which are not considered “fulfilled” (see under 2.2.1 above), as well as to continue to comply with those that are fulfilled. In doing so, the authorities should take particular account of the recommendations set out below. The recommendations by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter in Cyprus<sup>80</sup> remain valid in their own right. Recommendations made in the monitoring procedure of the Charter aim to support the authorities in the implementation process.

#### I. Recommendations for immediate action

- a. **Take resolute measures to ensure the teaching and study of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at all levels of education, including pre-school education.**
- b. **Introduce incentives for the recruitment of teachers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic and ensure their basic and further training.**
- c. **Promote the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic in the media, including an offer for children.**

#### II. Further recommendations

- d. Provide information on the activities carried out by the newly appointed Coordinator of the Religious Groups in relation to the protection of Cypriot Maronite Arabic.
- e. Recognise language proficiency in an official manner by issuing certificates to that effect.
- f. Strengthen the support, including financial, of the production of teaching materials in Cypriot Maronite Arabic to be used in pre-school, primary and secondary education.

<sup>80</sup> [CM/RecChL\(2006\)3](#); [CM/RecChL\(2009\)5](#); [CM/RecChL\(2012\)1](#); [CM/RecChL\(2014\)7](#); [CM/RecChL\(2018\)1](#); [CM/RecChL\(2022\)1](#). See also the relevant recommendations contained in the [Committee of Ministers' Resolution CM/ResCMN\(2021\)3](#) of 13 January 2021 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Cyprus

### **Chapter 3      [Proposals for] Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

The Committee of Experts, while acknowledging the efforts the Cypriot authorities have undertaken to protect the regional or minority languages spoken in their country, has in its evaluation chosen to concentrate on some of the most important deficiencies in the implementation of the Charter. The recommendations forwarded by the Committee of Experts to the Committee of Ministers should not, however, be interpreted as diminishing the relevance of the other, more detailed observations contained in the report, which remain valid in their own right. The recommendations proposed by the Committee of Experts are drafted accordingly.

The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in accordance with Article 16 (4) of the Charter, proposes on the basis of the information contained in this report, that the Committee of Ministers makes the following recommendations to Cyprus.

The Committee of Ministers,

In accordance with Article 16 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;

Having regard to the instrument of ratification deposited by Cyprus on 26 August 2002;

Having taken note of the evaluation made by the Committee of Experts of the Charter with respect to the application of the Charter by Cyprus;

Bearing in mind that this evaluation is based on information submitted by Cyprus in its seventh periodical report, supplementary information given by the Cypriot authorities, information submitted by bodies and associations legally established in Cyprus and on the information obtained by the Committee of Experts during its on-the-spot visit;

[Having taken note of the comments submitted by the Cypriot authorities on the content of the report of the Committee of Experts;]

Recommends that the Cypriot authorities take account of all the observations and recommendations of the Committee of Experts and, as a matter of priority:

1.      strengthen and extend the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic;
2.      provide teacher training for Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic in a sustainable and comprehensive manner;
3.      promote study and research on Armenian at university level;
4.      strengthen the presence of Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic in broadcasting, in particular with programmes reaching out to children and youth.

The Committee of Ministers invites the Cypriot authorities to submit the information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action contained in the seventh report of the Committee of Experts by 1 August 2026 and their next periodical report by 1 February 2029.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> See Committee of Ministers' decisions [CM/Del/Dec\(2018\)1330/10.4e](#), and Outlines for the periodical reports on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to be presented by the states parties, [CM\(2019\)69-final](#).

## Appendix I: Instrument of Ratification



Cyprus:

### **Declaration contained in a letter from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Representation of Cyprus, dated 3 August 2005, registered at the Secretariat General on 4 August 2005 - Or. Engl.**

In ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Republic of Cyprus deposited on 26 August 2002, a declaration which appears to be incompatible with the provisions of the Charter on undertakings to be applied by it.

In order to remove uncertainty and clarify the extent of the obligations undertaken, the Republic of Cyprus hereby withdraws the declaration of 26 August 2002 and replaces it with the following:

The Republic of Cyprus, while reiterating its commitment to respect the objectives and principles pursued by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, declares that it undertakes to apply Part II of the Charter in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1, to the Armenian language as a "non-territorial" language defined in Article 1c of the Charter.

The Republic of Cyprus would further like to state that its Constitution and laws uphold and safeguard effectively the principle of equality and non-discrimination on the ground of a person's community, race, religion, language, sex, political or other convictions, national or social descent, birth, colour, wealth, social class or any ground whatsoever.

#### **Period covered: 4/8/2005 -**

The preceding statement concerns Article(s): 2

### **Declaration contained in a Note verbale from the Permanent Representation of Cyprus, dated 5 November 2008, registered at the Secretariat General on 12 November 2008 - Or. Engl.**

Further to its Declaration of 3 August 2005, the Republic of Cyprus declares that the Cypriot Maronite Arabic is a language within the meaning of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, to which it will apply the provisions of Part II of the Charter in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1.

In doing so, the Republic of Cyprus further declares that, since the Cypriot Maronite Arabic is also used in the village of Kormakitis, cradle of the said language, situated in an area of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus under Turkish military occupation since 1974 in which the Republic does not exercise effective control, it excludes any interpretation of the Charter's provision in this regard that would be contrary to it, particularly its Article 5.

#### **Period covered: 12/11/2008 -**

The preceding statement concerns Article(s): 2, 5

## Appendix II: Comments from the Cypriot authorities

### Comments of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus on the Seventh Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on the Implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Document MIN-LANG (2024) 22, adopted on 19 November 2024

#### I. Introduction

1. Cyprus would like to thank the Committee of Experts for the preparation of its Seventh Evaluation Report under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
2. The report and its recommendations are duly noted and will be studied in detail. Furthermore, Cyprus will translate the recommendations of the 7th monitoring cycle in Greek and will publish them on the relevant Governmental websites.
3. Cyprus takes the opportunity to express its appreciation to the Committee for the constructive dialogue on the occasion of its country visit in June 2024.
4. As also stated both in the Reports of the Republic and in the Instrument of Ratification, the Republic of Cyprus undertakes to apply Part II of the Charter in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1, both to Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages.

#### II. Comments on the observations and recommendations contained in the Seventh Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts

The following comments are intended to clarify some issues mentioned in the Report and to provide some factual corrections:

5. **Page 4 (Executive Summary)** "...The Government continued to fund language learning and teaching activities at all levels of education, including through financing relevant school boards, school activities, annual summer camps and other related events".

**Comment:** The above sentence should be corrected as follows: The Government of the Republic of Cyprus continued to fund language learning and teaching activities at all levels of education, including through financing relevant school boards, school activities, annual summer camps, teachers' training and other related events.

6. **Page 4 (Executive Summary)** "...The Cypriot Government has been working to support efforts, also financially, to preserve this ancient language."

**Comment:** The above sentence should be corrected as follows: The Government of the Republic of Cyprus has been working to support efforts, also financially, to preserve this medieval oral language.

7. **Page 4 (Executive Summary):** "...The scientific research programmes of the University of Cyprus, aiming at creating an Oral Tradition Archive for both the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages through recording living memories, cultural and linguistic practices, attitudes, skills and competences of the speakers, are commendable and could constitute a good basis for the creation of a Chair of Armenian, as well as of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at the University.

**Comment:** There is a misinterpretation regarding this point. These are two separate projects. The first project concerns the Oral Archive for Cypriot Maronite Arabic and the Action Plan for the Revitalisation and Empowerment of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, that runs since 2013. It is fully funded by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) and supervised by the University of Cyprus (UCY). The second project KARMELA for the Armenian and Latin Religious Groups of Cyprus, runs since 2023 and it will be completed in 2025. It is fully funded by the Cyprus Scientific Research Centre of the MoESY and it runs at the UCY. It must also

be clarified that the Creation of a Chair for Cypriot Maronite Arabic at the UCY, was not brought before the Government by the Representative of the Maronite Religious Group, nor was it raised and discussed during the on-the-spot visit with the MoESY.

8. **Par. 8** "...However, a stronger language protection policy within institutions is needed for the successful revitalization of the Cypriot Maronite Arabic Language".

**Comment:** However, a stronger language protection policy from the competent authorities is needed for the successful revitalization of the Cypriot Maronite Arabic Language. Please refer to par.3 of the Seventh Periodical Report by the Republic of Cyprus.

**Par. 8, footnote 8** "The Kormakitis Primary School became operational in April 2024. The education in the school is in Greek, and Cypriot Maronite Arabic is only taught as an optional language."

**Comment:** The following sentence should be added: No schoolbooks are available yet, as the Turkish occupation forces, who exercise effective control in that area, have not allowed their delivery as of date.

9. **Par. 9** "...A storybook with illustrations of narratives from the Archive of Oral Tradition is also being prepared for publication.

**Comment:** A storybook with illustrations of narratives from the Archive of Oral Tradition has been completed and already published in 2024.

10. **Par. 9** "...Lastly, a family language policy intervention was also highlighted during the on-the-spot visit, aiming at raising awareness about the importance of language transmission and educating parents and grandparents on how to achieve transmission of a severely endangered language."

**Comment:** It must be noted that the family language policy intervention has been conducted by independent researchers of the University of Central Lancashire/Cyprus (UCLan) by Dr A. Kaninkli with the collaboration of Professor M. Karyolemou of UCY and has now been included in the Action Plan 2024-2027.

11. **Par. 11** "... A secondary school, the Nareg Gymnasium, located also in Nicosia, offers a three-year curriculum after which pupils continue their remaining years of secondary education in public schools."

**Comment:** There was a misinterpretation regarding this point. The sentence should be corrected as follows: A secondary school, the Nareg Gymnasium, located also in Nicosia, offers a three-year curriculum after which pupils continue their remaining years of secondary education in public or private schools.

12. **Par. 12** "...The Committee of Experts was informed that as education in Armenian at secondary level exists only in Nicosia, four pupils from Larnaca commute to Nicosia to be able to continue their education in Armenian."

**Comment:** There was a misinterpretation regarding this point. The sentence should be corrected as follows: The Committee of Experts was informed that as education in Armenian at secondary level exists only in Nicosia, four pupils from Larnaca will commute in September 2025 to Nicosia, to be able to continue their education in Armenian.

13. **Par. 13** "The Committee of Experts was informed about the plan to convert the Nareg Schools to full day schools, finishing at 4 pm in the afternoons instead of 1:30 pm as per current practice, allowing them to increase the time learning and using the language. Negotiations are ongoing on this issue with the MoESY, with the aim of teaching longer hours as of September 2025 at the latest."

**Comment:** As it has been mentioned during the on-the-spot visit the Nicosia Nareg Primary school will be converted to full day school as of September 2025.

14. **Par. 14** "...The MoESY also fully finances the Armenian courses available in the Adult Education Centres and partly finances the Nanor Armenian Childcare Centre, as well as the Nareg Summer School."

**Comment:** Some information should be added in the following sentence: "The MoESY also fully finances the Armenian courses available in the Adult Education Centres, teacher training, language lessons in Paphos and partly finances the Nanor Armenian Childcare Centre, as well as the Nareg Summer School."

15. **Par. 15** "Teaching materials are ordered online and delivered by the MoESY before the start of the school year, free of charge."

**Comment:** There was a misinterpretation regarding this point. The sentence should be corrected as follows: Teaching materials in Armenian are ordered by Nareg Armenian Schools before the start of the school year and provided by them to the students free of charge."

16. **Par. 16** "...During the on-the-spot visit, the Committee of Experts was informed that teacher training is provided in the Nareg Armenian Schools in Nicosia with the assistance of the University of Cyprus."

**Comment:** There was a misinterpretation regarding this point. The paragraph should be corrected as follows: During the on-the-spot visit, the Committee of Experts was informed that teacher training is provided in the Nareg Armenian Schools in Nicosia.

**Par. 16** "...In order to obtain work visa, trainers from abroad are obliged to undertake Greek lessons, which they do during their stay."

**Comment:** This information is inaccurate. No work visa is required in order to participate in the trainings.

17. **Par. 17** "The shortage of teachers has been a problem since the closing of the Nicosia based Melkonian Institute in 2005."

**Comment:** The sentence should provide clarification as follows: The shortage of teachers of Armenian language and history has been a problem since the closing of the Nicosia based Melkonian Institute in 2005.

18. **Par 18** "The Cypriot authorities have been examining this possibility and according to the information received, 250 to 300 hours of teaching programme would be needed to be set up, including a language teaching part and a pedagogical part."

**Comment:** The sentence in question should be corrected as follows: The Cypriot authorities have been examining this possibility. The remaining part concerns a teacher training program for Cypriot Maronite Arabic and has not been referred during the on-the-spot visit neither by the Cypriot Authorities nor by the Armenian Representative.

19. **Par. 19** "Cypriot Maronite Arabic continues to be taught at the Agios Maronas Pre-primary and Primary School in Nicosia as an optional course one afternoon per week for 40 minutes, after the regular school hours have finished. Currently 33 pupils are enrolled."

**Comment:** It must be noted that Cypriot Maronite Arabic is taught as an optional course at Agios Maronas Pre-primary and Primary School in Nicosia, during the afternoon timetable in all-day school.



20. **Par. 20** "...New teaching materials based on the findings of the research of the Archive of Oral Tradition were produced and approved by the Curriculum Development Unit of the Pedagogical Institute, providing a broader insight into the history and culture of the Maronites to all students in the framework of religious education, history and geography."

**Comment:** The sentence should be corrected as follows: New teaching materials were produced and approved by the Curriculum Development Unit of the Pedagogical Institute, providing a broader insight into the history, culture and religion of the Maronites, to Maronite students in the framework of religious education, history and geography. Please refer to par. 183 of the Seventh Periodical Report by the Republic of Cyprus.

**Par. 20** "...The Committee of Experts welcomes this development. However, it recalls the relevant recommendation formulated in its sixth evaluation report, and encourages the authorities to translate the materials, in close co-operation with the speakers, into Cypriot Maronite Arabic."

**Comment:** The referred curriculum material is produced for morning classes and is addressed to all pupils. It must be noted that Agios Maronas Primary School operates with the same status as all public schools of Cyprus and there are no separate regulations governing its staffing and/or operation. Apart from children from the Maronite Religious Group (approximately 70% Maronite children or children from mixed marriages), children of different origin are enrolled in the school based on the educational district designated for schools (about 30%).

21. **Par. 21** "In 2024, the summer camp took place for one week, separating primary and secondary level children in two groups."

**Comment:** The sentence should be corrected as follows: In 2024, the summer camp took place for one week, separating primary and secondary level pupils in five groups.

23. **Par. 24** "...Teachers expressed the need for more teaching materials and flashcards. A1 level teaching materials for adults and A2 level teaching materials for children are currently being finalised and expected to be published by the end of 2024. The Committee of Experts was informed that preparation of teaching materials for pre-school children is underway."

**Comment:** It must be clarified that A2 teaching material for children will be piloted during the 2025 Summer Sanna Camp, before they are sent for publication.

24. **Par. 26** "...The Committee of Experts welcomes the results of the ongoing research programme and, in this context, encourages the state authorities to seize this opportunity and strengthen their efforts, including financially, to create a Chair and a full study programme at the University of Cyprus for Cypriot Maronite Arabic."

**Comment:** It must be clarified that the Creation of a Chair for Cypriot Maronite Arabic at the UCY, was not brought before the Government by the Representative of the Maronite Religious Group, nor was it raised and discussed during the on-the-spot visit with the MoESY .

25. **Par. 28** "The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) radio station RIK 2 continues to broadcast a one-hour daily radio programme and news bulletin in Armenian from 5pm to 6pm (repeated between 5am and 6am the next morning), which covers literature, music, religion, content for children, health and news from Cyprus and the Armenian diaspora worldwide, hence both in English and Western Armenian."

**Comment:** The sentence should be corrected as follows: The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) radio station RIK 2 continues to broadcast a one-hour daily radio programme and news bulletin in Western Armenian language from 5pm to 6pm (repeated between 5am and 6am the next morning) which covers literature, music, religion, health and news from Cyprus and the Armenian diaspora worldwide, in Western Armenian Language.

**Par. 28** “...These programmes are prepared and presented by Armenian speakers, and there are plans to include pupils of the Nareg Schools»

**Comment:** The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: These programmes are prepared and presented by native Armenian speakers. There are plans to include Nareg School pupils in programmes to encourage practice of the Western Armenian language among the youth.

**Par. 28** “...During their meeting with the Committee of Experts, the representatives of the speakers confirmed that there would be both interest and enough material to exceed the current timeframe of broadcasting or provide for the possibility for audio on demand.”

**Comment:** The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: During their meeting with the Committee of Experts, the radio producers of the Armenian Programme suggested that the one-hour daily programme can be increased in duration in the future. The Armenian programme is available on audio-on-demand.

**Par. 28** “...Every year the Armenian Christmas and Easter services are broadcast live.”

**Comment:** The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: Every year the Armenian Christmas and Easter church services are broadcast live.

26. **Par. 30** “...The Artsakank Media has also content in English, targeting a wider audience than the Cypriot Armenian community. One editor and one cameraman work for the newspaper together with four advisors, supporting the every-day running of the newspaper on a voluntary basis. This online magazine does not receive funding from the Ministry of Interior.”

**Comment:** The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: “...This online magazine does not receive funding from the Ministry of Interior, as no request was ever made for such funding. The Ministry of Interior funded it until 2020, when the Representative of the Armenian Religious Group informed the Ministry of Interior that at some point in time the publication of the newspaper ceased”.

27. **Par. 31** “...The duration of the programme was increased from 30 minutes to 90 minutes per week this year.”

**Comment:** The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: The duration of the programme was increased in January 2024 from 60 minutes to 90 minutes per week.

**Par. 31.** “...The programme includes interviews, religious and traditional music and songs in **Cypriot Maronite Arabic** occasionally.”

**Comment:** The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: The programme which is also available on audio-on-demand, includes interviews, presentations, religious and traditional music and often songs in **Cypriot Maronite Arabic**.

**Par. 31.** “...Another idea is to involve native speakers to tell stories in Cypriot Maronite Arabic to children.”

**Comment:** “The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: Another idea is to involve native speakers and students learning the language to tell stories and sing songs in Cypriot Maronite Arabic, as a way towards facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, especially among youth”.

28. **Par. 50.** “...Moreover, the Press and Information Office, in close co-operation with the Armenian Representative in the House of Representatives and the MoESY, intends to publish a book dedicated to the Melkonian Educational Institute.”

**Comment:** The above paragraph should be corrected: Moreover, a book dedicated to the Melkonian Institute is under publication by the Press and Information Office, in close co-operation with the Armenian Representative in the House of Representative and the MoESY.

29. **Par. 51** "...There is a 25-minute version available to be broadcast in schools, and an 11-minute version was produced specifically for the Euronews, subtitled in English."

**Comment:** The above sentence should be deleted. It concerns the documentary that is referred in par. 52.

30. **Par. 52, footnote 70** "See: [Θρησκευτικές Ομάδες \(Μαρωνίτες - Sanna - Η γλώσσα μας\) \(youtube.com\).](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)"

**Comment:** The documentary is also available in the history page of Secondary General Education <https://istom.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/oles-oi-taxeis>, date of posting 9/7/2024.

31. **Par. 53, footnote 74** "According to the information received from the MoESY after the on-the-spot visit, proposals were submitted only for the KARMELA Archive, the award ceremony of which took place on 6 November 2024 at the University of Cyprus. The delegation of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities, conducting their monitoring visit in the country, was also invited to the event."

**Comment:** See the press release from MoESY <https://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp17789a>

32. **Par. 57** "The use of Armenian in public and private radio and television has not improved in the current monitoring cycle."

**Comment:** The sentence in question has to be corrected as follows: The use of the Western Armenian language in public radio, has improved as new activities have been incorporated in the programme, thus enhancing the use of the language.

**Par. 57** "...The CyBC is planning to broadcast new TV spots in Armenian that may improve the situation"

**Comment:** Fifteen spots regarding the religious groups were produced and aired by CyBC and can be found subtitled in the official CyBC website. Please refer to par. 24 of the Seventh Periodical Report by the Republic of Cyprus.

33. **Par. 58** "On 1 December 2022, the UCY launched a new research project called KARMELA, in collaboration with the speakers and the MoESY, to be completed by 30 November 2024."

**Comment:** The sentence should be corrected as follows: "On 1 December 2022, the UCY launched a new research project called KARMELA, in collaboration with the speakers and the MoESY, to be completed by the end of May of 2025."

34. **Par 59** "The vast majority of Maronites no longer live in their traditional area and are scattered throughout the Republic of Cyprus."

**Comment:** The sentence should be corrected as follows: The vast majority of Maronites have been forcibly displaced from their traditional villages, during the Turkish invasion in 1974, and are scattered throughout the government-controlled areas of the Republic of Cyprus.

**Par. 59** "...Teacher training is also organized in Kormakitis every July"

**Comment:** It must be clarified that teacher training is organized by the UCY, it is fully subsidized by the MoESY and it takes place at the University of Cyprus.

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