

A R M E N I A

SECTION A

Capital

Yerevan 1,254,400 (1990 est.)

Area

29,800 sq km (11,500 sq mi)

Form of government

Unitary multiparty republic with a single legislative body

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$2,900 (1999 est.)

Population

3,409,234 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic composition

Armenian	93%
Azeri	3%
Russian	2%
Other	2%

(Mostly Yezidi Kurds, Jews, Ukrainians, Greeks, Polonaises)

Note: as of the end of 1993, virtually all Azeris had emigrated from Armenia

Official language

Armenian

Minority languages

Russian and other

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, adopted on July 5, 1995

The Law of the Republic of Armenia on Language, adopted on April 17, 1993

Background notes

Armenia was one of the 15 successor republics to the USSR in December of 1991. Its leaders remain preoccupied by the long conflict with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave. Although a cease-fire has been in effect since May of 1994, the sides have not made substantial progress toward a peaceful resolution. In January 1998, differences between President Ter-Petrossian and members of his cabinet over the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process came to a head. With the Prime Minister, Defense Minister, and Security Minister arrayed against him, an isolated Ter-Petrossian resigned the presidency on February 3, 1998. Prime Minister Robert Kocharian was elected President in March 1998. Concerns about Armenia's economic performance have continued since 1997 with such factors as a slowdown in growth and the serious impact of the 1998 financial crisis in Russia.

Independence: May 28, 1918 to December 2, 1920 (First Armenian Republic); September 23, 1991 (from Soviet Union)

Armenia supports ethnic Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan in a longstanding, separatist conflict against the Azerbaijani Government. Historical claims on former Armenian lands in Turkey have subsided.

SECTION B

Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?

The Law on Language provides linguistic minorities with the right to publish and study in their native language. There are token publications in minority languages, but the Government has devoted minimal resources to maintaining minority language schools. The large network of Russian-language schools has been reduced greatly in recent years. In practice virtually all students, including members of the Yezidi and Greek communities, now attend Armenian-language schools with very limited classes in their mother tongue. In the Yezidi community, a high percentage of pupils do not attend school, partly for family economic reasons and partly because of discrimination from ethnic Armenian schoolmates and teachers.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

Russian is taught at primary, secondary schools and Universities. Kurdish, Jewish, Greek and Polish are taught on primary level at Sunday school in the framework of community activities. There are weekly periodicals issued by national minorities in Russian, Ukrainian and Kurdish. The weekly newspaper of the Jewish community is published in Armenian, Russian and English. The Russian minority has a large access to radio and television (daily on radio and weekly on TV). The other minorities have only weekly radio broadcasting in their languages. The Jewish community broadcasts only in Russian.

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities signed on July 25, 1997, ratified on July 20, 1998 and enacted on November 1, 1998.

Conclusion

Armenia is a very homogenous country with only a small number of minority communities (Russians, Jews, Greeks, Yezidis, Kurds, Georgians and Assyrians – there is no significant Azeri minority). These minorities are officially recognized but their economic and social situation has deteriorated since independence in 1991.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia the state language is Armenian and citizens belonging to national minorities are entitled to the preservation of their traditions and the development of their language and culture. The state also guarantees the protection of human rights and freedoms in accordance with the principles and norms of international law.

SECTION C

Did the country ratify any international treaty dealing with the protection of minorities?

Updated (March 2002)

On January 25, 2002 Armenia ratified the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, signed on May 11, 2001. The Charter will enter into force on May 1, 2002. Together with the ratification Armenia also submitted a joint declaration, whose content has not been officially made public yet by the Council of Europe.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF ARMENIA



APPENDIX B

ARMENIA - CONSTITUTION

(Adopted on July 5, 1995)

(Document Status in January 1999)

(Official Title: Constitution of the Republic of Armenia)

Article 12

The state language of the Republic of Armenia is Armenian.

Article 15

Citizens, regardless of national origin, race, sex, language, creed, political or other persuasion, social origin, wealth or other status, are entitled to all the rights and freedoms, and subject to the duties determined by the Constitution and the laws.

Article 37

Citizens belonging to national minorities are entitled to the preservation of their traditions and the development of their language and culture.

Note: The complete text of the Constitution and further information on the constitutional background of Armenia are provided by the International Constitutional Law Project at the University of Wuerzburg.

THE LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA ON LANGUAGE

(Adopted on April 17, 1993)

The present Law shall establish the principal tenets of the policy on language of the Republic of Armenia, shall govern a status of language, language relations between bodies of state authority and administration, enterprises, institutions and organizations.

Article 1 (Policy on language of the Republic of Armenia)

The Armenian language which serves all the spheres of life of the Republic shall be the state language of the Republic of Armenia. The literary Armenian language shall be the official language of the Republic of Armenia.

The Republic of Armenia shall promote preservation and dissemination of the Armenian language among Armenians residing outside its borders.

The Republic of Armenia shall promote unification of orthography of the Armenian language.

The Republic of Armenia on its territory shall guarantee the free usage of languages of national minorities.

Article 2 (Language of education)

The literary Armenian language shall be the language of teaching and education in the educational and teaching systems on the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

In communities of national minorities in the Republic of Armenia the general education may be organized in their native language in accordance with the state program and with the state patronage and compulsory teaching of the Armenian language.

On the territory of the Republic of Armenia a specialized educational institution in a foreign language may be established only by the Government of the Republic of Armenia upon the agreement of the standing committee on education, science, language and culture of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Armenia.

The entrance examination on the Armenian language and teaching of the Armenian language shall be obligatory at all secondary specialized, vocational and higher education institutions of the Republic of Armenia. The entrance examinations and education for repatriates, refugees, non-Armenians and aliens residing on the territory of the Republic of Armenia shall be organized in the manner established by the Government of the Republic of Armenia.

Article 3 (Language obligations of citizens)

The officials and citizens of the Republic of Armenia working in certain spheres of service shall know the Armenian language.

The Armenian language shall be the language of official statements of persons representing the Republic of Armenia, if it does not contradict the order accepted in that international institution.

In the official conversation citizens of the Republic of Armenia shall be obliged to ensure the purity of the language.

Article 4 (Language rights and obligations of institutions)

The enterprises, institutions and organizations located on the territory of the Republic of Armenia shall communicate with state bodies, enterprises, institutions, organizations and citizens of other countries in a mutually acceptable language.

The state bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations of the Republic of Armenia shall be obliged:

to conduct the office work in the Armenian language;

to ensure simultaneous translation of statements in other languages into Armenian at congresses, sessions, meetings, symposia, during public statements, official and other public events;

to design signboards, letterheads, labels, post stamps, seals, international mail envelopes in the Armenian language accompanied, where necessary, by translation into other languages.

The foreign state bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations located on the territory of the Republic of Armenia shall supply the documents that are subject to the state control, with translation into Armenian.

The organizations of national minorities residing on the territory of the Republic of Armenia shall design their documents, letterheads, seals in the Armenian language with parallel translation into their language.

Article 5 (Implementation of the state policy on language)

The Government of the Republic of Armenia, local bodies of state authority and administration as well as the duly authorized state body shall implement the state policy on language in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Armenia.

The Republic of Armenia shall encourage publications, press as well as preparation of textbooks, training appliances, scientific, methodical, reference, popular scientific literature in the Armenian language.

The legislation of the Republic of Armenia shall establish responsibility for violation of the requirements of the present Law.

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