

# FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES



Questions & Answers

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## What is the Framework Convention?

■ The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities entered into force in 1998 and is a comprehensive international treaty designed to protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

## Why is it called a Framework Convention?

■ The text of the Framework Convention enshrines rights enjoyed by individuals as well as complementary obligations to be respected by states. Whilst the convention is a legally binding instrument under international law, the word “Framework” highlights the scope for states parties to tailor some of the Convention’s provisions to their specific country situation through national legislation and government policy.

” ... a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity ...

## Who is protected by the Framework Convention?

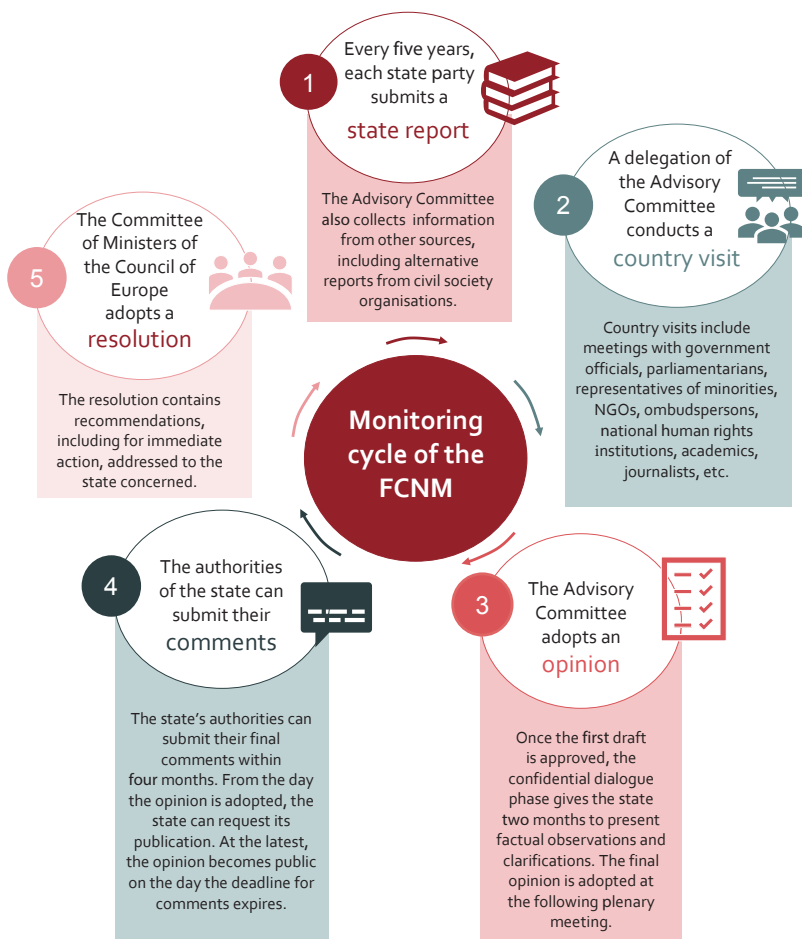
■ The Framework Convention contains no definition of “national minority”. Each state party has a margin of appreciation to define which groups are to be covered by the convention within their territory. This definition must be non-discriminatory, made in good faith and in accordance with general principles of international law, including the principle of free self-identification.

■ The principle of free self-identification means that individuals have the right to decide themselves whether they wish to be treated as belonging to a national minority. However, their decision must be based on objective criteria connected with their identity, such as their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

■ States have varied approaches with regard to the definition of a national minority under the Framework Convention: from a restrictive approach with, for example, a set list of traditional groups that are to benefit from the Framework Convention’s protection; to a more open approach, applying the articles of the convention flexibly to a broad spectrum of groups.

## How is the Framework Convention monitored?

— The Framework Convention is monitored by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe together with the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention, a body made up of 18 independent experts.



” ... the upheavals of European history have shown that the protection of national minorities is essential to stability, democratic security and peace in this continent ...

## Rights enjoyed by individuals belonging to national minorities

### & Complementary obligations to be respected by the States

**Freely expressing** ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities - Not being discriminated against - Promoting **effective equality** - Preserving and developing minority cultures, religions and languages - Promoting **intercultural dialogue** and protecting persons belonging to minorities from hostility or violence - Enjoying freedom of assembly, association, expression, thought, conscience and religion - Promoting a diverse **media space** with broadcasting in minority languages and support to minority media - Using minority **languages** in contact with the authorities in areas inhabited traditionally or in substantial numbers by national minorities - Displaying personal names, place names and other topographical indications in minority languages - Making **education accessible** to all and fostering intercultural knowledge - Teaching of and in minority languages, in private and public schools - Being able to influence **public decision making** for issues affecting persons belonging to national minorities - Participating in **cultural, social and economic life** - Refraining from gerrymandering to restrict minority rights - Promoting minority rights through bilateral, multilateral and cross-border co-operation

## Where are persons belonging to national minorities protected by the Framework Convention?

There are 38 states in which the Framework Convention is in force.\* A special monitoring agreement related to Kosovo\*\* exists with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

### ► States parties to the Framework Convention

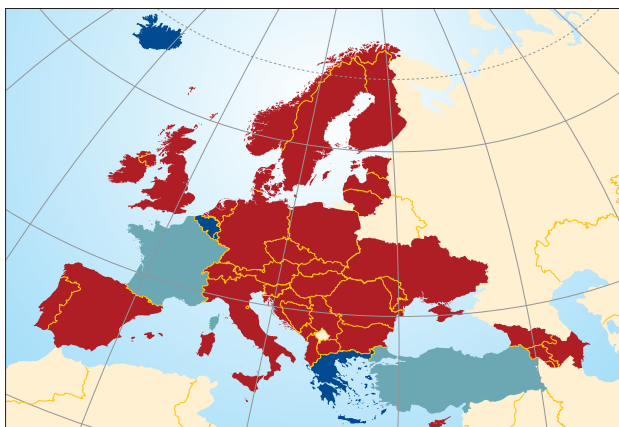
Albania	Estonia	Malta	Serbia
Armenia	Finland	Republic of Moldova	Slovak Republic
Austria	Georgia	Montenegro	Slovenia
Azerbaijan	Germany	Netherlands	Spain
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Hungary	North Macedonia	Sweden
Bulgaria	Ireland	Norway	Switzerland
Croatia	Italy	Poland	Ukraine
Cyprus	Latvia	Portugal	United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

### ► States having signed but not ratified the Framework Convention

Belgium	Iceland
Greece	Luxembourg

### ► States having neither signed nor ratified the Framework Convention

Andorra	Monaco
France	Türkiye



\* The Russian Federation was a state party from 1998 to 2024.

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

” ... the creation of a climate of tolerance and dialogue is necessary to enable cultural diversity to be a source and a factor, not of division, but of enrichment for each society ...



## INFORMATION

### Contact:

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**[www.coe.int/minorities](http://www.coe.int/minorities)**

For more information on the role of NGOs:

**[www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/role-of-ngos](http://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/role-of-ngos)**

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**[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)**

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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