

Press Release

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"Minority languages need more respect" says Commissioner Hammarberg

Strasbourg, 25.01.2010 – "Language rights have become an issue of contention within several European countries. Their denial undermines human rights and causes inter-communal tensions" said Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, in his latest Viewpoint published today.

"The spelling of personal names on passports, the displaying of street names and other topographical indications, the language used in schools, the language requirements when communicating with the authorities and the possibility to establish minority media are some of the main issues being raised by minority representatives" said Commissioner Hammarberg. "Mature political leadership is particularly needed in order to address these issues abiding by human rights standards."

Stressing that language is an essential tool for social organisation and individual identity, the Commissioner calls on European governments to better take into account the needs of the minorities. "All too often authorities have not listened carefully to them when policies have been developed. It is crucial that governments maintain close communication with persons belonging to national minorities and seek a thorough and continuing consultation."

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