



05.03.2008

Conference

TEN YEARS OF PROTECTING NATIONAL MINORITIES AND REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

Institutions and Impact

TUESDAY, 11 MARCH 2008, STRASBOURG
G BUILDING, ROOM G3

Rationale

This Conference will mark the 10th anniversaries of the entry into force of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages on 1 February and 1 March 1998 respectively. It will take place during the Slovak Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The Charter and the Framework Convention share a number of similarities. Many countries, such as the Slovak Republic, are Parties to both treaties. Both treaties have a large number of provisions that are relevant to linguistic minorities. Both treaties employ similar methods for monitoring State compliance.

In spite of the many similarities, both conventions have different objectives. The principal aim of the Framework Convention, as set out in its Preamble, is “the effective protection of national minorities and of the rights and freedoms of persons belonging to those national minorities”. Therefore, the Framework Convention proceeds from a human rights base. By contrast, the overriding concern of the Charter is cultural, as it is designed to protect and promote regional or minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe’s cultural heritage. Thus, the core objectives are cultural diversity and the maintenance and development of cultural wealth.

During the last decade, the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention adopted 61 Opinions which led to the Committee of Ministers adopting 54 Resolutions. Furthermore, the Committee of Experts on the Charter has adopted 35 evaluation reports, which have been followed up by 30 Committee of Ministers' Recommendations. The experience gathered during the last ten years calls for reflection on the role of the international and domestic institutions which implement both conventions as well as of their impact on national policies, legislation and practice.

As regards the Framework Convention, this Conference will look into the role of the Ombudsman Institutions and other Human Rights Protection agencies which draw on the resolutions and recommendations of the monitoring bodies. The Conference will then address the impact of the Charter in general with specific examples of its importance for Frisian language education in the Netherlands and the promotion of the Sami language in Norway.

Programme

8:30-9:00 *Registration of participants*

Chair: Ambassador Emil Kuchár, Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the Council of Europe

9:00 Opening of the conference

Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Mr Dušan Čaplovič, Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Government for Knowledge Based Society, European Affairs, Human Rights and Minorities

Ambassador Christian Oldenburg, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the Council of Europe, Chair of the Rapporteur Group on Human Rights

Ambassador Bruno Gain, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe, Chair of the Rapporteur Group on Legal Co-operation

9:40 Protection of National Minorities and Regional or Minority Languages in Europe: Where do we stand?

9:40 Mr Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe

9:50 Mr Brendan F. Moran, Director of the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

10:00 Mr Boriss Cilevičs, Representative of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, member of the Sub-Committee on Rights of Minorities

10:10 Mr Gianni Buquicchio, Director, Secretary of the Venice Commission, Council of Europe

10:20 Coffee break

10:40 Ms Judit Solymosi, President of the Committee of Experts on Issues relating to the Protection of National Minorities (DH-MIN)

10:50 Mr Alan Phillips, President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

11:00 Professor Stefan Oeter, Chair of the Committee of Experts on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

11:10 Mr Igor Grexa, Ambassador, Legal Adviser of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

11:20 Discussion

- 11:40 Ten Years of Protecting National Minorities under the Framework Convention**
- 11:40 Ms Ilze Brands-Kehris, 1st Vice-President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention: The experience of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention
- 11:55 Mr Jenő Kaltenbach, former Ombudsman for National and Ethnic Minorities of Hungary: The experience of Ombudsman for National and Ethnic Minorities in using the Framework Convention
- 12:10 Mr Mark Lattimer, Director, Minority Rights Group, London: Civil society's role in protecting national minorities rights
- 12:25 Discussion
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:30 Ten Years of Promoting Regional or Minority Languages under the Charter**
- 14:30 Professor Vesna Crnić-Grotić, 1st Vice Chair of the Committee of Experts on the Charter: The Impact of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- 14:45 Discussion
- 15:10 Ms Jannewietske de Vries, Minister of Language and Education of the Province of Fryslân (Netherlands): The Importance of the Charter for the Frisian Language
- 15:25 Mr Bjørn Olav Megard, Deputy Director General of the Department of Sami and Minority Affairs at the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (Norway): The Charter and the Promotion of the Sami Language in Norway
- 15:40 Discussion
- 16:10 Coffee break
- 16:30 Conclusions by the Chair
- 17:00 End

Languages: English, French