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Strasbourg, 15 June 2018

Minorities and Minority Languages in a Changing Europe

Conference on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Framework
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European
Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France
Palais de l'Europe, room 1

18 – 19 June 2018

Programme

The conference on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages will take place at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, on 18-19 June 2018. It is co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Croatian Government and takes place under the Croatian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The conference will open on Monday 18 June 2018 at 14.30 and close on Tuesday 19 June 2018 at 13.00.

Background of the Conference

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages were elaborated by the Council of Europe in the 1980s and early 1990s at a time of profound geopolitical changes and quest for a better recognition of minority rights. Both instruments entered into force in 1998 and albeit distinct in approach and background, both serve to depoliticise the often contentious question of treatment of persons belonging to national minorities, including their languages, turning their protection into a pan-European commitment. Their implementation is monitored by bodies comprised of independent experts, namely the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention and the Committee of Experts of the Language Charter, as well as the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The rights enshrined in the two instruments have materialised into a growing body of national laws ensuring minority rights, including widespread possibilities for education in minority languages, the use of minority languages in contact with the administration and topographical signs, as well as participatory structures giving minority representatives access to decision-making. All these elements are essential for the integration of society as a whole, wherein both persons belonging to national minorities and to the majority can prosper.

However, since their entry into force twenty years ago, Europe has changed beyond recognition. During their monitoring visits, members of the expert bodies monitoring these treaties increasingly come across challenges affecting both states and national minorities: the effects of migration, including on national minority policy, conflicts between states parties affecting national minorities, and the erosion of multilateralism are just some of the most prominent ones. Striking a balance between promoting the state language and protecting minority languages is another frequently contentious issue. On top of this, technological developments, particularly digitalisation, have created both new challenges and immense opportunities for national minorities and minority languages.

Key Questions of the Conference

1. Which political, social, and technological developments shape the situation of national minorities and minority languages today? How should the monitoring mechanisms of the Framework Convention and the Language Charter adapt to these developments?
2. What is the role of language and education policies in the interplay between minority and official languages? How can multilingual societies strike a balance between language rights of national minorities and the promotion of the official language?
3. Which challenges and opportunities do technological innovations around digitalisation create for persons belonging to minorities? How can they be used in beneficial ways for improving minority language teaching, access to public administration and other services?

The conclusions of the conference should feed into a reflection process by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on how the respective monitoring mechanisms of the two conventions can be reinforced to effectively respond to the above-mentioned challenges.

Monday, 18 June 2018

14.30 Opening Session

- Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- H.E. Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
- Ms Vesna Crnić-Grotić, Chair of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- Ms Edita Žiobienė, Interim President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

15.15 Keynote speech

- Ms Josefina Skerk, member of the Swedish Sami Parliament and Legal Advisor at Civil Rights Defenders, Sápmi, Sweden

15.30 High Level Session: Minorities and Minority Languages in a Changing Europe

Chair: H.E. Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

- H.E. Mr Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary
- Ms Artemis Dralo, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania
- Mr Vigen Kocharyan, Deputy Minister of Justice of Armenia
- Mr Leon Gjakaj, Deputy Minister, Ministry for Human and Minority Rights of Montenegro
- Ms Monica Gheorghiuță, Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania
- Mr Ivan Bošnjak, Secretary of State, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Serbia

16.30 *Coffee break*

16.45 Panel Session: The importance of the Council of Europe's standards in ensuring international protection of minority rights

Chair: Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe

- Ambassador Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities
- Ms Rita Izsák-Ndiaye, Rapporteur of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and former UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

17.15 Panel Session: Civil society and the Implementation of the Council of Europe's Conventions on Minority Rights

Chair: Ms Tove H. Malloy, Director of the European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, Germany

- Mr Ferran Suay i Lerma, President, European Language Equality Network
- Mr Loránt Vincze, President, Federal Union of European Nationalities
- Ms Claire Thomas, Acting Executive Director, Minority Rights Group International
- Ms Sabrina Rasom, Vice-Chair, Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity

18.00 *Reception offered by the Government of Croatia ("Restaurant Bleu", Palais de l'Europe)*

Tuesday 19 June 2018

9.00 Panel Session: Minority Languages and Education in Multilingual Societies

Chair: Mr Rainer Hofmann, Frankfurt University, Germany

- Ms Elma Blom, Professor of Language Development and Multilingualism, Utrecht University, the Netherlands
- Ms Ilze Brands-Kehris, Member of the UN Human Rights Committee in respect of Latvia; Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Lund, Sweden
- Ms Marisa Cavalli, independent researcher on language policy and education, Aoste, Italy
- Mr Jan Sisko, Department for Minority Schooling, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Austria

The floor will be open for an exchange with participants.

10.30 *Coffee break*

11.00 Panel Session: Minority Languages 2.0 - Digitalisation and other new Developments

Chair: Ms Elin Haf Jones, University of Aberystwyth, United Kingdom

- Ms Maimu Berezkina, Web Advisor, Norwegian Directorate of eHealth, Oslo
- Ms Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska, Associate Professor, Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw
- Ms Olga Kazakevich, Director of the Laboratory for Computational Lexicography, Research Computing Centre, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russian Federation
- Mr Jarmo Lainio, Professor of Finnish, Department of Slavic and Baltic languages, Finnish, Dutch and German, Stockholm University, Sweden

The floor will be open for an exchange with participants.

12.30 Closing Session: The Framework Convention and the Language Charter – Institutional Responses to the Challenges Ahead

Chairs: Ms Vesna Crnić-Grotić, Chair of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Ms Edita Žiobienė, Interim President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

- Mr Philippe Boillat, Conference Rapporteur
- Ms Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy, Council of Europe
- Ambassador Miroslav Papa, Chairman of the Ministers' Deputies of the Council of Europe, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the Council of Europe

13.00 *End of the conference*