

(English version)

Question for written answer E-002190/25
to the Commission
Șerban Dimitrie Sturdza (ECR)
(2 June 2025)

Subject: Persons belonging to a national majority must enjoy the same rights and freedoms as those belonging to national minorities

The rights of persons belonging to minorities are guaranteed both by multilateral and by bilateral international agreements and are enshrined in the constitutional systems of many Member States, while respect for them is a prerequisite in any assessment of the rule of law.

PACE Recommendation 1201, adopted in 1993, for an additional protocol on minority rights to the European Convention on Human Rights, expressly referred to in the European Parliament resolution of 13 November 2018 on minimum standards for minorities in the EU (2018/2036 (INI)), establishes as a general principle that ‘The exercise of the rights and freedoms listed in this protocol fully applies to the persons belonging to the majority in the whole of the state but who constitute a minority in one or several of its regions’, with this applying to regions such as the Basque Country and Catalonia (Spain), Corsica (France), South Tyrol and Sardinia (Italy), Covasna and Harghita (Romania) and the Åland Islands (Finland), etc.

1. How does the Commission monitor the implementation of this general principle in EU Member States’ legislation, notably in the case of Romania?
2. What concrete steps have EU Member States taken to implement this general principle in their legislation, especially in areas such as education in one’s mother tongue, recognition of cultural identity, participation in regional and national public life and access to public funding?

Submitted: 2.6.2025

Answer given by Mr McGrath on behalf of the European Commission
(3 September 2025)

Respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities is one of the founding values of the European Union and is a principle explicitly mentioned in the Treaty on European Union.

The EU is equipped with specific instruments on combatting discrimination, racism and xenophobia to ensure that, within the remit of its competences, on specific grounds, such as ethnicity or race, minorities are not discriminated against.

Member States retain general powers to take decisions about minorities, in particular, over issues relating to the recognition of the status of minorities, their self-determination and autonomy or the regime governing the use of regional or minority languages. Recommendation 1201 ⁽¹⁾ is an instrument of the Council of Europe, which is not part of EU law.

Outside the implementation of EU law, it is for Member States, including Romania, to ensure compliance with their constitutional order and their obligations under international law.

Moreover, Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) ⁽²⁾ limits the role of the EU in the area of education to supporting and supplementing Member States’ actions, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems (which includes the languages used in education) and their cultural and linguistic diversity.

The European Commission monitors Member States’ education policies under the European Education Area cooperation framework in the annual publication of the Education and Training Monitor ⁽³⁾ and carries out country analyses, including in the fields of education and training, as part of the European Semester. ⁽⁴⁾

⁽¹⁾ Council of Europe, Parliamentary assembly, Recommendation 1201 (1993) <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/15235/html>

⁽²⁾ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:41f89a28-1fc6-4c92-b1c8-03327d1b1ecc.0007.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

⁽³⁾ <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor/en/>

⁽⁴⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/european-semester_en