

# THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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## Recommendation 286 (2010)<sup>1</sup> Minority languages: an asset for regional development

1. Regional and minority languages are not useless luxuries: they are an integral part of Europe's rich cultural heritage and have a vital role to play in increasing the integration and economic prosperity of the greater European area.

2. For the economic potential of these languages to be realised, governments need to ensure that they are properly supported and that their use is encouraged in all sectors of society. Regional and minority language representatives should be fully involved in the economic development of their regions at all levels, for the benefit of all.

3. The Council of Europe has valuable legal instruments for protecting and promoting Europe's minority populations. These instruments deserve to be better known and more systematically implemented.

4. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe:

*a.* is mindful that the economic and cultural value of Europe's regional and minority languages remains largely unrecognised and that there is still too little attention given to regional and minority languages by the governments of member states;

*b.* acknowledges the work of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the work of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;

*c.* refers to Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)7 on the use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the promotion of plurilingualism;

*d.* is mindful that the promotion of regional and minority languages can provide an important stimulus to a region's economy;

*e.* refers to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1383 (1998) on linguistic diversification;

*f.* refers to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1740 (2006) on the place of the mother tongue in school education.

5. The Congress therefore invites the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to:

*a.* recognise that language minorities are an important economic and cultural asset;

*b.* recognise the economic benefits of promoting regional and minority languages and take the promotion of regional and minority languages and their cultures into account in their economic policies;

*c.* recognise the role of linguistic minorities in transborder co-operation and involve them fully in transborder projects and planning;

*d.* recognise that the languages of immigrant groups are an important asset for establishing cultural and economic links with countries of origin.

6. The Congress invites the Committee of Ministers to ask member states to:

*a.* take action to prevent the decline of regional and minority languages by ensuring shared responsibility between central government and relevant regional and local authorities;

*b.* ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn these languages from a very early age (pre-school) and to continue learning them up to higher education and vocational training;

*c.* encourage and support the provision of regional and minority language courses in adult and continuing education and vocational training;

*d.* encourage and promote the use of regional and minority languages in the media, cultural industries and cultural tourism;

*e.* promote education in the mother tongue for all minority groups;

*f.* set up language promotion councils to encourage language diversification and the development of regional and minority language use in regions;

*g.* sign and ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157) and the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) if they have not yet done so.

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1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Regions on 18 March 2010 and adopted by the Congress on 19 March 2010, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPR(18)3, explanatory memorandum), rapporteurs: K.-H. Lambertz (Belgium, R, SOC) and F. Mukhametshin (Russian Federation, R, ILDG).