



Recommendation 1353 (1998)¹

Access of minorities to higher education

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly believes that minorities should be able to express their identity and to develop their education, culture, language and traditions, and that states should take all necessary measures to this end. Moreover, this is the only way by which Europe will be able to preserve its rich cultural diversity.
2. Education is a fundamental human right and therefore access to all levels, including higher education, should be equally available to all permanent residents of the states signatories to the European Cultural Convention.
3. This is not the case at present as members of national minorities are often under-represented in higher education. The cost of provision, problems of recognition of qualifications, the lack of suitable primary and secondary education and, in some cases, political opposition contribute to this situation.
4. According to several studies – and in particular the results of the three year project on access to higher education in Europe conducted by the Higher Education and Research Committee (CC-HER) of the Council for Cultural Co-operation – the socio-economic situation of minorities is very often also an obstacle to their access to higher education. This is particularly true in the case of Roma/Gypsies.
5. Statistical data on the participation of minorities in higher education is, in many European countries and for different reasons, very incomplete.
6. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers ask the governments of states signatories to the European Cultural Convention to take account of the following principles when reviewing their national education policies:
 - 6.1. governments should avoid prescribing the exclusive use of the official language and abstain from pursuing policies aimed at the assimilation of national minorities into the majority culture;
 - 6.2. persons belonging to a linguistic minority should have access to suitable types and levels of public education in their mother tongue in order to prepare for higher education;
 - 6.3. all citizens should have the possibility to study their own language and culture in general, and also at university level; persons belonging to minority groups should be encouraged to take part in higher education in their own country as well as abroad; mutual recognition of qualifications should be promoted, especially in neighbouring countries;
 - 6.4. governments should recognise the fundamental liberty to engage in higher education activities and to establish institutions for that purpose; such institutions should be officially supported once their satisfactory quality has been established - on a non-discriminatory and fair basis - and a genuine demand has been demonstrated; language should not be a criteria for recognising institutions or qualifications;
 - 6.5. higher education institutions should develop out-reach programmes designed to facilitate the access of minorities, for example by collaborating more closely with secondary education institutions;

1. Assembly debate on 27 January 1998 (3rd Sitting) (see [Doc. 7888](#), report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mrs Isohookana Asunmaa). Text adopted by the Assembly on 27 January 1998 (3rd Sitting).



- 6.6. students from minority groups should have the possibility to sit entrance examinations to higher education in their mother tongue;
 - 6.7. a system of bonuses, given in the entrance examination on the basis of language, could be envisaged as a means of encouraging persons belonging to linguistic minorities;
 - 6.8. young persons from minority groups should, like other young people, and under the same conditions as them, be able to receive vocational training after general basic education and to attend education at all levels, whether or not in their mother tongue, without any additional financial constraints;
 - 6.9. special courses in minority languages and cultures should be included in the curricula of teacher training institutions;
 - 6.10. new information and communications technologies should be used more widely as these are well suited for the education of minority groups and of students in geographically remote areas;
 - 6.11. the access of minorities to higher education, as well as their subsequent participation in it, should be monitored on the basis of data voluntarily given by the students and in conformity with data protection principles.
7. The Assembly also recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 7.1. provide expert assistance, for instance through the CC-HER and the implementation of pilot projects, to universities and governments in countries where minorities experience difficulties in acceding to higher education;
 - 7.2. support institutional case studies that focus on the topic of minorities in higher education in Europe;
 - 7.3. consider the adoption of the draft recommendation on access to higher education approved by the Council for Cultural Co-operation on 22 January 1998.