

European Charta of the Higher Education in Traditional Minority Languages

Higher education in the languages of traditional national minorities and indigeneous people (that is, a national community that has lived in a certain geographical area for at least a century) plays a decisive role in the maintenance of Europe's cultural heritage and diversity and ultimately in the preservation of ethnic harmony. In order to study and share the achievements and practices of the universities involved, organized two conferences on this issue.

Charta Cluj / Kolozsvári Charta / Klausenburger Charta

The participants of the Conferences about minorities' higher education organized in the traditional center of the multilingual Transylvanian culture, Cluj / Kolozsvár, Romania, on May 2005 and November 2006 summarizing the experiences of several European universities that teach in a traditional national minority language, propose as following:

Recommendation about the principles of establishment, actuation and support of higher education institutions in the minorities' languages

Preamble

Emphasizing that the fundamental obligation of universities is to transmit and to advance knowledge is the basic purpose for which Academic Freedom and University Autonomy are required and recognized.

Recognizing the importance of the right to education for the enjoyment of all other human rights and the development of human persons and peoples,

Affirming that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall enable all persons to participate effectively in the construction of a free and egalitarian society, and promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic, or religious groups.

Convinced that universities and academic communities have an obligation to pursue the fulfillment of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights of the people. In practice, however, Universities fulfill this obligation primarily in respect of the communities in which they are located.

Observing that the fundamental principles on which universities are founded and which form the basis of their work for the common good have been reiterated by the international academic community on several occasions in the recent past (viz. the Declarations of

Sienna 1982, Lima 1988, Bologna 1988, Dar Es Salaam 1990, Kampala 1990, Sinaia 1992, Erfurt 1996) and that they are also specifically highlighted in the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel, adopted at the 29th Session of the UNESCO General Conference 1997; UNESCO World Conference of Higher Education, April 1998)

Affirming that the European Union is founded on the values of human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality and human rights – including the rights of the individuals belonging to a traditional national minority, and European Union respects its cultural and lingual diversity, and assures the preservation and continuous augmentation of the cultural heritage of Europe,

Observing the effect of the Union's extension that the new member states are broadening the EU-citizenship to numerous national minority communities, which have a minority language in their country, but in the same time an official language of the European Union and a culture belonging to the European cultural heritage,

Being acquainted about the fact that in every country of the European Union where the number of the individuals belonging to a traditional national minority reaches a certain value – over 80.000 –, these individuals can receive higher education in the traditional national minority's language they belong to,

Considering that the OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) appeals for the preservation and enlargement of independent higher education units in minority languages (The Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities & Explanatory Note, october 1996),

Considering that the Bologna process of configuring the European Area of Higher Education begun in 1999 (Bologna Declaration 1999) is supposed to develop the diversity of cultures, languages and higher education systems not only globally, but respecting the regional specificities,

The participant universities of the conferences do recommend to the states, organizations and boards engaged in the Bologna process to consider the following principles, points of view and institutional solutions:

1. In order to preserve the traditional national minorities' languages and cultures it is indispensable for these minorities – which are, in certain regions of Europe, in majority situation – to have their own state-financed higher education institutions in their mother language, which can also solve the problem of the training of the minorities' elite, in order to preserve and develop their culture and to connect it to the European cultural system. In places where the number and the traditions of minorities justifies it, the ideal institutional form for preservation and development of the traditional national minority language and culture is the state-financed university in mother language, which enables the autonomous development of a certain minority culture.

2. In the higher education institutions serving preservation, development and elite-training the education's languages are a certain traditional national minority's language, a certain state's (region's) language and a universal language (*possibility: English*).

Determination of the training language by specializations and subjects will serve:

a.) the development of a certain minority culture in perspectives; b.) the integration of the university in the higher education area reflecting the diversity of the European Culture; and c.) the development and spreading of terminology in the traditional national minorities' language.

All these if not harming the general policy of the certain country regarding licenses, equivalence of titles and exams.

3. In order to establish and actuate higher education in the traditional national minorities' language we can choose among the following possibilities:

a) Institution in their mother language – it would be the most efficient way to ensure the autonomy necessary for the culture to survive and to protect against assimilation. Special attention must be paid to learning the language of the majority and the international terminology, and possibly to learning the language of the neighboring countries.

b) In case of the traditional national minorities having a mother country, the outplacement of the minority higher education in the mother country can be regarded only in the case when there are no circumstances encouraging the emigration of the minority -like significant difference in the economic performance between the country of the minority's citizenship and the mother country, or suppressive measures taken against the minority in the country of their citizenship-, the political representatives of the minority agree with such a solution, and the number of the individuals of the minority is less than 300,000. In such cases the education of citizens belonging to the minority should be financed by the country of their citizenship.

c) In the form of private university, if the minority, the territorial state and – if existing – the kin-state do agree on the establishment and long-term actuation of such an institutional form, considering also the principle that the students belonging to a traditional national minority cannot be disadvantaged because of the school fees, comparing to the other students in the state: the state where the minority lives and pays taxes should finance private minority universities as long as the percentage of those learning in a minority language is lower compared to the general population.

d.) Multilingual universities, meeting the following criteria:

- 90% of the courses in the first three years are held in the students' mother tongue,
- the entrance procedure/examination must be allowed to take in minority language

- the multi-language aspect is proportionally reflected in all administrative details concerning the names given to and inscriptions displayed on university institutions, laboratories, libraries and all other facilities.
- all publications, including diplomas are bi- or trilingual (issued in majority, minority and upon request, on a universal language)
- all inscriptions are at least bilingual (in majority and minority language),
- the majority and minority languages are equivalent and official languages of the institution,
- the right to veto is granted to the representatives of the traditional national minorities in all decisions taken by the management of the university concerning the given minorities,
- higher education in minority language is organized in administrative units with decisional and financial autonomy, like faculties,
- all students are familiar at least on basic level with majority and minority languages at entrance/or the end of the first at latest (in which case they should learn the second language during the first year),
- at least 60% of the teaching staff is fluent in both languages in terms of giving lectures,
- the minority has representatives in the management at least according to the proportion of minority students, but not less than 30%
- members of the teaching staff and the administrative staff must be members of the minority at least in the proportion of the minority students, but not less than 30%.

5. Considering the disadvantages coming from the minority status and eventually the hegemonic practices, the states are supposed to support by special regulations the institutions of higher education in minorities' languages, if the measures taken in the spirit of the Bologna process proved to be insufficient, like

- agreements of equivalence between the territorial state and the mother country
- establishment of specific scholarship funds and subsidy systems, considering the specific situation of the students as members of a traditional national minority.
- specific instruments of educational policy in order to support accreditation process of ...

6. In order to implement the aforementioned recommendation we, the participants of the conference on higher education of minorities organized in Cluj / Kolozsvár / Klausenburg:

- adjure the European ministers for higher education to apply in their educational policies promoting the process of configuring the European Area of Higher Education the principles of our recommendation
- adjure the European Parliament to enact a European frame-law or to draft a recommendation in order to implement the aforementioned principles
- adjure the Council of Europe to put the implementation of the aforementioned principles on the agenda of the next session of the Parliamentary Assembly, in order to include these principles in a resolution / recommendation and to amend the previous, important resolutions and recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly in the field of the protection of minorities.