Committee of Ministers: Media Recommendations in Monitoring of Languages Charter

IRIS 2009-10:1/36

Tarlach McGonagle
Institute for Information Law (IViR), University of Amsterdam

Since the beginning of 2009, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers (CM) has adopted five country-specific Recommendations concerning the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: Serbia (first monitoring cycle); Armenia, Austria and Cyprus (second monitoring cycle) and Sweden (third monitoring cycle). The Charter contains a number of provisions of relevance for the (audiovisual) media, the most detailed of which are to be found in Article 11.

Of the latest batch of Recommendations on the application of the Charter, the most specific references to the audiovisual media are to be found in the Recommendations on Armenia and Austria. In respect of the former, the CM recommended that the State authorities "take measures to improve the presence of [...] Assyrian, Yezidi and Kurdish on television", "as a matter of priority". Similarly, in respect of the latter, the CM recommended that the State authorities "increase television broadcasting in Hungarian" - again "as a matter of priority". A number of the Recommendations dealt with other media, e.g., radio (Armenia in respect of Assyrian and Greek) and newspapers (Austria in respect of Burgenland-Croatian, Slovenian and Hungarian, and Sweden in respect of Sami and Meänkieli).

The application of the Charter by States Parties is overseen by the Committee of Experts on the Charter and the CM. Periodic State Reports are evaluated by the Committee of Experts, on the basis of which the CM formulates its country-specific Recommendations. The Evaluation Reports of the Committee of Experts are therefore more extensive and more detailed than the CM's Recommendations. As such, the Evaluation Reports tend to highlight a wider range of pertinent issues than the CM's Recommendations.

In respect of Serbia, for instance, the Committee of Experts encouraged the State authorities "to ensure that the privatization of local broadcasters does not negatively affect the offer of programmes in the regional or minority languages" (pp. 38, 50). The Committee also adverted to the importance of representation of regional or minority language speakers on relevant programme boards and the need for such boards to reflect their interests (p. 50).

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

The Committee of Experts urged the Armenian authorities to “develop schemes which will facilitate the broadcasting of television programmes in Assyrian, Greek, Kurdish and Yezidi” (p. 27; see also p. 35) - as subsequently reflected in the CM Recommendation. The Committee of Experts also encouraged the State authorities to “ensure that the interests of users of regional or minority languages are taken into account in the National Commission on Television and Radio” (p. 29).

The Committee of Experts expressed its regret that due to the discontinuation of “the annual Christmas television programme in Armenian”, “there are no television programmes in regional or minority languages” in Cyprus (p. 20). The Committee referred in this connection to “the role that television broadcasting plays in the promotion of minority languages” (p. 20).

In its evaluation of Austria, the Committee of Experts set out the information on which the aforementioned recommendations by the CM were based. Its evaluation of Sweden did not contain any observations or proposals relating specifically to the audiovisual media. Instead, relevant focuses were on the print media (pp. 25, 41, 44 and 46).

Recommendation RecChL(2009)1 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Austria, 11 March 2009

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/default_en.asp

Recommendation RecChL(2009)2 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Serbia, 6 May 2009

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/default_en.asp

Recommendation RecChL(2009)3 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Sweden, 6 May 2009

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/default_en.asp

Recommendation RecChL(2009)4 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Armenia, 23 September 2009

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/default_en.asp

Recommendation RecChL(2009)5 of the Committee of Ministers on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Cyprus, 23

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

September 2009

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/default_en.asp

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026

© European Audiovisual Observatory (Council of Europe) 2026