

**Appendix III: Comments by the Norwegian authorities****European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages  
Comments on the second report of the Committee of Experts to be presented to the  
Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe**

With reference to the letter from the Secretariat of the Charter dated 2 April 2003, please find enclosed the Norwegian Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs' comments on the proposed recommendations in the above-mentioned report.

The report of the Committee of Experts, describing the Norwegian policies that have been pursued and the measures that have been taken to fulfill the obligations in the Charter, has been carefully considered by the relevant government ministries. The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs thanks the Committee for its thorough work with the present report. The Ministry notes with satisfaction that the Committee understands that the protection of regional or minority languages is considered a priority in Norway.

We would like to comment on the Committee's four proposed recommendations in accordance with article 16 of the Charter. We have noted the Committee's more detailed observations, and these observations will be taken into consideration and will be used in the future work in this field. The next Norwegian periodical report is due in 2005, and will provide more information on topics underlined by the Committee.

**Proposal for recommendation No. 1: Collaboration between representatives of the various regional or minority languages.**

The Norwegian government concurs with the expert committee that minority languages would benefit from collaboration between representatives of the respective languages. The government therefore continues to attempt to facilitate collaboration between the different groups. However practical and cultural differences between the groups constitute a barrier, resulting in a situation where there currently is no common wish for such collaboration. The attempts to facilitate such collaboration will nevertheless continue.

**Proposal for recommendation No. 2: The question of whether Kven is a dialect of Finnish or a separate language.**

Clarification of the status of the Kven/Finnish language is in its final stages and an answer will hopefully soon be available. As mentioned in the Expert Committee's report, the Norwegian government has given the Swedish professor Kenneth Hytenstam the task of finding out whether Kven is a dialect of Finnish or a separate language. His report is due in the middle of June.

**Proposal for recommendation No. 3: The Establishment of the Inner Finnmark Court.**

The Inner Finnmark Court has been established and will be in operation from 1 January 2004. The circuit judge has been appointed and the court will be localized in Tana in Finnmark County.

**Proposal for recommendation No. 4: Protection and promotion of Lule and South Sami.**

Lule and South Sami are both part of the Norwegian government's language policy concerning the Sami languages. The Norwegian government is aware of the fact that Lule and South Sámi are endangered. The government is consequently considering which means are necessary to preserve Lule and South Sami languages. We would again like to emphasize that the Sami Parliament has drafted an action plan for the promotion of languages situated outside the administrative districts of the Sami. This action plan covers both Lule and South Sami.