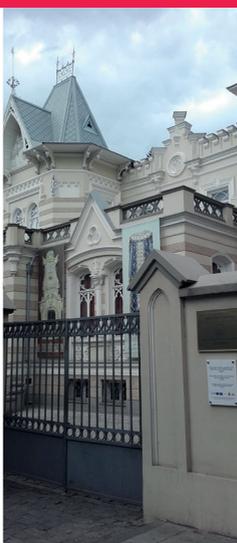


APPLYING THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES IN GEORGIA 2015-2017



Achievements of the Council of Europe/EU Project “Civic Integration of National Minorities in Georgia and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” 2015-2017

► coe.int/minlang

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Cover photos:

Greek pupils in Tbilisi happy to receive new textbooks

Information meeting for the Azerbaijani population in the Kvemo Kartli region

Minority architecture in Tbilisi: Art Palace with trilingual marble plaque

Georgia's Prime Minister with minority language textbooks published during the project

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Cover and layout: Documents and Publications
Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

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Printed at the Council of Europe

**Applying the
European Charter for
Regional or Minority Languages
in Georgia 2015-2017**

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The publications of the project can be downloaded on the website of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: coe.int/minlang (States Parties > Promoting ratification in Georgia).

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FOREWORD

When acceding to the Council of Europe in 1999, Georgia committed itself to ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) by 27 April 2000. In 2013, further to a request for expert support by the Georgian authorities, the Georgian high-level inter-ministerial commission on the ECRML and Council of Europe experts prepared a draft instrument of ratification. In order to further prepare the ratification of the ECRML and its implementation, the Council of Europe/EU project “Civic Integration of National Minorities in Georgia and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” was included in the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia.

■ One of the central objectives of the ongoing reform of the Council of Europe is to offer member states not only common human rights *standards* and *monitoring* thereof, but also *assistance* in implementing these standards and the recommendations made by the monitoring bodies. Having contributed to each of these three pillars, the project has indeed been successful in this respect.

■ Georgia has benefitted from all the legal assistance enabling it to proceed immediately to the ratification of the standards enshrined in the ECRML. In order to efficiently use the time until the entry into force of the treaty, the project activities presented in this report have been designed in such a way that they actually apply ECRML provisions already prior to its ratification. The activities have also contributed to the implementation of the related Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and recommendations made by its monitoring body, the Advisory Committee. Interestingly, several activities have also implemented recommendations which the Committee of Experts of the ECRML regularly makes in respect of states having already ratified this treaty. For example, all secondary schools in Georgia now have teaching materials about the history and culture of the linguistic minorities at their disposal. An information campaign has also been carried out encouraging parents to enrol their children in schools teaching minority languages.

■ Applying treaty provisions *de facto* is, however, not sufficient to honour Georgia’s membership commitments to the Council of Europe. Therefore, Georgia should also ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages without further delay, as requested by the Secretary General.

Professor Vesna Crnić-Grotić

*Chair of the Committee of Experts of the
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
Council of Europe*

RAISING AWARENESS OF MINORITY RIGHTS



Getting acquainted with language rights – an information meeting for the Azerbaijani population in the Kvemo Kartli region



Monitoring findings confirm that national minorities in Georgia and their associations are not comprehensively aware of minority rights.

■ In order to inform the minorities of the rights created by the ECRML (as required by Art. 6 ECRML), **bilingual information materials (Language Guides)** have been developed in Georgian and the minority languages **presenting the draft ratification instrument** in a reader-friendly format.¹

■ In cooperation with the Ministry of Civic Equality and Reconciliation, the Language Guides were presented and distributed **at information meetings organised throughout Georgia for all linguistic groups**, including smaller groups not living in compact settlement.²

■ Some of the Language Guides have been published in languages that are seldom used in written form and have contributed to develop the vocabulary of these languages.

1. in Abkhazian, Armenian, Assyrian, Avar, Azerbaijani, Chechen, German, Greek, Kurdish, Ossetian, Russian, Udi and Ukrainian
2. Second Opinion on Georgia of the Advisory Committee on the FCNM, ACFC/OP/II(2015)001, para. 79

COMBATING STEREOTYPES AND PROMOTING POSITIVE IMAGES OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

There is a perception among parts of Georgian society and some officials that national minorities constitute a potential threat to the country's territorial integrity or are backward communities with certain folkloristic traditions.

■ To combat such stereotypes (see Art. 7 (1) a, 7 (3) ECRML), **the image brochure “Minority Languages in Georgia – Expressions of Cultural Wealth”** was developed in cooperation with national authorities, national minorities and experts, portraying each national minority in an objective way. The image brochure has been widely distributed among public institutions, decision-takers and schools where it is used as a complementary teaching material.

■ Among other aspects, the image brochure shows religious and historical buildings related to national minorities. In order to make this cultural heritage and the related minority languages visible in public, the project, in cooperation with the State Agency for National Heritage Protection and the Tbilisi Development Fund, has developed and launched the **Cultural Route of National Minorities in Georgia**.

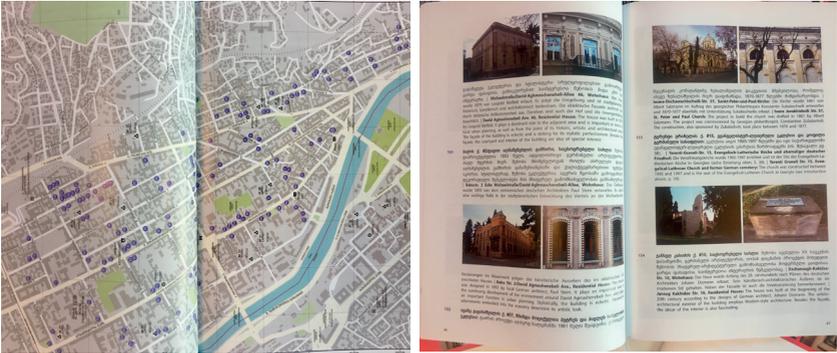
■ As part of the Cultural Route, **buildings built by persons belonging to national minorities have been signposted in Georgian, the respective minority language(s) and English**.

■ The Cultural Route's signage is accompanied by **minority-specific, trilingual guides with maps**³ explaining in detail approximately 500 buildings related to national minorities as well as the history and culture of the group concerned (see Art. 12 ECRML).



Museum of Georgia

3. in Abkhazian, Armenian, Assyrian, Avar, Azerbaijani, Chechen, German, Greek, Kurdish, Ossetian, Russian, Udi and Ukrainian

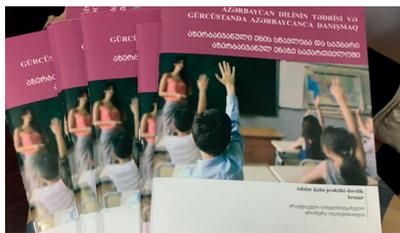


■ The Cultural Route not only demonstrates to the Georgian public that several widely-known buildings, especially in Tbilisi, have actually been contributed by persons belonging to national minorities, but also supports tourism. The guides are distributed by the Georgian National Tourism Administration at Tbilisi airport and information centres.

■ Furthermore, the development of the Cultural Route has supported the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia to identify, inventory and recognise minority heritage objects as monuments. The granting of monument status will facilitate to maintain these buildings, as the Advisory Committee on the FCNM has recommended to the Georgian authorities.⁴

4. Advisory Committee on the FCNM, op. cit., para. 38

EDUCATION



Parents attending an information meeting in the Kakheti region, interested in having their children learn the Avar language

With a view to **encouraging parents to enrol their children in schools teaching minority languages**, promotional brochures have been developed and published in 13 minority languages⁵, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science. Each brochure outlines the history of the minority concerned, the advantages of bilingualism for the child's development and practical information to enrol children in schools teaching the given language. 22 information meetings have been organised, and the brochures were widely distributed to parents, pupils, schools and local authorities.

■ A very low number of kindergartens in Georgia provide education in minority languages (see Art. 8 (1) a ECRML). This puts at risk the attainment of fluency in the minority language, which is a precondition for its use in public life. In addition, the quality of education in minority language schools is below average, inter alia owing to a lack of modern textbooks. The Advisory Committee has called on the authorities to prioritise the provision of good quality education materials.⁶

■ To address this issue, **a set of four kindergarten textbooks has been produced in 13 minority languages.**⁷

■ In the case of the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Russian language kindergartens, these teaching materials will also support children to develop proficiency in Georgian.



Local authorities receive new kindergarten books

5. Abkhazian, Armenian, Assyrian, Avar, Azerbaijani, Chechen, German, Greek, Kurdish, Ossetian, Russian, Udi and Ukrainian
6. Advisory Committee on the FCNM, op. cit., para. 87, 90
7. in Abkhazian, Armenian, Assyrian, Avar, Azerbaijani, Chechen, German, Greek, Kurdish, Ossetian, Russian, Udi and Ukrainian



A reading contest for Armenian and Azerbaijani pupils in Tbilisi

Furthermore, Greek language textbooks (five volumes) and a dictionary have been updated, reprinted and distributed to schools in cooperation with the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University.

The **teaching of the history and culture of the national minorities** (see Art. 8 (1) g ECRML) is hampered by the fact that textbooks cover these topics insufficiently and in some cases portray minorities in a stereotyped way. The Advisory Committee has called on the Georgian authorities to ensure that the history of national minorities in Georgia is adequately portrayed in education.⁸

To this end, the aforementioned image brochure and the guides on the Cultural Route of National Minorities have been distributed to all secondary schools in Georgia. In addition, didactic material has been developed to train teachers on how to use the publications **as complementary teaching materials**.

The project has also provided advice to the Ministry of Education during the elaboration of the draft **Strategy for integration and civic equality - "Education System for Social Integration"** with a view to adequately integrating the teaching in and of minority languages, as recommended by the Advisory Committee.⁹ A series of events promoting the use of minority languages and the civic integration of national minorities have been organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science for secondary school students from Georgian and minority language schools.

8. Advisory Committee on the FCNM, op. cit., para. 95

9. Ibidem, para. 14

JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES



In order to facilitate the **use of minority languages before courts**, the most important national laws and those pertaining to national minorities have been translated into minority languages (see Art. 9 (3) ECRML).

Furthermore, in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a **Georgian translation of the ECRML** has been prepared.

ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES



*Handover of Georgian-German street name signs to the authorities
A bilingual place name sign in a district of Tbilisi*

As the **adoption and use of traditional place names in minority languages** (see Art. 10 (2) g ECRML) is an affirmation of the long-standing presence of national minorities in Georgia and important for their public visibility, the Advisory Committee has encouraged the authorities to restore historical place names in minority languages.¹⁰

During the project, support has been granted to the adoption of traditional place names as well as the installation of place name signs and signposts bearing minority place names in several municipalities, including Tbilisi.

Place names in minority languages are also used on the signs of the Cultural Route of National Minorities. Furthermore, the scientific collection of place names in minority languages has been supported and maps with such names were produced.

10. Ibidem, para. 82, 85, 86

MEDIA



Journalist training in Tbilisi and Batumi: students learn how to apply their language skills in newspapers

There is insufficient support in Georgia for the few newspapers in minority languages (see Art. 11 (1) e ECRML). The Advisory Committee has encouraged the authorities to increase their support for these and noted a considerable need for more training of journalists working in minority languages (see Art. 11 (1) g ECRML) to reach out to minorities, in particular to young people.¹¹

■ In the framework of the project, newspapers¹² have carried out **journalist training for students of secondary schools teaching minority languages** to involve them on a regular basis as junior journalists, possibly leading to a professional training in the future. Moreover, the project has **supported newspapers in minority languages** by distributing its information material through them, which has increased the circulation of the papers.

OUTLOOK

In order to continue and extend the aforementioned activities, Georgia and the Council of Europe have agreed to include the “Implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) in Georgia” follow-up project in the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2016-2019.

■ Several of the activities already serve as a model in other Council of Europe/EU projects. For example, the information campaigns encouraging parents to enrol their children in schools teaching minority languages will also be implemented in Belarus and Serbia. Furthermore, Language Guides informing those who belong to national minorities about their linguistic rights will be published and distributed in Serbia. In Belarus and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the establishment of a Cultural Route of National Minorities is planned. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, an awareness-raising campaign portraying the national minorities in a positive light will be carried out (image brochures).

11. Ibidem, para. 67, 70

12. Gurgistan (Azerbaijani), Vrastan (Armenian), Kaukasische Post (German)

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe is the only treaty in the world which aims to protect and promote traditional regional and national minorities' languages. The Charter gives precise guidelines on how these languages should be used in everyday public life.

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