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Ratification of the Council of Europe's treaties on minority rights

Written question No. 694 to the Committee of Ministers

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The protection of national minorities as a guarantee of full and effective equality of all people is essential to the preservation of social and political stability, democratic security and the promotion of the diversity of cultures and languages in Europe. Understanding minority rights as an integral part of fundamental human rights was a crucial step forward in allowing persons belonging to national minorities to participate fully in the societies in which they live.

The effective protection and promotion of these rights requires the commitment of all States. In recent years, however, ratifications of the Council of Europe's two flagship instruments for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to minorities have stagnated.

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has to date been ratified by only 25 member States. It has been signed by eight member States. There have been no new ratifications of the Charter since September 2010.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has been ratified by 39 member States. Four member States have signed it. There have been no new ratifications of the Framework Convention since December 2005.

In Recommendation 1766 (2006), the Parliamentary Assembly asked the Committee of Ministers to encourage the ratification of the Framework Convention by those States that had not yet ratified it. In 2007, the Committee of Ministers indicated that "States which are not Parties to the Framework Convention can explain their position on minority issues and discuss legal or other obstacles that have prevented them from signing or ratifying the Framework Convention in the context of the Committee of Experts on Issues relating to the Protection of National Minorities (DH-MIN)" (Doc. 11369). Since the DH-MIN ceased functioning at the end of 2011, these questions have not been further debated.

Mr Cilevičs,

To ask the Committee of Ministers,

Bearing in mind the need to ensure the effective protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and speakers of regional or minority languages, what actions does the Committee of Ministers now intend to take in order:

- to identify the legal or other obstacles that may continue to prevent certain States from signing or ratifying the Framework Convention or the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;
- to achieve the full ratification of both the Framework Convention and the Charter by all 47 member States of the Council of Europe?

