

# Lost Momentum

## Minority Voices on the Implementation of Minority Rights in Sweden 2016

Alternative Report to the Council of Europe

**The Sweden Finnish Delegation**

**National Association of Swedish Tornedalians**



# LOST MOMENTUM

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### Foreword

Almost 16 years have passed since the Swedish Parliament in December 1999 decided to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The previous and the current Swedish Government have stated that implementation of human rights is an area of high priority, and especially human rights related to the rights of the child. Yet, many structural and legal implementation problems remain for the national minorities, especially in the field of education. The previous Council of Europe recommendations on education still remain to be attended to and tens of thousands of minority children have been denied the support of the educational system that they are entitled to. Sweden is still not fulfilling its international obligations under the Council of Europe Minority Conventions or article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

On 1 June 2016, the Swedish Government submitted its periodical reports on the progress in the implementation on the minority conventions to Council of Europe.<sup>1</sup> This alternative report provides additional information from minority NGOs on the current minority rights situation. We note that very few actual improvements have been made since the previous alternative report in December 2013.<sup>2</sup> Many promises have been made by those in charge, but the results and positive effects of the reforms remain to be seen. It is unclear why it is taking such a long time to take appropriate government measures. The minorities are still waiting for minority rights to receive the high priority attention that has been promised on numerous occasions.

We would also like to inform the Council of Europe of signs of deterioration in the current implementation and areas of concern that have been observed. The great hopes and expectations that

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<sup>1</sup> Fourth Report submitted by Sweden pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ACFC/SR/IV(2016)004, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168065895c> (English), <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168065895e> (Swedish); Sixth periodical report presented to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter, MIN-LANG (2016) PR 3, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/SwedenPR6\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/SwedenPR6_en.pdf) (English), [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/SwedenPR6\\_se.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/Report/PeriodicalReports/SwedenPR6_se.pdf) (Swedish)

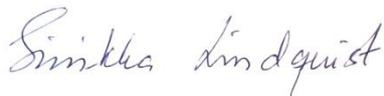
<sup>2</sup> Church of Sweden et al: *"Marginalized and Ignored – National Minority Children's Struggle for language Rights in Sweden 2013*, 2013, <https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/flersprakigkyrka/rapporter>

the 2010 minority rights reform raised have not been met yet. In fact, Swedish minority rights policy is currently losing momentum and the lack of appropriate government measures is detrimental.

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30 September 2016



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# 1. The Current Monitoring Period

The dates for submitting Sweden's periodical reports regarding the Framework Convention and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages happened to coincide this time to 1 June 2016. The Swedish Government's two reports contain partly the same text. The monitoring period regarding the Framework Convention is June 2011 – May 2016 and for the Language Charter October 2013 – May 2016.

As minority NGOs we will focus on the big picture of implementation of minority rights. A joint alternative report is therefore submitted on both conventions, focusing on the development since June 2011. This report will comment on a few positive developments and describe a number of issues of concern. The report focuses on the protection provided for Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami according to Part III of the Language Charter and the protection in the administrative areas. The protection of minority languages under Part II will only be dealt with briefly. The report will not discuss issues relating to the Government's strategy for Roma inclusion.

Many of the challenges previously described in the alternative reports "*Våga vara minoritet – En rapport om minoritetsrättigheter i Sverige 2012*" ("Dare to be Minority – A Report on Minority Rights in Sweden 2012")<sup>3</sup> and "*Marginalized and Ignored – National Minority Children's Struggle for Language Rights in Sweden 2013*"<sup>4</sup> remain.

## 2. Conclusions on the Minority Rights Situation 2016

The minority rights reform of 2009 brought hope to the national minorities. For the first time since Sweden ratified the Council of Europe minority conventions the Government finally expressed higher ambitions and an active approach to minority rights through a new policy, the new Minority Act and extended the administrative areas. A clearer government support to the municipalities and assigned government agencies in charge of follow-up of the implementation was expected to make a great difference for the national minorities, and especially for the territorial minority languages. It was clear that the minority rights policy would require a lot of hard work, active promotion and dissemination, awareness raising and development of new structures and work methods.

Many changes have taken place since then and some of them positive, but many opportunities to improve the situation have not been acted upon by those in charge. The situation in October 2016 shows that the hopes and expectations of the national minorities have been dashed. **The Government's ambitions in the minority rights policy of 2009 have not been realized and in some parts there is still no plan on how the goals are to be reached.**

Many municipalities have chosen a passive approach and a narrow interpretation of the Minority Act. The structural challenges in providing services in Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli in the administrative areas continue to be a problem, even though some municipalities are trying very hard. **The government agencies in charge of providing support for municipalities have also chosen a passive role and a narrow interpretation of their tasks.** There is much to be said about the analysis provided on implementation and the actual support provided for municipalities.

The national goals for the minority rights policy, affirmed by the Parliament, are not being observed when developing new government policies in other areas and very few political efforts have been made to strengthen the municipalities ability to provide necessary services for the national minorities. Higher awareness of the national goals is still needed.

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<sup>3</sup> Church of Sweden et al "*Våga vara minoritet – En rapport om minoritetsrättigheter i Sverige 2012*", <https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/flersprakigkyrka/rapporter>

<sup>4</sup> "*Marginalized and Ignored*", see above

Statements of high ambitions in the field of minority rights are not enough, these ambitions need to be transformed into actions. **The Government has not used the instruments in its power sufficiently to give assignments to government agencies in order to improve implementation or secure plans for implementation, nor has it taken sufficient measures to secure minority/Indigenous children´s right to their minority language and cultural identity.**

Mainstreaming of minority rights in other political fields and policies is still not being done in a consistent manner. The ministry in charge of minority rights has not even secured the promotion of minority rights within the ministry itself, which can be seen in the number of Government proposals, inquiries and government agency reports, that do not even mention national minorities let alone the obligations under the minority rights conventions, even though national minorities are being affected. **Coordination between government agencies is not being done to any great extent and the municipalities are not being given enough support, not even when they ask for such help.**

Implementation of minority rights is not necessarily a problem of funding, even though specific funding would most likely increase and promote implementation. **The main problem is the general passive approach, inability or even unwillingness to act and the Government´s lost opportunities in mainstreaming minority rights and using its instruments of powers to direct government agencies.** In the first years of the new minority rights policy more action could be observed, but this has tapered off. If the high ambitions would have been translated in to real actions to implement the minority rights policy, the national minorities would have been better off today. **The minorities feel that the implementation has lost momentum due to passiveness or tardiness, and this is causing frustration and resentment.**

When the current Government took office in September 2014 it needed time to form its own opinion of the minority rights situation and to figure out what actions would be appropriate. This is understandable. It took the Ministry of Culture 18 months from the first meetings with the Tornedalian and Sweden Finnish minorities to appoint a special inquiry on improving the implementation. It remains to be seen if any Government measures will be taken before the next elections in September 2018. **Another problem is that some of the tasks given to the newly appointed special inquiry could be dealt with already, if the Government chose to use its instruments of power.**

**In the field of education, no significant improvements have been made since the previous monitoring visit.** National minority children´s opportunities to reach acceptable levels of competence and especially literacy in their minority language continue to be very limited. Mother tongue tuition is not sufficient and bilingual teaching is virtually non-existent. **There is still no plan on how the educational situation should be improved and no definite answers are provided by the Ministry of Education.** There is no additional information available on the inquiry that the Ministry of Education plans to initiate.

The structures needed for implementing minority rights on the local or national levels are not in place, and very few efforts are being made to develop such structures. There is a continued need to raise awareness on minority rights and the current situation of the national minorities and to secure access to personnel with cultural and linguistic competence in the municipalities. In many cases, there is still no clear picture on the health situation etc. of the national minorities compared to the majority population.

Revitalization efforts are being made. We do not know, however, if these efforts are leading to any significant results for Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani Chib or Yiddish, since the government is not monitoring this in any way. There is no plan for how long term revitalization improvements are to be reached and sustained. **A number of proposals regarding revitalization have been made by the national minorities, but the Government has not acted upon these proposals.** Important steps forward in finding appropriate revitalization methods have been made regarding Sami, thanks to the Sami Language Centre. A real plan for systematic revitalization is needed.

Public service media in national minority languages is essential for implementing minority rights in Sweden. Recent negative trends that can be observed are: increasing use of majority language in

minority language broadcasts, the loss of prime time slots on the radio, the loss of regional reporting, fewer broadcasts that discuss and report on societal issues affecting the minorities/Indigenous people, very limited broadcasts for children and youth in minority languages etc. This is affecting revitalization of the national minority languages negatively. **The national minority languages are not receiving equal treatment and they are marginalized by having to use less popular channels and time slots.** The next broadcasting licences need to provide stronger protection of the national minority languages and minority/Indigenous issues.

### 3. Positive Development since June 2011

Five and a half years have passed since the new Act on Minorities and Minority Languages (hereafter called the Minority Act) entered into force in January 2010. The initial phase of implementation has been completed and specific results should have been reached by now. Here are some of the positive trends that can be observed.

#### 3.1 Political Ambitions to Strengthen Minority Rights

The minority rights reform was launched during the previous Centre/Right Coalition Government and there were some concerns among the national minorities on whether the new Social Democrat/Swedish Green Party Government, that took office in October 2014, would continue the implementation of the minority rights policy.

In the debates and interviews preceding the elections the Swedish Green Party made a number of statements about improving the situation of the national minorities. In an interview on 27 August 2014 the leading spokesperson for the Swedish Green Party Ms. Åsa Romson stated that her party was committed to increase the budget for minority rights policy with an additional 40 million SEK per year, if her party came in to power. The additional resources would, according to Ms. Romson, be used to improve the protection of the minority languages and cultures and measures in the field of education.<sup>5</sup>

In the Statement of Government Policy, 3 October 2014, where the newly elected Prime Minister Mr. Stefan Löfven outlined his policies, he emphasized the battle against racism and stated: *"Sweden must secure the rights of national minorities."*<sup>6</sup> This was the first time ever that the national minorities were even mentioned in a Statement of Government Policy. The statement was received very positively by minority representatives. The ministers in charge of minority rights issues and education were both selected from the Swedish Green Party.

The following year, however, the national minorities were no longer mentioned at all in the Statement of Government Policy. The only remaining reference was to the Sami, as an Indigenous people, and thus presumably referring to the Government's Sami policy: *"The Sami have special status as Sweden's Indigenous people. The Government intends to increase Sami influence and participation, and will reinforce the role of the Sami Parliament."*<sup>7</sup> In its most recent Statement of Government Policy on 13 September 2016 the Prime Minister stated again: *"The work to secure the rights of national minorities continues."*<sup>8</sup>

The Minister of Culture and Democracy, Ms. Alice Bah Kuhnke, (in charge of national minority issues in the Government) has on numerous occasions in speeches and interviews referred to her own and the Government's high ambitions in improving the implementation of minority rights. In an interview five months after taking office she stated that the situation of the national minorities is her most important issue to deal with as a minister.<sup>9</sup> In a speech commemorating the 15-year anniversary of the

<sup>5</sup> SR Sjuradio, 27 Aug. 2014, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=5948643>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.government.se/information-material/2014/10/statement-of-government-policy-3-october-2014/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.government.se/speeches/2015/09/statement-of-government-policy-15-september-2015/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2016/09/regeringsforklaringen-den-15-september-2015/>

<sup>9</sup> <http://minoritet.se/nationella-minoriterna-ar-min-viktigaste-fraga>

Parliament's decision to recognize the national minorities, 2 December 2014, the Minister of Culture stated that she was aware of shortcomings in the Minority Act and that she was considering an overview in order to improve the equal implementation in the municipalities. She also noted that measures in the field of education are important.<sup>10</sup> In several interviews she has stated the need to reform the minority rights policy and the Minority Act in order to improve the implementations, that this is an area of priority for the Government and that it is necessary to have a government inquiry on the matter.<sup>11</sup> She has also stated that her party will stand by the previous promise of an additional 40 million SEK for strengthening minority rights.<sup>12</sup>

The political statements made prior to the elections of 2014 and the statements by the current ministers in charge since September 2014 have led the national minorities to believe that the implementation of minority rights will continue in Sweden as a matter of priority.

### **3.2 Minority Legislation Has Made a Difference**

The Minority Act has been implemented since 1 January 2010. The annual reports of the County Administrative Board in Stockholm/The Sami Parliament show that many of the municipalities that are part of the administrative areas for Finnish, Meänkieli or Sami are implementing the Minority Act and developing local forms of dialogue. At least in these municipalities the Minority Act has had a significant impact. The national minorities have also been able to point to specific provisions in the Act in order to find support for their views. In municipalities outside the administrative areas it is less certain that the municipalities respect the basic protection of national minorities.

### **3.3 Geographical Expansion of Administrative Areas Was a Success**

Before the minority rights reform the total number of municipalities belonging to an administrative area was 7. Today the number of municipalities has increased to 75, out of which 38 have applied voluntarily to be a part of the administrative area. This means that the number of minority individuals living in administrative areas and thus receiving protection under Part III of the European Language Charter has increased dramatically. This is a very hopeful development for the Sweden Finns, Tornedalians and the Sami.

The possibility for municipalities to apply voluntarily has become a tremendous success. The main reason for this expansion can be attributed to a mobilization among the national minorities on the local level. Many of the municipalities that have chosen to join the administrative areas have also been rather successful in implementing the Minority Act. Some of the success factors for improved implementation appear to be that there is a political commitment in municipalities that have applied voluntarily, higher awareness in minority issues after having prepared and gone through the application process and also a strong local minority mobilization for finding solutions.

### **3.4 Dialogue with Minorities on the Local Level has Improved**

Within the administrative areas the municipalities have developed different forms of dialogue fora for minority issues. It is essential for the implementation of the minority rights that such fora are established. A challenge has been – and still is in some municipalities – to diversify the dialogue fora so that minority youth are also represented in the dialogues. Some municipalities have actively chosen to develop youth reference groups in order to secure younger minority participation. This is hopeful.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.regeringen.se/tal/2014/12/tal-m.a.a.-15-arsjubileum-av-riksdagens-erkannande-av-de-fem-minoriteterna/>

<sup>11</sup> SR Sisuradio, 3 Oct. 2014, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=5982349>; SR Sisuradio, 17 Mar. 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6118975>; SR Sisuradio and Sameradion, 9 June 2016,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6450182>,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=6449656>

<sup>12</sup> SR Sisuradio, 10 Nov. 2014, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6014032>

The need to increase the influence of children and youth has been an issue in many municipalities.<sup>13</sup> The effective participation of the national minorities has however not been as successful in municipalities outside the administrative areas even though the Minority Act requires such dialogue.

### **3.5 Strengthened Minority Youth Organizations**

Increasing the influence of minority youth is an essential step in empowering the national minorities and securing future revitalization of minority languages and cultures. A very positive development was that the cooperation between the minority youth organizations has increased. The government-funded project *Ung Minoritet/Young Minority* is a good example of such empowerment. The project was initiated by the previous Government. The project, that was coordinated and administrated by the participating youth organizations themselves, has focused on sharing experiences on issues like combating prejudice and racism and strengthening identity.<sup>14</sup> Due to lack of additional government funding, the project ended in June 2016.

### **3.6 Interest for Revitalization is Increasing**

There are many signs of a growing interest in language revitalization among national minorities. Inspired by the rising status of their languages and cultures, many young people enroll in language courses or other activities, trying to reclaim a heritage language they never learnt at home. Unlike many elders, the young do not carry the heavy burden of bad experiences and stigmatization, but instead, they lack the linguistic and cultural skills many of the elders still have. Young parents with a minority background are another group of people increasingly taking part in language revitalization. They might not have been particularly concerned by their minority language or culture in their teens, but many of them get a renewed interest when they become parents for the first time.

It is of course not so easy to offer all interested people real opportunities to learn and use their minority languages, because many different kinds of support are needed. The minorities differ from each other but also within one and the same minority, there are different needs. Those adults who have lost their minority language or who have never had the chance to learn it, might want to do something about it now that there is a chance. Another group are those who still have a certain language competence but who do not dare to use it because of psychological blocks caused by former bad experiences. It is also typical for historical minorities that there are many people who can speak but not read or write their minority language and who wish to develop literacy. If revitalization is to succeed, all these groups, and still others, are in need of support beyond what the Swedish education system or legal language rights are able to secure for them. They all need support and the ways of giving support in language revitalization must be tailored to meet these various individual needs. Innovative revitalization methods must be developed and individual revitalization programs launched as is today being done at the Sami Language Centre in Sweden.

### **3.7 The Sami Language Centre is a Success**

One of the most successful governmental efforts to secure and promote national minority languages in Sweden has been the establishment of a Sami Language Centre with the overall aim of revitalizing Sami in Sweden. The main tasks of the Centre are to promote and stimulate the use of Sami in society, develop methods for individual language reclamation, and to spread knowledge about revitalization. Cooperation with local actors, and completing the work done for minority languages in preschool, school, adult education, etc, are important parts of the Centre's task. The Centre, localized in two municipalities, is in charge of the revitalization for all the Sami languages spoken in Sweden, and its activities are tailored according to the special needs of each language. Children and youth are one important target group of the work at the Centre.

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<sup>13</sup> Church of Sweden et al: report "*Tio sätt att stärka barn och unga – ett minoritets- och urfolksperspektiv*" / "*Ten Ways to Strengthen Children and Youth – a Minority and Indigenous Perspective*". , 2014, <https://internwww.svenskakyrkan.se/flersprakigkyrka/rapporter>

<sup>14</sup> SR Sisu radio reporting on Ung Minoritet, 31 Mar. 2014, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1s85&artikel=5824440>

A continuous part of the Centre's work is also the yearly detailed analyses concerning the state of the Sami languages in Sweden. The Centre collects current data and experiences relating to Sami and analyzes this material against the backdrop of the UNESCO criteria for endangered languages. These kind of regular analyses of minority language situations are not carried out by any other part in Sweden in spite of the fact that they in fact are a precondition for efficient revitalization work.

Revitalization in general comprises a multitude of issues to be tackled, not least language-related attitudes and emotions. The work of the Sami Language Centre has shown that there is a need to work innovatively and without preconditions with such issues. In spite of the fact that all Sami languages still are seriously endangered in Sweden<sup>15</sup>, practical work carried out by the Centre has revealed the great potential of this kind of work supporting and adding to work done in other fora in society. In many cases, it has succeeded in giving individual people new hope and encouragement in a language situation regarded by many as impossible to remedy.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.8 Calls for Action to Deal with Historical Wrongdoings and Violations

The minority reform has strengthened the national minorities, and the calls for action on historical wrongdoings can be seen as a sign of this empowerment. Historical wrongdoings and systematic violations of the human rights and human dignity of the national minorities/Indigenous people are historic facts in Sweden. The Government's proposal 2009 launching the new minority rights policy lists some of these violations that took place as late as the 1900s: discrimination, language loss, subjection to research based on assumptions of racial characteristics (racial biology), forced registration of ethnicity, collective forced relocations, forced evictions, forced and involuntary sterilizations, children being taken into custody and separated from their parents, segregated institutionalized school systems with lower learning standards and subjection to corporal punishment in schools for using the minority language.<sup>17</sup>

The past few years demands for dealing with the historic violations and their consequences have increased in Sweden. In 2014 the previous Government published a white paper on the state's systematic human rights violations against the Roma in the 1900s.<sup>18</sup> The Roma white paper received praise for having been written in the first place, but it also generated criticism for having been too narrow in its scope and for not accomplishing very much. Documentation of the violations and an official apology were not seen as a sufficient step.

Calls for establishing a truth and reconciliation commission has been voiced by the Sami and the Tornedalians and there is currently an initiative in Parliament demanding a white paper on the issue.<sup>19</sup> Another such initiative dealing with historic wrongdoings and violations is a book on elderly Samis' own stories about the nomadic schools<sup>20</sup> (a mandatory school form for reindeer herding Sami families that was not abolished until the 1960s) and a scientific anthology on the historic relationships between the Sami and the Church, initiated by the Church of Sweden.<sup>21</sup> The initiatives are part of a

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<sup>15</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=6112791>

<sup>16</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=6299416>

<sup>17</sup> Government Proposal No 2008/09:158 p 32,

<http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/proposition/2009/03/prop.-200809158/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/ea9da200174a5faab2c8cd797936f1/den-morka-och-okanda-historien---vitbok-om-overgrepp-och-krankningar-av-romer-under-1900-talet-ds-20148>

<sup>19</sup> Motion No 2015/16:2499, [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/vitbok-om-behandlingen-av-samer-och-tornedalingar\\_H3022499](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/vitbok-om-behandlingen-av-samer-och-tornedalingar_H3022499)

<sup>20</sup> Church of Sweden: "När jag var åtta år lämnade jag mitt hem och jag har ännu inte kommit tillbaka" – minnesbilder från samernas skoltid nomadskolan/ "When I was eight years old I left my home and I still haven't come back" – Sami memories from the nomadic schools, 2016 (edit. Kaisa Huuva, Ellacarin Blind)

<sup>21</sup> Church of Sweden: *De historiska relationerna mellan Svenska kyrkan och samerna – En vetenskaplig antologi* / *The historic relationship between the Church of Sweden and the Sami – A scientific anthology*

reconciliation process between the Church and the Sami dealing with Sweden's colonial history and its consequences.

There is thus a growing need for revealing and documenting historical wrongdoings and violations. In Sweden these violations are still a part of a living memory, many still remember the forced assimilation that was practiced in the educational system etc. There is also a need for awareness raising on these issues among the majority population, decision makers, government officials on different levels and also among the minorities. In the Government's proposal to reform the minority rights policy it was noted that there is a need for reconciliation and to take responsibility for previous policies in the past.<sup>22</sup>

The form and the directives of such independent truth and reconciliation commissions have to be decided in dialogue with the minority/Indigenous people concerned, and based on the specific needs and specific situation of the groups.

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<sup>22</sup> Government's Proposal No 2008/09:158 p. 36

## 4. Issues of Concern

### 4.1 Minority Rights Governance and Empowerment of the Minorities

This report will focus on specific areas of concern where Sweden is having great difficulties in fulfilling its obligations under the Council of Europe Minority Conventions or areas where a negative trend in implementation can be observed. These problems are mainly of structural and legal character and they occur in essential areas of implementation and are therefore significant.

#### 4.1.1 Difficulty in Monitoring Implementation of Minority Rights

The Government's most recent periodical reports to the Council of Europe are, yet again, a list of measures taken within the field of minority rights. Minority NGOs have pointed out in previous alternative reports that the mere listing of measures taken is not sufficient. The main problem is that the periodical reports lack deeper analysis on the effects of these measures. That is also one of the major problems with the governance of the minority rights policy in Sweden. The mere ambition to implement minority rights is not sufficient, results are also needed. Currently we do not know whether measures taken actually lead to any lasting improvements. In fact, we do not even know what some of the results are and it is therefore difficult to monitor the effects and estimate the level of implementation. Moreover, the annual reports contain specific data on the amounts of government funding per year spent on different minority language services in the municipalities. The data has not been processed however, and for instance trends in spending from previous years cannot be followed on the municipal level. So we do not know if the situation is improving or developing in specific municipalities.

As a part of the follow-up, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm/Sami Parliament have made efforts to specify indicators in order to follow the development of implementation of minority rights. In its annual reports of 2014 and 2015 data was collected and reported on a number of different indicators. This provided a rough picture of the situation and the implementation of minority rights. This was perceived as a welcomed improvement in the domestic monitoring. However, these indicators are no longer reported on in the annual report of 2016. The change in policy was done without consulting the national minority representatives on the matter. When asked about it, the County Administrative Board argues, that data on indicators will only be collected every three years. The reason for this is that the municipalities in the administrative areas are not to be burdened too much. The fact remains though, that we do not know what the results are for 2016 in relation to previous years.

Municipal coordinators in the administrative areas have also criticized the County Administrative Board of Stockholm for basing its results on superficial surveys in the municipalities. According to some coordinators the questions only provide a simplified view of the complex situations in the municipalities.<sup>23</sup>

The lack of statistical data on the situation of the national minorities, continues to be a problem. A large amount of statistical data is in general collected every year on the wellbeing of individuals in Sweden. The collected data is necessary for tracking changes and evaluating the current situation of different groups and segments in society. When it comes to the situation of the national minorities, there are no specific markers in the general statistical data identifying individuals belonging to a specific national minority. The Government argues that it would be against current legislation to collect such data and that at least two of the national minorities oppose data collecting that can be traced to these minorities. The consequence of this practice is that we know very little about the national minorities and their current situation, for instance in the field of health, discrimination, housing, employment rates etc. One could argue that, since it is not allowed to register data on individuals regarding belonging to a national minority, government agencies and other authorities would make alternative and perhaps directed inquiries through other methods, in order to find out the

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<sup>23</sup> Letter from 24 municipal co-ordinators to County Administrative Board of Stockholm, 8 Dec 2014. See appendix 1.

current situation of the national minorities. This however has been done in very few cases. In general, the Government has not demanded the use of such alternate data collecting practices – such as through NGOs or voluntary reporting by individuals. So the problem, with lack of data on the situation of national minorities remains.

An effort was made in 2011-2012 to find ways to improve the collection of statistical data relating to discrimination of national minorities. The Equality Ombudsman made a special study on methods for collecting data and presented a report in 2012.<sup>24</sup> The Equality Ombudsman found that specific solutions for collecting data on the living conditions and situation of minorities are needed. And regarding Sweden Finns and Sami this could, according to the Equality Ombudsman, be done through general data collecting where providing information on belonging to the groups Sweden Finns or Sami would be voluntary for individuals. The other national minorities were negative to such solutions.<sup>25</sup> So far the Government has not taken any specific measures in developing data collection in the proposed direction, not even regarding Sweden Finns or Sami.

Since there is no reliable statistical data – with the exception for immigration statistics on persons born in Finland and their descendants<sup>26</sup> – we do not even know how many individuals perceive themselves as belonging to a national minority. As a consequence, there is no way of knowing how many individuals in a municipality belong to a national minority. It is thus exceedingly difficult for municipalities in the administrative areas to estimate how great the demand and need for services in minority languages is. In some municipalities the politicians may even argue that there is no need for such services.

#### **4.1.2 Too Passive Governance of Minority Rights Policy**

National minority rights have been developed step by step through the years. Important steps in the 2010 minority reform were the enactment of the Minority Act, and the establishment of a follow-up. This task was assigned to the County Administrative Board and the government agency part of the Sami Parliament.

In the two government inquiries preceding the minority rights reform the introduction of supervision was proposed.<sup>27</sup> In its proposal of 2009 the Government argued that the suggested supervision was not an operative supervision *per se*, but rather a lighter form, more like a follow-up. The Government concluded that if the follow-up that was introduced turned out to be insufficient for implementing minority rights, the question of operative supervision should be reopened for discussion.<sup>28</sup>

Six and a half years later we can conclude that the follow-up, coordination and the support provided by the County Administrative Board/Sami Parliament has not been sufficient enough to secure implementation of minority rights. The annual reports from the County Administrative Board/Sami Parliament show that some municipalities in the administrative areas are working hard to fulfill the obligations in the Minority Act and developing the local minority rights work. Other municipalities are more passive and individuals are frustrated when their minority rights are not being respected.

The County Administrative Board/Sami Parliament is also to provide support for municipalities in the administrative areas through advice, coordination and dissemination of knowledge about minority rights and the Minority Act. During the past few years a number of new municipalities have joined the administrative areas and these municipalities need active support in the initial phases of

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<sup>24</sup> Equality Ombudsman, report: "Statistikens roll i arbetet mot diskriminering", 2012, <http://www.do.se/om-diskriminering/publikationer/statistikens-roll-arbetet-mot-diskriminering/>

<sup>25</sup> See report, page 137

<sup>26</sup> The number of individuals born in Finland, and their descendants, are not an accurate figure for the number of Sweden Finns. These figures merely give an indication on the number of people with a Finnish background in Sweden. Some of these individuals have Swedish as their first language.

<sup>27</sup> Inquiry on the Finnish and South Sami Languages, Official reports government inquiries No. 2005: 40 and 2006:19; Memorandum from Ministry of Integration and Equality, Ds 2008:26.

<sup>28</sup> Government proposal No. 2008/09:158, p. 49.

implementation. But it is also clear that the “old“ municipalities are asking for guidance and additional support.

Municipal representatives have voiced concerns that the County Administrative Board is too passive in its support to the municipalities. On 8 December 2014 a total of 24 municipal coordinators in the administrative area for Finnish wrote to the County Administrative Board of Stockholm asking for “stronger support and clearer information” from the agency in order to improve implementation of minority rights.<sup>29</sup> In the letter the coordinators specifically requested organized meetings for municipal coordinators, thematic conferences on minority language preschool and care of the elderly, opportunities to exchange good practices and discuss challenges, and especially issues relating to the Sweden Finns. The coordinators also argued that the questions asked in surveys to municipalities were too simplified and that follow-up on results from such surveys could be misleading. The coordinators did not receive any answer to their letter. In February 2015 a representative of the unit in charge at the County Administrative Board finally responded that the questions put to the agency could be discussed at a meeting on 14 April 2015. At the meeting on 14 April, a representative of the County Administrative Board, started off saying that the questions would not be discussed at all. After renewed contacts, the agency responded that they had received the letter and in June 2015 a meeting with coordinators was held. One of the coordinators present describes the meeting “as not very constructive” and unpleasant, and that it was made clear to them that the agency was not interested in receiving such letters. Many of the coordinators at the meeting took offence when their request for help was so brusquely denied. The need for additional aid, support and information to the coordinators remains.

It is clear to the minority NGOs that the current support and aid to municipalities needs to improve. The support provided appears to be insufficient compared to the needs in the municipalities. This is the message to NGOs from several municipal coordinators.

Another serious problem seems to be the fact that the unit in charge of minority issues at the County Administrative Board lacks language and cultural skills in minority languages. There is a special need to be able to provide support and also understand issues relating to Finnish and Meänkieli, since these administrative areas are to receive support from the agency, just as the Sami Parliament provides support to the municipalities and the general public in the Sami administrative area. The Sami Parliament has personnel who speak and write Sami. As a consequence the County Administrative Board is unable to follow Finnish and Meänkieli language media’s reporting on minority issues. It also hinders the general public’s contacts in Finnish and Meänkieli.

One coordinator from the Finnish administrative area that provided information for this report tells us that the County Administrative Board does not seem to ask the right questions when dealing with the municipalities. If they were to follow Finnish language minority media closely they would get quite a different view of for instance the number of units in the municipalities that provide care of the elderly in Finnish. The statistics gathered by the agency seem to differ from what the minority media is reporting. If they were able to follow Finnish language media they would get a better and more detailed picture. The same coordinator states that the agency does not even follow up on the matters when the coordinators note discrepancies in what the municipalities are answering in surveys made, for instance when it comes to preschool and school issues. When asked about it, the County Administrative Board has answered that they trust that the municipalities are answering surveys accurately. The coordinator believes that the reported statistical data is not accurate and thus the analysis is based on inaccurate figures.

What are national minorities to do when municipalities ignore the provisions in the Minority Act? As mentioned above there is no operative supervision of the law, only follow-up. The minorities have continued to argue that such supervision should be introduced, as well as sanctions of some form. No such initiatives have been made yet, nor has the recently appointed inquiry been given such a task.

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<sup>29</sup> See appendix 1

#### 4.1.3 No Legal Basis for Actions Taken

In January 2016 the County Administrative Board of Stockholm presented a report to Ministry of Culture on the use of government funding in the municipalities in the administrative areas.<sup>30</sup> In its report the County Administrative Board of Stockholm also proposed new guidelines for the use of such government funding. The Ministry of Culture had requested such a report and guidelines.

The Finnish and Tornedalian minorities have questioned the content and the legal basis for these proposed guidelines. In a critical letter to the Ministry of Culture on 16 February 2016 the minority NGOs pointed out that the proposal is problematic in several aspects. The content *per se* in these proposed guidelines is also problematic in many ways. While drafting the proposed guidelines the County Administrative Board did not consult with minority representatives on the national level.

The County Administrative Board proposes for instance that government funding should not be allowed to be used by municipalities for purchasing additional pedagogical materials, such as children's books in the minority language for preschool, since this cannot be seen as an additional cost for preschools as defined in the government regulation. Preschools are supposed to purchase such materials anyway in Swedish. The only part that could be considered an "additional cost" would thus be the postage when ordering these minority language materials. This sort of reasoning is unrealistic, according to the minority representatives. The government funding is intended for making it possible to provide preschool in the minority language, and this requires materials for this purpose. Situations where the minority language preschool would have to compete for financial resources – and especially from the Swedish language preschools budget – should be avoided.

There is also a serious legal problem with the proposed guidelines. It is not within the regulatory powers of the County Administrative Board to propose such regulations. The regulatory powers are explicitly limited to the issues on how the municipalities are to present the use of government funding (section 12) and how the government is allowed to lower funding if previous funding has not been used (section 10 a). There is no regulatory power to define what is considered an "additional cost" according to section 8.<sup>31</sup>

It is difficult to understand how the County Administrative Board could exceed its regulatory powers when drafting the proposed guidelines. Nor has the agency reflected on the fact that the Government Regulations would have to be altered if such guidelines were to be imposed.

This is a very serious legal matter since the total amount of government funding administered to municipalities through these Regulations is over 76.3 million SEK. There has to be a legal basis for such regulations affecting the municipalities and the use of government funding. What the Ministry of Culture intends to do with the proposed guidelines is unclear. There is reason to believe that some municipalities may have started applying these guidelines already.

#### 4.1.4 Increasing Need for Minority Language Care of the Elderly

The need for care of the elderly is increasing among elderly Sweden Finns. Statistical data shows that the number of elderly is increasing drastically and the numbers will continue to increase. No information is available regarding the number of elderly in the other national minorities, nor their specific needs for care.

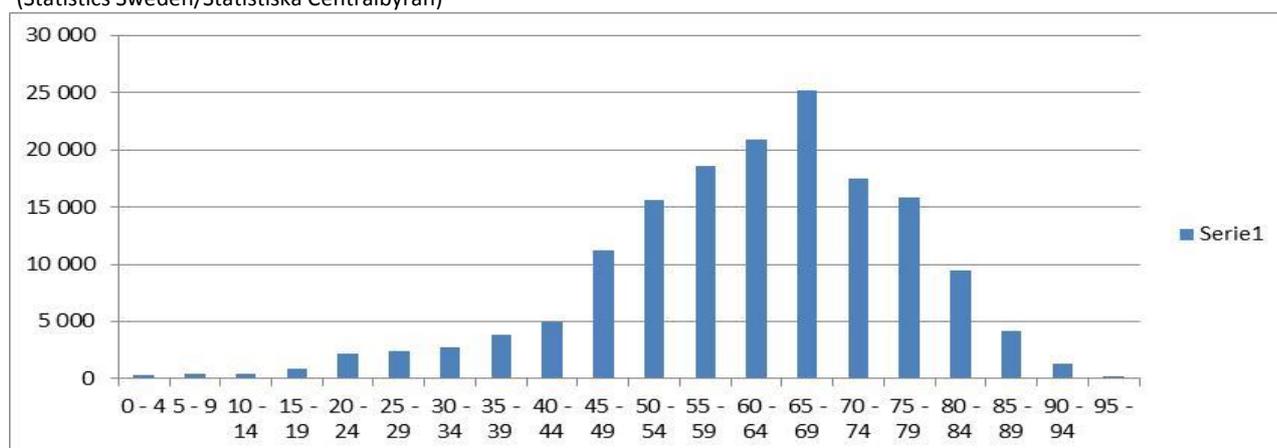
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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.lansstyrelsen.se/stockholm/SiteCollectionDocuments/Sv/manniska-och-samhalle/nationella-minoriteter/Rapport%20dnr%20106-23946-2015.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Regulatory powers as defined in section 13, Government Regulation No 2009:1299 on National Minorities and Minority Languages/ Förordning (2009:1299) om nationella minoriteter och minoritetsspråk, [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-20091299-om-nationella-minoriteter\\_sfs-2009-1299](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/forordning-20091299-om-nationella-minoriteter_sfs-2009-1299)

## Number of persons born in Finland living in Sweden on 31 Dec. 2014 by age

(Statistics Sweden/Statistiska Centralbyrån)



These figures show that the number of elderly persons with Finnish background – even if all of them might not have Finnish as a first language – are increasing. There are already 94 799 persons over 60 years, and 48 661 are 70 years or older and 15 260 have reached 80 years or older.

The number of care units providing care of the elderly in Finnish are very few in Sweden, even though they have increased when more municipalities have joined the administrative area for Finnish.

Surveys made by minority media show that 27 municipalities have units that can provide care of the elderly in Finnish.<sup>32</sup>

A map of these care units can be found in SR Sisuradio's reporting: <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6122382> (yellow dot: pre-existing units, black dots: new units, green dots: planned units for care of the elderly in Finnish).

This means that not even all the municipalities in the administrative area for Finnish have such units. A total of 40 municipalities report that they can provide care of the elderly in Finnish, but not in special Finnish speaking units.<sup>33</sup> The municipalities respond that it is not a question of priority, some municipalities are making surveys on the amount of care needed. Some municipalities claim that they cannot find Finnish speaking personnel.

There are numerous reports on individual cases where elderly Sweden Finns do not receive care in Finnish, even when they need it acutely. These elderly persons that are placed in regular Swedish language care units experience isolation, anger, sorrow and frustration.<sup>34</sup> Many elderly Sweden Finns are suffering from unworthy care conditions where they cannot communicate with the care providers. Most of the municipalities are not fulfilling their obligations under the Minority Act.

Media also reports that only 5,3 % of the municipalities in the country have a plan for how they are to solve care of the elderly for persons that speak another first language than Swedish. When SR Sisuradio reporters ask about the municipalities' preparedness to deal with this, the Minister in charge of issues relating to elderly persons, Ms. Åsa Regnér, responds that the Government has no initiatives

<sup>32</sup> SR Sisuradio, 24 March 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6122382>

<sup>33</sup> SR Sisuradio, 26 March 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6124735>

<sup>34</sup> For instance: SR Sisuradio, 22 Jan. 2014, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=5763408>, SR Sisuradio, 24 March 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6124791>, SR Sisuradio, 25 Dec 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6327730>

planned regarding this issue. The Minister in charge of issues relating to municipalities, Mr Ardalan Shekarabi, responds that his ministry is aware of the problems.<sup>35</sup>

#### **4.1.5 No New Municipalities in the Administrative Areas**

The provision in section 7 of the Minority Act allows municipalities to join the administrative area voluntarily. The provision was the result of a compromise when drafting the Minority Act. The Government did not want to close the door on new potential municipalities that wish to take on greater responsibilities in the minority rights policy. At the same time the Ministry of Finance was not willing to open the doors wide open. Thus, the current system requires approval by the Government before a new municipality can join an administrative area. The joining municipalities receive government funding for the extra costs entailed.

Since 2010 both the previous and the current Governments have encouraged municipalities to take greater responsibility by applying for voluntary admission. The voluntary admission of new municipalities has in fact been the question that has mobilized national minorities to active participation and lobbying in the municipalities, since the reform entered into force. Especially the Sweden Finns have successfully argued on the local level that there is a great need to find solutions for preschool and care of the elderly in Finnish and joining the administrative area for Finnish is an important way of dealing with these challenges. So far a total of 38 municipalities (of 75) have been allowed to join voluntarily. The results also show that municipalities that have joined voluntarily have been more successful in implementation of the Minority Act. Having gone through the political process of applying has raised the awareness on minority rights issues in the municipality and there is often some sort of plan for the implementation.

To the great surprise of the national minorities the current Government decided to stop voluntary admission in September 2015. No signs or hints about this were provided in advance. The minority representatives had to read the Government's budget proposal to find this out. The Ministry of Culture argues that since this was a budget question they could not inform the minorities in advance, let alone discuss the issue. At the same time the Minister of Culture states that the main reason for stopping the additional expansion of the administrative areas is that the current system of implementation is not working well enough and that the national minorities have requested measures to improve the implementation. The Minority Act thus needs to be reviewed before additional municipalities are allowed to join. The Minister stated in an interview that the Minority Act needs to be implemented the same way in all the municipalities and that it is not acceptable that they do things differently.<sup>36</sup>

As a consequence eight municipalities that had applied to join an administrative area were denied admission. These are Luleå (Meänkieli), Åsele (Sami), Sundsvall (Sami), Skellefteå (Finnish), Örnsköldsvik (Finnish), Järfälla (Finnish), Gislaved (Finnish) and Söderhamn (Finnish). Since then two more municipalities have made local decisions to apply: Luleå (Sami) and Laxå (Finnish). It is also worth noting that Luleå and Sundsvall are part of the administrative area for Finnish, so they are already within the system of stronger protection.

Minority representatives were very upset. In a debate article on 28 September 2015 representatives for Tornedalians, Sweden Finns and Sami criticized the Government for taking a step backwards in the minority rights policy. They argued that it is incomprehensible and counterproductive of the Government to stop one of the parts in the reform that is highly successful.<sup>37</sup>

It is difficult for the national minorities to understand why this decision was made and the way it was made. If the issue was not lack of additional funding, it was not a budget issue that had to be dealt with

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<sup>35</sup> SR Sisuradio, 26 March 2015,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6125833>

<sup>36</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6260657>;

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6261248>

<sup>37</sup> Debate article, "Regeringen tar ett stort steg bakåt för minoritetsspråket", SVT Opinion, 28 september 2015  
<http://www.svt.se/opinion/om-minoritetssprak>

in the budget proposal. The Ministry could have been straight forward with the minorities and the applying municipalities. Why would the Ministry of Culture stop one of the things that has actually been a success in the minority rights policy? Why was there no dialogue about it, as required by the principles in the minority conventions?

The decision has caused a lot criticism and resentment. The local minorities that mobilized and made the applications possible are devastated.<sup>38</sup> The preparations for joining have now been put on hold in these municipalities. At the same time there is a dire need to find solutions and develop preschool and care of the elderly. The Ministry of Culture has not given any more precise time table on when new municipalities would be allowed to be admitted.<sup>39</sup>

In a Parliament debate on the issue the Minister of Culture stated that the decision should be seen as a “pause” and not a “stop” for additional municipalities. She further argued that she was concerned about the municipalities’ use of government funding and that this has prompted the Ministry to assign the County Administrative Board to present new guidelines on use of government funding. While waiting for this proposal from the County Administrative Board, the adding of new municipalities would be “paused”.<sup>40</sup>

The proposed guidelines, that are referred to in the parliamentary debate, were presented in January 2016 and are described above under section 4.1.3. These proposed guidelines lack, as mentioned above, legal grounds and the content proposed is also questionable.

#### **4.1.6 Other Structural Problems**

Sweden has had a national minority policy over 15 years and it could thus be expected that the awareness about these rights and the needs of the national minorities would be higher than it actually is. We would like to mention two such examples where national minority issues have not yet become a part of the general municipal structures on the local level.

##### ***National Minorities and the Libraries***

On 1 January 2014 a new Library Act (No. 2013:801) entered into force. Section 5 stipulates that public libraries shall pay special attention to national minorities, among other things by providing literature in the national minority languages. The law is to be applied by all the municipalities in the country. How has the Library Act been implemented and are there any results regarding its implementation?

Statistics collected by the National Library of Sweden show that there are very few books in the national minority languages in the public libraries. SR Sisuradio reported on 14 December 2015 that it is difficult to find books in these languages in the libraries and that the selection of books is limited. When the SR Sisuradio asked 30 municipalities in different parts of the country, 27 municipalities reported that they had books in Finnish. According to SR Sisuradio the figures of the national Library of Sweden show that in 2015 only 64 percent of the libraries in Sweden had at least one book in at least one national minority language, and that the National Library of Sweden has concluded that the libraries are not implementing the Library Act as far as the national minorities are concerned.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Protest letters from minorities, SR Sisuradio, 12 Nov. 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6301039> ; protests in Järfälla, SR Sisuradio, 22 Sept. 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6261515>; protests in Luleå, SR Sisuradio, 13. Oct. 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6276476>

<sup>39</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6388714>

<sup>40</sup> Parliament debate between Mr. Roger Haddad, MP, and the Minister of Culture, Ms. Alice Bah Kuhnke, 13 Nov. 2015, <https://data.riksdagen.se/fil/93A552D1-8165-4FB4-8445-BCB0C8846315> page 26-

<sup>41</sup> SR Sisuradio, 14 Dec. 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6323186>

The Swedish Writer's Union published a report in 2016 called "*Twelve Minority Voices on the Libraries*".<sup>42</sup> The study found that availability of books in Finnish and the libraries activities varies from rather passive attitudes from the library with only older books in Finnish, to active libraries with modern literature, lots of activities in Finnish and about Finnish and even library personnel who speak Finnish. The more active models can be found in some of the municipalities that are part of the administrative area for Finnish.

Regarding Romani Chib the study found that Kalé and the variety of Romani Chib that is spoken by the Travellers hardly have any books at all in the libraries, while on the other hand there are more books available in the other varieties of Romani Chib. A successful approach to the Roma minorities can be found in some municipalities where there is a close dialogue with the minority.

Regarding Meänkieli the study found that the attitudes towards Meänkieli among librarians are problematic, even rejecting and discriminatory. Librarians would not answer questions regarding Meänkieli, claim that there were no books, and even refuse to order books in Meänkieli. There are very few books in Meänkieli in the libraries.

Books in Yiddish are scarce in public libraries, perhaps only a dictionary. Jewish organizations and congregations often have their own libraries.

Books in Sami can be found in some public libraries and the National Sami Library is located in Jokkmokk. Very few books in Sami are published in Sweden. Another challenge for libraries is that older Sami literature may be written with an older version of orthography.

The report concludes that the municipal libraries need to have better strategies for their work with national minority languages. There is also a need for advice in these issues and help with finding books in national minority languages.

In December 2015 SR Sisuradio reported that municipalities are not respecting the provision in the Library Act regarding national minority language literature and other media. When a representative of the Ministry of Culture was asked about what the minorities can do in this situation, the answer provided was to appeal municipal decisions and question their legality according to the Municipal Act.<sup>43</sup> It is difficult to understand how such a complaint could possibly help the national minorities or increase the amount of literature available in the libraries. There needs to be a specific decision regarding purchase of literature to complain about, the complaint has to be filed within three weeks, and the court can only decide on the decisions legality, such as if it was in the power of the official to make such a decision.

### ***National Minorities and Emergency Situations***

On 31 July 2014 a large wildfire broke out in the municipality of Surahammar. The wildfire raged for 12 days and spread to the municipalities of Fagersta, Norberg and Sala. An area of 150 sq. km was affected and hundreds of people had to be evacuated.<sup>44</sup> The County Administrative Board of Västmanland was in charge of the rescue and evacuation issues. One of the criticisms in connection with the wildfire and evacuations was that emergency information was not provided in Finnish. Yet, Surahammar and Fagersta are part of the administrative area for Finnish and very many Sweden Finns, especially elderly, reside or have vacation homes in these municipalities. Percentage of the population with Finnish background: Surahammar (31 %), Fagersta (33 %), Norberg (20 %) and Sala (11 %).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Tuija Niemi Kristoffersson, Sveriges Författarförbund, "*Tolv minoritetsröster om biblioteken*", 2016, <http://www.forfattarforbundet.se/om-oss/kontakt/biblioteksrad/>

<sup>43</sup> SR Sisuradio, 16 Dec. 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6325598>

<sup>44</sup> [https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skogsbranden\\_i\\_V%C3%A4stmanland\\_2014](https://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skogsbranden_i_V%C3%A4stmanland_2014)

<sup>45</sup> statistics, 31 Dec. 2012, <http://sverigesradio.se/Diverse/AppData/Isidor/Files/185/13554.xlsx>

What lessons have been learned from this, if any? Is there any preparedness and routines in informing in national minority languages in emergencies?

On 15 September 2016 a major water pipeline broke in the municipality of Gävle. The drinking water in a large area was contaminated and the authorities decided to alert the general public to boil all drinking water for the next week. The alarm went out as a so called “important message to the public” (relating to health and public safety) through media and municipal channels. Later the same day the radio news reported that this important message was only transmitted in the Swedish language. In the interview a representative of the local authorities in charge of drinking water stated that it’s the individual’s responsibility to interpret information, and that Google translate could be used.<sup>46</sup>

It would be natural to assume that an “important message to the public” would be transmitted in other languages as well, and in local languages. Since the municipality of Gävle is part of the administrative area for Finnish, it should have emergency capacity and plans to provide such public safety information in Finnish as well.

It seems that Swedish authorities still do not take national minorities into consideration in their emergency planning, not even in the administrative areas.

#### **4.1.7 Challenges in Dialogue and Effective Participation**

Very few municipalities outside the administrative areas are respecting the minimum standards provided for in the first part of the Minority Act. A report from the Sweden Finnish Delegation notes in August 2015 that the minimum standards are only being followed in a limited number of municipalities outside the administrative areas.<sup>47</sup> And the same type of results have also been reported by the follow-up agencies year after year. This means that consultation obligations are not being respected. The dialogue and participation in the municipalities that are part of an administrative areas usually works better. Many municipalities have developed models for minority participation.

When NGO representatives on the local lever are asked about how well the consultations with minorities in the administrative areas work, they respond that there is need of more training on the content of the Minority Act and regulations relating to government funding for municipalities. In some municipalities the consultations are still mere information meetings and not effective participation in decision making for the minorities.<sup>48</sup>

On a number of occasions the national minorities have been forgotten or completely ignored in government reports and inquiries that propose new government policies, for instance government inquiry on role of civil society in 2016 (an inquiry which met with a large number of civil society NGOs)<sup>49</sup>, and government inquiry on new policy for publicly funded museums in 2016<sup>50</sup> (both appointed by the Ministry of Culture). It is difficult to understand how the national minorities could be forgotten, yet again.

On the national level the minority NGOs receive a large number of requests to participate in dialogue meetings and to respond to different proposals. This is a very positive development. It is a challenge though for the NGOs since their organisations, personnel and financial resources are very limited. They do not have the capacity to participate effectively in such dialogues as it is. The need for additional resources has been brought up in discussions with the Ministry of Culture.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=99&artikel=6517487>

<sup>47</sup> Lennart Rohdin, report ”Minoritetspolitiskt bokslut 2010-2014”, p. 16,

<http://www.sverigefinne.nu/rapporti/Minoritetspolitiskt%20bokslut%202010%202014%20slutversion.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> Information provided for this report by local Sweden Finnish NGOs i the region of Västmanland, 17 Sept, 2016

<sup>49</sup> ”Palett för ett stärkt civilsamhälle”/”Palette for Strengthened Civil Society”, Official Government Inquiry, report no. 2016:13, <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2016/02/sou201613/>

<sup>50</sup> ”Ny museipolitik”/”New Museum Policy”, Official Government Inquiry, report no. 2015:89, <http://www.regeringen.se/rattsdokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/2015/10/sou-201589/>

## 4.2. Securing the Rights of Minority Children and Youth

### 4.2.1 Need to Strengthen National Minority Children and Youth

Surveys and interviews with national minority and Indigenous children and youth in Sweden show that there is a need to increase efforts to empower the young.<sup>51</sup> Many young persons belonging to these groups feel that their identity and culture is being questioned and that being minority/Indigenous is hard. Some have encountered prejudice and negative attitudes towards minority/Indigenous people. It is challenging to find situations and contexts where these young persons can be themselves, feel at ease and be part of the norm – contexts where their minority/Indigenous culture and language is seen as something valuable and even desirable. Some of the Indigenous children are burdened by the stress that Indigenous families living of traditional Sami livelihoods encounter and feel that the future of traditional Sami life is threatened by large scale exploitation of natural resources, large predators, climate change etc.

The Government and Swedish authorities claim to take the implementation of the rights of children very seriously. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child contains a specific article on minority and Indigenous children (article 30). Yet, the rights of national minority and Indigenous children are often ignored by decision makers and representatives of authorities.

There is thus a need for greater emphasis on children's perspective when implementing minority rights and more should be done to increase the participation of children and youth in decision making. More also needs to be done to create contexts and arenas where these young people are allowed to be themselves.

### 4.2.2 Continued Challenges in the Swedish Educational System

Very few significant improvements have been made in the educational system since the previous monitoring visit in 2013 (Language Charter). The problems and challenges described in the previous alternative report are basically the same. In some areas the educational situation for national minority children has in fact gotten even worse than before.

Are minority children and youth receiving the support they need within the educational system? This is what Mr. Dennis Barvsten, chairperson, and Ms. Laura Santala, secretary general of the Sweden Finnish Youth Organization, answered<sup>52</sup>:

*“In our experience, Swedish school as a national institution, does very little to raise the awareness of the Finnish roots, identity or the significance of the minority language. Among school officials, there is a great lack of knowledge as well as interest in Finland's and Sweden's mutual history. That has led to the situation, where people with Finnish roots are often very unaware of their heritage and rights as the largest national minority in Sweden. For decades it has been implied by officials, that using Finnish language is somehow not advisable, and that has left many Sweden Finns with a wounded identity.*

*A modern school system should be more open for multilingualism and see it as a strength in a globalized world. The ability to speak a second language as well as having a versatile cultural background is not a sign of a poor integration, but a strength that is beneficial for a child's development. It is the responsibility of the school officials to support children in developing their own language, and having an opportunity to study Finnish through all stages of development. Therefore, schools should guarantee, that there are enough chances to study Finnish with qualified teachers. At the moment the possibilities to do so vary a lot. Many parents are unaware of their right to mother tongue tuition in Finnish. Many municipalities neglect their obligation to inform about minority rights. Only 45 minutes a week of mother tongue tuition hardly gives good capability to understand Finnish grammar or to improve one's vocabulary. There is a shortage of qualified teachers in Finnish. There needs to be good and flexible chances to study and complete one's studies to become a Finnish*

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<sup>51</sup> report “Tio sätt att stärka barn och unga – ett minoritets- och urfolksperspektiv” see above

<sup>52</sup> Information provided for this report, 22 Sept. 2016

teacher. There should be possibilities to study that, not only in Stockholm but also in other university cities in Sweden.

*We also think that the differences between the national minorities should be acknowledged better when it comes to minority politics. The historical and cultural backgrounds of the five national minorities are very different and so are their needs. At the moment the minority politics handles the national minorities too much as a homogenous group without acknowledging their special needs. Sweden Finns are the largest group of the national minorities, yet our right to maintain our culture and language through the educational system seems to have been overlooked in the Swedish school policy.”*

The Tornedalians are experiencing similar problems in preschool and school. Ms. Birgitta Rantatalo, language activist and vice chairperson of Meän akateemi-Academia Tornedaliensis states<sup>53</sup>:  
*“Preschools and schools lack the tools, knowledge, clearly defined goals and work methods for revitalizing Meänkieli. The personnel is often not certified and often unaware of minority rights legislation. They are not up to date with the situation of the minorities. Frequent change in personnel makes it harder for children to learn and develop their minority language and a minority identity. There is also a lot of problems with lack of awareness of these rights among the national minorities as well. As long as there is no functioning teacher training in place for Meänkieli and there is a lack of trained teachers, revitalization of Meänkieli has to be promoted through other means. Schools need support in providing a national minority perspective in their work. There are a lot of invisible barriers to deal with: unwillingness to change, negative attitudes, lack of teaching materials etc.”*

### ***The Government's Response to Educational Challenges***

The minority NGOs have continued to pressure the previous and current Government to initiate measures to improve the Swedish implementation in the field of education. The legal and structural problems (as previously described in the report *“Marginalized and Ignored”*) have not been solved and Sweden continues to violate its obligations under the Minority Conventions.

Regarding the current Government that took office in September 2014, educational issues were brought up by the national minorities as issues of highest priority at all the meetings with Government representatives, and at the first meetings with the Minister of Culture on 15 December 2014 (Tornedalian NGOs) and 29 January 2015 (Sweden Finnish NGOs) as well.

In a radio interview on 22 January 2015, the Minister of Education, Mr. Gustav Fridolin, promised to strengthen teacher training in national minority languages. He was not willing to mention how much money would be used for this purpose, but said that the Government would deal with the matter in the upcoming annual spring budget (April 2015). He also stated that he was not willing to increase the amount of time for mother tongue teaching at this time. The question of more qualified teachers would have to be dealt with first and that the Government wants to improve the situation through remote teaching /fjärrundervisning. Mr. Fridolin expected that Sweden *“has a long journey ahead”* and that additional criticism from Council of Europe in the next monitoring round was to be expected.<sup>54</sup>

Since the Ministry of Culture referred educational issues to the Ministry of Education, a request for a meeting with the Minister of Education was sent in a letter on 12 February 2015. It took the Minister of Education 11 months to grant such a meeting that finally took place on 18 November 2015 (Tornedalian and Sweden Finnish NGOs). What has happened since then?

In a radio interview on 29 February 2016, the Minister of Education, Mr. Gustav Fridolin, stated: *“We are criticized as a nation by the Council of Europe for not fulfilling the international obligations to our national minorities and of course we have to do that. That is the basis for signing international conventions. And then it is my obligation to produce a plan for how this can be done. We will appoint*

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<sup>53</sup> Information provided for this report, 23 Sept. 2016

<sup>54</sup> SR Sisuradio, 22 Jan. 2015,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6074210>

*an inquiry this year to find out how we can fulfill the demands from the Council of Europe.*”<sup>55</sup> In the same interview he argued that the biggest problem is the lack of teachers and that it will take time to improve the situation.

At a meeting with the Ministry of Culture on 22 March 2016 representatives of the Ministry of Education were present and they informed the minority NGOs that they were discussing what kind of inquiry should be appointed. The options are an official government inquiry with appointed experts and a clear independent mandate, or an internal ministry inquiry without external experts or transparency. After receiving this information the Tornedalians and Sweden Finnish NGOs wrote to the Ministry of Education once again on 11 May 2016, begging for transparency in the process and demanding a clear mandate for an official independent government inquiry with external experts. No response has been received from the Ministry of Education so far on when and what kind of inquiry the Ministry of Education is planning. The Sweden Finnish Delegation asked for clarification on 11 Sept. 2016 (e-mail to the Ministry of Education), due to the up-coming monitoring visit. No response has been received.

The Swedish Government states in its 4<sup>th</sup> periodical review on the Framework Convention: *“At present the Government is preparing an inquiry on mother tongue tuition and bilingual instruction. The inquiry is expected to start in autumn 2016 and to complete its work by the end of 2016.”*<sup>56</sup> The Sweden Finnish and Tornedalians NGOs have not received any further information regarding the timetable, the format, the content of the inquiry or who is to conduct the inquiry, in spite of requests.

#### **4.2.3 Municipalities are Not Fulfilling Their Obligations in Preschool**

The reports from the municipalities within the administrative areas vary. In some municipalities they have found ways to provide services in the minority language in question, in others progress is slower. Some municipalities are still not providing services, in spite of the regulations in the Minority Act. Here are some examples.

Here are a few examples on the situation since the previous monitoring visit. In June 2014 media reported that there were big differences in the municipalities approach to Finnish language preschool within the administrative area. Sigtuna started a preschool unit even though there were only a few Finnish speaking children. After that the number of children has increased. One mother stated in the radio interview: *“We never had to argue or fight for it, we’ve had a good dialogue with the municipality.”* In Norrköping, on the other hand, the municipality had looked into the question for the past two years. A survey showed 16 Finnish speaking preschool personnel and 16 interested children in different preschools. The municipality was not willing to transfer personnel from one preschool to another, and instead they were considering a preschool teacher that would visit different preschools. One politician argued that the parents themselves should be active and find a solution: *“The parents could find each other through the internet and find practical solutions. In my opinion both the municipality and the parents should try to find a solution.”* One of the Sweden Finnish parents in Norrköping commented on the situation: *“The children cannot wait for a long time, so many things happen in their lives. Every year without support for their Finnish is bad.”*<sup>57</sup>

In September 2014 media reported that in the 52 municipalities that belonged to the Finnish administrative area at the time, only 21 municipalities had Finnish language preschool units (a total of 30 such units). That is less than half the municipalities! Many children do not get a spot on one of these preschool units and the waiting lists are long. One interviewed mother in Stockholm municipality reported that her son had waited for a Finnish language preschool spot in the Skarpnäck

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<sup>55</sup> Sveriges Radio, 29 Febr. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6379137>; SR Sisuradio, 29 Febr 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6379036>

<sup>56</sup> Sweden’s Fourth Periodical Report on the Framework Convention, 1 June 2016, page 59, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168065895c>

<sup>57</sup> SR Sisuradio, 16 June 2014, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=5889392>

district for four years and that she was losing hope: *“I am glad if my younger daughter gets a spot. It will always upset me that my son never got this opportunity... Many parents have to place their children in Swedish language preschools instead and give up waiting for a Finnish language spot.”*

The municipal officer in charge of preschool in that district in Stockholm stated in the same interview that the district had problems with providing preschool in general. She hoped that a Finnish speaking unit would be created the following year but it would require at least 14 children. A similar situation with long waiting lists for Finnish language preschool was reported from the districts of Slussen and Fridhemsplan. The waiting list for Fridhemsplan preschool alone was over a hundred children and other children than siblings would have to wait for years before they were expected to receive a spot. In the fall of 2014 a few available day-care spots were reported from the district of Rinkeby, Kista and Telefonplan (all in Stockholm) preschools. A third of the 30 preschool units in the survey made by SR Sisuradio stated that they had a waiting list and that they could provide a day-care spot relatively quickly. The exceptions were the preschools in Stockholm, Umeå and one preschool in Västerås.<sup>58</sup>

The radio also reported that the total number of children in Finnish language preschool was 800, an increase from previous years. The preschool groups were growing. For instance in Huddinge municipality the group consisted of 6 children four years earlier and now they had a total of 24 children divided in two units.<sup>59</sup>

Municipalities' failure to provide services required by the Minority Act may have many reasons, for instance financial ones.<sup>60</sup> In the municipality of Dorotea, the reason given for not starting preschool in Sami was the difficulty of recruiting South Sami speaking staff.<sup>61</sup> Another reason might be that many parents who might have given up their hope for preschool in their own minority language or who could not imagine that something like that could be possible now have realized that it is not only possible but even a legal right. For instance in the case of Finnish, we can see a trend of more and more preschools or preschool classes with activities in Finnish being set up and widened, while at the same time, the queues to these preschools remain and grow longer.<sup>62</sup>

While the situation can be difficult within the administrative areas, it is much worse outside these areas. There are municipalities who totally ignore their legal obligations, which is a big problem. Mr. Lennart Rohdin writes in an evaluation report of the Swedish national minority policy during 2010-2014, there *“still are only a few of the 215 municipalities which do not belong to any administrative areas where efforts are taken to fulfill the legal obligations concerning the ‘basic protection’ of national minorities and minority languages. And among those 75 municipalities which belong or will soon belong to such areas, again only a few have made efforts concerning the minorities/minority languages which are not affected by the administrative area. It is difficult to regard this as anything else than manifest contempt of the law on the part of a majority of the municipalities of this country.”*<sup>63</sup>

When Sami parents are asked if Sami children are receiving the support needed in preschool and school in order to develop the Sami language and a cultural identity, the language activists, Ms. Mariann Lörstrand, Mr. Johnny Skoglund and Ms. Susanne Svonni from the Sami Parents' Network, answer like this<sup>64</sup>:

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<sup>58</sup> SR Sisuradio, report 26 Sept. 2014,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=5974645>

<sup>59</sup> SR Sisuradio, report 25 Sept. 2014,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=5973066>

<sup>60</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=6498743>

<sup>61</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=5608797>

<sup>62</sup> SR Sisuradio, 28 Sept. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6527445>

<sup>63</sup> Report "Minoritetspolitiskt bokslut 2010-2014" see above

<sup>64</sup> Information provided for this report, 26 Sept. 2016

*“We see that the support provided for children’s linguistic and cultural development in Sami is insufficient in preschools and schools. Most municipalities have no strategy for this. Most of the Sami pedagogues are hired by the hour and they are not part of the preschool/school organization. They have very few possibilities to influence the content of the curriculum.*

*Preschool in the Sami administrative area should be provided in Sami if the parents ask for it. In reality the municipality of Arvidsjaur (part of the Sami administrative area) will only offer mother tongue support because they choose to interpret the legislation in an arbitrary fashion. If you want to see results the legislation has to be clarified so that at least 50 percent of the time in preschool is provided in Sami. If Sweden wants the Sami language to survive and to develop, more forceful actions are required on the local and national level. If the current system is allowed to continue, the Sami language will become extinct in Sweden.”*

#### **4.2.4 A Catch 22 Situation for Multilingual Children in Preschool**

There are also examples of negative development based on how government agencies interpret the legislation and regulations relating to education. The purpose of the legislation defines certain protection or support for the children concerned but this purpose is lost in implementation. According to the School Inspectorate there is no right to mother tongue support in preschool with language competent pedagogues, that parents can refer to.<sup>65</sup> At the same time there is a clear trend of fewer peripatetic pedagogues in preschools.<sup>66</sup>

##### ***The Example of Uppsala Municipality***

For a long time, preschools in Uppsala have offered support in other languages than Swedish for those children whose parents have requested it. Generally, the support has been given via peripatetic pedagogues with skills in the relevant languages. In the spring of 2016, a reorganization of the mother tongue support system was launched by the politicians of the Uppsala municipality Board of Education (utbildningsnämnden). Referring to received criticism from the Swedish School Inspectorate, to the effect that the former mother tongue support was too weak and too poorly integrated in the daily work in the preschools, the municipality decided to replace most of the peripatetic pedagogues with an integrated system where the ordinary personnel in each preschool would be charged with the task of supporting the development of the mother tongues of the children. The personnel would, in an initial phase, be given help and advice by special ”culture pedagogues” to learn how to support the various languages. In practice, this meant the disappearance from preschools of virtually all language-competent pedagogues with the exception of those serving newcomer refugee children during an initial phase of their stay in Sweden. Multilingual, non-newcomer children could also be exempted if they had other reasons than lacking Swedish language skills for not being able to participate in the daily activities at the preschool.

The political decision was made in spite of extensive protests from parents, pedagogues, researchers and others, but the local Sweden Finnish consultation group managed to change the situation for the national minority languages, among them Finnish. Uppsala belongs to the administrative area of Finnish, and the children have a legal right to ”childcare partly or wholly in the minority language”, but according to the Minority Act, other national minority children as well have special rights as to language and culture. However, the consultation group feared that the status of mother tongue support would drop drastically as mother tongue support according to the new system would label children as deficient in Swedish or otherwise. It was also feared that parents would be forced to fight for their rights as many preschools might not remember to distinguish between national minority languages and other mother tongues.

The Finnish minority media contacted the School Inspectorate and was given a confirmation: the School Inspectorate was indeed not in favour of peripatetic mother tongue pedagogues; rather, the local personnel in every preschool should take the whole responsibility of supporting the children’s mother tongues. When asked if it was not a problem that the ordinary personnel usually did not have

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<sup>65</sup> SR Sisuradio, 19 May, 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6435668>

<sup>66</sup> SR Sisuradio, 19 Apr. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=5456213>

any skills in the relevant languages, the Inspectorate referred to the National School Agency, who had the special competence in the pedagogic details.

When the representative of the National School Agency was given the same question, her answer was that the Agency had never recommended that language competent peripatetic mother tongue pedagogues should be dropped, on the contrary, they were a great asset, but in addition, more responsibility should be given to the local preschool to promote mother tongues in their daily activities. If municipalities were stopping the use of language competent pedagogues, the municipalities should be asked why they did it – maybe it was a question of money, she added.

Uppsala municipality has previously emphasized that it is not a question of money at all, only a way of improving mother tongue support in preschool according to the instruction of the School Inspectorate. This has become a Catch-22 situation with very detrimental consequences for many multilingual children, their families and Swedish society at large.

#### **4.2.5 Continued Problems with Mother Tongue Tuition**

For mother tongue tuition availability and the amount of time offered continues to be a problem for all the national minorities. Since the previous monitoring rounds the following has happened.

##### ***Whose Responsibility is it?***

When the previous Minister of Education, Mr. Jan Björklund, was interviewed about the problems a month before the elections in August 2014 he responded that the Government was changing the rules so that beginners would be entitled to mother tongue tuition and that the lack of teachers in the minority languages continued to be a problem. Therefore the Government had assigned a couple of universities to train such teachers. Mr. Björklund also stated that the national minorities need to take more responsibility themselves so that young people apply to become teachers in minority languages.<sup>67</sup>

When did it become the national minorities' responsibility to secure that there are students that would like to become teachers in national minority languages? In other subjects where there is a lack of qualified teachers, the Government has initiated incentives encouraging students to choose such professions. In the proposals on developing teacher training in national minority languages incentives were proposed, but the Ministry of Education did not pursue these proposed initiatives.<sup>68</sup>

##### ***Being Mother Tongue Teacher is Challenging***

Ms. Sirpa Humalisto, Chairperson of the Association for Sweden Finnish Teachers, describes the state of mother tongue tuition in national minority languages in Sweden like this<sup>69</sup>:

*"There are great differences between municipalities concerning mother tongue tuition. Sami, Romani, Yiddish and Meänkieli are in a very precarious situation, except for the private sector. As regards Sami and Meänkieli, these languages have a stronger support and basis in the northern municipalities in Sweden where there are enthusiasts struggling for the survival of these languages. Finnish has also been strengthened in the North, and the number of pupils is rising. But I often hear people say that the municipalities strive for cutting costs and for diminishing instruction time even there, in spite of the fact that the number of pupils to take care of is increasing.*

*Since 2015, there are new curricula for national minority languages and the pupils are to be offered the possibility of studying these languages as a second language, which also has resulted in a growing number of pupils. There are enormous differences in the ways the municipalities distinguish and divide classes between beginners and those who already know the language, and in my opinion, the municipalities have not been willing to meet the requirements relevant for this reform. I have also heard that certain municipalities have cut instruction time in mother tongue tuition down to 20*

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<sup>67</sup> Sveriges Radio, 20 Aug. 2014, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=5942002>

<sup>68</sup> "Marginalized and Ignored", p 27-, see above

<sup>69</sup> Information provided for this report, 21 Sept. 2016

minutes/week, regardless of if the pupils are national minority children, beginners or others. According to professor Jarmo Lainio, Stockholm University, the minimum amount of mother tongue tuition should be three hours per week for the pupils to attain the goals of the curriculum.

*I cannot really pinpoint the problem or what is lacking, but it feels like there is an enormous resistance in the municipalities to accept the Minority Act and certain school issues, such as the pupils' right to their mother tongue, also for beginners, and also in cases where only a single pupil wishes to have tuition. Most of the municipalities have dropped mother tongue support in preschool altogether. It seems to be very difficult for the municipalities to acquire new knowledge. Everybody knows what happened in Malmö where it was stated that an iPad could replace a mother tongue pedagogue.*

*As we know, the Language Act and the Minority Act are to be enforced in the whole country, not only in the so-called administrative areas for Finnish, Sami and Meänkieli. It is a fact, however, that the municipalities within these areas have done a better job than the rest of the municipalities as far as mother tongue tuition is concerned. The situation in the municipalities within the administrative areas has also depended on the consciousness and level of activity of the coordinators. Minority coordinators can influence processes a lot, and our Teachers' Association clearly sees where the coordinators have wanted to tackle school issues even though they are not yet mentioned as prioritized fields in the Minority Act.*

*Other important issues affecting mother tongue tuition:*

- *Mother tongue teachers need continuing education to be able to meet the new requirements of the new curricula*
- *The National School Agency must change the criteria concerning teacher certification of mother tongue teachers.*
- *The municipalities should give the teachers permanent positions instead of one semester or one year at a time. A teacher must have a permanent position in order to be able to do a good work.*
- *Continued lack of educated teachers. When I contacted some municipalities, one of them had recruited an Estonian teacher to teach Finnish in spite of the fact that there were applicants who spoke Finnish as their mother tongue and who were educated pedagogues. The municipalities are searching for mother tongue teachers but only offering a number of teaching hours or part-time positions and then they complain about not being able to find teachers. In this way, many interested mother tongue teachers are not recruited. This even though the interest has grown as a consequence of their hearing about the Minority Act and the new curricula which allow the study of a mother tongue as a beginner.”*

### **Challenges in Mother Tongue Tuition in Romani**

Mr. Gregor Kwiek, Project Leader for Roma Inclusion in Haninge municipality, comments on the current mother tongue tuition in Romani like this<sup>70</sup>:

*“There are many problems in Romani mother tongue tuition in municipal schools. My experience is that the classes are very heterogenous as fluent speakers are taught together with those who hardly know any Romani at all, and pupils with different Romani varieties can be included in the same class. This must be a question of money. The lack of teachers is always a big problem.*

*Another problem with Roma mother tongue instruction especially in municipal schools is the placing of the lessons after the ordinary school hours. Then the children are tired and the instruction must be very interesting for them to stay and participate. The school emphasizes books and grammars, but languages are more easily learnt if you can also do other things, like to cook, sing, and dance besides*

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<sup>70</sup> Information provided for this report on 19 Sept. 2016

*reading books. Dance is a very important part of Romani culture, but the schools are not promoting it. The parents say: 'We don't want our children to sit in school so late and not doing anything, we want them to come home instead.' There is hardly any dialogue between the school and the parents. In my opinion, independent schools are more flexible. A good example is Tornadoskolan in Skarpnäck, Stockholm. They give Roma teachers more freedom in planning the instruction, and the teachers get special pedagogic assistance and teaching materials via a private firm specialized in mother tongue instruction. There is a good dialogue between the parents and the school, and flexible solutions are possible."*

### **Mother Tongue Tuition for Beginners**

How has the reform, that entered into force 1 July 2015 and entitling pupils without previous knowledge in the minority language to study it as beginners, worked out?

Many families welcomed this new opportunity for their children to learn the minority language. There is an increased interest for mother tongue tuition among families. The municipalities of Västerås and Borås are reporting an increase of interested families. One father in Luleå tells reporters that his own interest for Meänkieli has also grown when his daughter has started mother tongue tuition for beginners and he is planning to study it himself at the university.<sup>71</sup>

Parents in Kalix are rejoicing over the changed regulations. In 2012 the municipality decided to deny 40 pupils the rights to mother tongue tuition.<sup>72</sup> Now the pupils are entitled to tuition again and one father relates to his own experiences of being denied his minority language: *"My father had to repeat the first grade three times because he did not know Swedish when he started school and speaking Finnish was prohibited. I was physically punished in school for speaking Finnish. All these feelings came back to me when Kalix decided to deny our children mother tongue tuition... It is really important that my daughter gets to learn her own language, because she wants to learn it..."*<sup>73</sup>

Media reported in June 2015 that some municipalities had sent out incorrect information about mother tongue tuition to pupils and their families. One such example was the municipality of Pajala, that had to send additional corrected information to principals.<sup>74</sup>

Ms. Birgitta Rantatalo, language activist and vice chairperson of Meän akateemi-Academia Tornedaliensis, confirm that there are problems in the municipalities in implementing mother tongue tuition for beginners.<sup>75</sup> She knows of two municipalities in the administrative area for Meänkieli that have sent out incorrect information to families about requirements for being allowed mother tongue tuition for beginners.

In the same newsreport Ms. Sirpa Humalisto, chairperson of the Association for Mother Tongue Teachers in Finnish Language, stated that she was very concerned about families not having receiving correct information about the new regulations. The Association had received calls from schools asking about the reform. She was concerned that many municipalities and principals were not aware of the reform at all and that there was reason to fear that many pupils entitled to such mother tongue teaching would not get such teaching.<sup>76</sup> Other mother tongue teachers have also reported on the lack of information. A teacher in the municipality of Sandviken tells the newsreporter that she is very happy about the new regulations since the schools can no longer deny pupils such teaching.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> SR Sisuradio, 21 Sept. 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6259087>

<sup>72</sup> Report "Marginalized and Ignored" see above

<sup>73</sup> SR Sisuradio, 24 Sept. 2015,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/grupp sida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6260497>

<sup>74</sup> SR Sisuradio, 11 June 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6187050>

<sup>75</sup> Information provided for this report, 23 Sept. 2016

<sup>76</sup> SR Sisuradio, 11 June 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6187050>

<sup>77</sup> SR Sisuradio, 27 March 2015, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6115870>

### ***The Amount of Teaching Time is Too Limited***

One of the weaknesses of mother tongue tuition has been the lack of a guaranteed minimum amount of instruction time. Some municipalities offer this tuition 20 minutes per week, others 30, 40, 60 or even 90 minutes, although the pupils have the same requirements to meet according to the curriculum. This is not only very unfair but also a sign that this school subject is not particularly important.

A survey made by Swedish Radio shows that 85 percent of the 248 municipalities that responded to the survey provided mother tongue tuition 60 minutes or less per week. Many of the municipalities do not even provide such teaching. Only half the municipalities offer tuition in Finnish.

The municipalities responses regarding all the five national minorities, can be seen on maps of the results. See link: **"This is how much mother tongue tuition is provided in municipalities"**, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6364721>.

Mr. Daniel Särkijärvi, language activist and board member of the National Association of Swedish Tornedalians, sees a lot of problems with mother tongue tuition:<sup>78</sup> *"The people in charge of mother tongue tuition in Kalix [municipality in the administrative area for Meänkieli] are not even going to look for a mother tongue teacher in Meänkieli, because there is only one pupil that wants such tuition (my daughter). So I am her teacher for now. The amount of tuition is 45 minutes a week, that is 1 hour of work time, which does not make it easier to find a teacher. But if the people in charge would take these issues seriously, they would search for a teacher among current personnel. The authorities are not taking responsibility. The only thing that seems to help is to be a pain in the ass to the authorities, and/or use media to create the smallest change. It has gotten better in some places, probably where there are engaged people."*

Recently, the government presented a proposal for a time plan for instruction in mathematics and technology in the comprehensive school. More time for mathematics was proposed as well as a guaranteed minimum amount of instruction in technology *"in order to make this subject more visible and to strengthen it."*<sup>79</sup> The National School Agency had also suggested that a minimum level of teaching the subject mother tongue should be included in the proposal, but no such suggestion was to be found in the final government promemoria. When minority media asked Ms. Helen Öberg, the state secretary of the minister of education Gustav Fridolin why it was not included, she answered: *"We started looking at the mother tongue issue but because of the time pressure caused by the other time plan issues, we felt that we could not come to a good proposal within this very quick process."*

The amount of teaching provided for those pupils who are just starting mother tongue tuition as beginners, appears to be too little to reach proficiency. Pupils and teachers express that they would like to have more lessons. For instance the municipality of Luleå is now seeing an increase in the interest in mother tongue tuition in Meänkieli. One of the teachers says that one hour a week is not enough to learn Meänkieli, but he as a teacher can create and uphold the pupils' interest for Meänkieli.<sup>80</sup> Another teacher of Finnish reports that in the municipality of Nacka the beginners only receive 20 minutes teaching per week: *"If (the pupils) do not get Finnish anywhere else than the 20 minutes per week, there is no chance of reaching the goals in the syllabus. According to the syllabus ... one should at least be able to discuss in Finnish, read and write. It feels hopeless when there is so little time at our disposal."*<sup>81</sup>

One 7th grader i Södertälje, says: *"I want to keep my identity, where I come from and the language is very important. If I have children, I want to speak Finnish to them so they can learn it too."* She feels that 60 minutes a week is not enough and would like to have another hour per week, because then she

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<sup>78</sup> Information provided for this report, 23 Sept. 2016

<sup>79</sup> SR Sisuradio, 26 Aug. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6503642>

<sup>80</sup> Swedish Radio, P4 Norrbotten, 29 Feb. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=98&artikel=6377849>

<sup>81</sup> SR Sisuradio, 17 June 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6455175>

could learn more. In Södertälje the new beginners only receive 30 minutes per week in mother tongue tuition.<sup>82</sup>

### ***Statistics on Pupils Entitled to Mother Tongue Tuition Appear to be Incorrect***

When the National School Agency collects data on the number of pupils that participate in mother tongue tuition, these figures are not necessarily correct. The statistics from March 2016 show that a total of 8900 pupils were entitled to mother tongue tuition in Finnish. If these figures are compared to other data on children with Finnish background in Sweden the number of pupils between 7-16 years amount to 102 504, according to Swedish Radio. Thus 91 percent of the children with Finnish background are missing in these figures.<sup>83</sup> According to the National School Agency their data is based on figures that the municipalities have reported to them. The large discrepancy shows that it is probable that the municipalities have no clear picture of how many children have Finnish background, and there is a risk that children that are entitled to mother tongue tuition are never even offered such tuition.

### ***Continued Lack of Teachers in Minority Languages***

Media continues to report on cases where families are not receiving mother tongue tuition. On 16 March 2016 SR Sameradion reported on a family that had waited for three years to receive mother tongue tuition in Lule Sami. The municipality of Värnamo and the family has tried to find a teacher. The municipality could offer a part time position (7 percent of full time), but no teacher has been found. The family believes it would be easier if they lived in the Sami administrative area. The family is hoping that remote teaching could be a possibility.<sup>84</sup>

Since it is difficult to find teachers, it is also difficult for municipalities to make sure that the quality of the teaching is acceptable. In one reported case from Luleå the mother tongue tuition teacher had been using an outdated North Sami orthography that has not been in use for 40 years. The school is now looking in to how this could have happened.<sup>85</sup>

The Sami Parents' Network comments on the mother tongue teaching for Sami children<sup>86</sup>:

*"We see a lot of problems with Sami mother tongue tuition in municipal schools all over the country. It is not working at all! We have a lot of contacts with parents in different parts of the country through social media. Regular media is reporting that many municipalities do not start mother tongue tuition in spite of early demands from families and families providing information on teachers and possible solutions. This is causing a lot of frustration among pupils and parents and in the long run it leads to less motivation for studying Sami. We have seen this in for instance the municipality of Arvidsjaur where there is a lot of demand for Ume Sami tuition. But now the families have given up, in spite of the fact that it is core area for Ume Sami and part of the Sami administrative area. The North Sami children are receiving tuition right now, but the parents have to pressure the municipal officials every fall semester to get the tuition started. Sometimes months pass before the tuition starts. Some of the students have thus lost teaching time, which is affecting their language development negatively. Some will not be reaching the requirements in the curricula in Sami. This has happened in spite of the fact that an available North Sami teacher has lived in Arvidsjaur the past 8 years. In some cases the childrens' language skills in Sami have deteriorated after starting preschool and school, since they spend less time in contexts where Sami is spoken.*

*The situation is just as bad in the municipality of Malå, which is also part of the Sami administrative area. Parents perceive that the Sami mother tongue tuition has been so poor the past two years that*

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<sup>82</sup> SR Sisuradio, 29 Febr. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6379088>

<sup>83</sup> SR Sisuradio, 8 Apr. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6407201>

<sup>84</sup> SR Sameradion, 16 Mar. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=6390709>

<sup>85</sup> SR Sameradion, 23 Aug. 2016, <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=6502200>

<sup>86</sup> Information provided for this report, 26 Sept. 2016

*the childrens' language skills are deteriorating. In one of the varieties of Sami the teachers did not even know Sami!*

*Some municipalities offer very little teaching time, in some cases only 45 minutes per week, which is not enough for developing the language and learning new things. The municipalities are interpreting the regulations so that they only offer one lesson per week. This can be compared to the government Sami schools where 3-4 hours per week are provided in order to reach the goals in the curricula. The time available is not enough to develop a cultural identity as a Sami. It is also negative that the tuition is scheduled after regular school hours in the pupils' sparetime and not during regular school hours. It signals exclusion, and that Sami tuition is not as important as other subjects in school.*

*The Sami parents are frustrated, dejected and offended because of the way their children are being treated in their home municipalities. They feel that they as parents are counteracted and questioned by the schools and municipality officials and perceived as difficult."*

### **Mother Tongue Tuition through Remote Teaching**

During the past few years, the idea of remote teaching to remedy the scarcity of mother tongue teachers in various languages has been discussed and developed. This kind of teaching was long unregulated, neither forbidden nor allowed officially, but used in some schools to test the method in order to serve a larger number of mother tongue pupils. Especially in the North of Sweden where distances between the schools are long and teachers relatively hard to find, especially in the smaller Sami languages, the possibility to apply remote teaching has been welcomed. In 2015, the Sami School Board started a project to offer remote teaching to a large number of pupils who had been queuing for mother tongue tuition in Sami.<sup>87</sup>

Remote teaching has also been the main proposal on the side of the present government to improve mother tongue tuition in Sweden. In August 2016, the School Act was changed to formally allow remote teaching for mother tongues in the comprehensive school and the secondary school. According to the National Agency for Education, this was not done primarily to cut costs, but to facilitate the use of mother tongue teachers from other schools.<sup>88</sup> In this way several schools would benefit from a limited number of skillful teachers, as the Minister of Education, Mr. Gustav Fridolin, expressed it in 2015. After the change in the School Act in August 2016, the media have reported that the interest in remote teaching has so far been low.<sup>89</sup> Some doubts have also been expressed about the possibility that the municipalities would actually stop recruiting available local mother tongue teachers for financial reasons. Remote teaching should instead be seen as a complement, not a substitute to traditional mother tongue tuition. Especially as far as younger children are concerned, it was seen as an advantage that a teacher was present at the pupil's own school, being also able to arrange other activities such as study visits, etc.<sup>90</sup>

#### **4.2.6 Situation is Now Worse for Bilingual Teaching**

Since the previous monitoring visit the situation of bilingual teaching on national minority language has deteriorated regarding the Sweden Finnish minority. In 2014 the Sweden Finnish Language School in Örebro had to close down. After a long financial conflict with the municipality of Örebro regarding the amount of municipal funding that the school was to receive per pupil, the Finnish Language School had to file for bankruptcy. In the pending court case the Court of Appeal decided in favor of the school, but at that time the verdict came the school had already been forced to file for bankruptcy.<sup>91</sup> After the school had to close down the municipality of Örebro showed interest in starting bilingual classes in Finnish, but no initiatives were made. Today only six such bilingual independent Sweden Finnish schools remain.

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<sup>87</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2327&artikel=6246316>

<sup>88</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6367476>

<sup>89</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6493212>

<sup>90</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=6022466>

<sup>91</sup> Swedish Television, Finnish news/Uutiset, 8 Oct. 2014, <http://www.svt.se/nyheter/uutiset/orebron-kielikoulu-voitti-pitkan-kiistan>

#### **4.2.7 The Current Situation for the Independent Sweden Finnish Schools in Sweden**

Ms. Heli Lindström, principal of the independent Sweden Finnish school in Stockholm, and Ms. Maija Vola, principal of the independent Sweden Finnish school in Upplands Väsby, (they are also the chairperson and vice chairperson of the Independent Sweden Finnish School Leaders' Association) describe the current situation<sup>92</sup>:

*“There are four independent bilingual schools that offer education in Swedish and Finnish in the vicinity of Stockholm today. The other two schools are located in Eskilstuna and in Gothenburg. In total, these schools enrol about 700 pupils altogether and the number has remained essentially constant during the past six years. However, one school in Örebro has been forced to close. Four of the schools offer schooling from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, one from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade and one offers schooling from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. All the schools offer preschool classes as well.*

*Two municipalities in Sweden, Borås and Haninge, have started offering classes in both Swedish and Finnish to preschool children. There are approximately 20-30 pupils in these municipality classes altogether today. No other municipalities offer bilingual classes in Finnish and in Swedish, therefore the responsibility for preserving Finnish as a living and thriving minority language in Sweden in the future lies almost solely in the classrooms of independent Sweden Finnish schools.*

*At the moment there is no education for bilingual primary school or preschool teachers. This is a real menace to the possibilities to run a bilingual education in the future. The lack of education for bilingual teachers is an issue that has been brought up several times without any result or real hope for a change.*

*It is encouraging though, that preschools in the administrative areas for Finnish language in Sweden offer all or at least a part of their activities in Finnish. This has increased the interest of Finnish speaking parents in bilingual learning and all the independent schools have started preschool groups in recent years. Pre-schooling in the Finnish language guarantees a higher level of language skills for the beginners in our preschool classes. This provides the schools a fantastic possibility to strive towards higher levels of bilingualism.*

*However, it is an immense problem for the Finnish speaking minority in Sweden that Sweden has not yet verified the rights for minority languages in compulsory schools. The Swedish Education Act basically stipulates that the Finnish language is comparable to any migrant language within the school system. There are a few minor differences, though; Finnish pupils have the right to attend lessons in Finnish mother tongue even in the case when there are less than five students with the same need and even if they don't have the basic knowledge of the language. The teacher can grade the pupil in either first or secondary language achievements, depending on the pupil's level of knowledge. This is not the case for migrant languages.*

*For pupils that speak another language than Swedish in their daily lives there is a possibility that part of the education is organized in that specific language during 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Finnish speaking pupils also have the opportunity to receive education in Finnish during 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. It is important to realize the vast difference in teaching a certain language and teaching another school subject in that language.*

*All schools in Sweden have the possibility of profiling themselves. According to the Swedish Educational Act 600 hours are dedicated for this purpose. Each school can use up to 20 per cent of the time reserved for other school subjects for profiling, except the time for basic subjects; Swedish, Swedish as a second language, English and mathematics. It is not allowed to award grades in the profile subject.*

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<sup>92</sup> Information provided for this report, 21 Sept. 2016

*There are two possibilities to award a grade for the Finnish language in Sweden, either as an optional language or as Finnish as a mother tongue subject. Optional language is chosen by the pupils whereas the subject mother tongue is not compulsory.*

*The overall syllabus for the optional language is 320 hours and there is no syllabus for the mother tongue. The mother tongue subject is most often taught one hour per school week and sums up to 320 hours in nine years. The syllabus for mother tongue education is written for a timeframe of one hour per week.*

*So, are we to believe that teaching Finnish for 600 hours and only granting grades for a maximum of 320 hours when Swedish is taught 1490 hours, leads to bilingualism? We would highly disagree. We need a syllabus adapted for bilingualism.*

*An exception from following the overall syllabus for school subjects is the Sami school. They have 800 hours of Sami and 910 hours in Swedish throughout 1<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.*

*Here follow a few other peculiarities concerning this issue; the study of German, Spanish and French grant Swedish students with so called merit points for higher education but there is no equivalent award for students of the Finnish language. Furthermore, Swedish 9<sup>th</sup> graders have a possibility of taking the national exams in English, however there is no possibility to do so in Finnish. Swedish Finnish schools are not even allowed to translate these tests for their pupils. Newly arrived English immigrants are granted the opportunity of receiving over 50 per cent of the education in English.*

*There is a lot to be done for equality for bilingual education. Finnish is the largest minority language and has no status in Sweden as a language for higher education.”*

#### **4.2.8 Continued Problems with Teacher Training Programs**

The teacher training programs initiated have had very limited effects so far. Ms. Sari Pesonen, Director of Studies and lecturer in Finnish at the Department of Slavic and Baltic Languages, Finnish, Dutch and German, Stockholm University, describes the current situation<sup>93</sup>:

*“Teacher training for mother tongue teachers in Finnish, grades 7-9, was started in 2014 at Stockholm University, and teacher training for mother tongue teachers in Sami in 2015. In the Sami stream in Umeå not even one student has started. In the Finnish stream, a handful of students (4-5) started in 2014 both in the autumn term 2014 and 2015, but only one student in 2016. Most of the students following the Finnish stream have a matriculation exam from Finland. As less than a half of those who started are still studying, only a few will be able to pass the examination.*

*There are two main challenges facing the students. The entry requirements, which include secondary school competence, is one of them – few students study Finnish or Sami at a secondary school level. There is a need to create a formal possibility to validate one’s language competence in a national minority language and it must be made known for potential students. Speakers of national minority languages who have studied their mother tongue in the comprehensive school have another kind of language competence than those who have studied the so-called modern languages at school, and this should be considered in connection with the formal entry requirements for the university.*

*One of the reasons for the scarcity of applicants with a national minority language as their heritage language may have something to do with the fact that many young people feel that their competence and skills in the national minority languages are too weak for a career as a teacher. Preparatory education especially in literacy should be available for instance through remote teaching. As the responsibility for the national minorities is concentrated on a few universities all of which cannot offer remote teaching, the student base becomes limited regionally (the students may not be willing to move away to another region for studies).*

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<sup>93</sup> Information provided for this report, 21 Sept. 2016

*Teacher training for mother tongue teachers gives formal eligibility, competence and skills for teaching in grades 7-9 (also 4-6) or the secondary school, but there is a great need for teachers in lower grades. There is also an acute need to prepare for the inclusion of a national minority language in the teacher training program for the comprehensive school.*

*In order to create prerequisites for a teacher training in national minority languages, research in teaching and in minority languages and cultures, that is, both didactic and linguistic research. There is also a need for course literature produced especially with the national minority and the Swedish context in mind. There is also a lack of study books for pupils.”*

#### **4.2.9 National Minority Languages at University Level**

The official responsibility for teaching and research in national minority languages in higher education has been divided between different universities. The Universities of Stockholm and Uppsala cater for Finnish, Umeå University for Sami and Meänkieli, Södertörn University for Romani and Lund University for Yiddish. However, the position of these languages is not necessarily very strong in the designated universities as shown by the example of Meänkieli in Umeå. In the fall of 2014, there was an unexpectedly large number of students, 100 persons, wishing to study elementary Meänkieli. The announced course was cancelled with the explanation that having it would have cost the university too much. The decision caused a lot of resentment on the part of Met Nuoret, the Tornedalian youth organization, who stated that Umeå was the only university in Sweden where Meänkieli could be studied now that it had finally become ”cool”, but now even that was impossible.<sup>94</sup>

Finnish has formerly been taught at many universities – in addition to Stockholm and Uppsala also in Umeå, Gothenburg, Lund and the Mälardalen University. Finnish is no longer taught in Gothenburg or Lund. The Finnish section, with a special Sweden Finnish profile, at Mälardalen University was closed down in 2013 when the ear-marked financing was stopped.<sup>95</sup>

### **4.3 Securing Revitalization of National Minority Languages**

#### **4.3.1 No Official Plan for Revitalization**

The need for additional active measures to promote revitalization is great for all the national minority languages. The small scale revitalization projects that exist are nevertheless important to the minorities and the individuals that take part in them. Ms. Birgitta Rantatalo, language activist and vice chairperson of Meän akateemi-Academia Tornedaliensis, shares her views on this<sup>96</sup>:

*“My experience is that the revitalization projects that Meän akateemi runs and the different revitalization activities arranged by organisations, for instance language camps and immersion activities, are very important for the revitalization of Meänkieli ... And the most important thing of all [in relation to preschool and school children] is the attitude that Meänkieli is something cool and something closely connected to identity, and something worth saving, is increasing. Especially children who do not have any own language history to relate to, have a much easier time to build on positive experiences.”*

Except for the Sami Language Centre aimed at the revitalization of Sami, there are no official structures for carrying out revitalization work concerning national minority languages, nor is there any official plan or action program for this work. The responsibility taken by the Institute of Language and Folklore is very limited, and we do not know whether the ”revitalization money” granted yearly to minority organizations in fact promotes revitalization to any significant degree, as no analyses are carried out concerning the effects.

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<sup>94</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=5991109>,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/gruppsida.aspx?programid=185&grupp=10390&artikel=5990970>

<sup>95</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=5575876>

<sup>96</sup> Information provided for this report, 23 Sept. 2016

In the wake of the minority reform of 2010, the Government appointed the same year a reference group for revitalization, consisting among others of representatives of all five national minorities. The reference group discussed and produced a list of concrete proposals concerning important issues to be dealt with in the continuing revitalization work, among others the following: Children and young people, the future carriers of the languages, were to be the main target of revitalization efforts. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the efforts made on various levels was a precondition for a successful revitalization work. The lack of official statistics was to be compensated for by other systems which were to be developed in consultation with minority representatives. The reference group also underlined the importance of spreading information about the national minorities and minority languages among the public and working to improve attitudes, to create understanding for the needs of the minorities and proposed various ways to improve the efforts taken until then.

The governmental reference group worked during two years and their final report was made public on 27 September 2012. Until today, the proposals of the reference group have not been taken into consideration, nor have they resulted in any concrete efforts on the part of the government.

#### **4.3.2 Need for a Language Centre for Finnish and Meänkieli**

The Sweden Finnish Delegation and the National Association of Tornedalians have proposed several times that a language centre should be established to revitalize Meänkieli and Finnish in Sweden. Referring to the good results from the Sami Language Centre, the organizations have stated that there is an urgent need to give the other two languages a similar chance. The interest in Meänkieli and Finnish is growing and there is a demand for new, innovative ways to learn and strengthen these languages, but in practice there are scarcely any possibilities to meet the demand and to create a situation where Meänkieli and Finnish would stop declining and instead start gaining strength.

The first time the organizations raised this matter with the Minister in charge of minority issues, Mr. Erik Ullenhag, was at a meeting on 2 April 2014, and later on with the current Minister of Culture, Ms. Alice Bah Kuhke, on 15 December 2014 and 29 January 2015. Since nothing seemed to be happening, the organizations decided to submit a written pilot study to the Ms. Bah Kuhnke on 25 November 2015 on the establishment of a joint language centre for Meänkieli and Finnish.<sup>97</sup> The pilot study contains a detailed description of the set-up, tasks and specified calculations of the government funding – all modeled after the experiences from the existing Sami language centre. The total cost for a language centre for both these languages would be the same as for the current Sami language centre – 6.7 million SEK per year. The issue was also raised with the Minister of Culture at the dialogue meeting on 22 March 2016, a preparatory meeting for the Swedish Government's submission of the most recent periodical reports to the Council of Europe.

According to the pilot study, the proposed centre would actively promote the revitalization of Meänkieli and Finnish by collecting and spreading information and knowledge about language revitalization and by developing revitalization methods to meet the needs of both young and old. The centre would also contribute to creating free-zones where culture and language could be passed over to those interested in a safe environment, and to engage in a long-term work to improve both public and in-group attitudes towards the two minority languages. As in the case of the Sami Language Centre, the planned centre would cooperate intimately with the surrounding society, such as the municipalities in the administrative areas. It would complement the work done for revitalization in other fields, and carefully listen to the needs of individual Tornedalians and Sweden Finns. The centre would be part of the Institute of Language and Folklore and consist of two sections: one located in Tornedalen and the other in Stockholm/Uppsala (where the Institute is currently located). The organizations even met with the General Director of the Institute, who seconds the proposal.

From a revitalization point-of-view, the idea of a joint language centre for Meänkieli and Finnish has several advantages. The two languages are closely-related linguistically and they face a number of similar challenges while both languages also face their own specific challenges. The proposed joint

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<sup>97</sup> Report: *"Etablering av ett språkcentrum för meänkieli och finska – En förstudie"/"Establishment of a Language Centre for Meänkieli and Finnish – A Pilot Study"*, 25 Nov. 2015, <http://minoritet.se/3905>

centre would greatly contribute to the synergies needed in efficient revitalization work. Until today, the Government has not shown any interest in the proposal, in spite of urgent pleas from the minority associations. The pilot study has not even been sent out for referral which is customary. It is only mentioned as an example in the directives for the new minority rights inquiry that was appointed on 1 September 2016. Finnish and Meänkieli revitalization continue to lose valuable time.

Ms. Maja Mella, director of the National Association of Tornedalians, comments on the need for more structured revitalization efforts of Meänkieli<sup>98</sup>:

*“Since 2010 the National Association of Tornedalians has fought for the establishment of a language centre for Meänkieli, modelled after the Sami Language Centre. A government language centre would raise the status of Meänkieli. It is remarkable that revitalization of Meänkieli is only to be done through projects. There is a need for systematic work to strengthen the language development of children and youth, as a complement to what is being done in schools. Civil society organizations are not going to be able to access the financial resources needed to facilitate effective revitalization efforts based on research and proven experience, compared to what a government language centre could do. Access to project financing for revitalization and a language center are both needed.”*

## **4.4 Public Service Media in National Minority Languages**

### **4.4.1 The Importance of Media for National Minorities and Minority Languages**

The public inquiry that preceded the minority rights reform stated that the most important things to achieve if the national minority languages are to have a future in Sweden are: systematic revitalization and increasing the visibility and raising the status of national minority languages in society. Minority language public service media is important from all these aspects.

Strong and independent minority language media is essential for the national minorities and for the improved implementation of minority rights in Sweden. Minority language media has of course the role of investigative journalism, just like other media. There are very few minority language newspapers and magazines – and no daily newspapers at all. Minority issues are considered of marginal interest to the general public and Swedish language newspapers seldom write about these issues. The awareness and knowledge among journalists and reporters is still very limited. Only if there is some sort of conflict, issues relating to the national minorities might get picked up temporarily by mainstream Swedish media reporting, but this does not seem to happen very often. The only media that can provide updated information on a daily basis about the situation and on issues that concern the national minorities is public service radio, television and the internet. Since there are no commercial interests in issues relating to national minorities, the public service radio and television become the only daily providers of minority news, regardless of if the listeners/viewers speak the majority language.

Minority language public service media is currently the only media that follows and investigates the implementation of the Council of Europe minority conventions and how the Government, the municipalities and authorities are pursuing this work. If the public service minority media does well in its reporting, some of the reporting might spill over to the majority public service media's reporting. This is a clear positive development in public service radio.

In a minority context public service radio and television have additional essential roles in the lives of the minorities. It is one of the few major channels for the minorities' freedom of expression and freedom of speech relating to minority issues, since other media's interest for these issues is so limited. Minority language public service media is one of the very few forums for minority discussions that are available for a larger audience.

For many individuals minority language media is a very important source for hearing and reading the national minority language – perhaps the only source for some people. Having the national minority

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<sup>98</sup> Information provided for this report, 24 Sept. 2016

languages on the radio and television is a way of normalizing the use of the language, it promotes standardization of the language among listeners and it enhances and modernizes the listeners'/viewers' vocabulary. It also raises the status of the minority language among the minorities and in relation to the majority population and increases awareness among the majority population.

Minority public service media for children and youth can promote self-esteem, minority/Indigenous identity and culture, develop minority language skills and provide fora for discussion and probing into issues relating to national minorities/Indigenous peoples. It is also a recognition of the existence and presence of these groups in Swedish society.

#### **4.4.2 Minority Comments on Media Situation in General**

There is currently an ongoing inquiry on media issues in Sweden. The inquiry is to present its final proposals on 31 October 2016. No clear picture of the national minorities' media needs was presented in the inquiry's first report.<sup>99</sup> It remains to be seen if any proposals concerning these minority media will be made in the final report.

Public service minority media reported on statements made by the Media Inquiry's claim that "it is not modern that minority language get special treatment" and that "digital simultaneous translation tools could be used in order to increase availability of media" for minorities. Professor Tom Moring, professor of communication and journalism at Helsinki University and expert on minority media issues, commented on this in a television interview on 14 December 2015. Professor Moring noted that it was a remarkable conclusion from the Media Inquiry and that this way of thinking marginalizes minorities. In his view there is reason to be very concerned about public service media wanting to mainstream minority language broadcasting. He also stated that using the internet (instead of other broadcasts) to a larger extent is not necessarily a solution for language minorities, because the internet is very heavily driven by a market forces. Being minority requires special status and thus also special treatment.<sup>100</sup>

In the discussions with the inquiry the minority/Indigenous NGOs have argued that the lack of minority language newspapers continues to be a problem. There is a need to increase and strengthen minority media in general in Sweden. There is also a need for increasing the amount of minority language broadcasting and the public service companies' support for developing and securing minority language broadcasts is very important.

Digital broadcasting continues to be a problem, since everybody cannot access such broadcast. So even though digital broadcasting is valuable *per se*, many and especially elderly people cannot be reached by such broadcasts today.

In some of the minority languages there is a dire need for more reporters who speak the minority language. There is also a need to increase reporting on local minority news, not only Stockholm based news reporting. In some of the minority languages there is a need to increase broadcasting in the smaller varieties of the language. Majority media in general continues to provide a stereotypical view of the national minorities and there is a need to increase knowledge and awareness about national minorities/Indigenous people.

The broadcasting licenses for public service media were altered for the program period 2014-2018 among other things to increase the amount of broadcasting time in national minority languages (with the exception of Yiddish), but there are still issues of concern and also some negative trends. It

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<sup>99</sup> Inquiry on Media, report: "Medieborgarna & medierna, En digital värld av rättigheter, skyldigheter – möjligheter och ansvar", SOU 2015:94, [http://www.sou.gov.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SOU-2015\\_94\\_Hela\\_Webb.pdf](http://www.sou.gov.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/SOU-2015_94_Hela_Webb.pdf), <http://www.mediutredningen.se/>

<sup>100</sup> SVT Uutiset, 14 Dec. 2015, <http://www.svtplay.se/klipp/5352118/tom-moring?info=visa&tab=senast;>  
<http://www.svt.se/nyheter/uutiset/mediaprofessori-netti-ei-saa-korvata-radiota>

continues to be a problem that the public service broadcasting companies are allowed to divide the responsibilities among themselves (a provision in the broadcasting licenses). This means that financial and other reasons can decide whether radio or television media is to be used in these languages and how financing is to be divided among the companies.

#### **4.4.3 Negative Trends in Public Service Minority Media**

It is important to recognize that Sweden undertook specific obligations regarding media when ratifying the European Language Charter. Sweden has promised to make adequate provisions so that broadcasters offer programmes in Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli<sup>101</sup> and to encourage and/or facilitate the creation of at least one television channel in Finnish<sup>102</sup>. Yet, in the broadcasting licences for public service media only one distinction is made, namely that Yiddish has a weaker position than the other national minority languages.

#### ***Developments in Finnish Language Public Service Media***

Swedish public radio has broadcasted in Finnish for decades, since long before Finnish became a national minority language. In the late 1990s there were as many as 50-60 personnel, mostly reporters engaged in this work. Today the number of reporters has decreased drastically and some positions are not even refilled when personnel retires.

In the fall of 2015 a number of major changes took place in the Finnish language SR Sisuradio. The executives at the broadcasting company explained the changes as improvements and ways to reach a larger Sweden Finnish audience.<sup>103</sup> The changes consisted of changing broadcasts from the more popular regional P4 channel to less popular P2 channel (national channel for classical music and foreign languages). P2 has in general very few listeners and is perceived as a more marginal channel by the listeners in general.

Finnish prime time broadcasts were moved to an afternoon time slot and at midnight. Finnish language broadcasts have no remaining prime time slots. The popular regional broadcasts have disappeared, since they moved away from P4 that has regional broadcasting. The regional P4 channels are also in charge of emergency broadcasting. As discussed above under section 4.1.6. the use of national minority languages can be of outmost importance in emergency situations.

The daily news-oriented broadcasts (“Studio Sisu”, Monday-Friday 16.00-17.00) were replaced with a talkshow (at 13.00-15.00). The content in some of the broadcasts are moving in the direction that Swedish language is taking over the use of Finnish language. According to SR Sisuradio the purpose is to provide so called bilingual programs, in order to attract a younger Sweden Finnish audience that is presumed to have lost most of their Finnish language. Following this logic, Swedish and Finnish ought to be mixed in the programs, but Swedish dominates. Sometimes there are only some phrases in Finnish, and the rest is in Swedish.

When the broadcasting company first told personnel at SR Sisuradio about the planned changes in 2014 the proposals caused a lot of concern. The local section of the Swedish Union of Journalists filed a written complaint to the executives dated 28 November 2014 protesting against the planned changes stating:<sup>104</sup>

*“Our experience from bilingual programs is that the majority language Swedish will dominate. To replace minority language programs completely or partly with Swedish programs is not in compliance with our mission to produce Finnish language radio in Sweden. P4 is the most listened channel and therefore it is essential that our listeners also have access to a channel that you can actually hear.”*

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<sup>101</sup> European Language Charter, Article 11.a) iii)

<sup>102</sup> European Language Charter, Article 11 c) i)

<sup>103</sup> <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6173758>,

<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=185&artikel=6174042>

<sup>104</sup> Information provided for this report

*“We find it remarkable that the executives of Swedish Radio want to take away the analog programs for the Sweden Finnish minority even more, by moving them to a lesser listened channel, P2, and a less listened time of the day.”*

The management did not change the decisions and followed through on the plans. In order to answer the viewers' concerns a call in show was held 28 May 2015 at 18.10-19.00, and a so called FAQ was made available on the internet.

The changes in the Finnish language public service radio have caused a lot of criticism from the Sweden Finnish NGOs. No prior consultation with effective participation for the Sweden Finnish minority NGOs was conducted. A short meeting was held, however, where some information was presented.

Professor Tom Moring, professor of communication and journalism at Helsinki University, commented on the changes made in SR Sisuradio in an interview on 27 May 2015.<sup>105</sup> He stated that it is very regrettable that SR Sisuradio is cancelling its regional broadcasts. In his opinion minorities use radio channels the same way as the majority population does. The Finnish speaking listeners need local news and the regional broadcasts cannot be substituted by news on the internet. The decision by Swedish Radio is not in accordance with the Council of Europe minority conventions. In the long run these practices will lead to assimilation of the minorities, and Sweden has already been criticized by the Council of Europe for its treatment of national minorities, according to professor Moring.

There are similar trends in Finnish language television broadcasts, as described above, where Swedish is being used more often than before in the broadcasted programs. In Finnish speaking talk shows there have also been examples of more frequent use of Swedish. The use of subtitles is a common practice in television and could be used instead of moving more and more spoken Swedish in the programs produced for Sweden Finns.

### ***Developments in Meänkieli Language Public Service Media***

Ms. Maja Mella, director, National Association of Swedish Tornedalians, describes the situation of Meänkieli in public service media as alarming:

*“The range of public service broadcasting in Meänkieli is very limited, especially for children and young people. In 2013 the Review Board for TV and Radio noted that the amount of broadcasts in Meänkieli (on an average an hour per day) and the analog accessibility are limited (with the exception of 26 minutes, broadcast only in Norrbotten and one channel in Stockholm).<sup>106</sup> The Meänkieli radio and television news departments are very small (compared to Finnish and Sami) and subordinated other minority language news departments and the local P4 channel in Norrbotten news department, and in the case of television the Sami news department.*

*Radio programs for children are aired only once a week and only sporadically on television. Programs for youth are only available once a week on the radio and not at all on television. There are no daily news in Meänkieli on television or radio.*

*Compared to the Sami and especially the Finnish news departments, the Swedish Television and Swedish Radio news departments for Meänkieli are very small. Moreover, they are located solely in Norrbotten, in spite of the fact that the Swedish Radio audience surveys show that Tornedalians and Meänkieli-speakers are much more numerous than Sami-speakers, and they are found all over Sweden. The same surveys show that in-group knowledge about broadcasts in Meänkieli and interest in them among Meänkieli-speakers are greater than the knowledge and interest concerning broadcasts in Finnish are among Sweden Finns.*

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<sup>105</sup> SVT Uutiset, 27 May 2015, <http://www.svt.se/nyheter/utiset/mediaprofessori-netti-ei-saa-korvata-radiota>

<sup>106</sup> Granskningsnämnden/ Review Board for TV and Radio, <http://radioochtv.se/CaseDecisions/209192.pdf>

*In addition, it is not at all self-evident that the public service companies have the right to divide the responsibility for different kinds of efforts for Meänkieli between themselves. It will automatically lead to a smaller supply of programs.*

*Radio and TV broadcasts are tremendously important for Meänkieli-speakers because Meänkieli is primarily a spoken language. There are no other comparable radio- or television broadcasts in Meänkieli in Sweden or abroad. The public service companies SR, SVT and UR could also play an important role in the revitalization of Meänkieli and contribute to the creation of a written language if the companies offered adequate broadcast services in Meänkieli and Swedish on their websites. Today this service is limited and above all sporadic.*

*Owing to the fact that the traditional territory of Meänkieli-speakers followed the Swedish-Finnish-Norwegian border, there is a great need to inform about what is happening in the North Calotte area, which in turn is more demanding for public service. It is also important for cross-border contacts that public service has listeners and viewers in neighbouring countries.*

*There is a shortage of educated journalists with competence in Meänkieli today. It is important to be able to use the language both orally and in writing. Media companies have until now looked for and trained new journalists themselves according to the principle "learning by doing". In order to secure availability of competent journalists in the future, education of journalists must be organized and a career in the field offered to those interested."*

### **Developments in Sami Public Service Media**

One of the more recent developments in Sami public service media is that the Sami radio and television merged a few years ago. The media solutions for Sami differ from the other national minority languages, since there is a close cooperation with public service broadcasting companies in Norway and Finland and there is active sharing of media materials. How has this affected the Sami broadcast in Sweden? Nils Henrik Sikku, journalist, writer and former executive at the Swedish Sameradio shared a few reflections on the subject:<sup>107</sup>

*"In the the late 1990s a policy decision was made between the public service broadcasting companies that a co-Nordic Sami radio channel should be established, that could broadcast 24 hours a day. Nothing came of these plans. Since then Norway has taken a lead in these media issues. The Swedish and Finnish radio broadcasters were not interested to follow through on these ideas.*

*In my opinion the merging of Sami radio and television has not lead to any real improvements for the Sami listeners/viewers. The development is rather that fewer voices are heard than before, because fewer people do all the journalistic work that was previously done by two different broadcasters. Since there are no daily or weekly newspapers, the Sami public service companies have a monopoly position.*

*There is more Swedish language nowadays on the radio, than there used to be. North Sami dominates in the broadcasts, and Lule and South Sami do not get much air time. The same development can be seen in Finland where North Sami dominates. They have lowered the quality standards for the Sami language. Instead the Sami broadcasters should prioritize Sami language and not compromise in the issues. Now the target group seems to be unclear, and they use Swedish instead. Use Sami language experts to improve the language!*

*Documentaries and investigating journalism have almost disappeared both in radio and television. This means that the coverage of important Sami and Indigenous issues suffers, as well as scrutiny of those in power (both Sami and majority political leaders). Instead they broadcast harmless cultural programs about and with Sami, such as music programs. It is important that the Sami broadcasters have reporters with deeper knowledge of Indigenous rights in order to ask relevant questions. As it is now, the reporters frequently do not ask tough follow up questions in the interviews. Many important*

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<sup>107</sup> Information provided for this report, 23 Sept. 2016

*issues affect the future of the Sami, such as for instance the current issue of a new reindeer herding bilateral convention between Norway and Sweden. Two states are deciding over the heads of the Sami over their civil rights of an Indigenous people – decision that will affect the whole Northern part of Sweden and have serious consequences on the future of Sami, the Sami villages and reindeer herding. Sami media need to follow such issues very closely!*

*I believe that the Sami people needs a full service Sami language radio channel – an alternative that takes its journalistic mission seriously. There are Sami language journalists to be found, if the broadcasting companies looked for them. And Sami radio needs to cover all the Sami languages. ”*

### **The Impact of the Changes in Public Service Media**

What impacts could these negative changes in minority language public service media have on the national minorities/Indigenous people?

From a minority rights perspective the following aspects are important to emphasize:

Minority language public service media is extremely important from a journalistic point of view. No other media has the capacity to follow, scrutinize and question how minority rights are implemented, how the national minorities'/Indigenous peoples' lives and situations are developing and whether politicians/authority representatives are following through on their promises and tasks. Since the minority language news departments have the necessary minority language skills they can do a more thorough job and in direct dialogue with the minorities in question.

The national minorities need strong minority language media in order for implementation of the minority conventions to improve. If public service media moves away from broadcast that focus on societal issues, in depth news reporting and analysis, this is very bad for the future of the minorities. Replacing such broadcasts with entertainment and talk shows would be a disservice to the minorities and also a failure for the democratic purpose of public service media.

There are signs in Swedish society of it becoming more polarized and the national minorities/Indigenous people and their rights are being questioned. It has become more important than ever to secure the minorities right to differ from the majority population. Awareness raising about minority rights is important, both among the minorities and also among the majority, and public service media has an important role in this.

The national minorities cannot do very much about these described negative trends. Swedish Radio did not have a proper dialogue with the national minority representatives prior to the changes in the Finnish broadcasts, nor did it secure effective participation from the minority in accordance with the Council of Europe Convention. It is a democratic problem that the broadcasting company did not even share the surveys and data that was the basis for the decisions, with the minority representatives in question.

The recent changes also affect the future of national minority languages in Sweden. Public service media can be a very strong tool and method in promoting and revitalizing minority languages, especially for the smaller minority languages that are very threatened. Such examples can be found in other countries. The increased use of majority language in minority language public service media is detrimental and it can even undermine radio as a language domain for the minority language. It also affects the quality of the programs and the listeners'/viewers' willingness to continue listening/viewing. From a revitalization point of view, the minority language has to be used even more and in more visible channels in a situation when it is losing ground to the majority language.

The Government's purpose with the current broadcasting licences was to increase national minority language broadcasts. As it is much of the broadcasts shown on television consists of broadcasts on the internet and reruns of television programs for children. If majority language is being used in bilingual radio broadcasts, the majority language tends to dominate. This was also pointed out by the Swedish Union of Journalists in their complaint to Swedish Radio on 28 November 2014 and the Union even

questioned whether exchanging Finnish language broadcasts with broadcasts partly in Swedish was in accordance with the requirements in the broadcasting licence.

There is also reason to fear that SR Sisuradio will substitute Finnish language programs with bilingual programs in their statistics in their annual Public Service Reports. On paper this may look like an increase, but in reality the total amount of Finnish has decreased. This could be compared to the municipalities way of interpreting “partly in Finnish” in a very minimalistic way. But the broadcasting licence requires programs in Finnish, not just “partly in Finnish”.

For the next licencing period even more detailed instructions will be needed in order to secure the needs and rights on national minorities in public service broadcasts. The provision that the three broadcasting companies are allowed to divide the tasks and resources between themselves is bad for the minorities, which has been pointed out previously on numerous occasions.

There is still no television channel in Finnish in Sweden, in accordance with Article 11 c) i) of the European Language Charter. Some parts of the country can watch TV Finland (a selection of programs from the Finnish YLE broadcasts sent in Finland) and only recently that channel decided to send even less news programs to the audience in Sweden. The solution with TV Finland, although appreciated by those who can watch it, is not sufficient to fulfill the obligations under article Article 11 c) i) of the European Language Charter. TV Finland can only be a complement, not a substitute for Finnish language television in Sweden.

And finally, the rights of national minority/Indigenous children must be secured as well, in accordance with Article 30 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child and the Council of Europe minority conventions. National minority children have the right to learn and develop their minority language and a cultural identity. This should be clearly stated in the next broadcasting licences.

## 5. The National Minorities are Still Waiting...

On 1 September 2016 the Government finally initiated an inquiry to analyze and improve the Minority Act. The inquiry is to submit its proposals at the latest on 15 June 2017.<sup>108</sup> The directives of the inquiry state that all proposals are to be financed within existing budget frames of the current minority rights policy. Many of the minority rights problems – with the exceptions of educational issues – are now squeezed in to the inquiry’s directives. The inquiry has very limited time to solve all these legal and structural problems that the Government and government agencies have been unable or perhaps unwilling to solve over the past six years.

The Minister of Culture states in interviews that she is expecting solutions and improvements from the inquiry – presumably some of them will have financial consequences. Unfortunately the initiation of the inquiry has been so delayed that time is running out. A Government proposal on a reformed Minority Act has to be submitted before the end of March 2018 to Parliament, if a decision is to be made by Parliament before general elections in September 2018. It remains to be seen if this is possible and how the Ministry of Culture will handle any proposals in relations to Government budget processes. Meanwhile the national minorities continue to wait.

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<sup>108</sup> Direktives, <http://rkrattsdb.gov.se/KOMdoc/16/160073.PDF>

## **Appendix 1: Letter from 24 Coordinators to the County Administrative Board of Stockholm, 8 Dec 2014**

2014-12-08

Till enheten för arbetsmarknads- och rättighetsfrågor  
Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län  
Box 22067  
104 22 Stockholm

### **Behov av starkare stöd och tydligare information till förvaltningskommuner**

Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län har ett nationellt uppföljnings- och samordningsansvar för minoritetspolitiken. Enligt årets regleringsbrev från regeringen ska Länsstyrelsen i Stockholm snart rapportera om vilka stödjande och samordnande insatser som har gjorts i anslutning till detta uppdrag i år.

Vi som arbetar med samordning av arbetet med finskt förvaltningsområde i kommuner vill lyfta fram några önskemål och kommentarer angående detta uppdrag. Vi ser genom vårt arbete att kommuner är i behov av fortsatt stöd och informationsinsatser från Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län. Detta gäller inte enbart nya förvaltningskommuner utan även kommuner som hör till det finska förvaltningsområdet sedan flera år tillbaka. Vi efterfrågar träffar och utbildningstillfällen, t.ex. nya temakonferenser om förskola och äldreomsorg för nationella minoriteter. Vi behöver möjligheter att höra goda exempel och byta erfarenheter. Det vore även viktigt att vid några tillfällen kunna koncentrera sig på just sverigefinska frågor. Varje nationell minoritet har sin egen historia och problematik och även dessa specifika frågor behöver lyftas i något sammanhang.

Vi anser att träffar och sammanhang för att föra en dialog och ha erfarenhetsbyte om minoritetspolitiken behövs och att de bör vara en naturlig del av ert uppföljnings- och samordningsuppdrag. Vi anser att Länsstyrelsen i Stockholm inte kan ge en rättvis bild av förvaltningskommunernas arbete med minoritetspolitiken om uppföljningen enbart baserar sig på svaren ni får via webbenkäten. Enkätfrågorna är för förenklade för att beskriva det mångfacetterade arbete som bedrivs i kommunerna.

Vi vill även lyfta fram att inte all information från er har nått alla finska förvaltningskommuner under året. Alla berörda kommuner har inte till exempel fått information om sina nya kontaktpersoner eller blivit inbjudna till årets huvudkonferens i Kiruna. Kontaktlistor på kommunernas samordnare har inte uppdaterats och information har därmed skickats till fel personer i våra organisationer.

Vi förstår att Länsstyrelsen i Stockholm har begränsade resurser att arbeta med detta uppdrag. Förvaltningskommuner har blivit flera och det innebär ett merarbete för er som arbetar med uppföljning och samordning. Vi vill dock signalera att behovet för starkare stöd och tydlig information finns i förvaltningskommunerna. Eftersom vi inte fick någon möjlighet att träffa er nu i slutet av året vill vi förmedla våra tankar och önskemål med detta brev.

Med vänlig hälsning

Eeva Östberg, Gävle kommun

Raija Arvidsson, Norrköpings kommun

Marjaana Lehmonen Nilsson, Haninge kommun  
Anoo Niskanen Naing, Skövde kommun  
Eija Viitala Larsson, Hofors kommun  
Marjatta Lamminen, Borlänge kommun  
Anne Ågren, Karlskoga kommun  
Marianne Kiiskilä, Hallstahammars kommun  
Anna Partanen, Uddevalla kommun  
Heli Kivimäki Hedin, Norrtälje kommun  
Pirjo Linna Avarre, Sundsvalls kommun  
Airie Tervaniemi, Lindesbergs kommun  
Hans Raab, Östhammars kommun  
Anne Alamaa, Köpings kommun  
Paula Wassberg, Sandvikens kommun  
Jaana Sundberg, Södertälje kommun  
Marjo Mäkinen, Hällefors kommun  
Tiina Mauritzell, Finspångs kommun  
Sirpa Lindelöf, Eskilstuna kommun  
Anne-Mari Angeria, Luleå kommun  
Lea Vaattovaara, Österåkers kommun  
Sofia Gullberg, Upplands Väsby kommun  
Jessika Krekula, Upplands Väsby kommun  
Tarja Cucevic Björkenö, Enköpings kommun