



Recommendation 1773 (2006)¹

The 2003 guidelines on the use of minority languages in the broadcast media and the Council of Europe standards: need to enhance co-operation and synergy with the OSCE

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly considers linguistic diversity to be a source of mutual enrichment which member states should encourage and maintain. Minorities must enjoy full and effective equality with the majority, including the right to preserve and develop their distinct identities. Genuine integration policies must respect differences and diversity.
2. The Assembly stresses that languages, which play a fundamental role in society as a tool for building communities, are particularly important for people belonging to minorities, since they are essential in the exercise of their right to maintain and develop their identity and culture as stipulated in the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157), the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ETS No. 148) and other Council of Europe instruments as well as in the 2003 guidelines on the use of minority languages in the broadcast media developed under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) High Commissioner on National Minorities.
3. The Assembly recalls that media can make a positive contribution to democracy and the fight against intolerance, especially where they foster public debate and a culture of understanding between different ethnic and linguistic groups in society and avoid presenting society in mono-cultural and mono-linguistic terms.
4. The Assembly notes moreover that languages play an important role in access to information and that providing information in minority languages not only has an obvious cultural dimension but also guarantees that minorities actually have full and equal access to information.
5. The Assembly deeply regrets that such access is sometimes deliberately made difficult or denied to minorities.
6. In this context, the Assembly recalls that, in [Recommendation 1623 \(2003\)](#) on rights of national minorities, it “reiterates the views [...] that all European states should abolish restrictions on the establishment and functioning of private media broadcasting in minority languages. Such restrictions are contrary to Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights as developed by the case law of the European Court of Human Rights”.
7. Moreover, the Assembly notes that the relevant Council of Europe and OSCE instruments, which aim to guarantee that minorities can use their own languages and that these languages are broadcast by the media, are complementary.
8. The Assembly recognises the significant role of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in conflict prevention and supports his continuous efforts to identify and seek early resolution of ethnic tensions.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 17 November 2006 (see [Doc. 11030](#), report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Cilevičs, and [Doc. 11081](#), opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Sahlberg).*



9. In its [Recommendation 1623 \(2003\)](#) the Assembly stated that “the co-operation between the Council of Europe’s bodies and other relevant European organisations (including the European Union and the OSCE) [...] should be stepped up”, and, in [Recommendation 1743 \(2006\)](#), that it attaches “great importance to relations between the Council of Europe and other institutions”.

10. The heads of state and government of the member states of the Council of Europe, meeting at the 3rd Summit in Warsaw on 16 and 17 May 2005, stated that they wished to foster “European identity and unity, based on shared fundamental values, respect for our common heritage and cultural diversity”.

11. In the Warsaw Declaration they undertook to continue their “work on national minorities, thus contributing to the development of democratic stability”, while declaring that they were “resolved to secure improved practical co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE and [welcomed] the prospect of enhanced synergy opened up by the joint declaration endorsed at this Summit”.

12. The Assembly welcomes the Action Plan adopted at the Warsaw Summit, in which attention is drawn to the decision taken at the Strasbourg Summit “to step up co-operation in respect of the protection of all persons belonging to national minorities”.

13. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

13.1. invite member states which have not yet done so to sign and ratify, without reservations and restrictive declarations, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which are fundamental instruments for the protection of national and linguistic minorities, as well as the European Convention on Transfrontier Television (ETS No. 132), and that it increase its efforts in this respect;

13.2. invite member states to ensure that people belonging to national minorities or using regional or minority languages have a balanced access to public broadcast media and an effective right to establish and use private broadcast media, in accordance with Article 11 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Article 9 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the opinions of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention and the reports of the Committee of Experts on the Charter, Parliamentary Assembly recommendations and resolutions on specific linguistic minorities and the 2003 guidelines on the use of minority languages in the broadcast media;

13.3. in the framework of the monitoring of the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, regularly take into account the 2003 guidelines on the use of minority languages in the broadcast media;

13.4. instruct the competent committee, when revising the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, to amend Article 10 of this convention in order to strengthen multilingual audiovisual works as well as audiovisual works produced in regional or minority languages.

14. The Assembly considers that there is a potential for enhanced co-operation and contacts between the Council of Europe and the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and encourages further synergies including through practical projects of common interest, in which civil society representatives could be involved.