

**Brochure European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
translated by Mercator Research Centre**

Translation of a unique European agreement in Dutch and Frisian

LEEWARDEN, OCTOBER 29th 2009 – The brochure European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages has recently been translated to Dutch and Frisian, on the occasion of the Partnership for Diversity conference (30-31 October in Leeuwarden). The Mercator Research Centre, part of the Fryske Akademy in Leeuwarden, has assisted in this. The Charter, which came into effect in 1998, includes linguistic and human rights. The 24 countries of the Council of Europe who have ratified the Charter, agree to do their best to protect and encourage languages that risk to be marginalised in the countries where they traditionally belong.

The Charter is a unique pact between the European states that are willing to subscribe to the intentions of a future in which multilingualism is embraced. The province of Fryslân, the Basque Country and Wales are clear examples in Europe where the Charter has a positive influence. Unfortunately there are many examples of countries where things are still difficult, like in Cyprus, Moldavia, but also Greece.

The Charter contains clear guidelines on how protecting and encouraging regional and minority languages should take place in daily life. This, however, doesn't apply to the languages of immigrants and dialects of the national state language. The states are obligated to dedicate themselves into using the languages in the field of education, in the media and also in the public administration. The Charter stimulates the use of regional and minority languages on all areas in daily life: from street signs to health care or the contact with public services.

Until now the brochure was available in English, German, Romanian, Hungarian, Swedish, Spanish, Basque, Catalan, Galician, Italian and Estonian. The Charter offers the subscribing states a common and internationally recognised frame for their language policy. Furthermore it contains many suggestions on how to encourage a language in practice. It is part of a series of conventions which proves the continuing attention of the Council of Europe for protecting national minorities. The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities also belong to this series.