

Recommendation 1599 (2003)¹

The cultural situation in the South Caucasus

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has followed closely cultural developments in the South Caucasus region during the transitional period, including the historical background and the impact on culture of the economic and political situation. In this context, culture is used in its broad sense to include the arts, heritage, religion, media, science, education, youth and sport.
2. The Assembly is concerned by the difficult overall political and economic situation in the three South Caucasus countries. It stresses the importance of the contribution of the cultural sector to the stability of the region.
3. It emphasises, however, the need for international aid to this sector through co-operation with the countries and through foreign investments and assistance, for example in the form of subsidies to enable European networks in the fields of education, science and culture to hold their meetings in the region.
4. There is a need for improving cultural policies in the countries involved and for improving cultural co-operation, not only within the region but also with the neighbouring countries and with the whole area covered by the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18).
5. The Assembly welcomes the contribution already made by the Council of Europe at individual, regional and multilateral levels by initiating educational and cultural projects for the Caucasian republics.
6. It notes, in particular, the series of informal conferences involving the ministers of culture and of education. It also welcomes the contribution all three republics made to the recent informal meeting of the European Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs in Strasbourg in February 2003.
7. It stresses the importance of involving young people actively in the cultural and political development of the region
8. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers encourage the member states of the Council of Europe to:
 - a. contribute to the preparation and funding of programmes and projects relating to the various fields of culture in the region;
 - b. provide financial and technical support to the countries in the region for structural reforms of the education system, especially in education for democratic citizenship and in higher education and research;
 - c. develop co-operation between the three countries in all cultural fields;
 - d. support and facilitate the development of regional co-operation in the cultural sector through the creation of regional structures and the promotion of regional initiatives, including encouraging relevant regional networking of non-governmental organisations;
 - e. promote activities involving civil society, and in particular those aiming at preparing young people for an active role in the democratic and cultural life of the region

1. Assembly debate on 1 April 2003 (11th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9736](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Abbasov). Text adopted by the Assembly on 1 April 2003 (11th Sitting).



9. The Assembly calls on the South Caucasian republics to: on conflict resolution
- a. refrain from the politicisation of the cultural sector;
 - b. abstain from using cultural values and property for political ends;
 - c. seek the peaceful settlement of existing controversies in the cultural sector;
 - d. work on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and mutual respect;
 - e. work on the promotion of a culture of tolerance and mutual respect;
 - f. discourage the expression of ultra-nationalism and ensure positive attitudes; on cultural diversity and minorities
 - g. vi. adopt measures to maintain and promote linguistic and cultural diversity;
 - h. accede to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157);
 - i. protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identities of minorities within their respective territories, encourage initiatives for the promotion of these identities and develop cross-community understanding of the differences;
 - j. provide for and facilitate the effective participation rights of minorities in political, social and economic life, in keeping with international norms; on culture in general
 - k. improve legislation relating to the fields of culture, including the status of languages, and amend all provisions which interfere with international co-operation;
 - l. develop inclusive and intercultural educational provisions and curricula that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, to ensure that all groups have an understanding of their multicultural society, but with particular emphasis on the younger generation, and that there are shared and common values in the public domain which evolve through democratic consultation;
 - m. seek international funding for the implementation of concrete projects in the fields of culture; on media
 - n. support the development of pluralistic public service broadcasting to guarantee freedom of expression in the media, in line with the standards of the Council of Europe; on education
 - o. pursue the reform of education systems in general, with special reference to history teaching, education for democratic citizenship and the development of language teaching, in the light of the declarations adopted by the ministers of education of the region;
 - p. support mobility and exchange programmes for students and young people;
 - q. increase the budgets for education and educational co-operation; on young people
 - r. encourage the development of formal and informal structures for the participation of young people in civil activities and cultural life; on heritage
 - s. avoid accusing, without sufficient evidence, neighbouring governments of damaging and appropriating their cultural heritage;
 - t. work together on the documentation and preservation of cultural heritage at the regional level, and not least in relation to conflict zones (Georgian heritage in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Armenian heritage in Azerbaijan and Georgia, Azeri heritage in Armenian-occupied territory, and so on), using such co-operation to build confidence and nurture respect for each other's cultural traditions and achievements;
 - u. support and develop institutional networks aiming to promote and develop the cultural heritage of the peoples of their countries, including that of past or minority ethnic groups.