

POLISH LANGUAGE POLICY ON THE RIGHTS TO MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The study focuses on the significant events that influenced the role and status of minority languages in Poland. Further on, it discusses the Polish Language Act and its influence on the rights to mother-tongue education. The Polish Language Act has been used in a variety of ways to protect and preserve minorities as well as the Polish national language. As a result, important actions have been taken by the relevant groups and authorities, which are included in the article. The ratification of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages is a key element in the integration of the European Union. Poland signed the Charter in 2003 and ratified it in 2009. In 2021, Poland submitted its third evaluation report. Using critical analysis, the researcher examined this report. The collected data suggest that significant changes are needed at all levels of education for several minorities.

Keywords: language policy, language policy in education, minorities, minority rights

1. Introduction

Conducting language policy and planning (LPP) in Poland involves three aspects:

- a) Protection of the Polish language
- b) Policy towards minority languages or dialects
- c) Policy of promoting the study of other languages.

The country's goals and methods of language policy are recorded in the Polish Language Act. The language act clarifies the basic elements of national identity, the Polish nation's cultural achievements, supporting a culturally diverse Europe with the protection and development of Polish.

The rights accorded to all Polish citizens are outlined in two official government documents: the Act on the Polish Language and the Polish constitution. Both of these legal documents describe the permissible and prohibited languages in Poland.

Apart from the protection of the national language, Poland's language policy involves the protection of minority languages or dialects too. These protections are fixed and specified in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is a treaty of the Council of Europe placing obligations on its state parties to protect and promote their countries' traditional minority languages in all fields of public life: education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges. Upon accession to the Council of Europe, Poland signed the Charter in 2003 and it entered into force in 2009. The correct application of the Charter is monitored by a Committee of Experts (COMEX) (Article 17).

In 2021 Poland submitted its third evaluation report. The third evaluation report is based on the political and legal situation of Poland.

2. Significant events in the development of the Polish language

The first significant event took place in 966 when Christianity was introduced to Poland. With the spreading of Christianity, Latin and Roman Catholic terminology entered the Polish language. Apart from its use in the church, Latin also became central for public discourse, education, diplomacy, administration and literature. As a result, it is challenging to discuss language legislation throughout the Middle Ages and later centuries (Mostowik and Żukowski 2001: 9).

The next important event happened in the 16th century when printing and publishing books in Polish became popular. The most significant event which happened this time is the translation of the Bible. The first printed version of both the Old and New Testaments (Leopolita's Bible) goes back to 1561. The status of Polish varied depending on the rulers that a particular region found itself under during the period when Poland lost its independence (1795–1918) and was occupied by three nations, Russia, Prussia, and Austria.

In the Austrian region "Germanisation" occurred, secondary schools were closed and the German language became the language of universities. In the Prussian territory, Polish education was completely abolished, with non-Polish teachers replacing Polish employees in all institutions.

The Polish language eventually came to be regarded as an ethnic minority language in the Russian territory. As a result, Russian authorities took less drastic action in regard to Polish education, which was clearly marginalised but not eliminated. For instance, the University of Vilnius rose to prominence as a key location for the development of the Polish language.

Despite the fact that the protection of Polish had been promised by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Russian and German continued to preserve their privileged status in both private and public life (Mostowik and Żukowski 2001: 9).

After the First World War, the main aim of Polish Language Policy was the unification of Polish and fighting illiteracy (Bugajski 2005: 76). Significant events which took place during this period were the establishment of the Polish Academy of Literature and the Act of 24 January 1924. As is can be read in the law: "*Polish shall be the official language in the Republic of Poland. This provision shall not infringe upon national minority rights resulting from ratified international agreements.*"¹

In 1945, after the Second World War, a new language act was passed. The act declares that Polish is the only official language used by governmental and self-governmental authorities in education, culture, and everyday life.

Polish language policy is marked by two periods after the World Wars (Nettmann-Multanowska 2003):

- a) traditional model – with the elimination of regionalisms
- b) flexible model – favouring difference and growth

After the end of the communist era, the following goals were set in Polish language policy (Przygoński 2012: 178):

- a) protecting the system of the Polish language
- b) the use of Polish in everyday communication
- c) creating the proper environment for all speech communities
- d) developing language attitude and skills
- e) standardising and codification
- f) promotion of the international recognition of Polish

¹ The Council for the Polish Language (Rada Języka Polskiego, RJP). The Constitution of The Republic of Poland, Article 27, 2nd April, 1997 Available at: <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htm>

3. The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages

The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) was prepared within the framework of the Council of Europe and opened for signature in Strasbourg on 5 November 1992.² The Council of Europe's mission is to fortify the ties that unite its members, to safeguard and advance the beliefs and ideals that form the foundation of their shared history, and to preserve minority languages that are in danger of extinction in order to retain and expand Europe's cultural variety and traditions.²

According to Gerard-René de Groot (2018), the preamble to the ECRML states that one of the objectives of this convention is the maintenance and development of regional and minority languages as a desirable manifestation of cultural wealth. The ECRML further emphasises that the principles of democracy and cultural diversity are based on the provisions enacted in the Charter.

The Charter names two levels of protection: basic and advanced. All regional and minority languages that have historically been spoken on the state's territory must receive the basic protection level. The basic protection level is recorded in Part II of the Charter under Article 7. A state may grant advanced protection, which is regulated in Articles 8–13.

The Charter provides the following definitions in Article 1 (part a) on "regional or minority languages":³

- a (i) - traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population;
- a (ii) - different from the official language(s) of that State.

However, it is important to highlight that the Charter does not include either dialects of the official language(s) of the State or the languages of migrants.

The first article also lists further categories (b and a c part) of "**regional or minority languages**", giving them specific definitions.

b – "territory in which the regional or minority language is used" means the geographical area in which the said language is the mode of expression of a number of people justifying the adoption of the various protective and promotional measures provided for in this Charter;

c – "non-territorial languages" means languages used by nationals of the State which differ from the language or languages used by the rest of the State's population but which, although traditionally used within the territory of the State, cannot be identified with a particular area thereof. Part II of the Charter obliges a member to grant protection to a regional or minority language which consists of:³

- a) Acceptance of the regional or minority language
- b) Recognition of the geographical area of each regional or minority language
- c) Supporting regional or minority languages
- d) Encouragement of the language's use in public and private life
- e) Maintenance of minority languages
- f) Providing the appropriate teaching on all levels of education (pre-school, primary school, secondary school, vocational training, university)
- g) Providing opportunities for study and research at universities or other institutions
- h) The promotion of transnational exchanges
- i) The elimination of all forms of unjustified distinction, exclusion and restriction

² Council Of Europe European Treaty Series (CETS) 148, Strasbourg 1992. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatyid=148>; (Last accessed: 02. 11. 2022.)

³ [ETS 148 – Charter for Minority Languages, 5.XI.1992](#). (Last accessed: 12. 08. 2023.)

- j) Mutual understanding between all the linguistic groups in the country
- k) Granting the needs and wishes of regional or minority language users.

The main fields of protection in Part III are:

- Education,
- Judicial authorities,
- Administrative authorities and public services,
- Media,
- Cultural activities and facilities,
- Economic and social life,
- Transfrontier exchanges.

In addition to the fundamental protection provided by Part II, the states must choose at least 35 of the undertakings in each Part III clause (Article 7). If a state decides to protect more than one regional or minority language in compliance with Part III, then the preferences of each language's speakers have to be taken into account.

4. The Polish Language Act

Poland's new constitution was adopted by the National Assembly in 1997, which was the first constitution ever to state that "The Polish Language is the official language of the Republic of Poland" (Article 27)⁴.

Article 27 states that "*Polish shall be the official language in the Republic of Poland. This provision shall not infringe upon national minority rights resulting from ratified international agreements.*"⁴

Based on the 1999 Collection of Laws, the Polish Parliament drew up the Act on the Polish Language (USTAWA z dnia 7 października 1999 r. o języku polskim) in order to establish national identity and national culture.

In the current global environment, protecting national identity is unavoidable. Culture helps create a unified and culturally varied Europe. Polish organisations and government agencies, as well as all Polish citizens, are accountable for protecting the language.

Article 9 of the Polish Language Act specifies that "The Polish language is a language of instruction, examinations and thesis in all types of public and non-public schools."⁵

Teacher Training in Poland. Local/regional authorities have been in charge of overseeing educational institutions' administration since the early 1990s. In the 1990s further challenges appeared regarding the need of teacher training in Poland. The first challenge was connected to the sudden need for foreign language teachers. The market's growing demand opened the need for foreign language teachers as a result of the growing influence of western languages. The second challenge was connected to the reform of school education. School education was reformed by the introduction of the Education Act in 1991.

Since the signing of the Education Act on the 7th of September 1991, Poland has distinguished between two school types:⁶

⁴ The Constitution of the Republic Poland of 2nd April, 1997. As published in Dziennik Ustaw No. 78, item 483. Available at: <https://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htm>

⁵ Polish Language Act. USTAWA z dnia 7 października 1999 r. o języku polskim. Available at: <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19990900999/T/D19990999L.pdf>

⁶ School Education Act of September 7, 1991 (USTAWA z 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty). Available at: <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu19910950425>

- public schools – free of charge
- non-public schools – students pay tuition fee.

Higher education institutions work based on the 27th of July 2005 Law on Higher Education Act, which specifies aspects of higher education institutions' activities. Higher education institutions in Poland can be public or non-public.

Initial teacher training programs have been established by The Minister for Higher Education and Science. The main aim of the programs is to assure high quality education and teaching, make the teaching career popular and set appropriate goals for students and teachers as well.

The initial training programs are divided based on the following sectors and programmes. **Degree programmes**, including:⁷

- first-cycle programmes: programmes leading to a Bachelor's degree
- second-cycle programmes: programmes leading to a Master's degree or an equivalent degree;
- long-cycle programmes: like second-cycle programmes, programmes leading to a Master's degree (magister) or an equivalent degree.

Non-degree postgraduate programmes: programmes leading to a certificate of completion.

Higher education institutions' system regarding teacher training was changed on 1 October 2004. Since then, first-cycle programmes have been divided into two parts: **main and additional specialisations**, meaning that it is possible to obtain two qualifications in two subjects. The second cycle from now on allows for the possibility of dual specialisation initial teacher training. A new element was added as well, the establishment of Initial Teacher Training Establishments.⁸

The Ministry of National Education (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej) is responsible for the qualification requirements of teachers. Based on the regulations of the Ministry of National Education, those teachers who have completed higher education or Initial Teacher Training Establishment may be employed.

Regarding ethnic or national minorities, those teachers can teach or conduct activities in groups who have the required qualifications. These required qualifications will enable teachers to work in a given type of school or kindergarten. Apart from the required qualifications, teachers must complete appropriate modern languages or post-graduate studies and have competence in the minority's language.

Teacher training programs of ethnic or national minorities have recently been promoted by plurilingual network training projects. The first plurilingual network training projects were established in the 1990s and it was essential to make changes from the beginning in the structure of the training projects. One of the major difficulties was the immediate shift towards western European languages. This created a need for proper foreign language teachers, textbooks and skill improvement projects. The initiatives were made by the National In-Service Teacher Training Center in Warsaw and involved providing the most teachers of specific foreign languages with effective methodological support.

The projects were established with the help of foreign and domestic partners. The aims of the projects are the following:

- improving foreign language teaching
- developing teacher trainings on all levels of education for minorities
- skill improvement with special emphasis on teaching minority languages

⁷ The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Interior and Administration. Available at: <https://www.gov.pl/web/mswia-en>

⁸ Konstytucja dla nauki (Ministry's document „Constitution for the Science”, describing i.e. how teachers should be educated and how Higher Education Institutions are organised). Available

- facilitating local teacher training programs
- improving textbooks for minorities.

In recent years, Poland's language projects gained recognition on an international level, by receiving European Language Label certificates. The proper usage of effective methods, providing local training opportunities for teachers and ensuring the protection of minorities has been implemented as a recommendation by the Council of Europe. Furthermore with the help of international partners, the financial and organisational support for minority communities is guaranteed on multiple spheres of life. The financial and organisational support happens locally and nationwide, and includes:

- organising language contests
- organising school competitions specifically in the language of the minorities
- organising festivals and fairs (in minority languages)
- preparation and printing of curricula
- providing textbooks for national and ethnic minority languages
- providing materials for teaching.

Every year, network projects are organised countrywide in order to develop and maintain the status of minorities. These network projects allow a wide range of development opportunities for teachers. Teachers can participate in the following courses:

- improving the quality of teaching
- using different skills and methods especially those which are usable in minority classrooms
- encouraging participation with other minority groups
- improvement courses directed towards minorities and regional languages
- improvement programs related to the recent educational changes in Poland
- exchanging professional experiences.

5. The situation of regional or minority languages in Poland

The rights for minorities are guaranteed in the Constitution and in the Act of 6 January 2005 on the Ethnic and National Minorities and on the Regional Language (ustawa z 6 stycznia 2005 r. o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym)⁹.

According to the 2021 census, Poland recognises 13 national and ethnic minorities.

- a) 9 national minorities: Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish;
- b) 4 ethnic minorities: Karaim, Lemko, Romany and Tatar;
- c) one community using the regional language of the Kashubians

⁹ Act of 6 January 2005 on the Ethnic and National Minorities and on the Regional Language. U S T AWA z dnia 6 stycznia 2005 r. o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym. Available at: <https://www.gov.pl/web/mniejszosci-narodowe-i-etniczne/ustawa-o-mniejszosciach-narodowych-i-etnicznych-oraz-o-jezyku-regionalnym>

Ethnicity	Population
Belarusian	56,607
Czech	7,818
Lithuanian	10,287
German	144,177
Armenian	6,772
Russian	15,994
Slovak	2,300
Ukrainian	82,440
Jewish	17,156
Karaim	350
Lemko	13,607
Romani	13,303
Tatar	2,000
Kashubians	179,685

Table1. Native speakers of minority languages in Poland (2021 census data)

5.1. The right to mother-education of minorities in Poland

According to the guidelines outlined in the School Education Act of September 7, 1991 (ustawa z 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty), ethnic and national minorities exercise their rights to learning the minority language or receiving education in the minority language, as well as learning about the history and culture of the minority.¹⁰

Additionally, they renewed the status of foreign languages as compulsory or optional school subjects, established teaching guidelines, made it possible to make changes to the assessment and examination process, and guaranteed initial teacher training, which prepares educators to quickly adapt to students' changing needs.

The protection of the rights of national and ethnic minorities as well as the rights of communities using regional language is handled within the cooperation of The Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Interior and Administration.⁶

On 6 January 2005, the Joint Committee of Government and National and Ethnic Minorities passed an act related to the activities of national and ethnic minorities and regional languages. The Joint Committee started its undertakings in September 2005 and working groups had been established. Further important elements of these actions are related to the development of educational programs, teacher training, granting funds for organising education in communities and pre-school education. Maintaining national and ethnic minorities' sense of linguistic and cultural identity is the primary goal of the Polish government.

5.2. Educational institutions of minorities in Poland

Armenian

Armenian is not used as a language of instruction. It is taught at primary schools but not in secondary education, technical or vocational education. People who would like to learn this language have the opportunity to attend Saturday/Sunday schools organised by the representatives of the Armenian minority. At universities students can study Armenian.

¹⁰ School Education Act of September 7, 1991 (USTAWA z 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty). Available at: <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu19910950425>

Belarusian

The Belarusian language is taught at all levels of education (pre-school, primary and secondary school levels). However, it does not meet the requirements for becoming a medium of instruction at all levels of education. In technical or vocational education, Belarusian is not taught. Belarusian can be studied at university level. At the University of Białystok students can learn Belarusian, since it is part of the study programme.

Czech

In primary, secondary, technical or vocational education, Czech is not offered. On the level of primary education it is only taught in the kindergarten of Zelów. Furthermore, language courses are organized by the Czech Culture Centre in Zelów. At the university level, the Czech language can be studied at the Faculty of Philology of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

German

German is taught at pre-school, primary and secondary school levels. Some educational institutions offer dual-language classes in German and Polish. Even though Poland offers the opportunity to learn/use German in technical and vocational education, still this number is very low compared to the size of the German speaking community. German can be studied at university level at various faculties as well as an optional subject.

Karaim

Karaim is not available at any level of education. At the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, classes on Karaim literature and culture are offered. The Karaim association organises annual summer camps where lessons and activities are held in Karaim.

Kashub

Kashub is available at all levels of education, it is taught at pre-school, primary and secondary school levels. "Ethno-philology"/studies on Kashubian culture is offered at the University of Gdańsk. It is a positive sign that special courses are organised for teacher training.

Lemko

Lemko is available at all levels of education; however, it is not the medium of instruction. According to the information provided by the authorities, there are no students learning at technical and vocational schools. Lemko is no longer studied at university level.

Lithuanian

Teaching in Lithuanian takes place at pre-school, primary and secondary school levels. According to information from the authorities, no pupils are currently studying Lithuanian at technical and vocational schools. At the University of Warsaw, Lithuanian may be studied as part of Baltic Philology (BA and MA courses).

Romani

In recent academic years, only a very small percentage of children learned Romani in kindergarten and primary school, according to the authorities. However, there is a growing interest among Romani speakers that their language should be part of the educational system.

Russian

Russian is taught at pre-school and primary school levels but not at the secondary school level. There is no teaching in/of Russian in technical and vocational education. Russian can be studied at university level at various faculties as well as an optional subject.

Slovak

Information from the authorities indicates that Slovak is taught only in primary schools. Slovak is not available in technical and vocational education. However, at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Slovak can be studied at university level.

Tatar

Tatar is not available at any level of education (pre-school, primary, secondary, technical or vocational education). The Tatar minority organises language courses with the government's support. The Tatar language is not studied as a subject of higher education at the Department of Asian Languages of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań; only Polish Tatar literature and culture is eligible to be studied there at the university level.

Ukrainian

Ukrainian is taught at pre-school, primary and secondary levels. Some institutions offer dual-language classes in Ukrainian and Polish. In the past year the number of students has significantly increased due to the rising number of people immigrating to Poland from Ukraine. Ukrainian can be studied at university level, at eight universities across Poland.

Yiddish

Yiddish is not present at any level of education (pre-school, primary, secondary, technical or vocational education). At the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Yiddish can be studied as part of Jewish Studies.

	Pre-school	Primary school	Secondary school	Technical/Vocational Education	Higher Education / University
Armenian	-	+	-	-	+
Belarusian	+	+	+	-	+
Czech	+	-	-	-	+
German	+	+	+	+	+
Karaim	-	-	-	-	only at one University
Kashub	+	+	+	+	+
Lemko	+	+	+	-	-
Lithuanian	+	+	+	-	+
Romani	+	+	-	-	-
Russian	+	+	+	-	+
Slovak	-	+	-	-	+
Tatar	-	-	-	-	only at one University
Ukrainian	+	+	+	+	+
Yiddish	-	-	-	-	only at one University

Table2. The availability of Educational Institutions for minorities in Poland

6. Conclusion and recommendation

Throughout history, both the Polish nation and the Polish language have had to fight for their survival. The constant struggle for the right to survival can be traced throughout the development of the Polish nation and language. In order for the Polish language to achieve its present important status in Europe (especially in Eastern Europe), the Polish speech community had to insist on the realisation of its dreams and goals, which are truly reflected in the creation of an independent

Polish state. A careful study of the history of the Polish nation and the Polish language reveals that it has played the role of an oppressed nation for thousands of years. The first such chapter occurred during the enforced 'Germanisation,' when Polish people were completely deprived of the right to use their religion and language freely. The forced use of languages by other countries did not disappear from Polish history completely afterwards, as the Russian language began to take hold in the area. As it can be seen, forced Germanisation and Russification made it impossible to use Polish, and it became a completely second-rate language within the borders of its own country.

The real changes came after the Second World War. The creation of an independent Polish state finally provided freedom of language and religion. The Polish nation's goals included protecting, nurturing, and ensuring the free use of the Polish language. To this end, a number of important laws and decrees were passed, and important changes were made in Polish education and teacher training.

The main aims of the newly formed language policy were to protect, preserve, cultivate, and use Polish in all areas of life. Once the Polish nation had laid the foundations for the maintenance and teaching of the Polish language, the next important step was to join the European integration process. A fundamental requirement for joining European integration is to guarantee the rights of minorities.

Language policy and planning (LPP) in Poland is principally centred on governmental executive areas. The Polish parliament, the Polish government and council members responsible for Polish language rights are key elements in LPP. Poland's language policy goes much further than safeguarding the official language or preserving the languages of racial and ethnic minorities. Educational policy regarding the teaching and learning of languages is also essential.

Important historical events paved the way towards the Polish language policy and language rights which are known today. The recent language policy dates back to 1989, when Poland gained independence, and a key aim of the country was to raise awareness of the importance and the role of Polish language. Another historical event took place in 1999, when the Act of the Polish Language was accepted. Following this event, Poland wanted to become a member of the European Union. Along this path, the protection of national and ethnic minorities and regional languages is a vital step towards European integration. Poland became a member of the European Union in 2004. The following year, the Act regarding the activities of national and ethnic minorities and regional languages was passed by the Joint Committee of Government and national and ethnic minorities. The protection and promotion of national and ethnic minorities are secured in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Poland signed the Charter in 2003 and ratified it in 2009.

In 2021, Poland submitted its third evaluation report. The third evaluation report is based on the political and legal situation of Poland. As it can be seen in the evaluation report, Poland recognises 13 national and ethnic minorities. In view of the collected data regarding rights to mother tongue education in Poland, the following changes can be recommended:

Armenian

- making education available in Armenian at all levels
- developing teaching and providing teacher training in Armenian
- providing available textbooks for the Armenian minority

Belarusian

- making education available in Belarusian at all levels;
- providing local and regional units regarding Belarusian
- making Belarusian an integral part of the curriculum

Czech

- making the Czech language available in primary and secondary schools
- developing teaching and providing available textbooks

German

- making German an integral part of the curriculum
- providing local and regional administrative units regarding German

Karaim

- making education available in Karaim at all levels
- developing teacher training for Karaim
- drawing up an action plan

Kashub

- providing local and regional administrative units regarding Kashub

Lemko

- developing teacher training for Lemko
- providing local and regional administrative units regarding Lemko
- making Lemko an integral part of the curriculum
- raising awareness of Lemko culture in society

Lithuanian

- providing local and regional administrative units regarding Lithuanian
- providing textbooks for Lithuanian students
- ensuring the long-term funding of education

Romani

- drawing up an action plan on how to promote the teaching of Romani
- introducing Romani at all levels of education
- ensuring the long-term funding of education

Russian

- developing teacher training at all levels
- ensuring the long-term funding of education

Slovak

- making education available in Slovak at all levels
- providing textbooks for Slovak students
- ensuring the long-term financial support of education

Tatar

- drawing up an action plan on how to promote the teaching of Tatar
- making education available in Tatar at all levels
- developing teacher training at all levels

Ukrainian

- providing textbooks for the Ukrainian minority
- making Ukrainian an integral part of the curriculum
- drawing up an action plan on how to promote the teaching of Ukrainian

Yiddish

- making education available in Yiddish at all levels
- promoting awareness of Yiddish culture among the society
- drawing up an action plan on how to promote the teaching of Yiddish.

The improvement of the quality of initial teacher training for teachers of minorities is crucial and the government should raise awareness of it. In order to support teaching, new methods, innovative techniques and processes should be implemented. Another key element of improvement which should be explored is the support of the preservation of the national (ethnic), linguistic, and cultural identities of students from ethnic minorities. However because of the declining minority populations, with the result that less and less children attend these schools, it may prove challenging for the government to provide financial stability and to preserve the functioning of small schools with regional/minority language teaching.

To guarantee the quality of regional or minority language education, teacher preparation programs and textbooks are crucial. The Committee of Ministers recommended that the Polish government update textbooks and other teaching resources for regional or minority language education in accordance with the New Core Curriculum and train a sufficient number of teachers to be able to teach subjects in Belarusian, German, Kashub, Lemko, and Ukrainian. This recommendation was made during the previous monitoring cycle.

In order to carry out the changes, first it is important to intensify initiatives to foster respect for and tolerance of regional or minority languages and the cultures they represent in Polish society as a whole. Secondly, to make education available at all levels for Armenian, Belarusian, Czech, Karaim, Slovak and Yiddish. In those minorities where education is present, the development should be ensured by providing updated textbooks and other teaching materials, as well as the fundamental and advanced training of a sufficient number of educators for regional or minority language education.

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