

Appendix II: Comments by the Swedish authorities



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Ministry of Justice
Sweden

10 July 2006

Comments from Sweden on the second report of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Sweden has received the second report of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and hereby takes the opportunity to submit comments according to Article 16 paragraph 3 of the Charter.

General comments

Since ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Sweden has presented two periodical reports to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on the application of the Charter in Sweden. Sweden has now received the second report of the Committee of Experts on the application of the Charter. This procedure is important in following up the measures taken to promote the minority languages in Sweden. The efforts made by the Committee of Experts to receive, gather, evaluate and draw conclusions from information on the situation of the minority languages in Sweden is of considerable value in developing the national minority policy in Sweden. Sweden welcomes the report and appreciates a continued dialogue and exchange of information and views.

Specific comments

The Government Commission on the Finnish and Sami Languages

The Committee of Experts refers several times in its report to the proposals of the Government Commission (Ju 2004:01) appointed to examine the possibility to extend existing legislation on the right to use Finnish and Sami. The Commission's report and proposals are currently being submitted for opinions by the parties concerned. After this procedure is completed the Government will consider the proposals in light of the opinions and other relevant circumstances.

Media

As has been noted by the Committee, a parliamentary committee has submitted proposals to the Government concerning the press subsidies. The committee proposes measures to facilitate the publication of newspapers aimed for minorities. In the proposals, Sami, Finnish and Meänkieli are singled out as especially important. The Government plans to submit a bill on press subsidies and will hereby consider these proposals.

The Parliament recently decided to adopt new guidelines for the three public service companies for the period 2007 to 2012. According to the guidelines, the interests of minorities are to be taken into account in the activities of public service radio and television and these are to be a continued priority. Sami, Finnish, Meänkieli and Romani Chib shall hold a unique position. The Yiddish speakers in Sweden are today too few to motivate a similar position, but the fact that Yiddish has minority language status is still to be taken into account in the public service activities.

Education

The report of the National Board of Education on the school situation of the national minorities, which has been noted by the committee, is currently being considered by the Government in light of the financial consequences of the reports proposals that the Board presented to the Government in April 2006. To promote information to the municipalities on this issue, the report has been printed and distributed to all municipalities in Sweden in March 2006.

In November 2005 the Government decided to support with the amount of 1.5 million SEK the development and production of teaching material in Sami, with special focus on South Sami, in the Sami School. Furthermore, in April 2006, the Government decided to support with the amount of 1 million SEK the development and production of teaching material in South Sami for adults. The Government has also decided to make it possible for adult Sami to receive state grants for short term studies to learn to read and write in Sami.

In December 2005, the Government commissioned the National Board for Education to make an in-depth study on the situation of Roma pupils in Swedish schools. The report is to be presented in February 2007.