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The use of languages by local and regional authorities

Governance Committee

Rapporteur:¹ Andrew DAWSON, United Kingdom (R, ECR)

Resolution 453 (2019)	2
Recommendation 441 (2019)	4
Explanatory memorandum	6

Summary

One of the features of the growing diversity of Europe's towns and regions is an increasing linguistic diversity. As a result, Europe's local and regional authorities find themselves confronted with more and more language issues in the conduct of their affairs and the provision of public services.

Many member states have important linguistic minorities. Language issues have featured in several recent complaints received by the Congress with regard to the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

This report examines the use of languages by local and regional authorities, as regards both the access to public services and the functioning of the organs of local democracy. It draws on the experience of the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages to examine how language diversity challenges can be addressed by local and regional authorities to the benefit of all concerned.

¹ L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

RESOLUTION 453 (2019)²

1. One of the features of the growing diversity of Europe's towns and regions is an increasing linguistic diversity. As a result, Europe's local and regional authorities find themselves confronted with more and more language issues in the conduct of their affairs and the provision of public services.
2. The Congress itself has language issues regularly brought to its attention, as the body entrusted with assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. More and more local authorities are asserting the right to make and apply their own language decisions and policies, according to their own needs, and as a result find themselves in disagreement with higher level authorities.
3. This has prompted the Congress to look more closely at how local and regional authorities can and should approach language issues raised by their citizens. The main reference text for the Congress for this is the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which in 2018 celebrated twenty years of entry into force, and which has its own monitoring mechanism, the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.
4. Article 10 of this Charter provides valuable guidance for the use of regional or minority languages by local and regional authorities in public life, which deserve the attention of all local and regional authorities, irrespective of whether their national governments are Parties to the Charter.
5. But whereas the Charter restricts its application to languages which have been present in a territory for over a hundred years, local and regional authorities have to provide services according to the current demographic profile of their citizens. Language is primarily a tool for communication, and local and regional authorities should be free to use non-official languages in the conduct of their work, if this will enable them to better communicate with a target group.
6. Since each town and city has its own specific demographic profile, in order to provide the most effective services, it should carry out a detailed assessment of the language needs of its citizens and other persons who use its public services.
7. The Congress believes that linguistic diversity is an asset for Europe's towns and regions, to be valued and enhanced for the benefit of all, and that this will contribute to greater social cohesion and mutual understanding between language minority speakers and speakers of the official language(s).
8. The Congress therefore:
 - a. bearing in mind:
 - i. the Congress reports and recommendations adopted in the course of its work to oversee the implantation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
 - ii. the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148);
 - iii. the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No.157);
 - iv. Congress Recommendation 286 (2010) and Resolution 301 (2010) - Minority languages: an asset for regional development;
 - v. Congress Recommendation 410 (2017) and Resolution 424 (2017) on Regional and minority languages in Europe today;
 - b. Considering that local and regional authorities are at the forefront of the provision of public services and interaction with the citizens and residents in their territories;

² Debated and adopted by the Congress on 31 October 2019, 3rd sitting (see Document [CG37\(2019\)17](#), explanatory Memorandum), Rapporteur: Andrew DAWSON, United Kingdom (R, ECR)

- c. Invites the local and regional authorities of Council of Europe member States to:
- i. undertake detailed language assessments of the language needs of their citizens and other persons who use their public services;
 - ii. provide services to all linguistic minorities to ensure adequate access to public services and democratic bodies, as far as is reasonably possible;
 - iii. take inspiration from Article 10 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in the conduct of their business and the provision of public services and to apply these provisions to all linguistic minorities on their territories, as far as is reasonably possible;
 - iv. where possible provide specific earmarked financial resources for provision of services in languages other than the official languages;
 - v. provide language training and recruit officials competent in the relevant languages;
 - vi. provide information about political rights and electoral information in the relevant languages;
 - vii. provide information about public services, such as health, education, employment services, unemployment benefits, in the relevant languages;
 - viii. provide information on taxes in the relevant languages;
 - ix. provide information on sanctions (such as local transport fines) in the relevant languages;
 - x. provide interpretation services to facilitate the participation of minority language speakers in local and regional council meetings;
 - xi. provide warning and security signs in the relevant languages.

RECOMMENDATION 441 (2019)³

1. The use of languages by local and regional authorities, and what they perceive to be undue restrictions on this use by central authorities, is an issue that has featured in several complaints that the Congress has received, in the course of its work in monitoring the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

2. Given the importance of language for culture, communication and identity, the growing diversity of Europe's societies, spurred on by increasing mobility, migration and freedom of movement, presents a growing challenge for local and regional authorities in the conduct of their affairs.

3. For more than twenty years, the Congress has been working to support and sustain regional and minority languages, to improve mutual understanding, based on the principles of democratic participation, cultural diversity and social cohesion. In its 2017-2020 priorities, it reaffirms its commitment to this work.

4. Mindful of Article 4, paragraph 2 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, namely that local authorities should have the right to exercise their initiative on any matter not excluded from their competence, the Congress believes that territorial authorities should be free to decide what languages to make use of in the conduct of their affairs and the provision of public services, and that language should not serve as a barrier or be used as a weapon, but rather serve as a tool for communication.

5. The Congress believes that linguistic diversity is an asset for Europe's towns and regions, to be valued and enhanced for the benefit of all, and that this will contribute to greater social cohesion and mutual understanding between language minority speakers and speakers of the official language(s).

6. Article 10 of the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) provides valuable guidance for the use of regional or minority languages by local and regional authorities in public life, which deserve the attention of all local and regional authorities, irrespective of whether their national governments are Parties to the Charter.

7. The Congress therefore,

a. bearing in mind:

i. the Congress reports and recommendations adopted in the course of its work to oversee the implantation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government;

ii. the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148);

iii. the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No.157);

iv. Congress Recommendation 286 (2010) and Resolution 301 (2010) - Minority languages: an asset for regional development;

v. Congress Recommendation 410 (2017) and Resolution 424 (2017) on Regional and minority languages in Europe today;

b. Calls on member States of the Council of Europe to ratify the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, if they have not yet done so;

c. Calls on Member States of the Council of Europe to encourage and assist local and regional authorities to:

i. undertake detailed language assessments of the language needs of their citizens and other persons who use their public services;

ii. provide services to all linguistic minorities to ensure adequate access to public services and democratic bodies, as far as is reasonably possible;

³ See footnote 2

- iii. take inspiration from Article 10 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in the conduct of their business and the provision of public services and to apply these provisions to all linguistic minorities on their territories, as far as is reasonably possible;
 - iv. where possible provide specific earmarked financial resources for provision of services in languages other than the official languages;
 - v. provide language training and recruit officials competent in the relevant languages;
 - vi. provide information about political rights and electoral information in the relevant languages;
 - vii. provide information about public services, such as health, education, employment services, unemployment benefits, in the relevant languages;
 - viii. provide information on taxes in the relevant languages;
 - ix. provide information on sanctions (such as local transport fines) in the relevant languages;
 - x. provide interpretation services to facilitate the participation of minority language speakers in local and regional council meetings;
 - xi. provide warning and security signs in the relevant languages;
- d. Calls on member States of the Council of Europe to encourage the States Parties to the two aforementioned treaties to:
- i. assess the gaps between their treaty obligations and the implementation in practice;
 - ii. avoid high numerical thresholds, ensure clear and consistent criteria;
 - iii. encourage the use of place-names in the relevant languages.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. As its title suggests, this is a report about the use of languages by local and regional authorities. The last twenty years have seen a huge increase in the number of languages being spoken on the streets of Europe's towns and cities. There are many reasons for this, such as increased mobility, freedom of movement within the Schengen area, the surge in low-cost air travel and international tourism and, more recently, an increased influx of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

2. While some politicians and citizens would present this proliferation of languages spoken in our towns and cities as undesirable, problematic and even frightening, the Congress, for its part, has called on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to recognise that language minorities are an important economic and cultural asset and that "the languages of immigrant groups are an important asset for establishing cultural and economic links with countries of origin."⁴

3. For local and regional authorities, these rapid demographic changes do however raise a number of practical issues and generate new demands from their citizens. Some of these relate to the use of languages in addition to the official languages of the country concerned.

4. One such issue arises in the organisation of local and regional elections. In order to exercise their democratic rights, voters need to know who they are voting for. According to the international election standards that the Congress applies in its election observation missions "information on lists and candidates must be available in minority languages, at least where they amount to a certain percentage of the population."⁵

5. When it comes to information on public safety and responses to emergencies, even international sports events, the languages used to communicate with target groups has to be that which will be understood by the targeted group. In such circumstances, practical considerations must always prevail over political issues, or questions as to whether the language that is needed has official recognition.

6. Another example is public health information. For health workers, the need to communicate with clients is often an urgent issue and can be a question of life and death. In emergencies, the overriding principle is to communicate however you can, irrespective of what the official language of your country is.

7. This is not a report about identity and cultural heritage. The Council of Europe has been trail-blazer in the promotion of languages, language education and the protection of regional or minority languages. The Congress is rightly proud of its central role in the conception of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter "ECRML"), a treaty that it continues to do much to promote, playing a full role in the 2018 20th anniversary celebrations of the Charter.

8. The issues of the recognition of regional and minority languages are complex. The ECRML has a hundred-year rule of thumb, limiting itself to dealing with languages that have been traditionally and continuously present in a given territory for at least a hundred years. But local and regional authorities have to deal with pressing issues that cannot wait a hundred years.

9. For public officials, language is just one of many tools that they use in carrying out their work. The object of this report is to look at how languages can best be used by local authorities and local officials in increasing the impact of their work.

⁴ Congress Recommendation 286 (2010): Minority languages: an asset for regional development.
https://search.coe.int/congress/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807194ad

⁵ Using international election standards: Council of Europe handbook for civil society organisations, 2016.
<https://rm.coe.int/16806c791a>

10. This report was partly a response to several language-related complaints that the Congress has received, which are briefly described below (paragraphs 20-22). The Governance Committee began its preparation of this report by organising a conference with the same title in Covasna, Romania, on 31 May 2018.⁶ The contributions to that conference can shed valuable light on the issues raised here.

11. Economics come into play here. Resources are always limited. However much we would like to communicate with all our citizens in the languages of their choice, pragmatic issues must prevail. For example, does the client understand the official language? In the Congress fact-finding mission to Lapland, Finland in the preparation of this report, in discussions on the Finnish authorities' commendable efforts to promote and protect the various Sami languages, we learnt that, given the scarcity of Sami-speaking doctors, most Sami-speakers will prefer to be treated by non-Sami speaking doctors and nurses rather than wait longer to see a Sami-speaker. For the client, it is also a question of priorities.

12. Language services require competent staff and resources, so we have to be practical. But at the same time, we would do well to make greater efforts to train and recruit staff with the necessary language skills.

13. We have to be clear that, with regard to inclusion, the goal must always be for newcomers to achieve a high degree of proficiency in the official language(s) of their new country. This is the most effective tool for fostering integration and social inclusion.

14. Language acquisition and interpretation doesn't come cheap, as the Congress is well aware. We cannot possibly offer a full range of public services in every language that is spoken in our communities.

15. Each specific local situation should be treated with due attention to the specific local needs. The local language needs will vary greatly from town to town. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. And that is why we need to begin by gathering data on what the language needs of our community are. Each town or city needs to carry out its own detailed assessment of the language needs of its inhabitants, as well as other categories of people, such as tourists, that the local authority has to cater for.

16. This can also involve border issues, as we discovered in Lapland. Many of Europe's borders are very recent, and cut across language divisions. Taking again the example of the Sami, there is scope for improving Sami language services by increasing and facilitating co-operation across the borders of the countries with significant Sami populations.

17. There are also special issues with regard to place-names, which are important in this context, we believe that we should encourage the use of local and regional, rather than state language names, when appropriate, and avoid pedantic use of both versions when they are almost identical. For example, signs to the Welsh town of Conway used to read "CONWAY / CONWY", but a sensible agreement has now been reached to simply use the form "CONWY" in both English and Welsh. By contrast, the town of Mold, which is Yr Wyddgrug in Welsh, clearly needs to be stated in both languages.

18. The main proposals in the recommendation and resolution are inspired by the work of the Committee of Experts of the ECRML, and in particular its experience of the application of Article 10 of that treaty, which is specifically related to the use of languages by public bodies.

19. The expert, who worked with us on this report, has produced a detailed overview of the protection of regional and minority languages through the instruments and bodies of the Council of Europe and other international organisations, which can be found in Appendix A.

⁶ Conference documents available here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/conference-on-the-use-of-languages-by-local-and-regional-authorities-31st-may-2018-covasna-county-romania>

20. However, this is not primarily a report about the ECRML, for the states who have ratified it. We believe that the provisions of Article 10 of that Charter can inspire all local and regional authorities in our member States, whether or not their governments have any intention of becoming parties to the charter.

21. The Congress has received several language-related complaints in the course of its work. While it is not the purpose of this report to reopen those specific cases, they deserve a mention. Already in 2007, in its Recommendation 229 on Local Democracy in Turkey, the Congress recommended that municipal councils be allowed to decide which languages to use in the provision of public services. The Congress response to a 2017 petition by a number of Romanian non-governmental organisations,⁷ with regard to a more recent case, was to take this petition into consideration during its next monitoring of Romania and to prepare the present report.

22. Another complaint, which led to Congress 2017 Recommendation on the Belgian communes “with facilities,”⁸ raises the issue of the freedom of local representatives to use their mother tongue in council meetings. This is one of the questions covered by Article 10 of the ECRML. So while Belgium is not a party to that treaty, it could still take inspiration from the experience of other countries in applying Article 10.

23. On the other hand, the report, which was prepared in the course of the work of the Congress with regard to the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, does draw attention to Article 7.1 of that Charter, namely the right of local elected representatives to enjoy free exercise of their functions. This article, together with Article 4.2, which stipulates that local authorities should have full discretion to exercise their initiative on any matter not excluded from their competence, is very relevant to the subject of this report, in which we would like to make a plea that common sense prevail over political considerations in the conduct of our local and regional authorities and the provision of public services. Language is primarily about communication. Let us stop using it as a political weapon. Local and regional authorities need to have maximum freedom to deliver public services in the best way they see fit.

⁷ Petition to consider the breach of Article 10 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the Covasna County prefect, CG/BUR13(2017)29

⁸ Recommendation 409 (2017) – The functioning of the organs of local democracy in a context of linguistic diversity in the communes “with facilities” around Brussels in the Flemish region.

<https://rm.coe.int/recommendation-409-2017-chamber-of-local-authorities-monitoring-168075ff5c>

APPENDIX A

Overview of protection of regional and minority languages in Europe

1. Introduction⁹

1. To mark the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) (hereafter: ECRML) on 1 March 1998, and in the framework of its priorities for 2017-2020, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities reaffirms “its commitment to promoting regional and minority languages”.

2. Most Council of Europe member States have important linguistic minorities. The rapid growth of migrant communities is also transforming the demography of Europe's towns and cities and how languages are being used by their populations. Increasing language diversity raises a number of challenges with respect to local and regional democracy. This is illustrated by the fact that linguistic issues have featured in several recent complaints received by the Congress with regard to the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

3. Language barriers can prevent citizens from exercising their right to effective and genuine participation in public affairs, for example, in local or regional council meetings. Linguistic barriers can also hinder citizens in their use of public services, particularly social services. This goes against the principle of equal access to public services.

4. This report draws *inter alia* on the exchanges held during the Congress conference “The use of languages by local and regional authorities”, held in Bálványos, Turia, Romania, on 31 May 2018. It will examine rules and guidelines on the use of languages by local and regional authorities, regarding the functioning of the organs of local and regional democracy, communication with citizens and access to public services. The overall goal is to explore how local and regional authorities can address the challenge of enhancing linguistic diversity, to benefit all citizens.

5. First, a survey pertaining to the protection of regional and minority languages through the different instruments and bodies of the Council of Europe will be given. Mention will also be made of the relevant rules and policies developed in the UN and the EU.

6. Detailed attention will be given to the obligations contained in Article 10 of the ECRML, dealing with the use of regional or minority languages by administrative authorities and public services. This provision serves as the main source of inspiration for guidance issued by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. This is because the predecessor to the Congress, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, played an important role in the preparation of the ECRML. It grasped that the involvement of local and regional authorities is essential to realisation of the effective protection of regional and minority languages (see par. 5 of the Explanatory Report on the ECRML).

7. Attention will then be given to the best practices of authorities following the rules of Article 10 of the ECRML, as well as practices which go beyond the rules of the ECRML will also be highlighted.

2. The protection of regional and minority languages through instruments and bodies of the Council of Europe

a. The European Charter of Local Self-Government (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities)

8. The European Charter of Local Self-Government was opened for signature on 15 October 1985 and has been ratified by all 47 Member States of the Council of Europe. The importance of communication, by local and regional authorities in languages other than the official language(s) of

⁹ Document prepared by Prof. Dr.Gerard-René de Groot, Emeritus Professor of Private International Law and Comparative Law, Maastricht University and Professor of Private Law, University of Aruba; Member of the Committee of Experts of the ECRML of the Council of Europe.

the State, was already recognised by the Standing Conference at the end of the 1980s. The commitment of the Congress in this field is seen as a consequence of an underlying principle of the European Charter of Local Self-Government: ensuring the capacity of locally and regionally elected representatives to participate in the activities and decisions of the local administrative bodies (daily running of local bodies operations, meetings and decisions), and to carry out a meaningful representative function in communication with citizens, even in a context of linguistic diversity (see §5 of the Preamble and Article 7 of the Charter). This implies that authorities must be willing – as far as possible – to allow the use languages, other than the State’s official language(s) in communication with citizens in order to ensure effective engagement.

9. During the Bálványos conference, attention was paid to allowing the use of other languages in order to enhance the effective participation of citizens in the political decision-making process. If citizens are able to understand the policies that affect them and become actively involved in the local/regional civic life, this promotes a pluralistic and open society. Furthermore, possible communication with local and regional administrations by linguistic minorities in their own language is also very facilitating when requesting for official documents, for example.

10. In order to guarantee equal and effective access to public services, it is key to provide information and advice in minority, regional and foreign languages which citizens understand (if necessary, through translation or interpretation for example). This is essential for access by all citizens to all public services. This is of particular importance for public healthcare, social services, unemployment benefits, public housing services and public education.

11. The Bálványos conference also considered the policy of authorities in respect of minority toponyms in the linguistic landscape. The politics of naming places and buildings (public road signs, street names, public signs on government buildings) can be of immense importance with regard to cultural identity of speakers of regional and minority languages. However, policies on the use of minority language place-names on official signage can be controversial and provoke strong reactions, which may cause fierce debates in local or regional councils.

b. The European Charter on Regional and Minority Languages

12. The ECRML was opened for signature 5 November 1992. 25 Member States have ratified this Convention.¹⁰ The objective of the ECRML is to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe.

13. The preamble of the ECRML mentions that the maintenance and development of regional and minority languages is desirable as a manifestation of cultural wealth. It underpins that the right to use a regional or minority language is inalienable. Furthermore, it stresses that the rules included in the Charter are based on the principles of democracy and cultural diversity. However, the preamble also stresses that the protection of regional and minority languages should not happen to the detriment of the official language(s) of the State and the need to learn them.

14. It is remarkable that the drafters of the Charter avoided human rights terminology. However, the Charter includes personal rights with an obvious collective dimension (of the group of speakers of the regional and minority language).

15. The overall goal of the ECRML is to protect and promote *historical* regional and minority languages in Europe. The Charter only applies to languages traditionally (which is interpreted as more than 100 years without interruption) used by the *nationals* of the State Parties (thus excluding languages used by more recent immigrants, even if these immigrants or their descendants acquired the nationality of the State of residence) (Article 1(a)(i) ECRML). Furthermore, language varieties of the official national language(s)/ dialects are also excluded (Article 1(a)(ii) ECRML).

16. It has to be admitted that the borderline between languages and dialects is not clear. Nor is there an easy answer to the question ‘what constitutes a variant of the official national language?’ The

¹⁰ See Appendix B

answer to both questions can often be qualified as a political statement. However, if a State has granted protection to a language under the Charter, this answer is irreversible!

17. The ECRML provides the possibility of two levels of protection: a basic and an advanced protection. The basic protection has to be granted to all regional and minority languages traditionally present on the territory of the State (Article 2(1) ECRML). The basic protection given to these languages is enshrined in Part II of the Charter, which consist of Article 7. A State may decide to grant an advanced protection which is regulated in the Article 8-13 (Article 2(2) ECRML).

18. In most cases, Contracting States will mention the languages covered by the ECRML in the ratification instrument. As already mentioned, this decision of a State to protect a language as minority language, and therefore recognising this language as a language traditionally spoken on its territory is irreversible. After ratification, downgrading a protected language to a dialect is not allowed. It is also not possible to downgrade a language protected under Part III to the status of a Part II language.

19. Mentioning a certain language as protected regional or minority language is absolutely necessary and leading for a Part III protection. However, the protection under part II is available for all regional and minority languages, which exist on the territory of a Member State, even if not listed in the ratification instrument. Nevertheless, the irreversibility principle has as consequence that no discussion is possible anymore whether or not a language mentioned in the ratification instrument is a variation of official national language. If the authorities of a State Party would start a discussion on the language qualification of a certain expressly protected regional or minority language and e.g. argue that, this language is a dialect variety of the national language this would imply a violation of the obligations accepted by the State while ratifying the ECRML.

20. However, on the other hand, one can argue that a certain regional or minority language exists within the territory of a Member State, which was until now not recognised for protection under part II. This possibility is well illustrated by the discussion on the possible protection under the Charter of Arabic/Darija as regional minority language in Ceuta in Spain. However, in order to qualify as minority language, the traditional uninterrupted presence of the language involved has to be proven.

21. It is also pertinent to pay due attention to the territorial scope of ratification as indicated in the ratification instrument. The United Kingdom, for example, did not include the Channel Islands in their instrument of ratification, but they did include Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man. The Netherlands ratified in 1996 for the *Kingdom in Europe*, which did not include Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles in the West Indies. However, in 2010 the Netherlands Antilles were dissolved and “Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius” legally received the status of being a part of the *Kingdom in Europe*. Consequently, the question can be raised and has to be answered whether this has consequences under international law for the scope of application of the Charter.

Basic protection

22. Part II (Article 7) makes it obligatory to grant a basic protection to all historical regional and minority languages present on the territory of the Contracting State. This basic protection includes:

- Recognition of regional or minority languages as an expression of cultural wealth. Mentioning a certain regional and minority language in the instrument of ratification of the ECRML confirms this, except if indications for the contrary.
- Respect for the geographical area of each regional or minority language. This implies that Member States have to be careful with modifications of territorial districts. New administrative divisions should not create obstacles to the promotion of a regional or minority language.
- Resolute action to promote the regional and minority languages.
- Facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of such languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life.
- Maintenance of ties with other groups speaking same or similar regional and minority languages.

- The provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of such languages at all appropriate stages (preschool, primary school, secondary school, vocational training, university).
- Learning facilities for adult non-speakers living in the area where a certain regional or minority language is spoken.
- Study and research at universities or equivalents institutions.
- The promotion of relevant transnational exchanges with speakers of the same or similar languages abroad.
- Eliminate all forms of unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger its maintenance or development.
- The promotion by the State of mutual understanding between all the country's linguistic groups.
- Take into consideration needs and wishes by speakers, such as by establishing bodies (including speakers) for advising authorities.

23. These obligations (called *undertakings*) of part II focus primarily on *regional* minority languages but have to be applied as far as possible *mutatis mutandis* on *non-territorial* minority languages (Article 7(5) ECRML). For many Contracting States, Yiddish or/and Roma/Sinti languages are recognised as such non-territorial minority languages.

Enhanced protection

24. The enhanced protection of a regional or minority language is covered by part III of the Charter. This level of protection requires an expressed declaration of the Contracting State involved, requiring a detailed indication which kind of protections will be granted to the language involved. The State will have to make a choice from a kind of menu card consisting of the Articles 8 – 14 ECRML.

25. If a State decides to give an enhanced protection to a certain regional or minority language, this language should at least be given the protection covered by 35 *undertakings* (Article 2(2) ECRML). At least three have to be chosen of each of Article 8 and 12, and one from each of the Articles 9, 10, 11 and 13.

26. The main field of protection of the menu card of Part III are Article 8 Education, Article 9 Judicial authorities, Article 10 Administrative authorities and public services, Article 11 Media, Article 12 Cultural activities and facilities, Article 13 Economic and social life and finally Article 14 Transfrontier exchanges.

27. As already mentioned, States must select at least thirty-five of the undertakings in respect of each Part III language next to the basic protection of Part II (Article 7). If a State decides to protect several regional and minority languages on the level of Part III, the chosen undertakings may differ from language to language, ideally in conformity with the wishes of the speakers.

28. Many provisions in part III contain several options, of varying degrees of stringency (a gliding scale), one of which has to be chosen “according to the situation of each language”. If a State took a strong and a lighter obligation in the same category, the Council of Europe will only assess the stronger obligation, which covers also the lighter one.

29. For the linguistic communication of local and regional authorities with citizens and within these bodies, Article 10 dealing with the use of languages by and within administrative authorities and public services is of paramount importance. The obligations enshrined in that provision will be discussed below in Section 4.

The monitoring system

30. The application of the Charter is monitored by a Committee of Experts (hereinafter: COMEX) of the ECRML of the Council of Europe (Article 17 ECRML). This Committee consists of 25 members (one for each Contracting State).

31. The monitoring procedure is regulated by Article 15 ECRML. Member States have to submit so-called periodical reports. The first report has to be submitted within one year after accession. After the periodical report is received by the Council of Europe, the COMEX organises an on the spot visit (hereafter 'OSV') by a delegation of COMEX (three Members plus a member of the secretariat). One of the Members of this delegation is the COMEX Member coming from the Member State involved.

32. During the OSV the delegation meets with regional and national authorities, but also with organisations representing the speakers of the protected regional and minority languages. Furthermore, Article 16 ECRML provides that "Bodies or associations legally established in a [State] Party" may ask attention for problems, also on the general policy of the State regarding regional and minority languages. The delegation therefore frequently receives several "shadow reports" on the situation of the protection of certain regional or minority languages.

33. After the OSV the delegation will meet in Strasbourg to prepare an assessment report on the implementation of the Charter in the Member State involved. This report of the COMEX delegation is discussed in a plenary session. After the plenary COMEX adopted the report, the Member State involved has the possibility to react on the assessment and the draft recommendations.

34. This reaction is submitted to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe together with the COMEX report and draft recommendations. After discussion in the Committee of Ministers (all 47 MS participate, not only the 25 Contracting States) a final version is adopted and published on the website of the Council of Europe.

35. The COMEX consists of 25 Members (one for each Contracting State) who are independent (Article 17 ECRML). With other words, a Member of the COMEX comes from a Member State but does not represent this State and does not get instructions by this State. In case of a vacancy the Contracting State involved submits a list of potential candidates to the Council of Europe. In principle this list should contain the names and CV's of three candidates. The choice/ appointment happens by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The appointment is for a term of six years with the possibility of one renewal, if the candidate is again proposed by her/his Member State.

36. Until now the periodical reports had to be submitted every three years. However, this reporting cycle is rather short, if one takes into account that it takes often about a year after the submission of a periodic report by a State Party, for the COMEX to formulate recommendations for this State. The reporting cycle of the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities is longer (five years). Furthermore, there is a certain overlap between the two reporting systems, because the Framework Convention also pays attention to the language spoken by protected minorities.

37. In the light of these two facts, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe decided on 28 November 2018 (CM/Del/Dec(2018)1330/10.4e)¹¹ to modify the monitoring mechanism and to align the reporting cycle of the ECRML with that of the Framework Convention. The new rules will operate from 1 July 2019. In future States will present every five years periodical reports on the implementation of the ECRML and two and a half years thereafter information on the implementation of a limited number of recommendations, if any, namely only those that have been identified by the Committee of Experts in its evaluation report as being for immediate action.

38. Until 2017, the COMEX prepared rather long assessment reports, with many repetitions of text already included in earlier reports. Sometimes it was difficult to find the remarks relevant for a particular regional or minority language. Since 2017, more concise reports are developed including tables for each regional or minority language with an evaluation of the relevant undertakings.

¹¹ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016808f22ea

39. For part III languages, an evaluation is provided of all 35+ undertakings chosen by the State from the menu card for a given regional or minority language. It is obvious that the choices made by the State in the ratification instrument are leading for the assessment by the COMEX. Furthermore, it is also assessed whether the general obligations of part II (Article 7) are met. For part II languages, an evaluation of the obligations under Article 7 is given.

40. In the tables it is indicated for each undertaking, whether the obligations is fulfilled/ partly fulfilled/ formally fulfilled/ not fulfilled/ respectively no conclusion can be made (e.g. if no or insufficient information is provided). The qualification “formally fulfilled” implies that policies and legislation are in conformity with the ECRML, but that there is no implementation in practice reported.

41. Furthermore, a symbol indicates whether the evaluation of the situation of an undertaking in respect of the language is improved/ unchanged or deteriorated since the previous monitoring round (↗ improvement ↘ deterioration = no change).

c. The Framework Convention for the protection of National Minorities

42. The FCNM (CETS No.157) was opened for signature on 1 February 1995 and operative since 1998. 39 Member States have ratified this Convention.¹² The FCNM pays also attention to the use of languages by national minorities. The right of minorities to preserve their language as part of their identity is guaranteed in Article 5(1) FCNM. Different dimensions of the use of languages by minorities are regulated in the Article 9-13 FCNM. For the use of minority languages in relation to local and regional authorities Article 10(2) and 11 deserve closer attention.

43. An Advisory Committee assists the Council of Ministers in monitoring the correct implementation of the FCNM (see Article 26 FCNM). The Advisory Committee consist of a minimum of 12 and a maximum of 18 members.¹³ Next to the assessment of the periodical reports of Member States on the implementation of the Convention, the Advisory Committee also publishes a number of Thematic Commentaries. For the use of minority languages Thematic Commentary No. 3 on the “Language rights of persons belonging to national minorities under the Framework Convention” is of particular importance (ACFC/44DOC(2012)001 rev).

44. It has to be noted that the number of languages protected under the FCNM is much lower than under the ECRML. For example, for the Netherlands only Frisian is listed as a national minority language under the FCNM, whereas under the ECRML the Netherlands has promised to protect – in addition to Frisian (under part III) - Low Saxon, Limburgish, Yiddish, and Roma/ Sinti (under part II).

45. Article 10 (2) FCNM stipulates: “In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if those persons so request and where such a request corresponds to a real need, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible, the conditions which would make it possible to use the minority language in relations between those people and the administrative authorities.”

46. According to the Explanatory Report to the FCNM (par. 65) the real need has to be assessed on the basis of an objective criteria. This wording indicates, that as far as possible, various factors, in particular the availability of financial resources may be taken into account. Regarding the determination of substantial numbers, States enjoy a margin of appreciation, but must provide clear criteria. The possibility of using minority languages in interaction with the administration may not be left solely at the discretion of the authorities. In Thematic commentary No 3 of 5 July 2012 (ACFC/44DOC(2012)001 rev, the Advisory Committee underlines: “It is therefore important to set up clear and transparent procedures on how and when to institute the use of minority languages, including in written form, to ensure that the right is enjoyed in an equal manner.” (Thematic commentary No 3, par. 55) “Numerical thresholds must not constitute an undue obstacle” and where they exist, “they must not be applied rigidly, and flexibility and caution should be exercised”. (Thematic commentary No 3, paragraph 57)

¹² See Appendix C

¹³ Resolution (97) 10 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 September 1997.

47. The FCNM also pays attention to the presence of minority languages in the linguistic landscape. Article 11 (2) and (3) mention: “2. The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to display, in his or her minority language, signs, inscriptions and other information of a private nature visible to the public.

48. In areas traditionally inhabited by substantial numbers of people belonging to a national minority, the Parties shall endeavour, in the framework of their legal system, including, where appropriate, agreements with other States, and taking into account their specific conditions, to display traditional local names, street names and other topographical indications intended for the public also in the minority language when there is a sufficient demand for such indications.”

49. Moreover attention is given to the names of persons in Article 11 (1): “The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to use his or her surname (patronym) and first names in the minority language and the right to official recognition of them, according to modalities provided for in their legal system.”

d. Venice Commission

50. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe also recognises the importance of respecting minority languages. The Commission underpins in particular the importance of education in the mother tongue “it is the keystone of safeguarding and promoting minority languages of a minority group”.¹⁴

3. The protection of regional and minority languages through instruments and bodies of other international bodies

a. United Nations

51. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states already that discrimination of persons based on their language is forbidden: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as [...] language [...].”

52. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stipulates: “in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language”

53. Article 29 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC 1989) includes the obligation to promote “the development of respect for [...] his or her own cultural identity, language and values” Moreover, Article 30 of the CRC mentions the right of minorities to use their languages.

54. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2 November 2001 includes inter alia the desirability of “safeguarding the linguistic heritage of humanity and giving support to expression, creation and dissemination in the greatest possible number of languages.”

55. The United Nations General Assembly Declaration on the rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities of 18 December 1992.

56. Mention has to be made of an ad hoc Expert Group Meeting on Endangered Languages convened by the UNESCO. 2019 is the UN Year of Indigenous Languages, that aims to raise awareness of the consequences of the endangerment of indigenous languages across the world, with an aim to establish a link between language, development, peace and reconciliation. The main focus of the events organised under this heading is the encouragement of urgent action to preserve, revitalize and promote endangered languages.

¹⁴ Compilation of Venice Commission Opinions and Reports Concerning the Protection of National Minorities (CDL(2011)018, p. 16-20.

b. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

57. Within the OSCE, the High Commissioner on National Minorities also pays attention to language issues. See e.g. the “Report on the Linguistic Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities in the OSCE Area” from 1999, available on <http://www.osce.org/hcnm/42060>.

c. European Union

58. Article 2 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFE) stipulates that the EU “shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity”. This respect of linguistic diversity is evidently a form of respect for languages as cultural expressions (see also Article 22 of the Charter). The focus of the EU activities regarding languages is on promoting multilingualism. Ideally, everyone should learn two languages next to mother tongue (COM (2008)0566). The EU supports two research centres on languages: the European Centre for Modern Languages (EMCL) and the European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning (Mercator).

59. The European Parliament also has an interest in language policies, including the languages spoken by minorities. See the report “A comprehensive protection system for minorities” commissioned by the European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizen’s Rights and Constitutional Affairs at request of the LIBE Committee”, prepared by Sergio Carrera/ Elspeth Guild/ Lina Vosyliute and Petra Bard (with an appendix on protection of regional and minority languages by Bastiaan David van der Velden).

60. In collaboration with the European Committee of the Regions, the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies (CALRE) has also worked on the issue of regional and minority languages. A working group on cultural and linguistic diversity met in May 2018 in Valencia and presented its conclusions in September 2018. CALRE asks to the EU inter alia to establish a European Languages Commissioner and Observatory for Language Rights.

61. Of importance is also the Minority SafePack European Citizen’s Initiative which called for the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity in the European Union. The initiative was opened for signature by citizens between April 2017 and April 2018 and collected more than one million valid signatures. However, a follow up activity is lacking until now.

62. Finally, the ratification of ECRML and of the Framework Convention belong to the Copenhagen Criteria for accession to the European Union.¹⁵ However, it is striking that several Member States have not ratified the Charter.

4. Protection by Article 10 of the ECRML, as the main source of inspiration for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

63. Article 10 ECRML is the core article on the use of regional and minority languages in communication with(in) local and regional authorities. The article makes a distinction between three different levels of authorities: the State authorities within a territory where a regional and minority language is spoken, the regional authorities and the local authorities. Furthermore, the article contains possible obligations for communications with(in) public services.

64. Article 10 (1) ECRML starts with listing potential obligations for State administrative authorities on the use of regional and minority languages “within the administrative districts of the State *in which the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages justifies the measures* specified below and according to the situation of each language, [...] as far as this is reasonably possible”. With other words, this provision addresses the activities of the central authorities of the State working in districts where regional or minority languages are spoken.

¹⁵ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/enlargement/ec/pdf/cop_en.pdf

65. A difficult question is of course when the number of regional or minority languages speakers justifies facilitations. Some States use a numerical threshold. The general policy of the COMEX is that these thresholds should not be too high and if a threshold exists, a flexible application is necessary. The facilitation should not depend on a majority decision of a regional or local government.

66. The communication with administrative authorities of the State can according to Article 10 (1) (a) be facilitated by making a choice between the five following levels of protection:

- “i to ensure that the administrative authorities use the regional or minority languages;
- ii to ensure that such of their officers as are in contact with the public use the regional or minority languages in their relations with persons applying to them in these languages;
- iii to ensure that users of regional or minority languages may submit oral or written applications and receive a reply in these languages;
- iv to ensure that users of regional or minority languages may submit oral or written applications in these languages;
- v to ensure that users of regional or minority languages may validly submit a document in these languages.”

67. A State can furthermore promise to make available widely used administrative texts and forms for the population in the regional or minority languages or in bilingual versions (Article 10 (1) (b)), respectively to allow the administrative authorities to draft documents in a regional or minority language (Article 10 (1) (c)).

68. Article 10 (2) deals with the communication with and within the local and regional authorities. The provision starts again with the phrase: “In respect of the local and regional authorities on whose territory the number of residents who are users of regional or minority languages is such as to justify the measures specified below, the Parties undertake to allow and/or encourage ...”. Some of the undertakings mirror the possible obligations in relation with the State authorities, but other go beyond and focus on the use of the regional or minority languages in regional and local assemblies:

- “a the use of regional or minority languages within the framework of the regional or local authority;
- b the possibility for users of regional or minority languages to submit oral or written applications in these languages;
- c the publication by regional authorities of their official documents also in the relevant regional or minority languages;
- d the publication by local authorities of their official documents also in the relevant regional or minority languages;
- e the use by regional authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;
- f the use by local authorities of regional or minority languages in debates in their assemblies, without excluding, however, the use of the official language(s) of the State;”

69. An interesting possible obligation is to allow “the use or adoption, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s), of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages.” (Article 10(2)(g)).

70. Article 10 (3) deals with the communication with regard to public services, which includes public services by the administrative authorities or by other persons acting on their behalf. A State can promise “within the territory in which regional or minority languages are used, in accordance with the situation of each language and as far as this is reasonably possible”:

- “a to ensure that the regional or minority languages are used in the provision of the service;

b to allow users of regional or minority languages to submit a request and receive a reply in these languages;

c to allow users of regional or minority languages to submit a request in these languages.”

71. In order to smoothen the implementation of obligations accepted under the afore- mentioned paragraphs, Article 10 (4) provides: “With a view to putting into effect those provisions of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 accepted by them, the Parties undertake to take one or more of the following measures:

a translation or interpretation as required;

b recruitment and, where necessary, training of the officials and other public service employees required;

c compliance as far as possible with requests from public service employees having a knowledge of a regional or minority language to be appointed in the territory in which that language is used.”

72. Article 10 (5) finally contains an obligation which is in most States outside of the competence of local and regional authorities: “The Parties undertake to allow the use or adoption of family names in the regional or minority languages, at the request of those concerned.”

73. Two phrases need further explanation “as far as possible” and “when the number [...]”. The first expression particularly concerns financial consequences. In respect of the relevant number of speakers, the COMEX reports on the situation of minority languages stress repeatedly that thresholds should be considerably lowered and applied in a flexible way.

5. Best practices of authorities following the rules of Article 10 of the ECRML and beyond

74. In some cantons in Switzerland, communication with several foreign language speaking citizens on health issues happens also in languages, which are not protected in Switzerland under the ECRML. This is a good example how to act if one wants a message from authorities to reach the relevant community.¹⁶

75. Another example of good practice is the practice in Ireland to send information on local elections in many languages to the population with voting rights. This is an excellent practice in light of the fact that, in local elections, many foreigners also have the right to vote. It would in that light be strange, if the information on electoral processes would only be communicated in the official language(s) of the State. It should also be allowed that parties approach voters with electoral campaign materials in regional and minority languages, but also in foreign languages spoken by migrants with voting rights.

76. It is also interesting to observe that, in several States, authorities, including at the local and regional level, develop tourist information and even newsletters or newspapers in foreign languages in order to assist and attract foreign tourists (e.g. in Russian in Turkey¹⁷ or in Chinese in Finland¹⁸). This flexible approach of authorities has to be welcomed. However, it also should be stressed that, if services to foreign tourist are offered in foreign languages, also services in regional or minority languages should be offered to residents using these languages, if their number is sufficient.

¹⁶ A presentation on this practice was given during the Bálványos conference.

¹⁷ See the Report prepared by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on Local Democracy in Turkey, CG/BUR(14)29REV2 (September 2007).

¹⁸ Observation of a Congress mission to Finland in December 2018.

APPENDIX B - Ratifications of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, (ETS No. 148), as of 23 May 2019

	Signature	Ratification	Entry into Force
<u>Albania</u>			
<u>Andorra</u>			
<u>Armenia</u>	11/05/2001	25/01/2002	01/05/2002
<u>Austria</u>	05/11/1992	28/06/2001	01/10/2001
<u>Azerbaijan</u>	21/12/2001		
<u>Belgium</u>			
<u>Bosnia and Herzegovina</u>	07/09/2005	21/09/2010	01/01/2011
<u>Bulgaria</u>			
<u>Croatia</u>	05/11/1997	05/11/1997	01/03/1998
<u>Cyprus</u>	12/11/1992	26/08/2002	01/12/2002
<u>Czech Republic</u>	09/11/2000	15/11/2006	01/03/2007
<u>Denmark</u>	05/11/1992	08/09/2000	01/01/2001
<u>Estonia</u>			
<u>Finland</u>	05/11/1992	09/11/1994	01/03/1998
<u>France</u>	07/05/1999		
<u>Georgia</u>			
<u>Germany</u>	05/11/1992	16/09/1998	01/01/1999
<u>Greece</u>			
<u>Hungary</u>	05/11/1992	26/04/1995	01/03/1998
<u>Iceland</u>	07/05/1999		
<u>Ireland</u>			
<u>Italy</u>	27/06/2000		
<u>Latvia</u>			
<u>Liechtenstein</u>	05/11/1992	18/11/1997	01/03/1998
<u>Lithuania</u>			
<u>Luxembourg</u>	05/11/1992	22/06/2005	01/10/2005
<u>Malta</u>	05/11/1992		
<u>Monaco</u>			
<u>Montenegro</u>	22/03/2005	15/02/2006	06/06/2006
<u>Netherlands</u>	05/11/1992	02/05/1996	01/03/1998
<u>North Macedonia</u>	25/07/1996		
<u>Norway</u>	05/11/1992	10/11/1993	01/03/1998
<u>Poland</u>	12/05/2003	12/02/2009	01/06/2009
<u>Portugal</u>			
<u>Republic of Moldova</u>	11/07/2002		
<u>Romania</u>	17/07/1995	29/01/2008	01/05/2008
<u>Russian Federation</u>	10/05/2001		
<u>San Marino</u>			
<u>Serbia</u>	22/03/2005	15/02/2006	01/06/2006
<u>Slovak Republic</u>	20/02/2001	05/09/2001	01/01/2002
<u>Slovenia</u>	03/07/1997	04/10/2000	01/01/2001
<u>Spain</u>	05/11/1992	09/04/2001	01/08/2001
<u>Sweden</u>	09/02/2000	09/02/2000	01/06/2000
<u>Switzerland</u>	08/10/1993	23/12/1997	01/04/1998
<u>Turkey</u>			
<u>Ukraine</u>	02/05/1996	19/09/2005	01/01/2006
<u>United Kingdom</u>	02/03/2000	27/03/2001	01/07/2001

APPENDIX C - Ratifications of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No.157), as of 23 May 2019

	Signature	Ratification	Entry into Force
<u>Albania</u>	29/06/1995	28/09/1999	01/01/2000
<u>Andorra</u>			
<u>Armenia</u>	25/07/1997	20/07/1998	01/11/1998
<u>Austria</u>	01/02/1995	31/03/1998	01/07/1998
<u>Azerbaijan</u>		26/06/2000 a	01/10/2000
<u>Belgium</u>	31/07/2001		
<u>Bosnia and Herzegovina</u>		24/02/2000 a	01/06/2000
<u>Bulgaria</u>	09/10/1997	07/05/1999	01/09/1999
<u>Croatia</u>	06/11/1996	11/10/1997	01/02/1998
<u>Cyprus</u>	01/02/1995	04/06/1996	01/02/1998
<u>Czech Republic</u>	28/04/1995	18/12/1997	01/04/1998
<u>Denmark</u>	01/02/1995	22/09/1997	01/02/1998
<u>Estonia</u>	02/02/1995	06/01/1997	01/02/1998
<u>Finland</u>	01/02/1995	03/10/1997	01/02/1998
<u>France</u>			
<u>Georgia</u>	21/01/2000	22/12/2005	01/04/2006
<u>Germany</u>	11/05/1995	10/09/1997	01/02/1998
<u>Greece</u>	22/09/1997		
<u>Hungary</u>	01/02/1995	25/09/1995	01/02/1998
<u>Iceland</u>	01/02/1995		
<u>Ireland</u>	01/02/1995	07/05/1999	01/09/1999
<u>Italy</u>	01/02/1995	03/11/1997	01/03/1998
<u>Latvia</u>	11/05/1995	06/06/2005	01/10/2005
<u>Liechtenstein</u>	01/02/1995	18/11/1997	01/03/1998
<u>Lithuania</u>	01/02/1995	23/03/2000	01/07/2000
<u>Luxembourg</u>	20/07/1995		
<u>Malta</u>	11/05/1995	10/02/1998	01/06/1998
<u>Monaco</u>			
<u>Montenegro</u>		11/05/2001 a	06/06/2006
<u>Netherlands</u>	01/02/1995	16/02/2005	01/06/2005
<u>North Macedonia</u>	25/07/1996	10/04/1997	01/02/1998
<u>Norway</u>	01/02/1995	17/03/1999	01/07/1999
<u>Poland</u>	01/02/1995	20/12/2000	01/04/2001
<u>Portugal</u>	01/02/1995	07/05/2002	01/09/2002
<u>Republic of Moldova</u>	13/07/1995	20/11/1996	01/02/1998
<u>Romania</u>	01/02/1995	11/05/1995	01/02/1998
<u>Russian Federation</u>	28/02/1996	21/08/1998	01/12/1998
<u>San Marino</u>	11/05/1995	05/12/1996	01/02/1998
<u>Serbia</u>		11/05/2001 a	01/09/2001
<u>Slovak Republic</u>	01/02/1995	14/09/1995	01/02/1998
<u>Slovenia</u>	01/02/1995	25/03/1998	01/07/1998
<u>Spain</u>	01/02/1995	01/09/1995	01/02/1998
<u>Sweden</u>	01/02/1995	09/02/2000	01/06/2000
<u>Switzerland</u>	01/02/1995	21/10/1998	01/02/1999
<u>Turkey</u>			
<u>Ukraine</u>	15/09/1995	26/01/1998	01/05/1998
<u>United Kingdom</u>	01/02/1995	15/01/1998	01/05/1998