

European Regional Forum on Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM 6 – 7 MAY 2019



Organised by:



Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

In cooperation with:



Background

The rights of linguistic minorities are human rights that must be respected, including in relation to the appropriate degree of use of minority languages. Education deals with what is perhaps the central linguistic right of minorities, and is also fundamental to the maintenance of linguistic diversity. A language that is not taught is a language that will ultimately vanish. The benefits of education in the mother language are now fairly well established scientifically through studies of minority children in different parts of the world.¹

In his first report to the UN General Assembly in New York in October 2017, the Special Rapporteur on minority issues (Special Rapporteur), Dr Fernand de Varennes, presented education and the language of minorities as one of the four thematic priorities of his new Human Rights Council mandate. At the November 2018 11th UN Forum on Minority Issues (Forum) in Geneva, the Special Rapporteur confirmed that this topic would be the focus of the 12th session of the Forum in 2019. He also announced at the November 2018 Forum that three regional forums would be organised in 2019 to make the Forum more accessible and responsive to regional contexts and realities.

¹ *Language Rights of Linguistic Minorities: A Practical Guide for Implementation*, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, April 2018.

Objectives

Three regional forums are to be convened on the topic of education in, and teaching of, minority languages. Their main aim is to provide regional insights for the development of a set of guidelines or a technical handbook focusing on education in, and teaching of, minority languages. Discussions at the forums will also inform the recommendations of the 12th session of the UN Forum in 2019.

Other objectives include:

- Raising awareness of the ways in which the education in, and the teaching of, minority languages is anchored in international human rights obligations;
- Providing a platform for more informal exchange on practical challenges of minority language education in Europe among various stakeholders;
- Identifying and discussing the central issues of topical concern related to education and minority languages in Europe;
- Amplifying the voices of minority communities in assessing and improving minority language education policies and offering expert input into their specific concerns.

Participants

The Forum shall be open to the participation of states; intergovernmental organisations including United Nations agencies and mechanisms; national human rights institutions and other relevant national bodies; academics and experts on minority issues; representatives of minorities as well as civil society organisations specialising in minority issues.

All individual participants must register online [here](#). Registration opens on 19th March 2019 and closes on Monday 15th April 2019. All participants registered will require approval, which will be confirmed by email. The confirmation email will contain a QR code. This code will need to be scanned upon your arrival.

All travel related-expenses, visas, accommodation and insurances are the responsibility of the participants. However, there is limited funding for a small number of participants, covering their travel, accommodation, subsistence and visas. If you require funding, please submit a request to regionalforum@tomlantosinstitute.hu.

Participation at the European Regional Forum is limited to 300 individuals.

Areas of Discussion

In light of the main objectives of the forum the discussions will address the following overarching themes that reflect the main challenges and issues in the field of minority language education and the human rights of persons belonging to minorities:

- Human Rights pertaining to minority language education in Europe
- Constitutional regulation and public policy objectives: justifications and practice
- Pedagogical approaches
- Quality, Management and Resources

Input and Outcomes

The UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues encourages wide participation from states, national human rights institutions, civil society representatives, as well as regional and international organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

All participants are encouraged to contribute to the discussion and dialogue by sharing experiences and views about the main issues identified under areas of discussion of the forum. The forum will consist of four panel sessions over the two days, which participants will be able to contribute to.

Based on the dialogue and contributions of the participants, a detailed summary of the discussion will be prepared, as well as concrete, regional specific recommendations.

Practical Information

The regional forum will be held at the European Parliament, Brussels. Details of the programme schedule, speakers and further helpful information will be provided in due course by email, following registration, and on the registration website.

It is anticipated that interpretation will be available in English and Russian, and possibly in French.