

**PREVENTING AND COUNTERING SEPARATIST EXTREMISM  
AT THE LEVEL OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE  
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN  
EUROPE**

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*Abstract: Although the problem of persons belonging to minorities has its global dimension, it has a specific meaning for Europe. Consequently, it has been the subject of concerns of some European institutions, such as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.*

*Keywords: extremism, radicalization, preventing, international community.*

**Introduction**

The autonomist-separatist extremism of an ethnic, religious and linguistic nature, represents a phenomenon that, through its implications, threatens not only the internal order and stability of some states, but even the international order and stability, having deep and long-term consequences and implications on the legitimate aspirations of the peoples and of humanity in general.

States were not content only with the elaboration, adoption and promotion of international mechanisms and regulations to prevent and combat separatist extremism with a universal character, but taking inspiration from the legal and institutional system created by the United Nations, they created and developed legal instruments and regional and national mechanisms to prevent and counter ethnic, religious and linguistic extremism.

The worldwide efforts of the United Nations (UN) Organization in the matter of the rights of national minorities and implicitly the prevention and countering of their separatist extremism, have been supported by various regional institutions, both by supporting the legal implementation

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developed within the UN, and by developing a normative framework and own institutional, consistent with the one existing worldwide.

Legal instruments and regional mechanisms were initiated and developed to promote and guarantee the identity rights of national minorities and respectively to prevent and counter separatist extremism within the institutional framework of the main European organizations, namely the Council of Europe (EC), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Union (EU).

The main categories of regional international regulations in the matter of preventing and countering separatist extremism are the conventions, resolutions, treaties, recommendations and final documents of meetings related to the issue of national minorities.

### **1. Preventing and countering separatist extremism at the level of the Council of Europe**

In 1949, in a report of the Committee for Legal and Administrative Issues within the Parliamentary Assembly, the importance of the issue of wider protection of the rights of national minorities was recognized in the perspective of increasing tolerance and preventing ethnic extremism.

However, the European Convention on Human Rights, later adopted within the Council of Europe, includes general provisions regarding the rights of persons who are part of minorities, limiting itself to providing in art. 14 that "The exercise of the rights and freedoms recognized by this Convention must be provided without any distinction, based in particular on sex, race, color, language, religion, political or any other opinions, national or social origin, membership of a national minority, wealth, birth or any other situation".<sup>1</sup>

In the case of this text, it is clearly a non-discrimination clause that concerns, among other reasons, that of belonging to a national minority. The provisions of this article can only be invoked in the event of the violation of one of the rights mentioned in the previous articles of the document (the right to life, to freedom and security of the person, to a fair trial, to private

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted in Rome on November 4, 1950. It entered into force on September 3, 1953. Romania ratified the Convention and its additional protocols through Law no. 30 of May 18, 1994, Official Gazette no. 135/1994. Protocol 11 was ratified in July 1995 by Law no. 179.

life, etc.) and, consequently, do not constitute a independent regulation of minority rights.<sup>2</sup>

In the application of art. 14 of the Convention, the European Court of Human Rights has developed an interesting jurisprudence that advanced the limited character of the respective provision.

The evolution of minority rights at the European level was generated to a greater extent by the relations between the Central European and Eastern European states, as well as those between them and those in Western Europe. Also, the impetus for the process of effectively solving the problem of minorities on the continent was also determined by the idea of building a multicultural Europe, a thesis that manifested itself since the 1960s. Last but not least, we note the increase in interest for minorities in the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and of the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia, occasions when minority ethnic radicalism and extremism manifested themselves to an important extent.

The result of these negative trends and developments in the field of minority issues was materialized in the adoption within the European Community of two conventions, which are directly related to the protection system of persons belonging to minorities, respectively the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the protection of minorities, documents that we will present next.

#### *1.1. European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages*

The purpose of this document, adopted in 1992, is the promotion and use of minority and regional languages, as an "expression of cultural wealth" and to contribute to the construction of a Europe founded on the principles of democracy and cultural diversity within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Charter defines the expression "regional and minority languages" as languages traditionally used in a certain area of a state by its

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<sup>2</sup> Donna Gomieu, *Introducere în Convenția Europeană a Drepturilor Omului*, All Publishing House, Bucharest, 1993, p.127.

citizens who constitute a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of the state and which differ from the official language or languages of the state, without to include the dialects and languages of migrants (art.1).

The charter, structured in five parts (general provisions, goals and principles, measures to promote the use of regional and minority languages in public life, application and final provisions), presents the characteristic of establishing, in order to promote the goals of this document, a "set" of measures from which the signatory states can choose what they will apply internally.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this flexibility, the Charter also provides in art.19 a number of only 5 ratifications to enter into force. The intention of the authors of this document to draft it in such a way as to produce effects in the shortest possible time is obvious. The merit of the initiators of the document lies in the fact that, at a time when the trend in favor of the revival of the protection of minorities at the European level was not yet clear enough, they managed to enact certain minority rights in an international convention. On the other hand, the Charter gives the states the opportunity to opt for the adoption of some measures from the set of measures offered by Part III of the Charter, namely appropriate language protection measures, in education (art. 8), justice (art. .9), administration and public services (art. 10), means of communication (art. 11), cultural life (art. 12), economic and social life (art. 13). It should be mentioned that, for the cultural field, the Charter emphasizes the importance of hiring personnel who are very knowledgeable about minority or regional traditions, on facilitating the direct participation of minority groups in the planning of cultural activities, on the development and promotion of an economic language, administrative, commercial, technical, legal, etc. appropriate in minority languages. The possibilities given by the Charter to the states to choose different alternatives, in their

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<sup>3</sup> Article 2 paragraph 2 imposes the obligation for the states to undertake to apply a minimum of 35 paragraphs stipulating, however, that at least three must be selected from articles 8 (regarding education) and 12 (cultural activities and facilities) and one of the articles.9 (justice), 10 (administrative authorities and public services), 11 (means of communication) and 13 (economic and social life). Such a wide possibility of choice is, on the one hand, positive because it reflects the European linguistic mosaic, and on the other negative, leaving too much to the political will of governments.

more limited areas or problems, certainly leads, to different categories of commitments from the party states, to a certain lack of uniformity in the application of the respective act. This generous state of affairs, however, responds to a real need for flexibility, arising from the different situation of the member countries of the Council, of the regional and minority languages spoken and of the minorities living in their territories. The positive side of the document is also the definition of the instruments that come to support the practical application of the provisions contained therein. Thus, the parties are obliged to present, periodically, a report on the measures undertaken in the given field, and a Committee of independent experts established as an effect of the Charter, will be able to examine these reports.

*1.2. The framework convention for the protection of national minorities.*

It was adopted on November 10, 1994 and opened for signature on February 1, 1995. Romania signed the Framework Convention on February 1, 1995 in Paris, and ratified the document in the same year. The framework convention was adopted instead of an additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, proposed by Recommendation 1201 of the Council of Europe.

The framework convention is the first multilateral treaty that exclusively regulates the protection of minorities. For this reason, the provisions of this document were formulated with great rigor and caution. In this context, the states imposed mainly pragmatic goals of their policy, without practically stipulating any rights that minorities could avail themselves of as such (directly).

Also, the Framework Convention, like the other international documents, does not include a definition of the notion of "national minority" and does not recognize in any way the existence of collective rights for persons who are part of minorities.

However, there are also situations in which the terms used, such as "to the extent possible", "within the national legislative systems", "if there is sufficient demand", etc., highlight the flexibility of the provisions contained

in the Convention in the sense of adopting some solutions related to the particularities of the party states.

Title I of the Framework Convention (art. 1-3) includes general provisions, enshrining the protection of national minorities and the rights of persons belonging to them as an integral part of the international protection of human rights (art. 1), the application of the Convention in good faith in a spirit of understanding, tolerance and with respect for good neighborliness, friendly relations and cooperation between states (art.2), the right of persons belonging to minorities to freely choose whether or not to be treated as such without any disadvantage arising from this choice ( art.3, paragraph 1), as well as the possibility for these persons to exercise the rights provided for in the Framework Convention, individually or jointly with others (art.3, paragraph 2).

The first two articles reiterate norms established a long time ago in public international law. Regarding art.3, it brings a new element, namely the right of option.

The second title (art.4-19) includes provisions that stipulate a set of principles: equality and the prohibition of discrimination (art.4), the right to one's own culture and identity (art.5), the obligation to encourage a spirit of tolerance (art. 6), freedom of assembly, freedom of thought, conscience, religion (art. 7), the right to manifest one's religion and to establish religious associations (art. 8), freedom of expression (art. 9), the right to use one's own language in private and in public, orally and in writing (art. 10), the right to use one's name and surname in the minority language (art. 11), the obligation to take measures in the field of education in order to encourage knowledge of culture , history, language and religion, both of the minorities and of the majority (art. 12), the right to establish and administer private educational institutions (art. 13), the right to learn one's minority language (art. 14), the right to participate in cultural-social and economic life, as well as in work public lands (art. 15), refraining from measures which, by changing the proportions of the population in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities, are directed against the rights and freedoms deriving from the principles enshrined in the Framework Convention (art. 16), the states refraining from infringements on the right of persons belonging to minorities to establish and maintain contacts across borders (art. 17), the parties to make efforts to conclude bilateral and

multilateral agreements with other states, especially with neighboring countries to ensure the protection of persons belonging to minorities (art. 18), committing to respect the principles enshrined in the Convention, bringing only those modifications or limitations, restrictions and exemptions provided for in international legal instruments, especially in the Convention for the Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (ECHR), to the extent that they are relevant for the rights and freedoms arising from the mentioned principles (art. 19).

Some of the provisions of the Framework Convention (those relating to equality, non-discrimination, religious freedom, the practice of religious worship) do nothing but reiterate, in a slightly modified form, provisions from universal or regional international documents, intended for the protection of human rights. New elements are registered regarding the right to use the name in one's own language or in the case of the rights to cross-border contacts with people of the same language, ethnicity or religion. Note that the provisions of art. 19 regarding the limitations made in the application of the principles of the Framework Convention present a certain generality, which is why they will raise problems of interpretation.

Title III (art. 20-23) contains provisions regarding the application and interpretation of the Convention. Thus, art. 20 stipulates the obligation of persons belonging to a national minority to respect national legislation and the rights of the majority or other minorities, art. 21 provides for the prohibition to interpret the Convention in any way that would imply an infringement of sovereign equality, territorial integrity or independence political policies of the states (characteristic elements of extremist-separatist actions), and art. 22, forbids interpretations that would harm human rights and fundamental freedoms. Art. 23 provides for a priority of the Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the interpretation of the provisions of the framework Convention which have the same object.

The fourth title (art. 24-26) deals with the supervision and control of the manner of application of the Convention by the party states, establishing in this sense, attributions to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (art. 24) to the General Secretariat of the Council Europe (art. 25)

and providing for the establishment of an Advisory Committee that will assist the Committee of Ministers in order to evaluate the system of protection of national minorities (art. 26).

The provisions of point 14 refer to the stages and sources of the introduction of autonomy.

We note the importance of some restrictive provisions stipulated by the resolution, namely that: autonomy is not a panacea and the solutions it offers are not universally relevant and applicable (pt. 15); this statute must never leave the impression of the respective community that local self-government is applicable exclusively to the community in question (pt. 16), autonomy must respect the principle of equality and non-discrimination simultaneously with the integrity and sovereignty of states (pt. 17); the interpretations and administration of autonomy must be subject to the authority of the state and determined by the national parliament and its institutions (pt. 19).

Autonomy also requires taking special measures to protect minorities from other minorities and to guarantee that the majority and other minorities do not feel threatened by the rights conferred on autonomous entities (21).

The final point (22) includes the basic principles that are required to be respected by the governments of the member states in case the status of autonomy is recognized.

From the content of the resolution it appears that this document does not aim to promote the granting of autonomy by the member states on ethnic criteria and in general to grant it to minorities, but to highlight the beneficial role of some forms of autonomy (territorial or cultural) in solving and smoothing conflicts or the prevention of straining the relations between the majority population and a particular national minority in a state.

Also, the same document stipulates that autonomy cannot be considered a pertinent solution applicable in all situations, so the provisions of the resolution do not have an imperative character, but constitute an alternative recommended for certain circumstances, including those of a conflicting nature with an ethnic background. According to the provisions of the document, in the case of unitary states, the application of the autonomous status is done through decentralization, and in the case of regional or federal states through a real division of powers, procedures that are circumscribed by the principles of decentralization, local autonomy and



deconcentration of public services and not a territorial autonomy on ethnic criterion.

In the context of the restrictions stipulated by the resolution regarding national minorities, the ones highlighted by its provisions from points 16 and 17 are included. They provide that the application of the autonomy status is not an exclusive business of minorities and that the promotion of autonomy requires the development of balanced relations within the state between the majority and the minority and, at the same time, between all national minorities. Also, the respective provisions show that any statute of autonomy must respect the principles of equality and non-discrimination and be based on the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the states.

Title V contains the final provisions, based on the model clauses for the conventions and agreements concluded within the Council of Europe. The convention remains open to those states that are not members of the Council of Europe.

In addition to the presented documents that exclusively concern the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and, implicitly, their protection system, in 2003 the same body adopted *Resolution 1334 of the Council of Europe*<sup>4</sup> on positive experiences of autonomous regimes as a source of inspiration for conflict resolution in Europe, an act that presents a certain relevance in the case of the mentioned categories of persons and the entities of which they are a part (limited to the circumstances and conditions stipulated by the document - the impossibility of ensuring by other means the necessary framework for the exercise of linguistic and cultural rights circumscribed to the preservation of identity them and the entity of which they are a part, as well as the lack of mechanisms to prevent or extinguish certain conflict situations, in which persons belonging to national minorities are involved).

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<sup>4</sup> It was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 24 June 2003 following the Report entitled "Positive experiences of autonomous regions as a source of inspiration for conflict resolution in Europe" presented by the Swiss parliamentarian Andreas Gross, available at: <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-View-HTML.asp?FileID=10177&lang=EN>, accessed on 01.06.2022.

In the first six points, the provisions of the document refer to the escalation of tensions and political crises in Europe (pt.1) at the origin of these events - territorial changes and the birth of new states, the increasingly frequent requests for rights of minority groups to preserve their identity and contradictory issues which manifests itself in terms of the interpretation between the principle of the indivisibility of states and that of the identity of persons who are part of minorities (pt. 2, 4) and to certain recommendations that are made to states, in the perspective of preventing tensions, in the sense of adapting to the requirements of democracy and international legislation regarding the interpretation of the concept of a national and sovereign state, and to develop a flexible legislative framework that corresponds to the requests to preserve the identity of national minorities (points 3 and 6).

The provisions in points 7 and 8 refer to the fact that the positive experience of autonomous regimes (geographical regions, not ethnic ones) can be a source of inspiration in the search for directions for the resolution of internal conflicts, considering the experience of certain European states in alleviating such tensions by introducing territorial or cultural autonomy.

In point 9, however, the negative connotation of the concept of autonomy for the territorial integrity of states is specified. Next, it is expressly stipulated that autonomy must be seen as a "commitment between sub-state entities" that allow a minority group within a state to exercise their rights and preserve their cultural identity, while guaranteeing the integrity and unity of the state.

Point 11 of the document develops the term territorial autonomy showing that it implies a commitment, usually adapted in sovereign states, where citizens of a certain region are granted rights that reflect their specific geographical situation and protect and/or promote their cultural traditions and religious. The concept involves the exercise of linguistic and cultural rights.

In the provisions that follow, it is specified that the indivisibility of the state is compatible with autonomy, regionalization and federalization (pt. 12), that the status of autonomy can be applied to various political systems, starting from decentralization in the unitary states to an authentic division of powers in the regional states federal times (pt. 13).

**2. Preventing and countering separatist extremism within the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe - CSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe - OSCE, from December 1994)**

The issue of national minorities was the focus of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975<sup>5</sup> and the Vienna Meeting in 1989 of the same body, both final documents adopted at the end of the two general European meetings, containing express provisions regarding the rights persons belonging to national minorities.

However, the most important leap, substantial and of a much higher quality in terms of preventing and counteracting ethnic approaches of an extremist nature and the protection of national minorities, is rightly considered to have been registered at the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (June 5-29, 1990) where an important chapter (IV) devoted to national minorities was included in the adopted document. In the respective act at point 30 of the mentioned chapter, "Participating states recognized that the problems related to national minorities can only be satisfactorily resolved in a democratic political framework based on the rule of law, with an independent, effective legal system"<sup>6</sup>. This framework guarantees full respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, equality of rights and equal conditions between all citizens, free expression of all their legitimate interests and aspirations, political pluralism and social tolerance.

The Copenhagen Final Document reconfirmed three fundamental principles aimed at the issue of minorities:

- respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, as a component of generally recognized human rights, constitutes an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy (pt. 30 paragraph. 3);

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<sup>5</sup> The name OSCE dates from January 1, 1995, following the decision of the Budapest summit in December 1994

<sup>6</sup> The Copenhagen meeting of the Conference for the Human Dimension of the C.S.C.E., available at: <https://www.legis.md/cautare/downloadpdf/115578>, accessed on 01.06.2022.

- equality before the law for everyone, regardless of ethnic origin and the prohibition of any form of discrimination, as well as attempts at forced assimilation (pt. 31);

- the personal option of belonging to a national minority, from which no disadvantage can result (pt. 32, paragraph. 1).

In point 32, paragraph 2 of the Final Document, it is stipulated that persons belonging to minorities have the right to preserve and develop in full freedom their ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity and to maintain and develop their culture in any form, sheltered from any attempts at assimilation against their will. The identity rights of these persons are stipulated:

- free use of the mother tongue, both in private and public settings (32.1);

- the creation and maintenance of their own educational, cultural and religious institutions, organizations or associations that may, according to national legislation, request voluntary financial contributions and other contributions, including public aid (32.2);

- professing and practicing one's religion (32.3);

- establishing and maintaining unrestricted contacts between them in their country, as well as across borders, with citizens of other states with whom they share ethnic or national origin, cultural heritage or religious beliefs (32.4);

- dissemination and exchange of information in their native language, as well as access to this information (32.5);

- creating and maintaining organizations or associations in their countries and participating in the activities of international non-governmental organizations (32.6).

Another category of provisions contained in the Final Document refers to the obligations of the participating states to ensure the protection of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of the national minorities on their territory and to create adequate conditions for the promotion of this identity, in accordance with the principles of equality in rights and non-discrimination against other citizens of the participating state in question (pt. 33).

Thus, as far as education is concerned, it is stipulated that the participating states will endeavor to guarantee that persons belonging to

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minorities will have, apart from the duty to study the official language of the state in question, the opportunity to learn their mother tongue or to be able to train in this language, as well as, if this it is possible and necessary to use the mother tongue in relations with public power, according to the national legislation in force (pt. 34).

It also stipulates the right of persons belonging to national minorities to effectively participate in public affairs, especially in activities related to the protection and promotion of the identity of these minorities (pt. 35). The same document also stipulates the obligation of the participating states to favor the establishment of a climate favorable to mutual understanding and respect between all citizens of the country, regardless of ethnic or national origin (pt. 36, para. 2). Racial and ethnic hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and any discrimination or persecution are condemned in the content of that act, the participating states declaring their determination to intensify their efforts against these phenomena and, for this purpose, to act against any act of violence based on national discrimination or hatred, to take measures to protect the persons concerned against such acts, to promote understanding and tolerance (pt. 40).

We draw attention, in the context of the presented Final Document, to the provisions outlining the political and international law limits in the exercise of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

In this sense, point 37 specifies that none of the presented commitments can be interpreted as entailing any right to undertake any activity or to carry out any action that is contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, of other obligations arising from International Law or from the provisions of the Final Act, including the principle of territorial integrity of states.

The meeting in Geneva from July 1-19, 1991, devoted to the issue of minorities, reiterated in the adopted document, the fact that fundamental human rights and freedoms constitute the basis for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

In that framework, after highlighting the qualitative changes registered on the continent, the participating states<sup>7</sup> took note of the positive results obtained in a number of countries and emphasized that there may be different appropriate approaches to the application of the O.S.C.E. commitments. in the issue of national minorities.

Also, the importance of the active participation of persons belonging to minorities in public life as a constitutive element of democracy was reiterated.

At the same time, it was emphasized that full equality of rights with the majority calls for special concern and the taking of special measures on the part of the party states.

Promoting the rights mentioned in the Copenhagen Final Document, the Report of the Geneva Meeting, in turn, developed new approaches, as follows:

- the participating states affirm that national minorities will enjoy the same rights and have the same civic duties as the rest of the population;
- the issue of minorities is recognized to be an international issue;
- persons belonging to the majority in the respective state, but who are in the minority in certain areas, are equally protected;
- the freedom to maintain ties with citizens of other states, of the same ethnicity, culture or faith. To this end, cross-border cooperation at all levels is encouraged.

In the context of the mechanisms aimed at promoting tolerance, the peaceful settlement of ethnic conflicts and the protection of national minorities, we also note the establishment by the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, on the occasion of the general European meeting in Helsinki in 1992, of the Institution of the High Commissioner for National Minorities.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Report of the O.S.C.E. Meeting of experts on the problems of national minorities, Geneva 1991, in Security and Cooperation in Europe, available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/-documents/4/3/14588.pdf>, accessed on 01.07.2022.

<sup>8</sup> Documents of the High Level Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki, July 9-11, 1992) High Level Declaration of Helsinki, 1992, available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/35918>, accessed on 01.07.2022.

The High Commissioner functions under the auspices of the Committee of Senior Officials as a means of preventing conflicts at an early stage.

In the mandate of the High Commissioner, specific attributions are included, such as that of ensuring an "early warning" and, if necessary, an "early action", the latter being applied at the earliest possible stage in relation to tensions that of problems of national minorities that have not yet passed the early warning stage, but which, according to the High Commissioner, are likely to degenerate into a conflict.

In the exercise of his duties, the High Commissioner acts confidentially and independently of all parties involved. He receives information from any sources (with the exception of individuals or groups practicing terrorism), evaluates as quickly as possible the role of the interested parties, the nature of tensions as well as the possible consequences for peace and stability in the sphere of C.S.C.E. It may also visit any participating state, after consultation with the state concerned, communicate personally with the parties and, where possible, promote dialogue and trust between them.

In the event of the existence of a potential risk of conflict, the High Commissioner can trigger an early alert that he communicates to the acting president of the C.S.C.E., after which he submits it to the Committee of Senior Officials (in the first session).

It can also recommend to be authorized in the sense of entering into contacts and consultations with the parties involved, aiming to find possible solutions. When he assesses that a situation is about to degenerate into a conflict and his possibilities of action are exhausted, he informs the president of the C.S.C.E. It is forbidden to engage in the examination of individual cases of human rights violations.

### **Conclusions**

Specifically, at the level of the Council of Europe, the following legal instruments in the field should be noted: the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, the Framework Convention on the

Protection of National Minorities, Resolution 1334 of the Council of Europe and Recommendation 1201 of the Council of Europe.

Regarding the mechanisms for applying the mentioned legal instruments, we note the Committee of Experts established as a result of the Charter and the Advisory Committee established according to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities which will assist the Committee of Ministers in order to evaluate the Minority Protection System.

Regarding the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the international documents adopted in the matter of protecting the rights of national minorities and, respectively, preventing and combating the extremism of these groups are: the two Final Documents of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe from Helsinki in 1975 and The 1989 Vienna Meetings, the 1990 Copenhagen Meeting Outcome Document and the 1991 Geneva Meeting Outcome Document.

In reference to the mechanisms aimed at the protection of national minorities and the promotion of tolerance, the peaceful settlement of conflict situations of an ethnic nature, we note the establishment by the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe on the occasion of the General European Meeting in Helsinki in 1992, of the institution of the High Commissioner for Minorities National.

The High Commissioner operates under the auspices of the Committee of Senior Officials as a means of preventing conflicts at an early stage.

The presented regional documents, especially the conventions, treaties and resolutions, are important legal instruments in terms of promoting and guaranteeing the identity rights of national minorities and, implicitly, actions to prevent and counter separatist extremism. Consequently, compliance with the standards conferred by the system for the protection of the identity rights of persons belonging to national minorities means that extremist-separatist actions are disregarded and lack international and regional support.





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