



Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund
Tornionlaaksolaiset

To the Expert Committee of the European Charter

Secretariat of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
DG II - Directorate of Anti-Discrimination
Council of Europe
Agora Building, 1 quai Jacoutot
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France

Copy: Ministries of Culture and Education

The Meänkieli-Speaking Minority is Forever Waiting...

Report to the Council of Europe

Introduction

The National Association of Swedish Tornedalians - STR-T wishes to comment on six aspects of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and also on the Swedish report.

First of all we urge the Committee of Experts within the European Charter to take the earlier reports¹²³ into consideration since we maintain that the criticism of earlier reports still remains.

There is a will to learn Meänkieli within the minority and a demand for language transfer between generations. However, Sweden fails to supply structures and systems for implementation and follow-up. Instead, they mend and patch.

Education = status quo

Many of the challenges documented in our earlier reports have not been undertaken and therefore we are worried and frustrated about the future of Meänkieli. We observe that the situation for Meänkieli has deteriorated in the last few years. We also observe that the Swedish authorities have neglected the recommendations of the previous monitoring visit from 2015⁴:

1. Strengthen education of or in all national minority languages by adopting a comprehensive and structured approach based on the needs of the speakers and according to the situation of each of the minority languages;
2. Ensure that "mother tongue" education meets the requirements of the Charter and offers adequate language tuition, enabling pupils to achieve mature literacy in the languages concerned;
3. Increase the amount of bilingual education available in Finnish and Sami, and establish bilingual education in Meänkieli;
4. Develop a system of teacher training according to the needs of the speakers and to the situation of each of the minority languages;
5. Consider extending the practice of the Sami language centres to other minority languages.

¹ Lost Momentum – Minority voices on the implementation of Minority Rights in Sweden 2016, Alternative report to the Council of Europe

² Still No Effective Measures for Implementation of Minority Rights, 22 May 2018

³ Additional Comments, 13 November 2018

⁴ https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680711410



Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund-Tornionlaaksolaiset
Tornedalsvägen 13, 984 31 Pajala

Tel: 070-582 40 74
Org.nr: 897600-3569
Bg: 669-2230

info@str-t.com
www.str-t.com
www.facebook.com/tornionlaaksolaiset



There is still a lack of an overall strategy for the national minority languages. This is obvious since it is not mentioned in the 7th report from the Swedish Government. The Council of Europe and representatives of the national minorities emphasized the need for an educational strategy at the Follow-Up Meeting on the Application of the Council of Europe Conventions on National Minorities and Minority Languages 13 November 2018 in Stockholm.

The commission of inquiry set up by the Government on Sweden's National Minority Languages in Education⁵ has been processed for two years but has not been included in the budget of the Swedish Government for 2020. Thus, national minority children still have to wait several years before they get adequate education. We therefore request that the Council of Europe seeks clarification from the Swedish Government if they intend to pursue this issue in the budget process for 2021. It would also be interesting to get information from the Ministry of Education and Research regarding the funding of the proposition and if they plan to pursue the issue as a whole or in parts.

In the statement of Government Policy, the Prime Minister said: "In 112 days The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, or the Children's Rights Convention (UNCRC) will come into force in Sweden. Every child will have the possibility to speak out and have the possibility to assert their rights"⁶. The Swedish Government should reflect on how they are going to listen to the children of national minorities when they have ignored them for 19 years. We also wish to emphasize that the above-mentioned inquiry did not cover bilingual education. We also observe that bilingual education in Meänkieli does not exist.

The conclusion from 22 May 2018 still remains: We must conclude that the national minority children's right to education in and about their minority language is as uncertain as before. No improvements have been made and this is devastating for the survival of the national minority languages in Sweden⁷.

The resources for a goal-directed teacher training in Meänkieli are insufficient as Umeå University gets funding corresponding to SEK 2 million. We need a fast track for further training for teachers to cover the current demand.

There is also an urgent need of teaching material for Meänkieli. There are only a few textbooks which are all used in compulsory school, secondary school and the university.

We observe that the Swedish Government brings up the inquiry of language centres in their report to the Council of Europe but we would like to highlight that this issue has not been given a definitive solution. The circulation for comments closed on 17 June which means that there would have been time to include it in the budget for 2020.

We claim that the language centres for Meänkieli cannot wait and we hope that the Council of Europe will urge the Swedish Government to accomplish this as soon as possible.

The Council of Europe is already well aware of the fact that one of the major challenges is the ignorance in Sweden about national minorities. All too few can name them or are aware of our rights, conditions and legislation. The knowledge about national minorities is not improving as fast as needed and the new proposals for the curricula presented by The Swedish National Agency for Education will not remedy this situation. We find it alarming that these curricula are designed without dialogue with the national minorities which is a violation of the Minority Act and the principle of the conventions.

⁵ Government Inquiry SOU 2017:91

⁶ <https://www.regeringen.se/4a5af5/contentassets/85873e3e6b5b46778d713e5143bdd66f/regeringsforklaringen-den-10-september-2019.pdf>

⁷ Appendix 2 Still No Effective Measures for Implementation of Minority Rights in Sweden





Truth and Reconciliation Process

November 13 2018 we informed the Council of Europe that the STR-T has requested that the Swedish Government set up a truth and reconciliation commission tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoing towards tornedalians, kvens and lantalaiset. This request is endorsed by the Church of Sweden.⁸⁹

It is good news that the government intends to continue the work for increasing knowledge about abuses and violations against our minority.¹⁰

The Follow-Up System in Sweden

To begin with we wish to point out that the previous comments from Appendices 1 and 2 on the follow-up system for national minority rights still remain. There are deficiencies in the follow-up system and the government has initiated an inquiry.¹¹ We welcome this inquiry as we are of the opinion that the County Administrative Board of Stockholm and the Sami Parliament are not suitable to be follow-up authorities for the government minority act.

We also conclude that Sweden still has no effective remedies for national minorities when minority rights are not being respected.¹²

Still Lack of Initiatives Regarding Influence

In May 2018 we informed the Council of Europe that “the language of the Government on improvements in the field of empowerment has no actual content!”¹³

We observe that this criticism still remains. In the 7h report the Government states that the increase for 2019 is totally SEK 1.9 million and points out that the increase is 40 per cent. Today, 14 organizations receive government funding so the actual increase for STR-T is SEK 82,027. This does not correspond to the increase in costs from 2010 up till now.

We also wish to inform the Council of Europe that the Government should consider redoubling the funding to organisations and increasing the support for consultations to SEK 600,000 for STR-T and the Sweden Finnish Delegation according to an inquiry¹⁴. The Sami Parliament already receives SEK 600,000 for consultations from 2018.

We would like to see equal funding for consultations. In the budget for 2020 the Government emphasizes that the opportunities and possibilities for empowerment and influence should be strengthened.¹⁵ We claim that this does not apply to the Tornedalian minority since we do not get adequate funding.

⁸ Appendix 3 Additional comments

⁹ <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/uitiset/svenska/praster-lat-rasbiologer-gora-skallmatningar-pa-barn>

¹⁰ The budget 2019/2020.(PROP. 2019/20:1 UTGIFTSOMRÅDE 1, p 93

<https://www.regeringen.se/4a6963/contentassets/c689564aa19c4d29bcebb1c037a2e37b/utgiftsomrade-1-rikets-styrelse.pdf>

¹¹ Samordning, utveckling och uppföljning för en stärkt minoritetspolitik. Dir. 2018:86

¹² Appendix 2 Still No Effective Measures for Implementation of Minority Rights

¹³ Appendix 2 Still No Effective Measures for Implementation of Minority Rights

¹⁴ Nästa steg? Förslag för en stärkt minoritetspolitik SOU 2017:60. English summary

<https://www.regeringen.se/4a8d12/contentassets/f869b8aae642474db1528c4da4d2b19a/sammanfattningen-pa-engelska-och-de-nationella-minoritetspraken>

¹⁵ The budget 2019/2020. PROP. 2019/20:1 UTGIFTSOMRÅDE 1, p 93

<https://www.regeringen.se/4a6963/contentassets/c689564aa19c4d29bcebb1c037a2e37b/utgiftsomrade-1-rikets-styrelse.pdf>





Care for the Elderly

The situation within this field is the same. We refer to our previous reports.

Meänkieli in Public Service

We would like to point out that the situation is the same as that described in our report Lost Momentum¹⁶. The range of public service broadcasting in Meänkieli is very limited, especially for children and young people. Compared to the Sami and Finnish news departments, the Swedish Television and Swedish Radio news departments for Meänkieli are very limited. The public service companies (Swedish Radio, Swedish Television and UR/Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company) could also play an important role in the revitalization of Meänkieli and contribute to the creation of a standard written language if the companies offered adequate broadcast services in Meänkieli and Swedish on their websites.

We note there is a demand for information about what is happening in the Arctic area of the Scandinavian countries and the Kola peninsula.

There is still a shortage of trained Meänkieli -speaking journalists.

We want to inform the Council of Europe that according to the media companies and the government there has been a positive development in the total production of programmes. In reality the situation is completely different, see tables below. When the information is based on the index of change the situation is positive but the actual increase in hours is marginal for Meänkieli. From 2013 to 2018 the increase is 365 hours for all companies, 304 hours for Swedish Radio, 53 hours for Swedish Television and 8 hours for The Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company.

Table 1. Meänkieli within public service companies 2013-2018, amount of hours . (Source: Sveriges Televisions public service-redovisning 2018, bilaga 2. Bolagsgemensamt index för minoritetsspråk)

	Swedish Radio	Swedish Television	Swedish Educational Broadcasting Company	Totally, hours
2013	803	17	10	830
2014	803	22	12	837
2015	830	19	17	866
2016	1047	45	17	1109
2017	1089	51	18	1158
2018	1107	70	18	1195

¹⁶ Lost Momentum – Minority voices on the implementation of Minority Rights in Sweden 2016, Alternative report to the Council of Europe, page 38.





Table 2 Change. (Source: Sveriges Televisions public service-redovisning 2017, bilaga 2. Bolagsgemensamt index för minoritetsspråk)

	Sveriges radio	Sveriges television	Utbildningsradion	Index
2013	100	100	100	100
2014	100	129	120	116
2015	103	112	170	128
2016	130	265	170	188
2017	136	300	180	205
2018	138	412	180	243

Additional Comments to the Swedish Report

A stricter minority legislation has been adopted 1 January 2019. We note that it is too early to see any effects of this change. It is remarkable that the government has not addressed other issues that were brought up in the inquiries SOU 2017:60 and SOU 2017:88. We informed the Council of Europe about this in May 2018.

It is good news that the Institute for Language and Folklore has appointed a language advisor who gives guidance on the usage of Meänkieli.

Much to our regret the seventh report from the government mentions that the youth organisations of Sámi and Swedenfinns have produced language packages but they neglect to mention that this has also been done by Met Nuoret for Meänkieli in 2018 (p. 25-26).

We ask the Expert Committee of the European Charter to take note of the current situation and to urge Sweden to fulfill its commitments under the European Language Charter.

8 October 2019

Ms Kerstin Salomonsson
Chairperson, National Association of Swedish Tornedalians/Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund-Tornionlaaksolaiset

Ms Maja Mella
Director, National Association of Swedish Tornedalians/Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund-Tornionlaaksolaiset

