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Minority protection in Europe: best practices and deficiencies in implementation of common standards

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 1904 (2010)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has carefully considered Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1904 (2010) together with the related Resolution 1713 (2010). Having regard to the Assembly's plea in both texts to encourage those states which have not yet done so to sign or to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Committee of Ministers agrees that it would be desirable that the rights contained in those instruments be applied throughout the continent.

2. The Committee of Ministers takes note of the encouragement addressed by the Assembly to member states to accede to the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.

3. As regards the suggestion, contained in paragraph 1.3 of the recommendation, that the Committee should strengthen the Council of Europe's work on intercultural dialogue, the Committee draws the Assembly's attention to a number of major realisations in this respect, including:

– Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education;

– the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living Together as Equals in Dignity";

– the establishment of regular exchanges on the religious dimension of the intercultural dialogue with the participation of religious leaders;

– most recently, the Secretary General's initiative to set up a Group of eminent persons "Living together in the 21st Century" in the context of the Turkish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

4. The protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities is the subject of active co-operation with other international organisations (see paragraph 1.4), particularly in the context of the Committee's regular co-ordination meetings with the OSCE, which has evident shared competence in the field.

5. Turning to paragraph 2 of the recommendation, the Committee agrees with the Assembly that the timely provision of information by State Parties is essential for the effective functioning of the Framework Convention. That is why it has put in place, in co-operation with the Advisory Committee of the Convention, a sequence of warning measures culminating in the possibility of authorising the Advisory Committee to begin its monitoring activity without having received a state report.

1. Adopted at the 1102nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (12 January 2011).

6. As to the related questions of thematic reports and information on good practice, the Committee recalls that the Advisory Committee has already adopted two thematic commentaries, on participation and on education, and is currently preparing a third on the subject of linguistic rights.