**Hungary needs to strengthen use of and access to minority languages**
Strasbourg, 14.12.2016 – A report published today by the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers praises Hungary for having strengthened minority language policies, which have led to increased funding for the country’s rich linguistic diversity, but notes that gaps remain. The report includes [recommendations](file:///Y%3A%5CWeb%5CReport%5CRecommendations%5CHungaryCMRec6_en.pdf) towards the full application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Hungary, together with a response from the Hungarian government. According to the report, Hungary has highly detailed and complex legislation governing national minority policies and the use of all 14 minority languages. Since January 2012, the rights of minorities have been considered fundamental rights and the importance of protecting national minorities and their languages is well recognised in Hungary. The following languages have been given special protection under the European Charter: Armenian, Beas, Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Greek, Polish, Romani, Romanian, Ruthenian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian and Ukrainian. In the report, the Charter’s Committee of Experts welcomed the fact that, as a result of the new minority policy, the funding for national minorities has been significantly increased for most minorities. The experts welcomed progress made in recent years in regional and minority languages education. However, they stressed that a structured long-term policy and plan for education in all minority languages must be developed. The report calls on Hungary to increase bilingual education at all levels, such as moving away from the model of teaching minority language as a subject, to that of bilingual education and the associated need to increase the number of teachers who are able to teach subjects in minority languages. The experts also recommended the adoption of further measures to improve the offer of Romani and Beas at all levels of education. Furthermore, although regional or minority languages before courts and in communication with administrative authorities are formally provided, measures are needed to encourage minority language speakers to make use of their rights in these areas. The Charter’s experts rate the use of minority languages in printed media and radio broadcasting as satisfactory overall in Hungary, but television remains unsatisfactory. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages entered into force in Hungary in March 1998.

**Minority languages in Switzerland: situation by and large satisfactory; Italian and Romansh require additional support**
Strasbourg, 14.12.2016 – The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has just published its report on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Switzerland and [recommendations](file:///Y%3A%5CWeb%5CReport%5CRecommendations%5CSwitzerlandCMRec6_en.pdf) to the authorities, together with the response from the Swiss Government. The report highlights recent positive developments concerning the Part III languages – Italian and Romansh. The Council of Europe experts welcomed the encouraging situation of Romansh in education and media. However, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe recommends proactive measures to be taken in order to prevent that municipality mergers in Graubünden/Grischun/Grigioni Canton reduce the use of Romansh in the near future. Concerning Italian in the Canton of Graubünden/Grischun/Grigioni, the experts pointed out the persisting problems in cantonal administration and in the public sector under the control of the canton. Therefore, the Committee of Ministers invites the Swiss authorities to strengthen the presence of Italian in the public sphere of the canton. The Council of Europe experts note that a structured policy is needed to guarantee the protection and promotion of French and German as Part II languages as far as they constitute minority languages in the officially bilingual cantons. The authorities are also invited to apply Part II of the Charter to Franco-Provençal. The experts highlight furthermore that support for new projects is necessary for the protection and promotion of the local Walser German dialect and culture in Bosco-Gurin, in the canton of Ticino. As a general evaluation, the report acknowledges the significant steps that Switzerland has taken to implement most of the undertakings ratified. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages entered into force in Switzerland in April 1998.

**Minority languages in the Netherlands: positive developments, but concern for regional or minority languages in the media**
Strasbourg, 14.12.2016 – The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has just published a [report](file:///Y%3A%5CWeb%5CReport%5CEvaluationReports%5CNetherlandsECRML5_en.pdf) on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in the Netherlands and [recommendations](file:///Y%3A%5CWeb%5CReport%5CRecommendations%5CNetherlandsCMRec5_en.pdf) to the authorities, together with the response from the Dutch Government. The report reflects several positive steps, in particular as regards the Frisian language. New developments have been noted in education, but additional efforts are needed to further strengthen the teaching of and in Frisian. New legislation addresses the use of Frisian in courts and administration. Nevertheless, the report is mindful of the reforms and mergers in these two areas possibly affecting the use of the language in practice. The Council of Europe experts welcome the new covenant between the national authorities and the Province of Fryslân, for which the Charter serves as a policy framework for the promotion of Frisian. The Council of Europe experts express concern about the changes in the legal and financial framework in the media sector, which might lead to a reduction of programmes in the regional or minority languages. The Committee of Ministers recommends that the authorities take measures to ensure that the on-going changes in the media system do not hamper the offer of programmes in these languages. Further efforts are needed to strengthen the status of Limburgish and Low Saxon in education, including at pre-school level. The Council of Europe also calls on the authorities to take measures, in co-operation with the speakers, to protect and promote Romanes and Yiddish. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages entered into force in the Netherlands in March 1998.

**Minority languages in Serbia: progress observed in education; language use in administration should be strengthened**

Strasbourg, 29.04.2016 – The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe just published a report on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Serbia and recommendations to the authorities, together with the response from the Serbian Government.

The importance of protecting national minorities and their languages is well recognised in Serbia which enjoys a rich linguistic diversity with 15 regional or minority languages. The following languages have been given special protection under the European Charter: Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Bunjevac, Croatian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Macedonian, Romani, Romanian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Vlach.

The Council of Europe experts welcomed those examples of municipalities which introduced minority languages into official use even though the threshold of 15% of the population speaking it has not been met, and encouraged a more systemic use of this possibility across the country.

The Council of Europe’s experts welcomed the progress made over the past years in the regional and minority languages education. Despite the legal threshold of 15 pupils - too high for the requirements of the Charter - the authorities in some cases allow classes even for very few pupils. However, the availability and quality of such education is affected by a lack of qualified teachers and of adequate teaching materials. Furthermore, there is no offer of adult education in any of the languages protected under the Charter, the report said. The experts specifically recommended establishing an adequate offer of Croatian and Romani in education.

The use of regional or minority languages before courts and in communication with administrative authorities is provided for in the legislation, but the implementation of these provisions should be strengthened.

The Council of Europe experts note that Serbia traditionally has a very high level of regional or minority language presence in radio and television broadcasts, as well as in print media. It is important to ensure that this positive development continues even in the context of the planned privatisation of local broadcast media, which according to the experts, “might negatively affect the situation”.

The Committee also recommended continuing to promote awareness and tolerance in Serbian society vis-à-vis the regional or minority languages and cultures. These activities, currently mainly concentrated in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, should expand to cover all other parts of Serbia as well.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages entered into force in the Republic of Serbia in June 2006.

**Regional or minority languages: Slovakia must take steps to implement Charter**

Strasbourg, 29.04.2016 – The Council of Europe published a report on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Slovakia, along with the comments of the Slovak authorities. The Charter which entered into force in Slovakia in 2002 protects 10 languages: Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Polish, Romani, Ruthenian, Ukrainian and Yiddish.

The report notes that Slovakia recently adopted a Human Rights Strategy, and that an action plan concerning the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is being prepared. It further notes that institutional structures dealing with national minorities and minority languages are in place and that the government, in line with national legislation, publishes an annual report on the use of minority languages.

The experts also note that the legislation governing the use of the official language and the minority languages is highly detailed and complex. Despite amendments, some of the provisions and their implementation still contradict the Charter’s principle of encouraging and facilitating the use of minority languages in public life, and in some cases actually prevent their use.

On the basis of these findings, the report makes a series of recommendations to be implemented by the Slovak authorities. It underlines the need for specific and immediate action in the field of education: cost-cutting measures known as “school rationalisation” are highlighted as they affect in particular small schools and thereby have a disproportionate impact on minority language education.

The report also highlights the insufficiency of radio and television broadcasting in minority languages. Weekly newspapers in these languages are almost non-existent. The same remark applies to the administrative field where the minority languages have limited presence.

Raising awareness and promoting tolerance in the Slovak society at large vis-à-vis regional and minority languages and the cultures they represent, are among priority recommendations in the report.

**Regional and minority languages in Spain: Council of Europe issues new evaluation report**

Strasbourg, 21.01.2016 - The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe today issued six [recommendations](file:///Z%3A%5CWeb%5CReport%5CRecommendations%5CSpainCMRec4_en.pdf) to the Spanish authorities on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. It also published a [Report](file:///Z%3A%5CWeb%5CReport%5CE_Reports%5CSpainECRML4_en.pdf) by a committee of experts assessing Spain´s compliance with the Charter.

In its report, the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages acknowledges that Spain has chosen a very high level of protection for autonomous communities´ co-official languages, and points out that in the last years the implementation of the Charter commitments that bind Spain has improved considerably, notably those which fall under the responsibility of the autonomous communities.

However the report, which is the fourth prepared by the committee on Spain, identifies some significant problems. The legislation on the right to have proceedings before judicial and state administration bodies conducted in the relevant regional language has not been changed to ensure that this right can be exercised at the request of one party, and the use of regional languages in some areas of the state administration and in public services, particularly in health care, is hampered by the lack of staff who can use them.

With regard to the trilingual education model which was introduced in a number of autonomous communities – which especially affects the Balearic Islands, Galicia and Valencia -, the report stresses that great care should be taken that it does not negatively affect the provision of education in regional or minority languages.

In most autonomous communities, more effort is needed in the field of printed and broadcasting media, to have adequate coverage in the whole region. The report also calls for greater co-operation in education and broadcast media between the autonomous communities where the same or similar languages are spoken.

The report notes positive trends in respect to teaching of the Basque language both in the Basque country and Navarre. However the low proportion of staff with a command of the Basque language causes problems in the fields of justice, police, health and social care in the Basque Autonomous Community.

The gradual reduction of teaching in Galician in Galicia is cause for concern for the speakers, according to the committee. Moreover, the legislation in place limits the use of Galician in education to a maximum of 50%.