The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 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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Where are persons belonging to national minorities protected by the Framework Convention?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States parties to the Framework Convention</th>
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<tr>
<td>Albania</td>
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<td>Armenia</td>
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<td>Azerbaijan</td>
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<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>Bulgaria</td>
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<td>Cyprus</td>
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<td>Denmark</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
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</table>

States having signed but not ratified the Framework Convention:

- Belgium
- Greece
- Lebanon
- Luxembourg

States having neither signed nor ratified the Framework Convention:

- Andorra
- Monaco
- France
- Turkey

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.

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**CONTACT**

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minorities.fcnm@coe.int

www.coe.int/minorities

For more information on the role of NGOs:

www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/role-of-ngos

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**INFORMATION**

**FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The Framework Convention has not received any financial support under the European Union’s Structural Funds since its entry into force.

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**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

…” 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…."

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**www.coe.int**
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. It 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. 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, it offers 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 to 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.

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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 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. 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 to their identity, such as their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

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