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**EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES**

**APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER IN CYPRUS**

**Initial monitoring cycle**

- A. Report of the Committee of Experts on the Charter**
- B. Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter by Cyprus**

The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages provides for a control mechanism to evaluate how the Charter is applied in a State Party with a view to, where necessary, making Recommendations for improvements in its legislation, policy and practices. The central element of this procedure is the Committee of Experts, established in accordance with Article 17 of the Charter. Its principal purpose is to examine the real situation of the regional or minority languages in the State, to report to the Committee of Ministers on its evaluation of compliance by a Party with its undertakings, and, where appropriate, to encourage the Party to gradually reach a higher level of commitment.

To facilitate this task, the Committee of Ministers has adopted, in accordance with Article 15.1, an outline for the periodical reports that a Party is required to submit to the Secretary General. The report shall be made public by the government concerned. This outline requires the State to give an account of the concrete application of the Charter, the general policy for the languages protected under its Part II and in more precise terms all measures that have been taken in application of the provisions chosen for each language protected under Part III of the Charter. The Committee's first task is therefore to examine the information contained in the periodical report for all the relevant regional or minority languages on the territory of the State concerned.

The Committee's role is to evaluate the existing legal acts, regulations and real practice applied in each State for its regional or minority languages. It has established its working methods accordingly. The Committee gathers information from the respective authorities and from independent sources within the State, with a view to obtaining a just and fair overview of the real language situation. After a preliminary examination of a periodical report, the Committee submits, if necessary, a number of questions to the Party concerned on matters it considers unclear or insufficiently developed in the report itself. This written procedure is usually followed up by an "on-the-spot" visit of a delegation of the Committee to the respective State. During this visit the delegation meets bodies and associations whose work is closely related to the use of the relevant languages, and consults the authorities on matters that have been brought to its attention.

Having concluded this process, the Committee of Experts adopts its own report. This report is submitted to the Committee of Ministers together with suggestions for recommendations that the latter could decide to address to the Party concerned.

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## **A. Report of the Committee of Experts on the application of the Charter in Cyprus**

adopted by the Committee of Experts on 24 March 2006  
and presented to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe  
in accordance with Article 16 of the Charter

### **Chapter 1 Background information and preliminary issues**

#### *1.1. The Charter's ratification by Cyprus*

1. The Republic of Cyprus signed the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter referred to as the Charter) on 12 November 1992 and ratified it on 26 August 2002. The Charter entered into force with regard to Cyprus on 1 December 2002. Pursuant to Article 169.3 of the Cyprus Constitution, the Charter, by virtue of its ratification by the Republic of Cyprus (Ratification Law 39(III)/1993), and publication thereof in the Official Gazette of the Republic, is incorporated into the Republic's domestic law and takes precedence over any other domestic law.

2. Cyprus declared, at the time of depositing its instrument of ratification, that the regional or minority language, within the meaning of the Charter, was Armenian. Cyprus replaced the original declaration on 4 August 2005 in order to clarify that it undertakes to apply only Part II of the Charter to the Armenian language as a non-territorial language.

3. The revised Declaration of 4 August 2005 is set out in Appendix I to this report.

4. In accordance with Article 15 para. 1 of the Charter, the initial periodical report on the application of the Charter in Cyprus was due on 1 December 2003. It was presented to the Secretary General on 17 January 2005. The report was prepared by the Office of the Law Commissioner and made public in June 2005 on the official website of the State's Press and Information Office. The Armenian Representative in the House of Representatives presented and explained the initial periodical report both to the Armenian community in a special meeting and to various committees.

#### *1.2. The work of the Committee of Experts*

5. After the Committee of Experts' preliminary examination of the report, a questionnaire was drawn up and addressed to the Cypriot authorities. A delegation of the Committee of Experts made an "on-the-spot" visit to Cyprus in October 2005. Meetings were held in Nicosia with representatives of the speakers of the Armenian, Cypriot Maronite Arabic and Turkish languages, including journalists and educationalists, all of whom reside in the government-controlled area, and non-governmental organisations, all of which are based and have been established in the government-controlled area. The delegation also visited an Armenian primary school and a Maronite primary school in Nicosia. It met both the Armenian and the Maronite Parliamentary Representative, the Law Commissioner and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

6. The Committee of Experts received some comments and additional information from representatives of the speakers. This information has been very helpful in the evaluation of the application of the Charter and the Committee of Experts would like to thank all of them for their active input and participation in the monitoring process.

7. In accordance with Article 16 para. 4 of the Charter (see Chapter 3 of this report), the Committee of Experts has established a list of general proposals for the preparation of recommendations that the Committee of Ministers may wish to address to Cyprus. Furthermore, in the body of the report, where necessary, it has made more detailed observations, which it encourages the Cypriot authorities to take into consideration when developing their regional or minority language policy.

8. This report is based on the political and legal situation prevailing when the Charter entered into force in Cyprus (1 December 2002), on the information presented by the Government of Cyprus in its initial periodical report to the Council of Europe (17 January 2005), on additional information provided by the Government at a later stage through the answers to the questionnaire, and on information obtained by the Committee of Experts during the “on-the-spot” visit, as stated above. The report was adopted on 24 March 2006.

### 1.3. Presentation of the regional or minority language situation in Cyprus

#### Preliminary remark

9. Cyprus owes its linguistic and ethnic composition to a complex history which began ca. 1400 B.C. when Cyprus became a Greek settlement. In 58 B.C., Cyprus became part of the Roman Empire and after its division in 395 A.D., it remained part of the Byzantine Empire for about 800 years. Cyprus was then under Latin rule from 1191 to 1570 when control was taken by the Lusignans and later by the Venetians. From 1571 to 1878, Cyprus was part of the Ottoman Empire and it then came under British control until its independence in 1960.

10. According to official statistics, the number of legal residents on the whole island of Cyprus at the end of 2003 was 818 200.

11. The prevailing sociolinguistic and geo-demographic situation of today however is mainly a result of the events of 1974, when, after over a decade of growing tensions between the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots, who made up about 18% of the total population, Turkish armed forces occupied the northern part of Cyprus on 20 July 1974, following the coup d'état of 15 July 1974 instigated by the military junta of Greece against the Cyprus Government.

12. As a result, about 37% of the island was occupied by the Turkish army. This led to a *de facto* division of the island of Cyprus and a massive internal displacement and separation of the population, with nearly 200 000 Greek Cypriots moving to the south and about 50 000 Turkish Cypriots, moving to the north. However, probably about a third of the Turkish Cypriots have left Cyprus since 1974. On the other hand, over 100 000 people from Turkey have moved to Cyprus since 1974.

13. The *de facto* partition did not only relocate Greek and Turkish speakers, but affected also the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic speakers who were displaced and mostly moved to the non-occupied territory (see also paras. 19 and 26 - 27 below).

14. Since 1974, the government of Cyprus only has effective control over the territory in Cyprus that is not occupied. Therefore, with regard to the implementation of the Charter in Cyprus, the Committee of Experts restricts its evaluation of the situation of regional or minority languages to the territory that is under government control. The Committee of Experts has nevertheless taken into account information concerning regional or minority language speakers on the whole island, in order to gain a comprehensive view of the complex and in some instances sensitive set of circumstances. The Committee of Experts is of course aware of the exceptional situation in Cyprus and hopes that a viable solution will be found in the near future.

#### General information

15. The constitutional structure of the Republic of Cyprus has emanated from an Agreement reached on 11 February 1959 at Zurich between the Greek and Turkish Prime Ministers (in the absence of the Cypriots) for the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus. The Agreement reached at Zurich was subsequently incorporated in the London Agreement signed on 19 February 1959 by the Governments of the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey and by the leaders of the Greek-Cypriot Community and Turkish-Cypriot Community. The Constitution of the Republic was based on those two Agreements. The Joint Constitutional Commission established under the London Agreement for completing a draft of such constitution had strict terms of reference in its work to "*have regard to and scrupulously observe the points contained in the documents of the Zurich Conference and fulfill its task in accordance with the principles there laid down*". The Constitution so drafted was signed on 16 August 1960 by representatives of the Governments of Greece, Turkey, the United Kingdom and by the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot Communities, and was put into effect on that date and Cyprus was declared as an independent sovereign state.

16. The Constitution divides the Cypriot population into two “Communities”, Greek and Turkish. The Communities are defined on the grounds of ethnic origin, language, culture and religion. The Constitution further makes reference to “religious groups”. As the denomination implies, religious groups are defined by their religious affiliation only. According to this classification, the only religious groups of Cyprus are the Armenians, the Maronites and the Latins. In 1960, a referendum was carried out by which members of the three religious groups, in accordance with Article 2 of the Constitution, had to decide which of the two Communities they wanted to belong to. All three groups chose to belong to the Greek Community.

17. As well as sharing the same rights as all Cypriot citizens, the religious groups have the additional right, under Article 109 of the Constitution, to be represented in the Cypriot Parliament (the House of Representatives) by an elected member of their respective group. However, the Representative has no right to vote and his or her right to speak is restricted to religious, educational and cultural matters of concern for his or her respective community. He or she mainly has an advisory role.

### Armenian

18. According to the information at the Committee of Experts’ disposal, the first Armenian-speakers settled in Cyprus during the Byzantine period in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century and there are records of as many as 10,000. A more recent and main migratory movement to Cyprus took place when thousands of Armenians fled the Ottoman Empire in the wake of the Armenian genocide (1915/16) forming what is called the Armenian Diaspora where large numbers of Armenians settled worldwide. About 1300 remained in Cyprus. Armenian-speakers traditionally inhabited the towns of Larnaca, Limassol and Nicosia. In 1924, to avoid assimilation, the Armenian-speakers decided to teach Armenian to the new generation, and by the mid 1940s, its use in the community was predominant.

19. By 1960, there were about 4000 Armenian-speakers living in Cyprus. Due to the growing civil tensions that followed, many Armenian-speakers left and the Armenian population was reduced by half. In 1963, Nicosia was divided into two, with a UN buffer zone that ran through the centre of the old Armenian quarter of Nicosia where Armenian-speakers had lived for centuries, resulting in their displacement. In 1974, the Armenian-speakers living in the northern part of Cyprus moved to the south, just like the Greek Cypriots.

20. According to the information received during the “on-the-spot” visit from representatives of the Armenian-speakers, until 1960, Armenians lived in self-contained communities and a low prestige was attached to being Armenian. However, this situation has changed and the Armenian-speakers are well integrated into society.

21. According to the information provided by the Cypriot authorities, there are 3 000 Armenian-speakers in Cyprus, of whom 400 are non-Cypriots and recent immigrants. Armenian-speakers constitute 0.4% of the population in the government-controlled area. Most speakers live in the District of Nicosia. According to the Cypriot authorities and the Armenian Representative, there are no Armenians or Armenian-speakers in the territory that is not under government control.

22. Armenian forms a separate branch of the Indo-European language family. In Cyprus, a form of Western Armenian is spoken, which is also spoken by most Armenians of the Diaspora. All Armenians in Cyprus are bilingual in Armenian and Greek except for the recent immigrants, most of whom do not speak Greek.

### Cypriot Maronite Arabic

23. According to the information at the Committee of Experts’ disposal, the first Maronites came to Cyprus probably from Northern Syria and South East Anatolia in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Waves of migration to Cyprus followed thereafter in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, resulting in a relatively sizeable Maronite community of 50 000 in 60 villages. A decrease of the Maronite population in Cyprus began as early as the Latin Rule (1191 – 1571 A.D.) following natural and man-made disasters. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Maronite population in Cyprus counted 4500 – 6000 inhabiting mainly four villages – Kormakitis, Asomatos, Agia Marina and Karpasia, all located in the now occupied territory of Cyprus.

24. Until 1974, Cypriot Maronite Arabic was spoken primarily by the inhabitants of Kormakitis in the northwest of Cyprus, who then represented around half of the Maronite population in Cyprus.

25. Despite the low number of speakers, Cypriot Maronite Arabic remained intact due to its rural and secluded setting in a tight-knit community and with a high concentration of speakers.

26. Following the Turkish occupation in 1974, the inhabitants of the four villages became refugees and were displaced and dispersed throughout the government-controlled territory. Initially, 1500 Maronites stayed in their villages, but most of them left shortly afterwards, leaving only a few, mostly elderly people. Under the Vienna III Agreement of 1973, Maronites are allowed to move relatively freely between their villages in the occupied area and the government-controlled area. Those that left moved mainly to the city of Nicosia and its suburbs, and also to the Limassol area.

27. Thereafter, inter-marriage, urbanisation and fragmentation of the Maronite community resulted in a significant decline of the number of Cypriot Maronite Arabic-speakers and an interruption of intergenerational transmission of the language. The process of language loss has dramatically accelerated ever since.

28. According to the information provided by the Cypriot authorities, in 2004 there were 4650 Maronites living in the government-controlled area and 150 Maronites, all elderly people, living in four villages in the non-government controlled area, the large majority in the village of Kormakitis.

29. There is no official data on the number of Cypriot Maronite Arabic speakers. The “2001 Census of Population” did not include data on the number of these speakers. The Cypriot authorities state that there is an estimated number of 1 300 speakers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic on the whole territory of Cyprus, a figure based on the total number of Maronites living in Kormakitis at the time of the Micro Census in 1973. During the “on-the-spot” visit, the delegation was informed by the speakers, that there were 2000 – 2500 Maronites who could speak or at least had a passive knowledge of Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

30. Cypriot Maronite Arabic is a Semitic language. There is no written or standard form of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, although attempts have been made to codify it in the Greek alphabet. The long geographical and cultural isolation from the Arab-speaking mainland has led to a unique development and independent linguistic evolution of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. It can be regarded as a distinct language. There are literary sources that prove that Cypriot Maronite Arabic was already distinct in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. The speakers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic refer to their own language simply as *sanna* (‘our language’).

#### ‘Latin’

31. The third religious group is the Latin community, who are Roman Catholics. They have no separate language.

#### Kurbetcha/ Romani

32. The self-designation of Roma in Cyprus is *Kurbet*. In the Greek language the word used is *Athingganoi*. According to the information at the Committee of Experts’ disposal, the first Roma immigrated to Cyprus in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Turkish occupation in 1974 led to a change from a nomadic lifestyle to a more settled one, when most of the approximately 600 Roma settled in the occupied territory in the towns of Morphou and Famagusta. The total Roma population of the island has been estimated at 1000 – 1500, although the Ministry of the Interior estimates a lower figure. Some Roma families moved from the occupied area to the non-occupied area in 2001 and 2002. Most of them settled in Limassol.

33. The Roma refer to their language as *Kurbetcha*. The Committee of Experts was unable to receive any information on whether the Roma still speak *Kurbetcha* or any other language than Turkish and/or Greek and would welcome more information in the next periodical report on this and on other matters relating to the Roma in Cyprus.

#### *1.4. General issues arising from the evaluation of the report*

34. The co-operation with the Cypriot authorities was good. Responsibility for the implementation of the Charter lies with the central government. The Committee of Experts was informed by the municipal authorities that they have no competence relating to the Charter.



35. The Committee of Experts was informed that the offices and bodies consulted on the preparation of the initial periodical report were the Parliamentary Representative of the Armenian Religious Group, a member of the Advisory Committee to the Armenian Representative and representatives of the Armenian primary and secondary schools. Armenian non-governmental organisations were not consulted in connection with the preparation of the initial periodical report.

36. In general, the Committee of Experts observes that awareness of the need to value and safeguard regional or minority languages seems to be very recent in Cyprus. There are no specific laws or policies aimed directly at protecting or promoting regional or minority languages. Therefore, support for regional or minority languages is in most cases a positive side-effect of either a high level of support for the religious groups or the promotion of multilingualism in general.

#### 1.5 *Particular issue concerning the Turkish language*

37. According to Article 3 of the Constitution of Cyprus, the official languages of the Republic are Greek and Turkish, and all texts that appear in the Official Gazette shall be in both languages. It is also specified in the article that official acts and documents shall be drawn up in both languages. The official languages shall be used in judicial proceedings, on coins, currency notes and stamps. Every person has the right to address authorities in either of the official languages. More regulations are laid down in further Articles of the Constitution (Art. 11, 12, 28, 30, 171, and 180).

38. However, most of these provisions ceased to be implemented after December 1963 with the withdrawal of Turkish Cypriots from all institutions and official posts. With the *de facto* division in 1974, the termination of official bilingualism was consolidated. Since 1963, the few Turkish Cypriots that decided to stay in the government-controlled area therefore have not been able to exercise their full linguistic rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

39. According to the population census 2001, there were 361 Turkish Cypriots living in the government-controlled area. The delegation was informed during the “on-the-spot” visit that this number has risen in the last 3 – 5 years to about 1000, with an upward trend.

40. On the basis of these two facts – that Turkish has basically ceased to function as an official language and that there are a number of Turkish speakers living in the government-controlled area - Turkish appears to be in a similar position to a regional or minority language in the government-controlled area.

41. In the view of the Cypriot authorities, the Turkish language is not a language protected under the Charter because of its official status under the Constitution of the Republic. As mentioned above, the Committee of Experts is aware of the situation created by the *de facto* division of Cyprus. Nevertheless it is bound to enquire whether the official status attaching to the Turkish language is implemented in practice at least to a sufficient degree to ensure that this language is not less favourably treated than an ordinary regional or minority language.

42. The Turkish language does not seem to be fully operational as an official language in the government-controlled area. There are practical limitations of its use in communications with official bodies. Nevertheless, the Committee of Experts has not been made aware of any prevention or direct discouragement of the use of Turkish. On the contrary, the government has taken many positive steps, e.g. in the field of education. Also, there are Turkish television and radio programmes etc.

43. The information received during the on-the-spot visit thus suggests that the obligations under Part II of the Charter are probably fulfilled concerning the Turkish language in the government-controlled area. The Committee of Experts asks the Cypriot authorities to supply more detailed information in the next periodical report with regard to the Turkish language in the government-controlled area.



## Chapter 2 The Committee of Experts' evaluation of the application of the Charter

44. No languages have been designated by the Cypriot authorities for protection under Part III of the Charter. The Committee of Experts has therefore evaluated how the State has fulfilled each undertaking in Part II (Article 7).

### 2.1. Preliminary issues

45. In the light of the additional information the Committee of Experts received from the Cypriot authorities and also from the information received on the "on-the-spot" visit to Cyprus, Cypriot Maronite Arabic must be assessed on the basis of the definition of a regional or minority language laid down in Article 1.a of the Charter and according to Article 2.1. of the Charter.

46. On the basis of the information received, it appears that the Cyprus government's conception of the linguistic status of Cypriot Maronite Arabic is based on the following criteria: Cypriot Maronite Arabic is widely termed and usually referred to as a 'dialect', both in early academic work and even by some speakers themselves. The reasons for this seem to stem from the fact that Cypriot Maronite Arabic shares some traits with dialects in the sense that it has never been codified nor standardised, and that its usage is restricted to the private sphere. Further, Cypriot Maronite Arabic is only spoken by a minority of the Maronites, who are already relatively few. It is not passed on to the younger generation, and in general seems to be of low prestige. On these grounds Cypriot Maronite Arabic has been considered as "merely" a dialect.

47. Cypriot Maronite Arabic may be a dialect of Standard Arabic, but not of the official languages of Cyprus, namely Greek or Turkish. Cypriot Maronite Arabic has been spoken in Cyprus since the arrival of the first Maronites in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and since then has a continuous presence on the island. Moreover, Cypriot Maronite Arabic differs from the official languages of Cyprus. Therefore, since Cypriot Maronite Arabic is traditionally spoken in Cyprus and is not a dialect of the official languages of Cyprus, it must be considered a regional or minority language within the meaning of the Charter. However, the above-mentioned factors point to a seriously endangered language and it is consequently all the more necessary for the Cypriot authorities to recognise Cypriot Maronite Arabic as a language and moreover one that is in urgent and immediate need of protection.

48. During its "on-the-spot" visit, the delegation met with representatives of the speakers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic who indicated that there is a strong need and urgency for their language to be protected and safeguarded.

49. The Committee of Experts is therefore of the opinion that Cypriot Maronite Arabic qualifies as a regional or minority language within the meaning of Article 1, para. a of the Charter and encourages the Cypriot authorities to take urgent measures to protect and promote it in accordance with Part II of the Charter.

***The Committee of Experts encourages the Cypriot authorities to comment on the implementation of the Charter with regard to Cypriot Maronite Arabic in their next periodical report.***

## 2.2 *The evaluation in respect of Part II of the Charter*

50. Part II of the Charter sets out a number of general objectives and principles that a Party is obliged to apply to all the regional or minority languages on its territory. In the following paragraphs the Committee of Experts examines Cyprus' compliance with Article 7 in respect of the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages. While doing so, it has taken into consideration additional information at its disposal.

### **Article 7 – Objectives and principles**

#### ***"Paragraph 1***

***In respect of regional or minority languages, within the territories in which such languages are used and according to the situation of each language, the Parties shall base their policies, legislation and practice on the following objectives and principles:***

- a the recognition of the regional or minority languages as an expression of cultural wealth;"***

51. Apart from the constitutional provisions in Cyprus guaranteeing the recognition of the religious groups, there does not seem to be any specific policy aimed at promoting recognition and awareness of linguistic diversity. Linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism are promoted in general in Cyprus, mainly in the school curriculum. For example, 2005 was declared a year of linguistic and cultural diversity at school. However, this does not specifically include or directly target the regional or minority languages of Cyprus.

#### Armenian

52. The ratification of the Charter with explicit reference to Armenian, may be interpreted as specific recognition of the Armenian language in Cyprus as an expression of cultural wealth.

53. The main legal acts with respect to the recognition of the Armenian language are the following:
- The Agreement between Cyprus and Armenia for Co-operation in the Fields of Culture, Education and Science (Ratification) Law, 1998 (Law 19(III) of 1998);
  - The Programme between the Government of the Republic of Armenia and the Government of the Republic of Cyprus on Co-operation in the Fields of Culture, Education and Science in the Years 2001-2004;
  - Memorandum (2004) on the results of the meeting between the President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus and the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia within the framework of the official visit to the Republic of Armenia of the Cyprus Parliamentary Delegation;
  - Official Languages of the Republic Law 67/1988 as amended by Law 154/1990.

54. The Annual Government Budget earmarks a subsidy for a teacher from Armenia for teaching traditional dances, as well as subsidies for the Armenian Church and for the "Cyprus-Armenia Friendship Society". All other financial assistance to cultural organisations is granted on an ad hoc basis. According to the information provided by the Cypriot authorities, there are a number of Armenian cultural institutions and activities subsidised by and implemented in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Such activities include concerts, dance performances, art exhibitions and literary events. These activities to some extent promote the Armenian language.

55. The authorities show sensitivity towards the Armenian language and culture in Cyprus. The delegation received information on the "on-the-spot" visit that the Armenian-speakers were in general pleased with the support the government gives to them and the concern it shows. The Armenian-speakers reported that funds they apply for are usually granted.

### Cypriot Maronite Arabic

56. The Committee of Experts has not received sufficient information as to what extent the Cypriot authorities recognise Cypriot Maronite Arabic as an expression of cultural wealth and would welcome more information in the next periodical report.

**"b the respect of the geographical area of each regional or minority language in order to ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of the regional or minority language in question;"**

### Armenian

57. Armenian has been identified as a non-territorial language in Cyprus. There have been no reports brought to the attention of the Committee of Experts that would indicate any administrative divisions constituting any hindrance to the promotion of the Armenian language.

### Cypriot Maronite Arabic

58. The *de facto* division of Cyprus in 1974 had a dramatically negative impact on Cypriot Maronite Arabic. Prior to 1974, Cypriot Maronite Arabic could have been defined as a territorial language within the meaning of the Charter, spoken mainly in the village of Kormakitis, located in northern Cyprus. The population in Kormakitis constituted roughly half of the total Cypriot Maronite population. The Turkish occupation led to a disruption of community life and a dispersion of the Maronites across the southern part of the island. Only a few elderly people stayed in Kormakitis (see para. 26). The situation of the language today corresponds to the definition of a non-territorial language within the meaning of the Charter.

59. Within the government-controlled area, the same applies for Cypriot Maronite Arabic as for Armenian, meaning that there are no administrative divisions that would be harmful to the protection of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, since it has become a non-territorial language in the government-controlled area. Cypriot Maronite Arabic has been particularly affected for two reasons: 1. it was only spoken in the now occupied area and 2. it used to be a territorial language and therefore the speakers did not have the necessary infrastructure in terms of organisations and clubs etc. to deal with the new situation, unlike, for example, the Armenian-speakers.

60. The Committee of Experts is of course aware that this particular division constituting an obstacle for the promotion of Cypriot Maronite Arabic, lies beyond the power and influence of the Cypriot authorities and the Committee of Experts commends the authorities for their support to the Cypriot Maronite Arabic-speakers who live in the occupied area enabling regular links and contacts with other Cypriot Maronite Arabic-speakers in the government-controlled area (see para. 80 and 81 below).

**"c the need for resolute action to promote regional or minority languages in order to safeguard them;"**

### Armenian

61. Although, as mentioned above, there is no overall language plan nor any national strategy plans aiming at the promotion of regional or minority languages in Cyprus, the government has shown resolute action to promote Armenian.

62. The Armenian Nareg primary schools are completely financed by the government. On the "on-the-spot" visit, when visiting a Nareg school in Nicosia, the delegation was informed by the head of school and a member of the school board that there was excellent co-operation with the government and that any requests for funding were usually granted. A new Nareg school building is currently under construction in Limassol.

63. The Cyprus government must in particular be commended for its quick reaction to the announcement of the closure of the Armenian secondary school, the Melkonian Educational Institute. It approved an additional grant of CYP 100 000 to keep the school open (see para. 88 - 92 below).

64. The Committee of Experts trusts that the government will continue its support. Although the Armenian language is widely spoken in the community, it nevertheless remains an endangered language,

due to the small size of the community, and it is therefore very important to continue to provide education in Armenian.

#### Cypriot Maronite Arabic

65. The Committee of Experts has been informed by the Cypriot authorities that the Maronite community receives state grants and subsidies just as the Armenian community does. However, there were some complaints from representatives of the speakers that state support either came with a delay or did not sufficiently meet the needs of the community. For example, although the Maronite community welcomes the establishment of the Maronite school four years ago, the initial request was actually made thirty years ago, which is seen as a missed opportunity. The delegation was also informed by the Maronite Parliamentary Representative that the Maronites applied to the previous government for a cultural centre, whereupon they were given land, but did not have the resources to build on it.

66. Resolute action to promote Cypriot Maronite Arabic seems to be essential since the language is only spoken by a very limited number of Maronites. The Committee of Experts asks the authorities to provide more information in the next periodical report on the steps taken in order to safeguard Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

***"d the facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing, in public and private life;"***

67. With regard to Armenian, as mentioned already, the state gives financial support to cultural events in co-operation with the Armenian community. This happens in an ad-hoc manner with the exception of the "Cyprus-Armenia Friendship Society" where there is organised and regular co-operation (see para. 54 above).

68. The Cypriot authorities stated that there are plans to develop a more structured and regular co-operation as part of the implementation of the above-mentioned Agreement on Co-operation in the field of culture, education and science between Cyprus and Armenia. A programme was agreed upon between the two states for the years 2001 – 2004. The programme lists a number of initiatives concerning cultural and educational matters relevant to the implementation of the Charter with regard to Armenian. The Committee of Experts however, was not given any information to what extent this Agreement was in fact implemented. A new programme is under consideration with Armenia. The Committee of Experts asks the Cypriot authorities to provide detailed information in the next periodical report about the outcome of these negotiations and any activities carried out in the framework of the new programme under the Agreement.

69. Several cultural events take place, with performers invited from Armenia, such as the Armenian State Philharmonic Orchestra in 2004, the State Theatre of Yerevan and the Armenian State Dance Ensemble. These activities are subsidised by the government. The Committee of Experts commends this. The Armenian Representative is consulted for any event that relates to Armenian culture. On the other hand, during the "on-the-spot" visit representatives of Armenian-speakers informed the delegation that, although they appreciate the subsidies given by the government they would also like to express their culture and language through their own activities. However, there is no structured policy and permanent funding for such activities.

***The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to allocate funds to promote Armenian language and culture in public and private life, including the media, through a more satisfactory arrangement in co-operation with the speakers.***

70. With regard to Cypriot Maronite Arabic, it seems that only a limited number of the Maronites speak the language. Its visibility to the general public is limited, as it is used mainly within the family home. It appears that no conscious steps are being taken to encourage and/ or facilitate the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic in the public or private sphere. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to facilitate and/or encourage the use of Cypriot Maronite Arabic in public and private life.

71. As mentioned in para 30 above, Cypriot Maronite Arabic has so far not been codified or standardised, despite some individual attempts made by the speakers themselves to codify it in the Greek script. For example a Cypriot Maronite Arabic – Greek dictionary was published. During the "on-the-spot" visit

the delegation met with several representatives who expressed the wish and need for codification and standardisation of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. This could be achieved only through governmental support. Some representatives have also suggested a codification in the Latin alphabet. The codification of Cypriot Maronite Arabic is crucial for its maintenance since it facilitates its teaching at school, enhances its visibility in public life, for example in the press, and raises its cultural status. The Committee of Experts encourages the Cypriot authorities to find means, in co-operation with the speakers, to codify Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

72. During the “on-the-spot” visit, representatives of the Maronite youth voiced the wish and need for the establishment of a culture and youth centre for young Maronites to socialise, as well as to cultivate, converse in, and also learn Cypriot Maronite Arabic. The Maronite youth organisation has currently no building to meet in. Since the Cypriot Maronite Arabic-speakers now live dispersed, this would be one possibility to facilitate the use of the language in public life.

***The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to assist the Maronites in establishing a Culture and Youth Centre.***

73. Concerning radio and television broadcasting, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) is the public broadcasting service of Cyprus and functions as a semi-governmental, non-profit-making organisation, which receives a state subsidy. It transmits island-wide on four radio and two television channels.

74. The Committee of Experts was informed during the “on-the-spot” visit that the second radio channel broadcasts a daily programme in Armenian for the Armenian community from 5pm – 6pm, including a news bulletin three times a week. There has been Armenian broadcasting since the 1960s. According to the initial periodical report, the programme also reaches Armenians in Lebanon, Syria, Bulgaria, Iran, and Greece and it is estimated that the programme has 250 000 listeners.

75. According to the initial periodical report, there is a one-hour television entertainment programme in Armenian once a year on the Armenian Christmas Day (6 January). There are no television programmes in Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

76. Since 2000, the first radio channel broadcasts a 30-minute cultural programme in Greek for the Maronite community every Saturday entitled “The voice of Maronites”. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to encourage and/or facilitate the broadcasting of radio programmes in Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

77. The presenters of the Armenian and Maronite programmes are always members of the respective communities and the content of the programmes is negotiated with CyBC. The Committee of Experts welcomes this form of direct participation.

78. With regard to the print media, there are two Armenian monthly periodicals that are primarily in Armenian and published in Cyprus, called “Azad Tsayn” and “Artsagang”. Both are free of charge and entirely dependent on individual donations, advertisements and voluntary contributions. Both are delivered free of charge to the community households. There is no financial assistance by the state.

79. The bimonthly periodical “Kinotiko Vima” is published and financed by the Maronite Welfare Foundation and is free of charge and entirely dependent on donations and advertisements. The periodical, which is sent free of charge to all Maronite households, is entirely in Greek. “O typos ton Maroniton” is another monthly periodical dedicated to Maronite issues and also published entirely in Greek.

***“e the maintenance and development of links, in the fields covered by this Charter, between groups using a regional or minority language and other groups in the State employing a language used in identical or similar form, as well as the establishment of cultural relations with other groups in the State using different languages;”***

#### Cypriot Maronite Arabic

80. Many Cypriot Maronite Arabic-speakers of all ages travel to the village of Kormakitis regularly at weekends to maintain family ties and to socialise with other Cypriot Maronite Arabic-speakers. In order to facilitate these links, the Cyprus government provides, among other things, free transport twice a week to all members of the Maronite community resident in the occupied area to enable visits to the government-controlled area and gives free food supplies.

81. The Committee of Experts recognises and commends this support as it enables Cypriot Maronite Arabic-speakers living outside their traditional area to maintain ties with their traditional settlement and with the inhabitants of Kormakitis who are all speakers of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. This is important for the language maintenance since, as mentioned above, not many opportunities arise in daily life to speak the language.

82. The Committee of Experts has not been informed of any examples of institutionalised relations between the Armenians and Maronites and would welcome information on this in the next periodical report.

***"f the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of regional or minority languages at all appropriate stages;"***

83. Educational administration is highly centralised in Cyprus with the overall responsibility lying with the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Armenian

84. The Armenian "Nareg" primary schools (1<sup>st</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> class) operate in Nicosia, Limassol and Larnaca. The schools are autonomous and governed by a board, composed of members who are appointed by the state upon the recommendation of the Armenian Parliamentary Representative. The board has competence for almost all Nareg-related issues. Nareg schools are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture and must fulfil the educational standards applicable to other state primary schools in Cyprus. The schools are completely funded by the government, which covers running costs, teachers and staff salaries and textbooks. All schoolbooks are free of charge. As from the education year 2005/06, Armenian textbooks imported from Lebanon and the United States are paid for by the government.

85. According to the initial periodical report, 90% of the Armenian pupils attend the Nareg schools. There would be sufficient capacity for all Armenian children to attend a Nareg school.

86. Pre-school classes operate under the Nareg schools.

87. Apart from Greek and English, all subjects in the Nareg primary schools are taught either in Armenian only or bilingually, with a slight decrease of Armenian in the upper two classes. Schoolbooks are either in Greek and taught in Armenian, or in Armenian and imported from abroad.

88. With regard to secondary education, until June 2005, there was one Armenian secondary school, the Melkonian Educational Institute (MEI) in Nicosia, which was internationally recognised and had existed for over 70 years. Instruction was bilingual, whereby subjects of the Armenian Department (Armenian History, Language, Art, Music etc.) were taught in Western Standard Armenian, and examination subjects (Mathematics, natural and social sciences, etc.) were taught in English. The latter was a European curriculum that prepared pupils for admission to universities worldwide.

89. The Melkonian Educational Institute, which was for boarders and day students, was an Armenian community and private school as well as a cultural centre for Armenian-speakers. Around 2/3 of the Cypriot Armenians graduating from the Nareg schools attended the MEI. It has been reported to the Committee of Experts that the Armenian schools in Cyprus are very important for raising the standard of spoken and written Western Armenian in Cyprus.

90. Secondary education at the MEI was subsidised for the Cypriot Armenians by the government, including payment of tuition fees and subsidies for textbooks and teaching staff salaries. This amounted to CYP 40 000 annually. The MEI was the only school worldwide to offer GCE (General Certificate of Education) O-level examinations with Armenian as a subject. It was also the only Western Armenian boarding secondary school in the world.

91. The Central Board of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) in New York, an organisation that was entrusted with the custodian and management rights of MEI, decided in March 2004 to close down the school by June 2005.



92. The Cyprus government reacted instantly and approved an additional grant of CYP100 000 to allow it to continue its functioning. In addition, in April 2004, it declared part of the buildings and the site on which they lie, as a National Heritage Site. This covers about 60% of the estate.

93. A lawsuit was brought before the District Court of Nicosia questioning the legal entitlement of AGBU to close down the school in August 2005. In order to prevent AGBU from selling the premises of the Melkonian Institute, injunction procedures were initiated as well. The Committee of Experts is aware of the recent court ruling of the District Court of Nicosia imposing an injunction order on the property (February 2006). There is another lawsuit being filed in California/ USA aimed at overturning AGBU's decision to close the Melkonian school.

94. The Committee of Experts is concerned that the closure of the MEI will constitute a danger to the existence of secondary education in Armenian in Cyprus. It therefore hopes that the situation can be resolved soon. It is of vital importance that Armenian-medium education will continue in Cyprus also on the level of secondary education.

95. The delegation was informed during the "on-the-spot" visit that a two-year transition programme has been put together by AGBU. A number of former MEI students now attend the American Academy in Nicosia, a private secondary school, and 40 – 50 of them are from abroad and reside on MEI campgrounds. AGBU covers school fees and provides food and lodging. Of 111 MEI pupils, 79 returned after the summer holidays. Armenian classes are restricted to the afternoon from 4-6pm.

96. The Nareg school in Nicosia reacted quickly to the closure of the MEI and in May was granted permission to set up a lower secondary school at Nareg with the 1<sup>st</sup> year being now fully operational and free of charge for the pupils. Ten students are currently attending this lower secondary school. Nareg will not have the capacity or human and financial resources to run an upper secondary school which would require a wide curriculum. One former MEI teacher is teaching at Nareg.

97. The closure of MEI came as a blow to the Cypriot Armenians and authorities, and it also caused a worldwide reaction from the Armenian Diaspora, since the MEI served the mainly Western Armenian speaking Diaspora. The Committee of Experts acknowledges and commends the support the government is giving to the Armenian-speakers in this difficult situation. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to take appropriate steps in order to ensure that secondary education in Armenian will continue to be available. The Committee of Experts would welcome information in the next periodical report about the position of secondary education in Armenian in Cyprus.

***The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to take appropriate steps in order to ensure that secondary education in Armenian will continue to be available.***

98. Technical education, adult education and higher education are not available in Armenian. There are no possibilities for teacher training in Armenian in Cyprus. Also, not many young Armenians are motivated to become teachers due to the lack of career prospects. Teacher training in Armenian is currently not possible in Cyprus. The Committee of Experts encourages the government to consider subsidising such training, if possible in Cyprus, or else abroad for those Cypriot students who wish to train to teach the Armenian language.

***The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to arrange teacher-training in Armenian.***

#### Cypriot Maronite Arabic

99. The St. Maronas primary school is a public state school that was established in 2001 upon request from the Maronite community. Although the school is much welcomed by the community, it regrets that it happened so late, since they had been requesting it for 30 years.

100. Before 1974, the Maronites had their own primary schools in all four villages, supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In Kormakitis the pupils were also taught, or taught in, Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

101. There are currently 110 pupils enrolled in the St. Maronas school, out of which 100 belong to the Maronite community. Out of these, 41 pupils speak Cypriot Maronite Arabic and are from families that originally came from Kormakitis. Another 20 – 30 pupils have at least a passive knowledge of the language. School



transport is provided for all pupils. According to the information received during the “on-the-spot” visit, only about 10% of the Maronite pupils attend this school.

102. The language of instruction in the St. Maronas primary school is Greek. Classes follow the general curriculum of other Cypriot schools, but also include aspects of the Maronite culture, religion and heritage. A voluntary teacher currently offers an optional extracurricular class of Cypriot Maronite Arabic once a week in the afternoon, which is attended by 15 pupils. The Parents Association of the Maronite Primary State School has made a request to the Ministry of Education and Culture for the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic to become part of the regular curriculum.

103. There is no teaching in or of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at pre-school or secondary school level, nor in higher education. There are no teaching materials nor possibilities for teacher training either, but it has been suggested by representatives of the Maronite community that teachers could be partly trained in Lebanon.

104. The Committee of Experts underlines that although Cypriot Maronite Arabic is so far not a written language, this by no means makes the teaching of the language at school impossible (see para. 50 of the Committee of Experts’ 2<sup>nd</sup> evaluation report with regard to Hungary - document ECRML (2004) 5).

105. The St. Maronas primary school seems ideally placed to introduce the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic. Although only 10% of all Maronite pupils attend this school, there seems to be a high concentration of children whose parents or grandparents are from Kormakitis and who have a command of Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

106. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to provide for the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at the Maronite primary school to those pupils who or whose parents so demand. It is just as important to ensure that parents are aware of this possibility.

***The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to provide for the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at primary school level and otherwise where appropriate and in particular to arrange for the training of teachers and the production of teaching materials.***

***“g the provision of facilities enabling non-speakers of a regional or minority language living in the area where it is used to learn it if they so desire;”***

107. This provision deals with two different kinds of non-speakers: those who define themselves as part of the language community and those who are not part of it.

#### Armenian

108. Since practically all Armenians in Cyprus speak Armenian, the latter applies. However there is currently no provision for non-speakers to learn the (Western) Armenian language in Cyprus. Cypriot non-Armenian-speakers do have the right to attend the Nareg primary school. However, since Nareg schools teach Armenian to mother tongue speakers, the teaching level is probably not suitable or appropriate for non-speakers. According to the information received, at present adult-education is not available to non-speakers. However, the Committee of Experts has also been informed that the State Institute for Further Learning can provide such education if there is a sufficient demand for it. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to provide more information with regard to this in the next periodical report.

#### Cypriot Maronite Arabic

109. There are members of the Maronite community who do not speak Cypriot Maronite Arabic, but there is no possibility to learn Cypriot Maronite Arabic. During the “on-the-spot” visit, the delegation was informed that there have been attempts by the youth organisation to teach Cypriot Maronite Arabic but that it proved to be difficult without any support. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to facilitate the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic to those who wish to learn it.

**"h the promotion of study and research on regional or minority languages at universities or equivalent institutions;"**

110. There are no possibilities for study or research on Armenian or Cypriot Maronite Arabic in Cyprus, however, research on both languages is carried out outside Cyprus. Study and research on (Western Armenian) is carried out at several institutes worldwide. During the "on-the-spot" visit, requests were voiced for the establishment of a chair for Armenian studies at university level in Cyprus. The study of Cypriot Maronite Arabic has been a matter of attention to scholars for about 50 years, and research into it has been valuable in the field of Arabic linguistics. The latest publication is a Comparative Glossary of Cypriot Maronite Arabic.

**"i the promotion of appropriate types of transnational exchanges, in the fields covered by this Charter, for regional or minority languages used in identical or similar form in two or more States."**

Armenian

111. According to additional information provided by the Cypriot authorities, as a result of the above-mentioned Agreement on Co-operation in the Fields of Culture Education Science between the governments of Cyprus and Armenia, various groups occasionally visit Cyprus.

112. Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Culture gives financial support and has regular co-operation with the "Cyprus-Armenia Friendship Society" for organising cultural events and for strengthening ties with Armenia.

Cypriot Maronite Arabic

113. Maronites in Cyprus have close ties to Lebanon due to their origin, religion and the fact that there are many Maronites in Lebanon and finally also because of the linguistic affinity of Cypriot Maronite Arabic with Lebanese Arabic. The Committee of Experts has not been made aware of any kind of promotion of transnational exchanges through the Cyprus government.

114. The delegation was informed during the "on-the-spot" that the Parents Association of St Maronas School organised a visit to Lebanon for 30 pupils on its own initiative. The pupils then found it useful to know Cypriot Maronite Arabic as they could converse with the Lebanese. In addition, it reinforces their cultural ties to the Maronites in Lebanon. The Committee of Experts finds this an excellent way to promote Cypriot Maronite Arabic and encourages the Cypriot authorities to promote similar educational and cultural transnational exchanges.

**"Paragraph 2**

***The Parties undertake to eliminate, if they have not yet done so, any unjustified distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference relating to the use of a regional or minority language and intended to discourage or endanger the maintenance or development of it. The adoption of special measures in favour of regional or minority languages aimed at promoting equality between the users of these languages and the rest of the population or which take due account of their specific conditions is not considered to be an act of discrimination against the users of more widely-used languages."***

115. The principle of non-discrimination is incorporated in the Constitution of Cyprus by Article 28 which states that "every person shall enjoy all the rights and liberties provided for in this Constitution without any direct or indirect discrimination against any person on the ground of his community, race, religion, language, sex, political or other convictions, national or social descent, birth, colour, wealth, social class, or on any other ground whatsoever, unless there is express provision to the contrary in this Constitution".

116. The Committee of Experts has not been made aware of any discrimination or any practical problems in this field.

**"Paragraph 3**

***The Parties undertake to promote, by appropriate measures, mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups of the country and in particular the inclusion of respect, understanding and***

***tolerance in relation to regional or minority languages among the objectives of education and training provided within their countries and encouragement of the mass media to pursue the same objective."***

117. According to the information provided by the Cypriot authorities, multilingualism as such is currently promoted in Cyprus in the mainstream curriculum, but this does not specifically target the regional or minority languages of Cyprus. It merely promotes a positive attitude to multilingualism. Also, within the school curriculum the wider issue of combating racism, intolerance, xenophobia and discrimination also covers the issue of mutual understanding between all linguistic groups in Cyprus. The government also reported that there was a growing awareness in Greek Cypriot schools about the history and culture of the Armenians in Cyprus. Also, awareness of the history of the Maronites in Cyprus was growing.

118. According to the speakers themselves, there is still not enough awareness among the majority population of the historical presence of Armenians in Cyprus. On his own initiative, the Principal of the Nareg schools has published a booklet on the history of the Armenians in Cyprus to be introduced to 6<sup>th</sup> class and also to middle schools. In 2005, the Principal visited other primary schools on two significant Armenian days, and introduced the Armenian culture to the pupils.

119. It seems that there is a general awareness of the Armenian and Maronite communities in Cyprus, but specifically the existence of their language is not reflected sufficiently in the school curriculum. According to the Maronite Parliamentary Representative, there is currently only a small summary of the history of the Cypriot Maronites in schoolbooks, which is insufficient. According to him, there is a high level of ignorance in the general public concerning the existence of Maronites in Cyprus.

120. The Committee of Experts lacks detailed information on the extent to which the teaching of the history and culture of the Cypriot Armenians and Maronites includes the teaching of the historical presence of the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages in Cyprus. Based on the impression from the "on-the-spot" visit, it seems clear however that there is a general lack of knowledge about the existence of the Armenian language and especially the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language in Cyprus.

121. According to the information provided by the Cypriot authorities, the Ministry of the Interior has a plan to promote mutual understanding between linguistic groups in Cyprus through the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC) and the Cyprus Radio Television Authority. However, the Committee of Experts has not yet been informed on how this is to be achieved.

122. The delegation was informed by representatives of CyBC during the "on-the-spot" visit that many issues concerning the Cypriot Armenian and Maronite communities are covered by radio programmes and occasionally on television, for example the election of the Armenian Parliamentary Representative. In general, the CyBC seems aware and positive towards minorities (see paras. 73 - 77 above).

***The Committee of Experts encourages the Cypriot authorities to raise awareness within the general public of the traditional presence in Cyprus of the Armenian language and especially of the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language and promote mutual understanding between all linguistic groups of Cyprus.***

#### ***"Paragraph 4***

***In determining their policy with regard to regional or minority languages, the Parties shall take into consideration the needs and wishes expressed by the groups which use such languages. They are encouraged to establish bodies, if necessary, for the purpose of advising the authorities on all matters pertaining to regional or minority languages."***

123. As mentioned above, under Article 109 of the Constitution, the Armenians and Maronites (and Latins) have the right to elect a representative into the House of Representatives for a 5-year term of office. Section 4 of the Religious Groups (Representation) Law states that "Each representative up to the time of expiration of his term of office shall represent his respective group in relation to matters which fell under the Greek Communal Chamber and for this purpose –

- (a) shall have the right to present the views of his group on any such matters which relate thereto or to make the necessary representations on such matters which relate to his group before any organ or committee of the House of Representatives or organ or authority in the Republic.
- (b) The House of Representatives by its competent committee before taking any legislative measure on any such matter and any organ or authority in the Republic before taking or exercising any administrative competence on any such matter shall request the views of the said representative of the respective group.”

124. Within this framework of competences, the Representative can also represent the interests of the language spoken by his/ her respective group at national level and carry out practical measures to promote the language. They may also express their views on language before any organ or committee of the House of Representatives or any other organ or authority of the Republic.

### Chapter 3 Findings

The Committee of Experts hereby presents its general findings on the application of the Charter in Cyprus.

A. The Cypriot authorities show a high degree of awareness and sensitivity towards the Armenian and the Maronite communities. The authorities give support that reaches beyond financial assistance. The competent ministries work in co-operation with the minorities, or their representatives, take their needs and wishes into account for projects and policies, and have taken resolute action for example in the case of the Melkonian Educational Institute.

B. Western Armenian as spoken traditionally in Cyprus is the form of Armenian spoken by most Armenians of the Diaspora. Cyprus seems to be the only place in Europe where the speakers of Western Armenian have been continuously supported by the Government.

C. The minorities in Cyprus are well integrated into society and are in general satisfied with the degree of protection and support granted by the government. However, awareness of regional or minority languages seems to be fairly recent in Cyprus. As a consequence, there is no legislation or policy as such that aims directly at protecting and promoting regional or minority languages. The focus until now has been on the religious groups. This has in some cases had a positive side-effect on the languages spoken by the respective communities. This is especially the case with Armenian, where governmental support in the field of education and culture, for example, coincides with protecting and promoting the Armenian language.

D. However, this should not conceal the fact that the Armenian language remains in a vulnerable position, where the fragile situation and the possible discontinuing of teaching in/of Armenian at secondary level (caused by the decision of its governing trust to close the Melkonian Institute) could have negative repercussions on the presence of the Armenian language in Cyprus.

E. Cypriot Maronite Arabic is a seriously endangered language, especially since the disruption of community life after 1974. The Maronite community receives support from the Cyprus government but this support is not especially targeted towards the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language.

G. The infrastructure for promoting and protecting the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages already exists in Cyprus. Established and institutionalised co-operation exists between the authorities and the speakers, and there are Armenian and Maronite schools and churches. This should make it easier for the Cypriot authorities to introduce a structured policy for the protection and promotion of the languages.

The Cypriot government was invited to comment on the content of this report in accordance with Article 16.3 of the Charter, but did not wish to do so.

On the basis of this report and its findings the Committee of Experts submitted its proposals to the Committee of Ministers for recommendations to be addressed to Cyprus. At the same time it emphasised the need for the Cypriot authorities to take into account, in addition to these general recommendations, the more detailed observations contained in the body of the report.

At its 974<sup>th</sup> meeting on 27 September 2006, the Committee of Ministers adopted its Recommendation addressed to Cyprus, which is set out in Part B of this document.

## Appendix I: Instrument of ratification



**Cyprus :**

### **Declaration contained in a letter from the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Permanent Representation of Cyprus, dated 3 August 2005, registered at the Secretariat General on 4 August 2005 - Or. Engl.**

In ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Republic of Cyprus deposited on 26 August 2002, a declaration which appears to be incompatible with the provisions of the Charter on undertakings to be applied by it.

In order to remove uncertainty and clarify the extent of the obligations undertaken, the Republic of Cyprus hereby withdraws the declaration of 26 August 2002 and replaces it with the following :

The Republic of Cyprus, while reiterating its commitment to respect the objectives and principles pursued by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, declares that it undertakes to apply Part II of the Charter in accordance with Article 2, paragraph 1, to the Armenian language as a "non-territorial" language defined in Article 1c of the Charter.

The Republic of Cyprus would further like to state that its Constitution and laws uphold and safeguard effectively the principle of equality and non-discrimination on the ground of a person's community, race, religion, language, sex, political or other convictions, national or social descent, birth, colour, wealth, social class or any ground whatsoever.

**Period covered: 4/8/2005 -**

The preceding statement concerns Article(s) : 2

**B. Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe  
on the application of the Charter by Cyprus**

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE**  
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

**Recommendation RecChL(2006)3  
of the Committee of Ministers  
on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by Cyprus**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2006  
at the 974th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers,

In accordance with Article 16 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages;

Having regard to the declarations submitted by Cyprus on 4 August 2005;

Having taken note of the evaluation made by the Committee of Experts on the Charter with respect to the application of the Charter by Cyprus;

Bearing in mind that this evaluation is based on information submitted by Cyprus in its national report, supplementary information provided by the Cypriot authorities, information submitted by bodies and associations legally established in Cyprus and information obtained by the Committee of Experts during its "on-the-spot" visit;

Recommends that the authorities of Cyprus take account of all the observations of the Committee of Experts and, as a matter of priority:

1. apply Part II protection to Cypriot Maronite Arabic as a regional or minority language in Cyprus within the meaning of the Charter and strengthen in particular the teaching of Cypriot Maronite Arabic at primary school level;
2. take measures to ensure that teaching in and of Armenian at secondary level remains available;
3. adopt a structured policy for the protection and promotion of the Armenian and Cypriot Maronite Arabic languages.