The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) is a European treaty (CETS 148) adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe. The preparation for the charter was undertaken by the predecessor to the current Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe because involvement of local and regional government was essential. The actual charter was written in the Parliamentary Assembly based on the Congress’ Recommendations. It only applies to languages traditionally used by the nationals of the State Parties (thus excluding languages used by recent immigrants from other states, see immigrant languages), which significantly differ from the majority or official language (thus excluding what the state party wishes to consider as mere local dialects of the official or majority language) and that either have a territorial basis (and are therefore traditionally spoken by populations of regions or areas within the State) or are used by linguistic minorities within the State as a whole (thereby including such languages as Yiddish and Romani, which are used over a wide geographic area).

Languages that are official within regions, provinces or federal units within a State (for example Catalan in Spain) are not classified as official languages of the State and may therefore benefit from the Charter. On the other hand, Ireland has not been able to sign the Charter on behalf of the Irish language (although a minority language) as it is defined as the first official language of the state. The United Kingdom has ratified the Charter in respect to (among other languages) Welsh in Wales and Irish in Northern Ireland. France, although a signatory, has been
constitutionally blocked from ratifying the Charter in respect to the languages of France.

The charter provides a large number of different actions state parties can take to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages. There are two levels of protection—all signatories must apply the lower level of protection to qualifying languages. Signatories may further declare that a qualifying language or languages will benefit from the higher level of protection, which lists a range of actions from which states must agree to undertake at least 35.

Languages protected under the Charter

Countries that have ratified the Charter, and languages for which the ratification was made:

- **Armenia** ratification: 25 January 2002
  - Assyrian
  - Greek
  - Russian
  - Kurdish as Yazidis' language

- **Austria** ratification: 28 June 2001[2]
  - Croatian of Burgenland
  - Slovene (in Carinthia and Styria)
  - Hungarian (in Burgenland and Vienna)
  - Czech (in Vienna)
  - Slovak (in Vienna)
  - Romani (in Burgenland)

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** ratification: 21 September 2010
  - Albanian
  - Montenegrin
  - Czech
  - Italian
  - Hungarian
  - Macedonian
  - German
  - Polish
  - Romanian
  - Rusyn
  - Slovak
  - Slovène
  - Turkish
  - Ukrainian
  - Jewish languages (Yiddish and Ladino)

- **Croatia** ratification: 5 November 1997
  - Czech
  - Hungarian
  - Italian
  - Rusyn
  - Serbian
  - Slovak
  - Ukrainian
European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Cyprus ratification: 26 August 2002
- Armenian
- Cypriot Maronite Arabic

Czech Republic ratification: 15 November 2006
- Slovak (parts II and III, across the whole territory)
- Polish (part II; and part III in Moravia-Silesia, in districts Frydek-Místek and Karviná)
- German (part II only)
- Romani (part II only)

Denmark ratification: 8 September 2000
- German (in Southern Jutland)

Finland ratification: 9 November 1994
- Sami
- Swedish (co-official language)

Germany ratification: 16 September 1998
- Danish (in Schleswig-Holstein)
- Upper Sorbian (in the Free State of Saxony)
- Lower Sorbian (in Brandenburg)
- North Frisian (in Schleswig-Holstein)
- Saterland Frisian (in Lower Saxony)
- Romani (across Germany)
- Low German (part III in Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein); (part II in Brandenburg, Northrhine-Westphalia and Saxony-Anhalt)

Hungary ratification: 26 April 1995
- Croatian
- German
- Greek
- Romanian
- Serbian
- Slovak
- Slovene

Liechtenstein ratification: 18 November 1997
- No regional or minority languages

Luxembourg ratification: 22 June 2005
- No regional or minority languages

Montenegro ratification: 15 February 2006
- Albanian
- Romani

Netherlands ratification: 2 May 1996
- West Frisian (in Friesland)
- Limburgish (in Limburg)
- Low Saxon (across the Netherlands)
- Romani (across the Netherlands)
- Yiddish (across the Netherlands)
Norway ratification: 10 November 1993\(^5\)
- Sami (parts II and III)
- Kven (part II only)
- Romani (part II only)
- Scandoromani (part II only)

Poland ratification: 12 February 2009
- Belarusian
- Czech
- Hebrew
- Yiddish
- Karaim
- Kashub
- Lithuanian
- Lemko
- German
- Armenian
- Romani
- Russian
- Slovak
- Tatar
- Ukrainian

Romania ratification 24 October 2007\(^6\)
Part II applied to:
- Albanian
- Armenian
- Greek
- Italian
- Macedonian
- Polish
- Romani
- Rusyn
- Tatar
- Yiddish

Part III applied to:
- Bulgarian
- Croatian
- Czech
- German
- Hungarian
- Russian
- Serbian
- Slovak
- Turkish
- Ukrainian

Serbia ratification: 15 February 2006\(^7\)[8]
- Albanian
- Bosnian
- Bulgarian
- Croatian
- Hungarian
- Romani
- Romanian
- Rusyn
- Slovak
- Ukrainian
- Vlach

**Slovakia ratification: 5 September 2001**
- Bulgarian
- Croatian
- Czech
- German
- Hungarian
- Polish
- Romani
- Rusyn
- Ukrainian

**Slovenia ratification: 4 October 2000**
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Romani

**Spain ratification: 9 April 2001**
- Aragonese, *luenga propia* in Aragon
- Astur-Leonese, present in Asturias; and in part of Leon, Zamora, Cantabria and Extremadura (recognized in Asturias, Castile and León and Miranda do Douro)
- Basque (official in the Basque Country and part of Navarre)
- Catalan, official in the Balearic Islands and Catalonia; *llengua propia* in Aragon.
- Valencian (A dialect of Catalan, official in Valencia)[9]
- Galician, present in Galicia; and in part of Asturias, Leon and Zamora provinces (official in Galicia)

**Sweden ratification: 9 February 2000**
- Finnish
- Meänkieli
- Sami
- Romani
- Yiddish

**Switzerland ratification: 23 December 1997**
- Italian
- Romansh

**Ukraine ratification: 19 September 2005**

Ukraine does not specify languages by name, but rather ratifies on behalf of "the languages of the following ethnic minorities of Ukraine":[10] Not counted are Rusyns (Ruthenians), because Ukraine (unlike neighboring countries)
denies them separate ethnic and linguistic status.

- Belarusian
- Bulgarian
- Crimean Tatar
- Gagauz
- Greek
- German
- Hungarian
- Jewish/Yiddish
- Moldavian
- Polish
- Romanian
- Russian
- Slovak

**United Kingdom ratification : 27 March 2001**

All languages are ratified as applicable to the territory of *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, except Manx, which is ratified on behalf of the Crown dependency of the Isle of Man.

- Cornish
- Irish
- Manx (ratified on behalf of Government of the Isle of Man)
- Scots in Scotland and Northern Ireland (Ulster Scots)
- Scottish Gaelic
- Welsh

**Notes and references**


[2] Austria has ratified the Charter for each language in respect of specific Länder

[3] Notes Verbales accompanying the Danish ratification specified that, whilst the Charter was not going to be ratified in respect of the two languages, Faroese and Greenlandic are each official in their respective territories

[4] Germany has ratified the Charter for each language in respect of specific Länder


[7] Ratified as Serbia and Montenegro on December 22, 2005


[10] July 2007, Ukraine's entry on the Council of Europe site (http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/ListeDeclarations.asp?NT=148&CM=8&DF=23/01/05&CL=ENG&VL=1) states the following: *Ukraine declares that the provisions of the Charter shall apply to the languages of the following ethnic minorities of Ukraine : Byelorussian, Bulgarian, Gagauz, Greek, Jewish, Crimean Tatar, Moldavian, German, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Slovak and Hungarian.*
External links

- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages text (http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/Treaties/Html/148.htm)
- Charter website (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/)
- Eurolang (News agency about minority languages in Europe) (http://www.eurolang.net)
- Application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,Doc. 12881 (http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/Doc/XrefViewHTML.asp?FileId=13028&Language=en)
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