

Appendix 2: Comments by the Finnish Government on the report prepared by the Committee of Experts

Part II

General Comment:

Finnish and Swedish are the official national languages in Finland. The Sámi language has a special status. Other languages, even if they are regarded as regional or minority languages, do not have the same position. In some parts of the report, Swedish and Russian are incorrectly considered to have an equal standing.

Particular comments:

Paras. 27 and 62 :

According to Section 11 of the Day Care Act (1973/36), the municipality has to provide day care services in Finnish, Swedish and Sámi depending on the child's mother tongue. There is no corresponding obligation to provide education in other languages. However, more than 80 languages are spoken in day care centres around the country.

Para. 31

The Sámi should be referred to as an indigenous *people*, not as a *group*. Furthermore, the phrasing "other groups" in Section 17, paragraph 2 of the Constitution of Finland is understood by the Committee as referring to the Tatar, Russian, Yiddish-speaking and Karelian communities. The phrasing of the Constitution is intended to include *all other groups*, thus it is not limited to the aforementioned groups.

Para. 32

The Finnish legislation does not contain any provisions regarding national minority languages or the official recognition of such languages. The Constitution explicitly aims at emphasizing the importance of *all groups* (see above) instead of different categories of language status.

Para. 50

The Karelian language is to be considered a language spoken by an "*other group*".

Part III

Swedish language

Article 11 - para. 135

No proposals have been made to establish a private radio or tv-channel that would broadcast in Swedish.

Article 13 - paras. 162 and 164

The statement regarding a visit to an Emergency Response Center and the lack of Swedish speakers there is vague. The Center referred to in the report has not been identified. Thus, neither can the employment situation nor the linguistic distribution in the service area of that Center be verified.

Sami language

Para. 168

The first report on the application of the Sámi language legislation shall be submitted to the Sámi Parliament *by the end of 2007*.

Article 8 - para. 171

The report refers to *the Ministry of Education and Interior*. The correct reference would be the Ministry of Education.

Article 11

Para. 251

A newspaper published in the Inari Sámi is subsidised both by the Sámi Parliament (by an appropriation directed to Sámi language culture and Sámi organisations) and by the Ministry of Education (by an appropriation directed to cultural newspapers and their distribution).

Article 12**Para. 261**

With regard to the Encyclopaedia on the Sami culture, a translation error has occurred in the English version of the Government's report. The support has been given, among others, by the Ministry of Education, not by the Ministry of Justice.

Para. 263

The official name to the "Attainability Project for Art and Culture" would be "Action Programme on Access to Art and Culture for All".

Article 13 - paras. 281-282

The Emergency Response Centre Administration has examined the possibility of providing emergency number 112 information in the Sami languages in operational area of the Emergency Response Centre of Lapland. However, the Centre does not currently have capacity to provide Emergency Response Centre services in the Sámi languages. Therefore, it would be problematic to provide the said information in these languages on the internet etc.