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## Strengthening measures to protect and revive highly endangered languages

**Reply to Recommendation<sup>1</sup>:** Recommendation 1943 (2010)  
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has taken note of Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1943 \(2010\)](#) on “Strengthening measures to protect and revive highly endangered languages” and has brought it to the attention of governments of member states. It forwarded it to the Committee of Experts on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz and the Steering Committee for Education (CDED), who have all submitted comments which the Committee of Ministers has taken into account in this reply.

2. The Committee of Ministers regards linguistic diversity as a factor in mutual enrichment. It seeks to preserve and develop the identity and languages of people belonging to national minorities, in particular through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and other relevant Council of Europe treaties. It also draws on the work of the CDED and the ECML, whose contribution to the Organisation’s language policy development has been of great importance for the promotion of plurilingualism in Europe. In particular, it draws attention to the activities related to the “European Day of Languages” celebrated every year, in co-operation with the European Union. It helps, *inter alia*, to raise people’s awareness of the importance of preserving endangered languages and encourage transmission of these to younger generations.

3. The Committee of Ministers notes with interest the recommendation that all member states should make the best use of the experience and the potential of the ECML. However, the Committee of Ministers would like to recall that the European Centre for Modern Languages is an enlarged partial agreement which currently has 34 member states. As stated in its statute, the Centre has as its mission the implementation of language policies and the promotion of innovative approaches to the learning and teaching of modern languages. In the Centre’s work, no distinction is made between endangered and non-endangered languages. The Centre applies an inclusive approach to language education, supporting and promoting the efficient use of all languages available to learners as part of their linguistic repertoire, for the benefit both of the individual and of society.

4. Regarding the possible role of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML), the Committee of Ministers fully agrees with the recommendation that all member states should make the best use of the knowledge and experience of the Committee of Experts of the ECRML. The Charter was drawn up to protect and promote regional or minority languages, including as a threatened aspect of Europe’s cultural heritage. The Charter does not therefore make a distinction between “highly, critically or severely endangered regional and minority languages”; they are all considered as being in need of special protection and all considered as specific, given the socio-linguistic context in the member states themselves. This is why the Charter provides for a flexible “à la carte” system, to be able to adapt itself to a vast diversity of situations, including regarding languages which may be considered highly, critically or severely endangered. In this context, selected good practices developed in the course of the implementation of the Charter may be identified if needed by independent experts, on request of the countries who so wish and make funds

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1. adopted at the 1121st meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies (21 September 2011)



available for this. The text of the Charter itself already provides for a list of guidelines to be implemented in the member states Parties to the Charter (general principles and special provisions in education, culture, justice, media, economic and social life).

5. Lastly, the Committee of Ministers points out that the CDED's programme of activities places a special focus on the plurilingual and intercultural education of pupils/students. One of the priority objectives of this programme for the years to come will be the elaboration of guidelines for policies for the linguistic and educational integration of children of vulnerable groups. The CDED's efforts in the field of language policies will concentrate on implementing this new programme, and in view of the current budgetary restrictions, the Committee of Ministers does not intend expanding its action regarding the specific recommendations made by the Parliamentary Assembly.

6. In conclusion, the Committee of Ministers points out that the protection and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity remain priority lines of action, in particular in the context of the areas of work of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Committee of Ministers wishes to recall that certain member states have not yet signed and/or ratified the Charter.