

S W E D E N

SECTION A

Capital

Stockholm 711,119 (1995 est.)

Area

449,964 sq km (173,732 sq mi)

Form of government

Constitutional monarchy and parliamentary state with one legislative house

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$20,700 (1999 est.)

Population

8,911,296 (July 1999 est.)

Ethnic composition

Swedish	89.3%
Finnish	2.3%
Yugoslav	0.8%
Iranian	0.6%
Bosnian	0.5%
Other	6.5%

Official language

Swedish (there are no legal provisions on this subject)

Minority languages

Finnish, Sami, Romany Chib

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The basic principles of the Swedish Constitution state as follows: "Opportunities should be promoted for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities to preserve and develop a cultural and social life of their own". This means that Finnish is promoted, i.e. it is taught at school and its existence has been recognized. However, Finnish has not been given a full official status in Sweden, except that of an immigrant language. Finnish speakers cannot deal with the administration using their own language.

The new Swedish legislation guaranteeing the right to use the Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli languages in several spheres of the public life came into force on April 1, 1999. The objective of the law is to strengthen the use and the presence of the above-mentioned languages in their native territories. Such laws, proposed by the Swedish government a year ago, regulate the right to use these languages in the scopes of public administration, in court houses and in pre-school and geriatrics activities. The new legislation, which responds to the unrecognized Swedish multilingual reality, is considered a step towards the fulfillment of the articles from the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, which had been signed and ratified by Sweden on February 9, 2000.

Background notes

Finnish has deep roots in Sweden because Sweden and Finland were one State for about 650 years (1155-1809). During that period, there were constant migrations from one side of the territory to the other. Even when Finland was separated from Sweden and annexed to the Russian empire in 1809, migrations continued in both directions. Only in the north of the country, in the Torne Valley, the Finns have stayed since settling there in the 11th century. These Finns are considered to be the genuine autochthonous Finnish community of Sweden.

SAMI/LAPP

The oldest description of the Sami people was given by Tacitus in "De origine et situ Germanorum" in 98 B.C. The Lapps, as they are colloquially known, lived originally by hunting and fishing in small communities. Their way of living was affected during the 17th and 18th centuries when colonists settled in the northern territories. The mores of

these colonists, who were mainly farmers living in houses and producing wool and butter, were very different from the traditional occupations of the Lapps. However, the colonists were able to integrate with and adapt to the Sami's life. In the 19th century, the establishment of a school system changed behavior towards the Lapps and their culture and led to a limitation of the use of "Samegiella", which would subsequently be eliminated.

The Sami language belongs to the Finno-Ugric family. It has three main dialects: East Sami, Central Sami and South Sami. The differences between the three main dialects are sometimes so great that they can be described as different languages. The Central Sami is the most widely spoken; meanwhile, East Sami and South Sami are spoken in the areas where the Sami are a minority. Estimates are that 70% of Sami speak the Sami language.

SECTION B

What does it cost in terms of money, time and government resources to police the country's language restrictions?

According to the fact sheet published by the Ministry of Culture in June 1999, the government calculated SEK 10 million per year from 2000, as a response to the minority policy. The amount is expected to be allocated as follows: SEK 6 million to the municipalities and county council; SEK 1 million to the courts; SEK 1 million to strengthen the state cultural subsidy and SEK 2 million for measures concerning the national minorities' influence and for follow-up measures.

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

FINNISH (GENERALLY)

Finnish (including Tornedalen Finnish) is proposed for official status as a minority language. Both Sweden Finns and Tornedalians are proposed for official minority group status (in addition to Sami, Romanies and Jews).

During the 19th century, the Swedish language policy was directed against the Finnish language to avoid the Russian influence in the area. Regarding the linguistic policy, it generated a negative attitude towards Finns. Finnish was not allowed to have a visible role in society; there were no street signs in Finnish, no place names, etc. Although the use of Finnish was neither officially encouraged nor prohibited in informal

exchanges, in practice there was discrimination in schools. Finnish students marked with an “F”, punishment for using Finnish in the classroom and on the playground. This practice lasted up until 1957 when the Swedish National Board of Education withdrew the unofficial regulations forbidding the use of Finnish.

In the 1950's and 60's there was no instruction in Finnish in primary schools in the whole of Sweden. There were hardly any demands for Finnish (there were very few pupils with Finnish as their mother tongue). Home language instruction in Finnish started in Torne Valley in 1970. In 1975, it started in the rest of the country with 2-3 hours a week introduced in public schools. During these first years, Swedish local councils supported the use of Finnish. From September 1992, Finnish lessons were in the pupils' free time (early in the morning, lunch time, etc.). Some Swedish teachers put the Finnish pupils under pressure not to attend the Finnish lessons, arguing that it was better and more useful to study other subjects.

The use of Finnish in education is restricted to primary school level. There are some secondary schools in the South of Sweden that teach Finnish as a foreign language, in order to develop the skills of people for the Baltic market (principally Estonia), as regards the economy and social services. Most of the teaching and learning materials are imported from Finland, which tends to confuse the pupils, as the cultural and social context is different. At the university level, Finnish is taught both as a “home language” and a second language in Stockholm and Uppsala.

There is no use of Finnish by public authorities, although some social services are available in Finnish in the larger cities.

FINNISH (TORNE VALLEY)

The bilingual area of Torne Valley is located in the northernmost part of Sweden, in Norrbotten province and has 270,000 inhabitants. Approximately 40,000 to 60,000 people speak Tornedalen Finnish as an everyday language. It is worth pointing out that between 1900 and 1930, and later, during the 50's and 60's, a lot of Finnish-speaking people (about 20%) changed their Finnish family names by statute to take new Swedish family names. The official reason given was the difficulty Swedish-speakers had in pronouncing and transcribing the Finnish names correctly. But according to experts, this was a deliberate intent on the part of the Tornedalians to merge with the overall Swedish society and to identify themselves as fully Swedish.

In Norrbotten and specifically in Tornedalen the rate of unemployment is high and other socio-economic figures are also considerably worse than

the national average. State expenditure is higher here, as are unemployment, sickness leave, early retirement pensions, and social transfers in the family budget, crime and violence rates. Life expectancy is shorter and the death rate from alcohol and drug-related diseases is higher.

Finnish-speaking people in Sweden do not, in general, like to be considered as Finns, because Finns traditionally have been perceived in Sweden as backward immigrants. Furthermore, most Tornedalians consider that their language (called *Meän kieli*, “our language”) is not the same language as “real” or standard Finnish. The differences between Tornedalen and standard Finnish are controversial. This is due not only to prestige and identity (a lot of standard Finnish-speakers tend to see themselves firstly as Finnish, while Tornedalens feel Swedish) but also to power play and money. The recent government proposal, for example, to grant Finnish (including Tornedalen) an official minority language status has provoked protest, since many Tornedalens wish a special status for their language.

In the last decade of the 19th century up until the 70’s, Finnish was banned from folk and primary schools. The first school was established in Torne in 1854 but only Swedish was taught there. Later on, the Swedish education system became bilingual. One of the main consequences was that few Tornedalians have developed literacy in their mother tongue and the language is therefore used mainly as an oral language. The main barrier to the survival of Finnish in the Torne Valley (who only make up between 3-4% of the Finnish speakers in Sweden) is that there is no harmonic relationship between the cultural environment and the use of the language. There is no perceived practical reason for learning Finnish, and no incentive. Only Swedish is useful for finding employment and for studying. Youngsters think more globally regarding their future, so most display no interest in speaking or learning Finnish. This is a classic example of a minority language in decline.

In the 1960’s, Swedish became the language of the household of most young families. Today only a small percentage of parents within the educated middle class speaks Finnish with their children. There is a negative perception of bilingualism.

SAMI

Sami children can choose between attending government Sami schools or regular municipal nine-year-compulsory schools where they can also receive instruction in Sami. There is a special board of education responsible for the curriculum at the Sami schools. The aim of Sami education is to give the children the same instruction that Swedish

children receive in the compulsory schools, while providing them with schooling that takes into account their own linguistic and cultural background.

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

Sweden ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on February 9, 2000 and enacted on June 1, 2000. European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages signed on February 9, 2000, ratified on February 9, 2000 and enacted on June 1, 2000.

What else can be found about languages and minorities?

The Finnish-speaking community in Sweden doubt whether the implementation of the new system of local government will benefit their linguistic rights. The Finns are a long-established community in Sweden, though they are now scattered over certain areas of the country. This lack of geographical concentration prevents them from having such an important role in the new decentralized system. As a matter of fact, only five communities in the north, known as Tornedalian Finns, benefit from specific legal minority rights (schools, day-care for children, home for the elderly, etc.). Thus, according to National Association of Finns in Sweden, the only efficient action that could be undertaken should be at a national level. Their purpose is to keep working toward achievement of the same recognition as the Tornedalian Finns so they will be granted particular rights in the whole country.

SECTION C

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

Updated (News from the year 2000)

After the approval of the project in 1999 a new Swedish legislation guaranteeing the right to use the Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli languages in several spheres of the public life came into force on April 1, 2000.

According to the Ministry of Culture the objective of this law is to strengthen the use and the presence of the abovementioned languages in the territories considered as their own. The new legislation, which responds to so far unrecognized Swedish multilingual reality, is considered a step towards the fulfillment of the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages which had been signed and ratified by

Sweden on February 9, 2000, and which came into force on June 1, 2000.

Updated (November 2002)

SÁMI

As of April 1, 2000, legislation ensures the right to use Sámi when dealing with state authorities and courts in Sweden. The law applies to state, municipal, regional, and local authorities in the Sámi administrative area, which covers Kiruna, Gällivare, Jokkmokk, and Arjeplog.

According to the law, an individual has the right to use Sámi in oral and written communication with authorities and in the courts when a case is related to the administrative area.

The administrative area for the Sámi language includes the area where North and Lule Sámi are traditionally spoken. South Sámi is not covered by this legislation.

EDUCATIONAL LEGISLATION

Regulations concerning Sámi schools and education are gathered in *the School Act*. This Act, passed by the Swedish Parliament, specifies the basic regulations for education in all types of schools and provides the overall objectives and guidelines to design schools' programs. One of the regulations stipulates that the national curriculum for standard Swedish compulsory schools also applies to Sámi schools. The national curriculum specifies what knowledge students attending Sámi schools should have had beyond the standard curriculum of a regular compulsory school. The students of Sámi schools should be well versed in the Sámi cultural heritage and language. The Appendix of the School Act indicates a timetable for compulsory schools.

Additional regulations for the Sámi schools are determined by the National Agency for Education. In 1995, the National Agency for Education established a syllabus for the Sámi language and determined that other subjects will follow the standard syllabi for compulsory schools.

Sámi children are educated in the Sámi language up to the 6th grade. The Sámi School Board establishes criteria to enroll students in Sámi schools.

Source: Mercator Education, The Sámi language in Education in Sweden, http://www1.faknaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_sami_in_sweden.htm

MEÄNKIELI AND SWEDEN FINNISH

Sweden lacks an official language *de jure*; however, since the late 18th and early 19th Century Swedish has been the *de facto* official language.

In the Constitution (RF 1976: Ch. 1, par. 2) support for the promotion of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups' characteristics is expressed.

In Tornedalen, Meänkieli and Finnish (Sweden Finnish) are official minority languages according to level 3 of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Elsewhere in Sweden, Sweden Finnish is the official minority language according to the level 2.

EDUCATIONAL LEGISLATION

In reports produced by the Immigration Committee in 1974, it was stressed that the Swedish school system should support development of active bilingualism, i.e. a fairly high competence in both languages, among potentially bilingual (minority, immigrant, aboriginal/Sámi) children.

This later resulted in *the Home Language Reform (1976)*. It was aimed at the development of Swedish as well as the retention and development of the home languages (later mother tongue). This policy also covered regional and minority languages.

After another committee recommendation on multiculturalism in Sweden in 1983 (in force since 1985), the Tornedalen children have been given a higher degree of support than the children of immigrants, among which the Sweden Finns were also included until 1994. Formation of minority language educational units in basic schools depended on the amount of children. Five pupils wishing to receive a mother tongue instruction in the municipality were enough to start a class/unit. Since 1985, that restriction no longer has applied to Meänkieli. Parents of Meänkieli-speaking children may require instruction in their mother tongue, irrespective of the number of children. Until 1991, municipalities in practice offered instruction even when the number of pupils was smaller, but after 1991 this has rarely happened.

THE SWEDISH EDUCATION ACT

The Swedish Education Act stipulates that all children and young people should have an access to education of equal value. This concerns all

pupils, irrespective of gender, geographical place of residence or social or economic conditions. Language is not specifically mentioned.

Since the early 1960s, the School Act has prohibited that education in the language other than Swedish would create more than 50 percent of the whole time spent in a basic school. This regulation has been prolonged in recent education acts (SFS 1994:1194, SFS 1997:599, Ch. 2, par. 7).

Source: Mercator Education, The Finnic Languages in Education in Sweden,
http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_meankieli_in_sweden.htm

Background notes

Updated (November 2001)

The Finns' history in Sweden dates back to the Middle Age and the Finnish congregation in Stockholm, which is around 500 years old. However, migration increased dramatically during the 1960's and 70's, due to lack of work in Finland.

In the book "Finnarnas historia i Sverige 3" (The Finns' History in Sweden 3), Risto Laakkonen wrote that the majority of Finns were employed in the industry. There existed no interpretation or other language services; Swedish was used at the workplaces.

Now and then extreme cases prevailed, like in the mining communities in the region of Norrbotten in the 1950's, when Finns were forbidden to talk Finnish with each other during work and breaks. An impulse for it was to decrease the accident risk.

During the 60's, Sweden admitted almost 200,000 Finnish immigrants, of which 80,000 arrived during 1968-69. A new problem was the lack of suitable apartments so many Finns ended up living in barracks. Simultaneously, Sweden recruited working labor from other parts of Europe so the employees belonged to different ethnic groups. This was also a new experience that the Finns were not prepared for.

The 80's were the decade when many refugees arrived to the country. This raised the Finns' status, since new ethnic groups took over the low-paid work. According to Pasi Salmela, recently elected Executive Director for the National Association of Finns in Sweden, (NAFS) Swedes do not see Finns as immigrants today and there is no negative undertone.

Updated (November 2002)

MEÄNKIELI AND SWEDEN FINNISH

Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish, which are seen by some as varieties of Finnish, and by the others as separate languages, have historical roots in Sweden. Meänkieli dates back to the 11th and 12th Century. It has developed from Finland Finnish since the Hamina Peace Treaty in 1809, when Sweden ceded Finland to Russia. About 8,000 inhabitants in the border region of Tornedalen, in which Meänkieli was spoken, remained on the Swedish side, while about 11,000 stayed on the Finnish side. Until about 1980, Meänkieli was considered a dialect of Finnish, and was called Tornedalen Finnish. The province of Norrbotten, in which Tornedalen is situated, covers about one fourth (98,911 km²) of the total area of Sweden, but it is populated only by about 3 percent of the total population.

Sweden Finnish has been used frequently since about the same period of time as the term Meänkieli (instead of Tornedalen Finnish) came into more general use. Sweden Finnish is predominantly spoken in and around the capital of Stockholm, in the central Swedish Mälardalen region, in urban centers along the Baltic shore, and in and around the second largest city, Gothenburg. It is also spoken in the region of Tornedalen at the border of Finland, and thus overlaps with the Meänkieli-speaking area. Meänkieli is spoken mainly in rural, Northern Sweden, and Sweden Finnish in central, urban Sweden.

Source: Mercator Education, The Finnic Languages in Education in Sweden,

http://www1.faknaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_meankieli_in_sweden.htm

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

Updated (November 2001)

Approximately 447,000 Sweden-Finns and Finland-Swedes live in Sweden. Most Sweden-Finns are bilingual but it is difficult to preserve the Finnish language in Sweden today and not to assimilate too fast. Those Finns who arrived first were called “the quiet generation” since they were ashamed to talk Finnish or broken Swedish. Even the second generation showed similar tendencies. Only the third and fourth generation started to appreciate their roots again.

Nowadays Swedish representatives themselves (in the report of the Education Board of the Swedish Government) admit that although

Sweden is a multicultural society, the co-living between cultures remains a problem, as multi-linguistic and cultural variety is seen as a difficulty rather than richness.

Updated (March 2002)

TORNEDALIAN MINORITY

The Tornedalian minority in Northern Sweden reported Swedish Television, Swedish Radio and Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company for discrimination against Tornedalians in radio and television. According to the Swedish Law, Tornedalians, whose language is called Tornedalian Finnish or Meänkieli, enjoy a “unique position” in Swedish media together with the Finnish and Sámis. But the Tornedalians say that they have considerably less programs than the two other linguistic minorities. A Control Board however disagreed with them and ruled that the current broadcasting situation is sufficient to guarantee the “unique position”. Minority is now approaching Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts with their complaint.

“The Control Board decided that about 4 hours of television per year - including reruns - is sufficient to fulfill the State’s agreement of a “unique position”. Around 5 hours radio broadcasting per week in Meänkieli is also considered sufficient, and we are not allowed to compare our situation with the Finnish or Sámis, which both have more broadcasting time,’ said Birger Winsa, a Tornedalian researcher at the University of Stockholm.

Pääjärvi, the Chairman of the Association of Swedish Tornedalians, thinks that Meänkieli is often mixed up with Finnish. The two languages resemble each other, but the Tornedalians have their own distinct culture and history. Tornedalians, numbered roughly 70,000 people, are also seen as an original minority population.

To what extent are minority groups in this country disadvantaged by their language?

Updated (November 2002)

MEÄNKIELI AND SWEDEN FINNISH

Signing the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages ended the process of assimilation of the Tornedalians, initiated in 1888.

In 1888, one of the formal decisions in Tornedalen stipulated that only schools giving instruction in Swedish should benefit from the state support. From the introduction of Swedish state schools, the purpose of

which was to “Swedimize” the region, until about 1957, there was an unofficial regional prohibition to use Finnish/Meänkieli in schoolyards. These languages were abandoned due to criticism by the former National Board of Education (Skolöverstyrelsen).

During the period of prohibition there were no coherent attempts to teach or to allow Finnish to be spoken in Swedish schools. In practice, the status of Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish was supported, but not explicitly protected, particularly in the education system and in the media. Theoretically Meänkieli speakers have had occasional opportunities to receive some instruction in Finnish at different levels since the 1930s, but in practice this has been possible mainly since the mid-1950s.

Between about 1962 and 1975, children with the Meänkieli/Sweden Finnish language backgrounds were sporadically given remedial instruction in their mother tongue for some hours per week. Around 1970, with the increased immigration from Finland, remedial instruction and so-called home language teaching was initiated on a larger scale. This was a result of the fact that Swedish teachers faced difficulties to teach non-Swedish-speaking children, who were submersed into monolingual mainstream classes.

On the other hand, ideas for a more coherent immigrant policy were being formulated at that time. In the 1970s and 1980s, Sweden treated immigrant languages in a progressive way, compared to other European countries. Through the Home Language Reform (1976) immigrant groups and their languages, including Meänkieli and Finnish, got special support and the right to mother tongue provision in some form.

During the last 30 years, a bilateral educational council has contributed to a dialogue between politicians and educational administrators in Finland and Sweden. This council has from time to time discussed and influenced many issues concerning language support for Finnish-speaking children in Sweden.

Support of mother tongue instruction, however, has also been based on the alarming reports about bilingual children from Tornedalen, who suffered from the double handicap of knowing neither language well.

Beginning in the late 1990s, bilingual signs for villages, streets etc. have been actively retained or re-introduced in Tornedalen. The present protection of the regional and minority languages depends on the local policies of 289 municipalities and their political and administrative leaderships.

The school in the municipality of Pajala in Tornedalen, for example, made Meänkieli a compulsory subject for most children in the year 2000. The goal of this effort was to teach basic Meänkieli and some old Finnish and Sámi place names typical for the region to all children living in that area.

Another municipality in the Tornedalen area, Haparanda, has developed an educational system with Tornio, its twin-neighboring town in Finland.¹ The two towns are often referred to as the first “Eurocity” of Europe.

Source: Mercator Education, The Finnic Languages in Education in Sweden,
http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_meankieli_in_sweden.htm

What does it cost in terms of money, time and government resources to police the country’s language restrictions?

Updated (May 2001)

SAMI

The Sami minority in Sweden numbers about 20,000. The Ministry of Agriculture allocated 6 million Swedish kronor (658,000 EURO) to finance the Project aimed at disseminating information about Sami. The project will last five years and around 60 million Swedish kronor will be needed altogether to achieve the results.

Updated (June 2003)

SWEDES AND SÁMI LAUNCH A PROJECT TO TACKLE ANTI-SÁMI RACISM

The Swedish government and the Sámi Parliament are together trying to change the attitudes of Swedes towards the Sámi in the northern part of the country with a project worth of millions kroner (SEK). According to the Executive Director of the Sámi Parliament, Mr Lars Nila Lasko, racism and discrimination problem has been known for years, but very little has been done to improve the situation.

¹ In both towns the pupils can choose instruction in the language of the other country, even at the upper secondary level, in the form of a modified two-way bilingual program.

In 1998, the Swedish Discrimination Ombudsman prepared a study according to which 75 percent of Sámi people felt that the majority is more or less hostile to them. Almost 50 percent felt that this hostility is even growing.

Racism and discrimination against the Sámi has always been difficult to prove since the study also shows that the Sámi do not trust the local authorities. It means that only a tiny proportion of the racial incidents and crimes are reported and documented.

The Swedish government has decided to invest SEK 3,000,000 (about €320,000) over the next three years to set up the Sámi Information Center that will educate and inform the majority population about Sámi culture and history in the inner parts of Norrland. The Center must start from scratch because up until now the state policy failed to teach about Sámi issues.

Source: Eurolang News, Uppsala, June 24, 2003, by Johanna Parikka-Altenstedt,
<http://217.136.252.147/webpub/eurolang/pajenn.asp?ID=4289>

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

Updated (January 2001)

SAMI

The first course for tour guides focusing on Sami tourism and culture began in January 2001. Seven participants will be employed at the end of the course because it is important that Sami people themselves would control tourism in their area.

Updated (November 2001)

The Finnish language has a national minority status in Sweden since April last year, but in practice it is without importance even its symbolic value is big.

EDUCATION

Education is the most current issue. According to 1999 statistics from the National Agency for Education, only 42% of the Finnish children had education in their mother tongue in school. Currently students can choose a two-hour native language class per week. It is often set outside the ordinary school schedule so this could explain why number of children participating has diminished. Another reason is a lack of

information about the right to Finnish education. At the moment, NAFS is revising its information to Sweden-Finnish parents.

Since ten years (1990), freestanding schools have got the same subsidizing as municipal ones. There are eight Finnish-speaking freestanding schools in Sweden at the moment, and some of them are expanding rapidly. The Sweden-Finnish school in Stockholm has increased the number of pupils from 11 at the beginning of the school year in 1990, to 342 in the school year 1999/00. The main aim of the Sweden-Finnish schools is bilingualism. The education is in Finnish at the beginning and later it is successively switched to Swedish. There are no Finnish-speaking upper secondary schools. On university level Finnish can be studied at the Universities of Lund, Stockholm and Umeå.

NAFS (National Association of Finns in Sweden)

The 45-year-old association has 20,000 members and is the umbrella organization for some 150 different Finnish institutes dealing with culture, dance, music, theatre and sports. "Most members are fairly old and if we do not react soon it will all end badly," Salmela, recently elected Executive Director for the NAFS, stated. "I am not worried, as Sweden-Finns are a proud breed these days. We just have to do something to activate the younger ones and to work with their attitudes. But it is difficult to create something that interests them. We have to offer them the same kind of spare time activities as the Swedes have. It just has to be better, an all-activity house for example."

GERIATRIC CARE

Another important issue, alongside education, is geriatric care. According to the estimates there are around 40,000 Finnish pensioners in Sweden. However, the municipalities do not take their responsibility, there are not enough places for Finns and for Finnish-speaking staff.

Updated (November 2002)

SÁMI

The use of Sámi has decreased during the last five - six decades in Sweden as well as throughout Sápmi (Sámiland) and several smaller dialects are in danger of extinction. This is especially true of eastern Sámi and south Sámi languages.

North Sámi has the strongest position in the society. Perhaps 80 to 90 percent of all Sámi speakers speak this dialect. The fact that more than half of all Sámi in Sweden do not speak the language points to the

ongoing language shift from Sámi to Swedish. On the other hand, the use of Sámi has developed within certain areas, e.g., education and administration.

EDUCATION

Until the beginning of the 1990s, the use of the Sámi language in teaching was limited. The school in Karesuando offered Sámi instructions in the lowest grades. This was considered to be justified because the children who came to the Sámi school did not have a command of Swedish at the beginning of their schooling.

However, the survey conducted in the 1990s by the Sámi School Board showed that the way the Sámi language was taught is not particularly effective, especially for the children whose knowledge of Sámi is low when they start the school.

In 1993/94, a three-year research project began at three Sámi schools (Karesuando, Kiruna and Gällivare) aimed at developing a model for language instruction in Sámi schools. This project recommended that instruction should be given regularly in both Sámi and Swedish.

After this project, the number of students instructed in Sámi has increased. There were about 170 students in the Sámi schools in the academic year 2000/2001, 155 students in 1997/98, 132 students in 1995/96 and 115 students in 1994/95.

NOMAD SCHOOLS

This special type of school was created for Sámi children who conducted nomadic mountain reindeer herding at the beginning of the 1900s. Children of Sámi who conducted forest reindeer herding and Sámi who were not nomadic were not permitted to attend the nomad schools. This school form existed until 1962, when a new nomad Sámi schools were established.

Even though the nomad schools were highly adapted to the conditions of nomadic Sámi, all instructions were in Swedish. The Sámi language was added to the curriculum as a subject only after 1950. In 1962, the Swedish Parliament reorganized Sámi education, making nomad schools (i.e. Sámi schools) voluntary and open to all Sámi children. The Sámi language became a mandatory subject and could be taught at most two hours per week.

In 1975, Parliament approved teaching of Sámi as a subject (starting from the academic year 1977/78) in both compulsory and upper-secondary schools. After the mother tongue reform was enacted, the

number of lessons taught in Sámi per week has increased. Sámi was taught six to eight hours a week in grades 1-3 and four hours a week in grades 4-6.

Nowadays, Sámi can be studied as a mandatory subject and thus it can replace other language study requirements (i.e. French, Spanish, or German). It can also be chosen as an optional subject within the framework of the school's elective courses.

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

Since 1999 there has been a special curriculum for pre-schools in two municipalities: Kiruna and Gällivare. According to the Sámi School Board the main goal of this curriculum is to preserve and strengthen the Sámi language, culture, identity, traditions, and values.

The use of the Sámi language has increased over the last several years in pre-schools in Kiruna, Gällivare, and Jokkmokk. The Sámi language began to be used systematically in the pre-schools in Gällivare during the 1990s, even with children whose first language was not Sámi.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

There are no Sámi schools at this level.

Sámi as a subject in upper-secondary schools has been taught since 1978. Up until 1990, the number of students studying the language was very low when less than ten studied Sámi as a home language. There was a slight increase during the 1990s when the number of students increased to about twenty.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The teaching of the Sámi language in higher education takes place primarily at Umeå University. To a limited degree it is also offered at the Finno-Ugrian Department at Uppsala University. Some courses in Sámi have also been offered at Luleå Institute of Technology.

ADMINISTRATION

An increased use of Sámi can also be seen in administrative institutions such as the Sámi Parliament. The production of specialized literature, fiction, television and radio programs in Sámi has also increased substantially over the last decades. The Act on the Right to use Sámi with Public Authorities and Courts and in Pre-schools (1999) improved the conditions for the Sámi language in society.

All these improvements contribute to the fact that Sámi speaking parents will choose to speak Sámi with their children, which is the primary prerequisite for the preservation of the language.

The language situation of South Sámi is particularly difficult in Sweden since legislation dealing with the use of Sámi does not include this dialect. It only covers Lule and North Sámi.

Source: Mercator Education, Regional Dossier, The Sámi language in Education in Sweden,
http://www1.faknaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_sami_in_sweden.htm

MEÄNKIELI

Most speakers of Meänkieli are bilingual in Finnish/Meänkieli and Swedish, with dominance in Swedish, but some are trilingual, with Sámi as a third language. Speakers of Meänkieli have for the most part become literate in their second language (Swedish) first, before gaining possible literacy skills in their mother tongue.

EDUCATION

Among the Tornedalen children with Meänkieli as their mother tongue, few received instruction in Meänkieli before the 1990s. Instead, they were either integrated into mainstream Swedish-only classes or took part in Sweden Finnish classes/hours. The use of Meänkieli as a learning target and a code of instruction has increased during the late 1990s.

Mother tongue teaching in the public school system, in which Sweden Finnish and Tornedalen children participate, now largely takes place in the late afternoon, after school time. In 1999/2000 more than 37.4 percent (this has increased annually during the 90s) of all mother tongue teaching in Finnish (including Meänkieli) took place outside the normal school day (63.5 percent for all languages nationally). Simultaneously, the teachers of a native language have lost the chance to integrate their work into everyday school activities and to cooperate with other teachers and school staff.

About 75 percent of 289 Swedish municipalities offer some type of mother tongue instruction. Although Finnish/Meänkieli was the largest minority language in 2000, according to the National Agency of Education, only about 80 municipalities offered mother tongue teaching in it. This number also includes 8 independent schools and some 8-10 municipalities, in which bilingual classes still exist.

In several cities with large Finnish-speaking population (Huddinge) there is a great discrepancy between the number of pupils who receive instruction and those who are entitled to receive it. Similarly, a handful of municipalities have been criticized for lack of compliance to other regulations (information about or organization of the instruction) regarding other tongues than Swedish (for example Malmö, Gothenburg, Norrköping, Uppsala, Västerås).

PRIMARY EDUCATION

In 2000, about 1.1 million children were at compulsory school age. More than 123,000 had a language background other than Swedish (11.9 percent). According to the language they used at home about 13,500 children in compulsory schools had Finnish background, including both Sweden Finnish and Meänkieli (1999/2000).

The proportion of students in the public schools who received instructions in Finnish has decreased from slightly less than 60 percent (22,000 pupils) in the early 1980s, to 43 percent in 1999/2000, when only about 5,900 pupils were educated in Finnish.

The right to opt for a mother tongue instruction in Finnish/Meänkieli has been valid for all nine years of a basic school (since 1994), whereas it has been restricted to the first seven years for other languages.

Finnish and Meänkieli can also, at least in theory, be chosen by an individual pupil in several ways:

- ❖ The pupil may choose Finnish/Meänkieli as a *“language choice”* (a maximum of 320 hours of a total of 6,665 instructional hours in basic school).
- ❖ In grades 6 and 7 they can be chosen as so-called second languages (earlier *“B” languages*), instead of French, German, Spanish or some other international European languages.
- ❖ The mother tongue can also become a *“pupil’s choice”* (maximally 382 hours of 6,665) for one or several hours per week. This can take place earlier than in grade 6. If Finnish/Meänkieli is chosen as a pupil’s choice in grade 6 or later, it is referred to as a third or *“C” language*. In this case it can be chosen for 320 hours during three to four years.
- ❖ It is also possible to have Finnish and Meänkieli as a subject chosen by the school (*“school’s choice,”* maximally 600 hours). Also in this case it is sometimes called the *“C” language*.

The four choices offered depend on the school's economic situation, availability of teachers, attitudes of both the teachers and parents, and the number of pupils required to form a class (5 for Finnish; no limits for Meänkieli). In all instances the municipality may deny the students' right to receive a mother tongue instruction, by failing to arrange suitable teachers.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

Both Finnish and Meänkieli may be taught as so-called third language (earlier "C" language at the beginner's level). English is the first foreign language for all children in the 1st to 3rd grade. The second foreign language may be chosen in the 6th or 7th grade.

Finnish/Meänkieli can also become the pupil's choice. The rule for the minimal number of pupils (5) applies in this case. The percentage of pupils who choose Finnish or Meänkieli as the third language is consistently lower than that choosing them as a mother tongue. Furthermore, the proportion of pupils who want Finnish or Meänkieli as a mother tongue at the upper secondary level is lower than that choosing them as a mother tongue in a basic school.

HIGHER EDUCATION

At the moment, no full study program exists which would include teaching in these languages. Separate preparations are being made for both Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish to start up study programs for bilingual (Swedish + either language) journalists/media production in co-operation with two journalistic departments (Mitthögskolan for Meänkieli and Stockholm University for Sweden Finnish).

Teaching in Finnish has been offered at five traditional universities: in Uppsala since 1894 (at the Department of Finno-Ugrian Languages), in Stockholm since 1930 (the Department of Finnish), in Umeå (northern Sweden) since the early 1970s (the Department of Finnish and Sámi), in Lund (southern Sweden, close to the border with Denmark) since 1947 (the Department of Finno-Ugrian Languages) and in Gothenburg since the late 1970s (Finnish section). In 1996, a decision was taken to stop providing teaching in Finnish at Gothenburg University. This decision came into effect in 1999. In Lund, the Department of Finno-Ugrian languages was closed in the fall of 2001, but some teaching is available in co-operation with the Finnish section at Copenhagen University in Denmark.

The Department of Finnish at Stockholm University is one of the two largest institutions for higher education in Finnish outside Finland, with about 150-200 students annually. More than half of the students have

Sweden Finnish background while about 5 to 10 percent have Tornedalian background. At the universities of Uppsala and Umeå, about 50 to 100 students take courses in Finnish.

Higher education in Meänkieli is in its initial phase. Luleå Technical University has a pedagogical faculty and a language section. Finnish has been taught in Luleå since 1972.

Source: Mercator Education, The Finnic Languages in Education in Sweden,

http://www1.fa.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/regional_dossier_meankieli_in_sweden.htm

APPENDIX A

MAP OF SWEDEN



APPENDIX B

SWEDEN - CONSTITUTION

(Adopted on January 1, 1975)

(Document Status 1989)

CHAPTER 1

Article 2

(4) Opportunities should be promoted for ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities to preserve and develop a cultural and social life of their own.

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

LAW ON THE RIGHT TO USE SAAMI IN RELATIONS WITH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Territory of enforcement of the law

1. The present law will be enforced in those relations with the authorities of the state, local or regional administration in a geographical territory of activities which partially or entirely covers the territory of administration for the Saami language.

The territory for the administration for the Saami language comprises the towns of Arjeplog, Gällivare, Jokkmokk and Kiruna.

This law will also be applied to provincial courts, courts of first instance, dwelling tribunals, tribunals for the environment and maritime rights, in the domains partially or entirely covered by the territory for the administration for the Saami language.

The right to use Saami in relations with the authorities of the administration

2. An individual has the right to use the Saami language in verbal and written contacts with an authority of the administration, in those cases concerning the exercise of the authority towards the individual, as long as the case is related to the territory of the administration.

In case the individual makes use of the language in any of these cases, the authorities are obliged to answer in Saami. Written replies must contain information in Saami and the resolution may be orally translated, if requested by the individual. Authorities must intend to deal with Saami-speakers in Saami.

3. The authorities of the administration must establish a schedule for visits and phone calls in Saami.

The right to use Saami at courts

4. The Saami language may be used during the procedures of the trial, as long as the case is related to the territory of the administration. This right is also applied to the bringing of actions corresponding to the courts where the decision has been submitted.

5. According to section 4, the right to use the Saami language also includes the right to deliver documentation related to the case, as well as the right to speak in Saami in oral negotiations before the tribunal. The tribunal will have to undertake the translation into Swedish, if necessary.

6. Those whose will is to use the Saami language during the procedures of a case in a court, will have to previously request for it, according to section 4. If this is not so, the request may be denied.

A request for the use of Saami may be denied in those cases in which there is an obvious inappropriate purpose.

7. In case the interested part makes use of the Saami language, he/she will also have to make use of an interpreter, according to the provisions corresponding to chapter 5, sections 6-8, and chapter 33, section 9 of the civil code, and to sections 50-52 of the Act for the procedures of administration.

The Saami language in nursery schools and geriatrics

8. Those towns inside the administration offering vacancies in nursery schools or geriatric activities must grant the possibility to get one of them in a centre in which Saami is the language partially or entirely used in the activity, according to chapter 2, sections 1 and 7 of the Act of school activities.

9. Towns inside the administration will have to undertake the possibility to be attended by staff with a proficient command of Saami for those who request for it in the services corresponding to the field of geriatrics.

Exceptions

10. In special cases, the government will be able to decree the exemption of the implementation of section 2 for certain government authorities. This will likewise be valid for delegates of the General Council and township delegates, with the previous authorization from the government.

This law will be enforced on April 1, 2000. It will be applied to those cases in concerned tribunals after its enforcement.

LAW ON THE RIGHT TO USE THE FINNISH AND MEÄNKIELI LANGUAGES IN RELATIONS WITH PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION.

Territory of enforcement of the law

1. The present law will be enforced in those relations with the authorities of the state, local or regional administration in a geographical territory of activities which partially or entirely covers the territory of administration for the Finnish and Meänkieli languages.

The territory for the administration for the Finnish and Meänkieli languages comprises the towns of Gällivare, Haparanda, Kiruna, Pajala and Övertorneå.

This law will also be applied to provincial courts, courts of first instance, dwelling tribunals, tribunals for environment and maritime rights in the domains partially or entirely covered by the territory for the administration for the Finnish and Meänkieli languages.

The right to use Finnish and Meänkieli in relations with the authorities of the administration

2. An individual has the right to use the Finnish and Meänkieli languages in verbal and written contacts with an authority of the administration, in those cases concerning the exercise of the authority towards the individual, as long as the case is related to the territory of the administration.

In case the individual makes use of the languages in any of these cases, the authorities are obliged to answer in Finnish and Meänkieli. Written replies must contain information in Finnish and Meänkieli, and the resolution may be orally translated, when requested by the individual.

Authorities must intend to deal with speakers of Finnish and Meänkieli in their respective languages.

3. The authorities of the administration must establish a schedule for visits and phone calls in Finnish and Meänkieli.

The right to use Finnish and Meänkieli at courts

4. The Finnish and Meänkieli languages may be used during the procedures of the trial, as long as the case is related to the territory of the administration. This right is also applied to the bringing of actions corresponding to the courts where the decision has been submitted.

5. According to section 4, the right to use the Finnish and Meänkieli languages also includes the right to deliver documentation related to the case, as well as the right to speak Finnish or Meänkieli in oral negotiations before the tribunal. The tribunal will have to undertake the translation into Swedish, if necessary.

6. Those whose will is to use the Finnish and Meänkieli languages during the procedures of a case in a court, will have to previously request for it, according to section 4. If this is not so, the request may be denied.

A request for the use of Finnish and Meänkieli may be denied in those cases in which there is an obvious inappropriate purpose.

7. In case the interested part makes use of the Finnish and Meänkieli languages, he/she will also have to make use of an interpreter, according to the provisions corresponding to chapter 5, sections 6-8, and chapter 33, section 9 of the civil code, and to sections 50-52 of the Act for the procedures of administration.

The Finnish and Meänkieli languages in nursery schools and geriatrics

8. Those towns inside the administration offering vacancies in nursery schools or geriatric activities must grant the possibility to get one of them in a centre in which Finnish and Meänkieli is the languages partially or entirely used in the activity, according to chapter 2, sections 1 and 7 of the Act of school activities.

9. Towns inside the administration will have to undertake the possibility to be attended by staff with a proficient command of Finnish and Meänkieli, respectively, for those who request for it in services corresponding to the field of geriatrics.

Exceptions

10. In special cases, the government will be able to decree the exemption of the implementation of section 2 for certain government authorities. This will likewise be valid for delegates of the General Council and township delegates, with a previous authorization from the government.

This law will be enforced on April 1, 2000. It will be applied to those cases in concerned tribunals after its enforcement.

Adapted text from a non-official translation

NATIONAL MINORITIES IN SWEDEN

Ministry of Culture

June 1999

In the Government Bill *National Minorities in Sweden*, the Government presents its proposals for a unified Swedish minorities policy for the protection of national minorities in Sweden. A number of measures are proposed aimed at strengthening the situation of the national minorities in Sweden and giving their languages the support necessary to keep them alive. The focus of the policy is on protecting the national minorities and the historical regional and minority languages.

A unified Swedish minorities policy

Sweden's ethnic and cultural diversity has a long history. Many of the groups that have long been minorities in Sweden have worked actively to preserve their culture and language so that today they form a living part of Swedish society. These minority groups have lived in Sweden for a very long time, and have their own religious, linguistic and cultural identity and the will to retain their own identity.

The Government now proposes in the bill *National Minorities in Sweden (1998/99:143)* that Sweden ratify the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The national minorities in Sweden thereby recognised are Sami, Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Roma and Jews. The languages covered are Sami (all forms), Finnish, Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish), Romani Chib (all forms) and Yiddish. Of these, Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli are historically geographically based, which means that more far-reaching measures are needed for these languages.

Regional measures

The right to use Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli in dealings with administrative authorities and courts of law

The Government proposes that the individual be given the right to use Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli in dealings with administrative authorities and courts of law in the geographical areas in which the languages have traditionally been used and are still used to a sufficient extent. The right applies to contacts with administrative authorities (such as county administrative boards, regional public prosecution offices, police authorities, tax authorities and employment offices), county council and municipal administrative authorities, district and city courts, county administrative courts and certain special courts.

For Sami the proposed geographical region includes the municipalities of Arjeplog, Gällivare, Jokkmokk and Kiruna, and for Finnish and Meänkieli the municipalities of Gällivare, Haparanda, Kiruna, Pajala and Övertorneå. The individual is entitled to speak Sami, Finnish or Meänkieli in oral proceedings before a court of law in the municipality concerned, irrespective of whether or not he or she has a command of Swedish. The individual is also entitled to submit documents in these languages. In contacts with administrative authorities the individual shall have the right to choose Finnish, Meänkieli or any form of Sami he or she wishes. The authority shall give an oral reply in Sami, Finnish or Meänkieli and generally strive to meet the individual in the respective language.

Pre-school activities and care of the elderly

Pre-school activities in the child's own language are important for the preservation of Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli, since a child's language learning is most intensive during the pre-school years. The Government proposes that the municipalities in the administrative regions for Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli give parents the opportunity to place their children in pre-school activities in which all or some of the activities are carried out in these languages.

With respect to the care of the elderly, it is the elderly who are often the greatest bearers of the language, culture and traditions. It is important therefore that older people who use Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli are able to continue to do so. Another reason why the mother tongue is important is that elderly people can lose their knowledge of the most recently acquired languages while retaining their first language. The Government proposes that the municipalities in the respective administrative regions

offer elderly care in which all or some of the activities are carried out in Sami, Finnish or Meänkieli.

COUNTRYWIDE MEASURES

Education

It is important that all children in Sweden, whether they belong to a minority or majority group, learn about the national minorities' history in Sweden and their culture, language and religion. Therefore the Government regards it as important that the national curricula for state primary and secondary schools, pre-schools and after-school centres (*Lpo 94*) and independent schools (*Lpf 94*) be amended to include the provision of information about national minorities and re-gional and minority languages. For this to be effective, teacher training must follow the new curricula.

Mother-tongue instruction and *bilingual instruction* have an important role to play in supporting and strengthening regional and minority languages. The National Agency for Education must, within its supervisory framework, pay particular attention to the development of mothertongue instruction for the national minorities.

It is important that *university education and research* on regional and minority languages and the national minorities continue and develop at the universities which today carry out higher education and research in Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli. The potential for and interest in university courses and research in Romani Chib and Yiddish, and the national minorities' culture, religion and history should also be carefully considered. The Government intends to present an evaluation in its next research policy bill.

Folk high schools and *educational associations*, because of their nature and form, are able to pursue activities aimed at members of national minorities. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education will be instructed to carry out an inventory of the courses for national minorities offered within adult and continuing education. The Council should also pay attention to the extent to which these groups participate in adult and continuing education, as well as the further measures that may be necessary in order to increase participation by these groups.

Cultural activities

Particular attention should be paid to national minorities in allocating public funds to literature, cultural periodicals and other cultural activities. Existing subsidies should be increased by one million kronor

beginning in the year 2000. The National Council for Cultural Affairs should be instructed to study how Sami, Finnish, Tornedal Finnish, Romany and Jewish culture can be given sufficient space in Swedish cultural life.

Mass media

When considering new broadcasting licences for the public service broadcasters, Swedish Television, the Swedish Broadcasting Company and the Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company, the Government intends to raise the issue of affording Romani Chib the same status in programming as Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli have today. It is also important that newspapers in Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli are given sufficient support. Newspapers in Sami can obtain state subsidies through the Sami Parliament, and the Finnish-language newspaper *Ruotsin Suomalainen*, and *Haparandabladet*, which is partly written in Meänkieli, can receive support via the Press Subsidies Council.

Archives

At present, government support is given to the Sami Parliament to be used in support of Sami culture and language, and to provide a Sami archivist at the Institute for Dialectology, Onomastics and Folklore Research in Umeå. The Government intends to initiate a survey of suitable methods of collecting and keeping documents in all the regional and minority languages.

Elderly care

The Finnish-speaking minority is the largest minority in Sweden. Shortly there will be a large number of Finnish speakers in need of elderly care. In order to provide different examples of elderly care takes into account the wishes of elderly Finnish speakers, the Government intends to instruct the National Board of Health and Welfare to survey elderly care for Finnish speakers in municipalities with a large number of elderly people who speak Finnish. The objective is to provide good examples.

Translation of certain statutes into regional and minority languages

Statutes that especially concern the rights of national minority groups should be translated into the regional and minority languages.

The national minorities' ability to influence

It is important that those affected by the new minorities policy are able to make their views and wishes known before decisions are made.

Examples of forms of influence are the Sami Parliament and the Working Group on the Roma at the Ministry of Culture, which has been working to improve the situation of the Roma. Closer forms of continuous consultation should be considered. In order to monitor regional measures, a regional working group will be set up under Norrbotten County Administrative Board, made up of representatives of municipalities, county councils and users of Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli.

Transfrontier cooperation

At present there is transfrontier cooperation on a number of different issues concerning national minorities. A large amount of this work is carried out through the Nordic Council of Ministers, but there is also co-operation between groups belonging to national minorities. Sweden should continue to encourage transfrontier cooperation on issues of interest to the national minorities, such as culture, history, language, religion, etc.

Economic consequences

In the Spring Budget the Government calculated SEK 10 million per year from 2000 as a response to the minorities policy. The amount is expected to be allocated as follows: SEK 6 million to the municipalities and county council concerned; SEK 1 million to the courts; SEK 1 million to strengthening the state cultural subsidy; and SEK 2 million for measures concerning the national minorities' influence and for follow-up measures. The Government intends to present proposals for the exact allocation of the funds in the autumn budget bill for the year 2000.

APPENDIX C

“Sweden may have new official languages”

Criticism against Southern Sami not being included in a preliminary decision by the Minority Language Commission.

Kiruna and Gällivare are two cities in Norrbotten, which may have three official languages in the future: Swedish, Finnish and Sami. Five other cities in Norrbotten may get two official languages. The citizens of these cities will be able to demand to use Finnish or Sami in their contacts with state or local authorities in the exercise of public authorities. On the other hand, the citizens will not have the right to demand replies in the Finnish and Sami languages.

The proposal, which has been produced by a State Commission, may be seen as the first step for Sweden to develop a minority policy. “So far Sweden has not had any particular policy towards minorities who have been here for a considerable length of time - only a immigrant policy,” says Carin Lundmark - MP and Social Democrat and Chairman of the Committee.

“May refuse the Convention”

The Minority Language Commission is working on a proposal on how Sweden should adopt to the Convention of regional and minority languages. The Committee has put forward proposals of how the demands in the convention can be fulfilled, but no decision has been made so far.

“We may still arrive at the conclusion that Sweden should not sign the convention,” says Carin Lundberg.

The Convention does not concern immigrant languages, only languages that “by tradition” have been spoken in the country. The convention talks about two types of minority languages with different levels of protection. Minority languages, which have regional roots, will have the most profound protection. In order to adopt the convention the state must pledge to fulfill at least 35 measures from the convention menu. For a language without a regional foundation the rules are a bit more vague.

“A step in the right direction”

The Swedish Commission has made the preliminary determination that a possible adaptation of the convention would result in the Sami Language

being a regional language in the cities of Arjeplog, Gällivare, Kiruna and Jokkmokk. "It is a step in the right direction, but we are of the opinion that all three Sami-language regions should be included. But the Southern Sami communities are missing in the proposal," says Ingvar Åhén - Chairman of the Sami Ting (Parliament).

He is also critical to the proposal, since it does not stipulate that the authorities are obliged to give answers in the minority language. "It is not logical. One should strive for having employees who have the ability to both speak and write in the Finnish and Sami languages," he says. The Commission is also of the opinion that the only demarcated geographic territory where Finnish has been spoken up to the present day is Tornedalen. The extended regional rights for the language is therefore proposed to concern only the communities (cities) of Pajala, Övertorneå, Haparanda, Kiruna and Gällivare. Nor is any distinction between Finnish and Tornedal Finnish made in the proposal. Representatives of the Finnish speaking Finns in Sweden have demand an official recognition for their language in all of Sweden, similar to the position of Swedish in Finland.

In addition to the regional regulations a number of supporting activities are proposed for Finnish and Sami, particularly in the area of education and culture.

"Support for Romany weakened"

The language of the Roma will, according to the proposal, have the status as non-territorial minority language. It does not give the same distinct level of support.

"In addition to what is already been done we have discussed additional support activities for the Romany language," says Carin Lundmark. The committee also discusses the possibility of giving the Jewish language Yiddish status as a non-territorial minority language. The commission is not permitted to propose anything that may cause any additional costs for the State.

"The proposal may cost money, but that is because Sweden has to pay for old sins. If we the Sami had been allowed to use our languages all the time there would have been people in the administrations able to both speak and write Sami," says Ingvar Åhrén.

(Article published in the Svenska Dagbladet, June 13, 1997)

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