

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 17 March 2022

MIN-LANG(2022)3

EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

**Evaluation by the Committee of Experts
of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action
contained in the Committee of Experts' sixth evaluation report on
CROATIA**

Introduction

1. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter referred to as “the Charter”) is a treaty of the Council of Europe putting obligations on its states parties to protect and promote the country’s traditional minority languages in all fields of public life: education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges. The Charter was ratified by Croatia on 5 November 1997, entered into force on 1 March 1998 and applies to the following languages: Czech (covered by Parts II and III), German (Part II), Hungarian (Parts II and III), Boyash Romanian (Part II), Istro-Romanian (Part II), Italian (Parts II and III), Ruthenian (Parts II and III), Serbian (Parts II and III), Slovakian (Parts II and III), Slovenian (Part II) and Ukrainian (Parts II and III).

2. The Committee of Experts monitors the implementation of the Charter. Each state party shall present a periodical report on the implementation of the Charter every five years. On the basis of the periodical report, the Committee of Experts adopts an evaluation report in which it makes “**recommendations for immediate action**” and “further recommendations” on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in the state concerned. Based on this evaluation report, the Committee of Ministers adopts its recommendations to the state party.

3. Two and a half years after the due date of its periodical report, the state party shall present information on the implementation of every recommendation for immediate action¹ that the Committee of Experts has made in its evaluation report. The Committee of Experts then adopts an evaluation of the implementation of these recommendations. The “further recommendations” by the Committee of Experts are examined after reception of the next periodical report and the on-the-spot visit to the state party. Five-yearly periodical reports shall contain comprehensive information about the implementation of all Charter undertakings and all recommendations by the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers.

4. Croatia submitted the **information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action** contained in the Committee of Experts’ sixth evaluation report² on 14 September 2021. This **evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action** is based on the information received from the Croatian authorities, as well as from representatives of the minority language speakers pursuant to Article 16.2 of the Charter.³ As far as the compliance of Croatia with all its undertakings under the Charter is concerned, the Committee of Experts refers to its sixth evaluation report. The Committee of Experts will examine the implementation of all of the undertakings concerning all of the minority languages in the next evaluation report.

5. This evaluation was adopted by the Committee of Experts on 17 March 2022.

¹ In accordance with Committee of Ministers Decisions “Strengthening the monitoring mechanism of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” (CM/Del/Dec(2018)1330/10.4e), para. 1.a.

² Sixth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Croatia (MIN-LANG(2019)18), <https://rm.coe.int/croatiaecrml6-en-rm2-docx/16809ec2e9>.

³ In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Committee of Experts (MIN-LANG(2019)7), Rule 17, paras. 1-6.

Examination of the implementation by Croatia of the recommendations for immediate action

I. General issues

Use of minority languages during the Covid-19 pandemic

6. In 2020, the Committee of Experts expressed concern about the widespread absence of regional or minority languages from official information and communication about the Covid-19 pandemic in several states parties. It was underlined that, according to the Charter, regional or minority languages should be used in all fields of public life and, therefore, that authorities should also actively use such languages in their response to the pandemic. In particular, it should be borne in mind that Covid-19 patients would feel even more isolated if they were not able to communicate with healthcare staff in their language.⁴ In this context, the Committee of Experts decided to address the impact of the pandemic in its future evaluations and reports.

7. The Croatian authorities have informed the Committee of Experts that, during the pandemic, video lessons were recorded for pupils attending classes in Czech and Serbian language and culture, respectively. The video lessons were published online by the Ministry of Science and Education. An association promoting Istro-Romanian produced digital educational materials for the distance learning of Istro-Romanian and distributed them to children's parents.

Consultation of representatives of the minority language users

8. The authorities have also informed the Committee of Experts that they have not consulted the representatives of the minority language users when preparing the information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action that the Committee of Experts has made in its sixth evaluation report. The Committee of Experts reiterates that, in conformity with Articles 6 and 7.4 of the Charter, it is necessary to inform the organisations concerned of the recommendations made during the monitoring and to take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by them in the implementation and related reporting.⁵

9. The Committee of Experts reminds the Croatian authorities to ensure dissemination of the Committee of Experts' evaluation reports and related Committee of Ministers recommendations on their official websites.

⁴ See "Communication in regional or minority languages of utmost importance in global medical crises", 25 March 2020.

⁵ See, for example, the Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action by Slovenia (MIN-LANG(2021)11), para. 8; Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action by the United Kingdom and Isle of Man (MIN-LANG(2021)3), para. 7; Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action by Hungary (MIN-LANG(2020)14), para. 6.

II. Recommendations for immediate action

1. Czech

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Use Czech in regional and local authorities and extend its equal and official use to additional municipalities.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

10. The authorities recall the legal provisions regulating the use of minority languages in the field of administrative authorities. According to Article 12 of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities, equal and official use of the language and script used by persons belonging to a national minority is guaranteed on the territory of a local or regional self-government unit if i.) persons belonging to the national minority constitute at least one third of the overall population of the unit or ii.) when this is enshrined in international agreements or iii.) stipulated in the statute of a local or regional self-government unit. Requirements for the official use of national minority languages and scripts, which ensure their equality with the Croatian language and Latin script, are regulated by the Act on the Use of the Languages and Scripts of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia. Local and regional self-government units report annually on the implementation to the national authorities.

11. At the level of local authorities, Czech continues to be in equal and official use in the town of Daruvar as well as in the municipalities of Dežanovac and Končanica (county of Bjelovar-Bilogora). According to the authorities, "there are still challenges in some local units to exercising certain rights from the Act on the Use of Languages and Scripts of National Minorities in the Republic of Croatia in practice". In this context, the National School of Public Administration organises a workshop entitled "Implementation of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities" at least once a year, which is intended for civil servants from national and local governments dealing with national minorities, and one of the workshop's topics is the equal and official use of minority languages.

12. The authorities further state that they "continuously monitor" the statutes regarding equal and official use of the languages and scripts of national minorities in units where persons belonging to a national minority constitute less than one third of the local population. In addition, they raise awareness among civil servants of the possibility to introduce equal and official use of a minority language in such units through a change of the statute.

13. As far as regional (county) authorities are concerned, no minority language except Italian (county of Istria) is in equal and official use.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

14. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. With regard to local authorities, the Committee of Experts reiterates that the threshold for the mandatory equal and official use of a minority language (at least one third of the local population) is too high for the promotion of the use of minority languages and not compatible with the Charter. In order to implement the respective undertakings under Article 10.2, the national authorities should actively encourage municipalities where Czech speakers constitute less than one third of the population, but are still present in sufficient numbers for the application of the respective undertakings, to change their statute and introduce equal and official use of this language. Considering that no additional municipality has introduced equal and official use of Czech during the reporting period, it is clear that the awareness raising carried out by the national authorities during the workshop for civil servants is insufficient and that efforts to implement the relevant Charter undertakings need to be intensified.⁶

⁶ See 6th evaluation report, para. 10.

15. According to the authorities, deficits in implementation of the obligation to use minority languages persist “in some local units”. It is not clear if Daruvar, Dežanovac and Končanica are among them. In February 2022, in the context of the application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the Committee of Ministers recommended to Croatia to “ensure that the relevant legal requirements [concerning official use of language and script of national minorities] are observed and applied by all local authorities.”⁷ The Committee of Experts underlines that the implementation of the undertakings under Article 10.2 of the Charter requires both organisational measures within the administrations (e.g. recruitment of officials who can work in the relevant minority language, training of existing staff, translation) as well as measures which encourage the minority language speakers to avail themselves of the possibility to use their language in contacts with the authorities.⁸

16. The Committee of Experts underlines that, in conformity with Article 10.2, Croatia has undertaken to allow and/or encourage the use of Czech in contacts with, and by, regional authorities. Consequently, the Croatian authorities should ensure that the statutes of relevant counties (notably the county of Bjelovar-Bilogora) enable the external and internal use of Czech.

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Introduce the broadcasting of a television programme in Czech on a regular basis and of a sufficiently long duration.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

17. No new television programme broadcasting in Czech has been introduced. In accordance with the Agreement concluded between the Government of the Republic of Croatia and the Croatian Radiotelevision for the period 2018-2022, the Croatian Television continues to broadcast the weekly documentary programme “Manjinski mozaik” (37 episodes in 2021) in minority languages with Croatian subtitles. Every 15th episode is devoted to a particular national minority in its language. HTV also broadcasts a weekly multicultural programme “Prizma” where some features are partly in minority languages (the interlocutors speak the minority language and the reporter’s comments are in Croatian).

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

18. The Committee of Experts notes that the organisation of broadcasting in minority languages has not been changed during the reporting period and that, consequently, the recommendation is not yet implemented. As the Committee of Experts has pointed out in its previous evaluation reports, “Prizma” and “Manjinski mozaik” have a very short broadcasting duration and ensure no regularity in the use of various minority languages. In their current format, these programmes are insufficient to contribute to the promotion of the minority languages.

19. Television broadcasts in a minority language are of particular importance for the promotion of the language. They not only provide information in the minority language, but also increase the level of exposure to the language in addition to its use in the family and/or in school. This supports the learning or practice of the language and its development. Television broadcasts in a minority language also raise the prestige and functionality of the language, which may encourage people to learn or transmit it. The achievement of these objectives requires an adequate broadcasting duration, regularity and accessibility of the programme, which can be facilitated by the internet. In order to reach out to the linguistic group as a whole, the broadcasts should cover content from various genres such as local and national news, entertainment and culture, and address different generations, including children and young people to support language transmission.⁹ The Committee of Experts, therefore, underlines again that the authorities should change the current system of minority language broadcasting and allocate to each minority language

⁷ Resolution CM/ResCMN(2022)2 on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Croatia, 23 February 2022, para. 7.

⁸ See 6th evaluation report, para. 48.

⁹ See 6th evaluation report, para. 51; Evaluation by the Committee of Experts of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action by Armenia, MIN-LANG(2021)17, para 16.

time slots for a television programme and a radio programme to be broadcast at regular intervals and of a sufficient duration.¹⁰

2. German

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Provide German language education at pre-school and primary levels (Model C) in additional municipalities where the German minority association is active, e.g. Đakovo, Sirač, Vukovar and Zagreb.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

20. German language education at pre-school and primary levels (Model C) has not been introduced in additional municipalities. Representatives of the German speakers have confirmed that they remain interested in the provision of such education.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

21. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It invites the national authorities to address the interest expressed and to consult representatives of pre-schools and primary schools in relevant municipalities (e.g. Đakovo, Sirač, Vukovar and Zagreb), the German minority association and parents with a view to organising German language education at these educational institutions in the next schoolyear.

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in German on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

22. No new television or radio programme broadcasting in German has been introduced.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

23. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 18-19 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in German on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

3. Hungarian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Use Hungarian in regional and local authorities and extend its equal and official use to additional municipalities.

¹⁰ See 6th evaluation report, para. 54.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

24. At local level, Hungarian continues to be in equal and official use in the municipalities of Kneževi Vinogradi/Hercegszöllös, Ernestinovo, Bilje/Bellye (county of Osijek-Baranja) and Tordinci/Valkótard (county of Vukovar-Sirmium). The equal and official use of Hungarian has not been extended to additional municipalities during the reporting period. Apart from the reference to a workshop for civil servants (see paras. 11-12), there is no information about steps taken by the national authorities to improve the actual use of Hungarian by local authorities in practice.

25. It follows from the information provided by the authorities (see para. 13) that the statutes of the counties of Osijek-Baranja and Vukovar-Sirmium, or the statutes of other counties, do not provide for the use of Hungarian.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

26. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 14-16 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to use Hungarian in regional and local authorities and extend its equal and official use to additional municipalities.

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Introduce the broadcasting of a television programme in Hungarian on a regular basis and of a sufficiently long duration.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

27. No new television programme broadcasting in Hungarian has been introduced.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

28. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 18-19 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to introduce the broadcasting of a television programme in Hungarian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

4. Italian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Make education in Italian available in additional municipalities where Italian is used, e.g. in Zadar and Pakrac.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

29. The Ministry of Science and Education has received a request from a primary school in Zadar to start teaching Italian language and culture under Model C¹¹ and is currently processing the request. In

¹¹ There are three models of minority language education at primary, secondary and technical/vocational levels: Model A provides that all lessons take place in the language and script of the national minority with the compulsory teaching of Croatian; Model B is a bilingual one whereby natural sciences are taught in Croatian, but social science subjects and those relating to the minority are taught in separate classes in the minority language and script; Model C consists of a teaching programme of two to five hours per week in the minority language in addition to regular classes in Croatian and covers the language and literature of the national minority, geography, history, music and art (6th evaluation report, para. 18).

addition, Italian language and culture continue to be taught under Model C at the Pakrac Secondary School (county of Požega-Slavonia).

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

30. While appreciating the initiative to teach Italian in Zadar, the Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation concerns education in Italian, i.e. in accordance with Model A. It therefore invites the authorities to consult the representatives of the Italian speakers about whether teaching in Italian should be introduced in Zadar and whether the existing teaching of Italian in Pakrac (Model C) could be upgraded to teaching in Italian (Model A). Furthermore, it is important to see to it that Italian language education is introduced at pre-school, primary and secondary levels in Zadar and Pakrac.

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Introduce the broadcasting of a television programme in Italian on a regular basis and of a sufficiently long duration.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

31. No new television programme broadcasting in Italian has been introduced.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

32. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 18-19 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to introduce the broadcasting of a television programme in Italian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

Recommendation for immediate action

c. Accelerate the translation of textbooks in Italian.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

33. The authorities point out that, in order to accelerate the translation of textbooks for minority language education, the Ministry of Science and Education has continuously increased the relevant funding and provided continuous professional support to minority publishers, who are responsible for the production and translation of such textbooks.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

34. The Committee of Experts welcomes the increase of funding for the translation of textbooks and the additional support provided to publishers. As the representatives of the Italian speakers have not indicated to the Committee of Experts that problems with the availability of textbooks persist, it considers the recommendation implemented.

5. Boyash Romanian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Introduce Boyash Romanian in pre-school and primary education (Model C) in the counties of Međimurje and Osijek-Baranja.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

35. In April 2020, the Ministry of Science and Education adopted the curriculum for the subject “Language and Culture of the Roma National Minority in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Republic of Croatia (Model C)”. Interest in the introduction of teaching Boyash Romanian based on this curriculum has been expressed by the Jagodnjak Primary School (county of Osijek-Baranja), following a request from pupils and their parents. However, as this school has so far not succeeded in recruiting the necessary teachers, it is not known when the teaching of Boyash Romanian will begin. Furthermore, in December 2021, the Ministry of Science and Education held a meeting with the principals of primary schools in Orehovica and Podturen (both located in the county of Međimurje), as these schools also expressed interest in organising classes on the basis of this curriculum.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

36. The Committee of Experts notes that the pilot project concerning the teaching of Boyash Romanian in Jagodnjak and the preparation of the curriculum¹² were completed. In order to begin the teaching of Boyash Romanian in regular education in accordance with Model C, the national authorities should actively support the Jagodnjak Primary School in the process of recruiting teachers. Moreover, in light of the wishes expressed by representatives of speakers during the last monitoring cycles, the Committee of Experts invites the authorities to combine teaching of both standard Romanian and the local varieties of Boyash Romanian. Considering that Boyash Romanian is almost exclusively used orally, it could be the medium of instruction in subjects where teaching takes place mainly orally (e.g. music, sport) as well as in social activities. Furthermore, the Committee of Experts reiterates its recommendation to introduce teaching of Boyash Romanian in primary education also in the county of Međimurje, for example in Orehovica and Podturen, and to begin using Boyash Romanian in pre-school education.¹³

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in Boyash Romanian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration in the areas where this language is traditionally used.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

37. No new television or radio programme broadcasting in Boyash Romanian has been introduced. The authorities mention, however, that Croatian Radiotelevision has broadcast episodes of a children’s show translated into Boyash Romanian.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

38. While welcoming the offer for children, the Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 18-19 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in Boyash Romanian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

6. Istro-Romanian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Introduce Istro-Romanian in pre-school and primary education in the municipalities of Kršan and Matulji.

¹² See 6th evaluation report, para. 27.

¹³ See *ibidem*.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

39. During the last years, the county of Istria and the Istrian municipality of Kršan have organised meetings to discuss the possibility of introducing the teaching of Istro-Romanian at the Primary School Ivan Goran Kovačić in Čepić/Ceppich (municipality of Oprtalj/Portole) and the branch primary school in Šušnjeвица with representatives of the Istro-Romanian speakers. At present, Istro-Romanian is used in a playgroup ("Puljići") for pre-school and younger school children. In the schoolyear 2021/2022, a project started in the framework of which Istro-Romanian is taught as an extracurricular activity at the school in Šušnjeвица (1st-4th grade) and at the Primary School Ivan Goran Kovačić (5th-8th grade) during one lesson per week. As there are no teachers who speak Istro-Romanian, the project is implemented by an association promoting Istro-Romanian and partly funded by the county of Istria. Digital educational materials for learning and teaching Istro-Romanian are also prepared by the association which, however, lacks funding for this task. The association intends to apply for co-financing from the Ministry of Culture; an application for funding submitted to the Ministry of Science and Education has not been successful.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

40. The Committee of Experts welcomes the co-operation between the authorities of the municipality of Kršan and the county of Istria with the representatives of the Istro-Romanian speakers. It considers that the project-based extracurricular teaching of Istro-Romanian in primary education is an important step on the way to the introduction of Istro-Romanian as a regular subject taught as part of the curriculum. While being aware of the limited number of native speakers, the Committee of Experts invites the authorities to train as a matter of priority a number of professional teachers who could use or teach Istro-Romanian in pre-school education and at primary schools in the municipalities of Kršan and Matulji (county of Primorje-Gorski Kotar). The availability of professional teachers would also make it possible to extend the teaching programme and the number of weekly lessons in accordance with Model C or a comparable model. Furthermore, the national authorities are encouraged to support the development of educational materials for learning and teaching Istro-Romanian. In general, the design of the educational model should take into account that Istro-Romanian is no longer transmitted in families and that education has the role of ensuring that children become fluent in the language and are enabled to transmit it to their children.¹⁴

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Develop and implement, in co-operation with representatives of the speakers, a strategy on the safeguarding of Istro-Romanian as a living language.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

41. The Committee of Experts has not received any information that the recommended strategy has been developed. Representatives of the Istro-Romanian speakers have informed that they are planning several activities aiming at the safeguarding and transmission of Istro-Romanian, namely its audio and video documentation, the production of digital educational materials, and awareness-raising about, and use of, Istro-Romanian on television, radio and in newspapers.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

42. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. Considering that Istro-Romanian is severely endangered and will become extinct if immediate resolute action is not taken to safeguard it, the Committee of Experts reiterates its recommendation that the authorities should, in co-operation with the representatives of the speakers, develop and implement a strategy on the safeguarding of Istro-Romanian as a living language. This strategy should *inter alia* comprise the promotional measures foreseen by Part II of the Charter, clarify for each measure the responsibilities of the local, regional and national authorities concerned, and receive sufficient funding. The

¹⁴ See 6th evaluation report, para. 28.

measures planned by the speakers in the fields of documentation, education and media could be part of a comprehensive strategy.

7. Ruthenian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Use Ruthenian in regional and local authorities and extend its equal and official use to additional municipalities.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

43. At local level, the Ruthenian language and the Cyrillic script are in equal and official use in the municipality of Bogdanovci (county of Vukovar-Sirmium). Their equal and official use has not been extended to additional municipalities during the reporting period. Apart from the reference to a workshop for civil servants (see paras. 11-12), there is no information about steps taken by the authorities to improve the actual use of Ruthenian by local authorities in practice.

44. It follows from the information provided by the authorities (see para. 13) that the statute of the county of Vukovar-Sirmium, or the statute of another county, does not provide for the use of the Ruthenian language and the Cyrillic script.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

45. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 14-16 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to use the Ruthenian language and the Cyrillic script in regional and local authorities and extend their equal and official use to additional municipalities.

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Make pre-school education available in Ruthenian.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

46. While Ruthenian is still not used in pre-school education, the authorities indicate that they are in principle willing to support the introduction of new pre-school programmes in minority languages in co-operation with the speakers and pre-schools.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

47. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. Considering that language learning begins at a very early age of a child, the Committee of Experts underlines the importance of kindergartens for learning a minority language. In order to fulfil the undertaking in Article 8.1.a.iii, the national authorities, in co-operation with the local authorities concerned, need to "favour and/or encourage" the provision of at least a substantial part of pre-school education in Ruthenian. In addition, the national authorities should, in co-operation with the local authorities/pre-schools and representatives of the Ruthenian speakers, inform parents about the offer of pre-school education in Ruthenian and actively encourage them to enrol their children in the kindergartens concerned.

Recommendation for immediate action

c. Introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in Ruthenian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

48. No new television or radio programme broadcasting in Ruthenian has been introduced.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

49. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 18-19 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in Ruthenian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

8. Serbian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Use Serbian and its script in regional and local authorities and extend its equal and official use to additional municipalities.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

50. At local level, the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script continue to be in equal and official use in 23 local government units.¹⁵ The equal and official use of this language has not been extended to additional municipalities during the reporting period.

51. Apart from the reference to a workshop for civil servants (see paras. 11-12), there is no information about steps taken by the authorities to improve the actual use of the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script by local authorities in practice. In October 2021, the town council of Vukovar/Вуковар reached the conclusion that the conditions for officially using the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script were not yet met. According to representatives of the Serbian speakers, this decision is contrary to national law (see 6th evaluation report, para. 13).

52. It follows from the information provided by the authorities (see para. 13) that there have been no changes in the statutes of the counties providing for the equal and official use of the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

53. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 14-16 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to use the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script in regional and local authorities and extend their equal and official use to additional municipalities, including Vukovar/Вуковар. The Committee of Experts stresses again that thresholds should not be used to prevent the implementation of the Charter. It also refers to the Committee of Ministers' recent recommendation to Croatia concerning the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.¹⁶

¹⁵ County of Sisak-Moslavina: Donji Kukuruzari-Доњи Кукурузари, Dvor-Двор, Gvozd-Гвозд; county of Karlovac: Крњак-Крњак, Плашки-Плашки, Војнић-Војнић; county of Lika-Senj: Donji Lapac-Доњи Лапац, Udbina-Удбина, Vrhovine-Врховине; county of Zadar: Грачак-Грачак; county of Osijek-Baranja: Erdut-Ердут, Jagodnjak-Јагодњак, Кнежеви Vinogradi-Нерцегсзöllös-Кнежеви Виногради, Šodolovci-Шодоловци; county of Šibenik-Knin: Biskupija-Бискупиа, Cviljane-Цивљане, Ervenik-Ервеник, Kistanje-Кистање; county of Primorje-Gorski kotar: Vrbovsko-Врбовско; county of Vukovar-Sirmium: Borovo-Борово, Markušica-Маркушица, Negoslavci-Негославци, Трпнја-Трпнја, see 6th evaluation report, para. 80.

¹⁶ "implement the right of persons belonging to national minorities to display street names and indications on public buildings in minority languages and scripts in accordance with the national legal framework and Article 11 (3) of the Framework Convention; also raise awareness at all levels and among the public about these legal obligations, as a demonstration of the diverse character of areas in which persons belonging to national minorities reside, traditionally and at present. In the implementation of these obligations, close consultations should be conducted between the authorities and representatives of minorities and the majority", Resolution

9. Slovakian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Use Slovakian in regional and local authorities and extend its equal and official use to additional municipalities.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

54. At local level, Slovakian is in equal and official use in the municipality of Punitovci (county of Osijek-Baranja). The equal and official use of this language has not been extended to additional municipalities during the reporting period. Apart from the reference to a workshop for civil servants (see paras. 11-12), there is no information about steps taken by the authorities to improve the actual use of Slovakian by local authorities in practice.

55. It follows from the information provided by the authorities (see para. 13) that the statute of the county of Osijek-Baranja, or the statute of another county, does not provide for the use of Slovakian.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

56. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 14-16 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to use Slovakian in regional and local authorities and extend its equal and official use to additional municipalities.

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Make available pre-school education in Slovakian.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

57. Slovakian is still not used in pre-school education. As mentioned above, the authorities are in principle willing to support the introduction of new pre-school programmes in minority languages in co-operation with the speakers and pre-schools.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

58. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in para. 47 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to make available pre-school education in Slovakian. In this context, the Committee of Experts notes that, at the time of its on-the-spot visit in 2019, representatives of the Slovak speakers were planning to establish a Slovakian-language kindergarten in Jelisavac/Jelisavec (municipality of Našice, county of Osijek-Baranja).

10. Slovenian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Make pre-school education available in Slovenian.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

59. Slovenian is still not used in pre-school education. As mentioned above, the authorities are in principle willing to support the introduction of new pre-school programmes in minority languages in co-operation with the speakers and pre-schools.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

60. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in para. 47 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to make available pre-school education in Slovenian. This also requires the training of teachers (see the following recommendation).

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Take measures to train teachers of Slovenian for all levels of education.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

61. The authorities state that representatives of the Slovenian speakers regularly apply for the co-financing of the professional development of teachers in the framework of an annual public call conducted by the Ministry of Science and Education. It is not clear which levels of education are concerned by this further training and how many teachers teaching Slovenian have participated during the reporting period. No information has been provided about the basic training of teachers.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

62. On the basis of this information, the Committee of Experts is not in a position to evaluate if the recommendation has been implemented. It also observes that the recommendation concerns primarily the basic training of teachers of Slovenian, including for pre-school education (see recommendation above).¹⁷ The Committee of Experts invites the Croatian authorities to address the interest expressed by the speakers and consult their representatives about needs concerning the training of teachers of Slovenian for all levels of education and to initiate such training, as appropriate.

11. Ukrainian

Recommendation for immediate action

a. Introduce Ukrainian in equal and official use at least in the municipality of Bogdanovci.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

63. The statute of the municipality of Bogdanovci, as provided by the national authorities, still does not provide for equal and official use of the Ukrainian language and the Cyrillic script.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

64. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented and that Ukrainian is still not in equal and official use in any local self-government unit in Croatia. In order to implement the undertakings under Article 10.2, it is important that the national authorities encourage at least the municipality with the highest local share of persons belonging to the Ukrainian minority in Croatia,

¹⁷ See 6th evaluation report, para. 31.

i.e. Bogdanovci, to introduce the Ukrainian language and the Cyrillic script in equal and official use, in addition to Ruthenian which is already in equal and official use in Bogdanovci (see para. 43).

Recommendation for immediate action

b. Make pre-school education available in Ukrainian and teach this language in secondary education.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

65. Ukrainian is still neither used in pre-school education, nor taught in secondary education. The authorities are in principle willing to support the introduction of Ukrainian language education at these levels in co-operation with the speakers.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

66. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. In its view, the fact that Ukrainian is used at primary level proves a certain general interest in the teaching and learning of that language. On this basis, the national and local authorities, relevant pre-schools and primary schools and representatives of the Ukrainian speakers could jointly raise awareness about the benefits of, and opportunities for, minority language education, which could make it possible to introduce Ukrainian in pre-school education and to establish continuity from primary to secondary education.¹⁸ The Committee of Experts therefore reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to make pre-school education available in Ukrainian and to teach this language in secondary education.

Recommendation for immediate action

c. Introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in Ukrainian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

Implementation measures taken by the Croatian authorities

67. No new television or radio programme broadcasting in Ukrainian has been introduced.

Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

68. The Committee of Experts notes that the recommendation has not yet been implemented. It refers to its observations made in paras. 18-19 and reiterates its recommendation to the Croatian authorities to introduce the broadcasting of a television programme and a radio programme in Ukrainian on a regular basis and of sufficiently long duration.

¹⁸ See 6th evaluation report, para. 26.

Communication to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, while acknowledging the efforts of the Croatian authorities to comply with their undertakings under the Charter, has in its sixth evaluation report (CM(2020)62) made “recommendations for immediate action” and “further recommendations” on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in Croatia.

In accordance with the Committee of Ministers Decisions of 28 November 2018 (CM/Del/Dec(2018)1330/10.4e), Croatia had to present information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action, which contain the priority measures that should be taken by the state party. Croatia presented this information on 14 September 2021. In the present evaluation, the Committee of Experts has examined the implementation of these recommendations.

In accordance with its Rules of Procedure, the Committee of Experts invites the Committee of Ministers to:

1. take note of the evaluation made by the Committee of Experts of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action by Croatia and invite the Croatian authorities to disseminate it to the competent national authorities and relevant stakeholders;
2. reiterate its Recommendation CM/RecChL(2020)7 and invite the Croatian authorities to present their next periodical report by 1 March 2023 in the required format.