

Lack of Effective Participation for the National Minorities in Sweden

As representatives of national minorities in Sweden we are very concerned that the Swedish Government is currently not securing effective participation for the national minorities in the ongoing reform of education in and on national minority languages.

Since Sweden ratified the Council of Europe conventions on minority rights in April 2000 the Swedish Government has received criticism on numerous occasions for not implementing the provisions on education in a satisfactory manner. The problems in the Swedish educational system and the severe lack of implementation of educational rights have been described in numerous government agency reports and most recently in the alternative reports from civil society to Council of Europe Expert and Advisory Committees, namely *Marginalized and Ignored – National Minority Children’s Struggle for Language Rights in Sweden 2013*¹ (2013) and in *Lost Momentum – Minority Voices on the Implementation of Minority Rights in Sweden 2016*², (2016).

Council of Europe has provided a number of recommendations on how to improve the implementation in the field of education. On 22 Dec. 2016 the Swedish Government finally established a government inquiry that is to evaluate how to improve access/availability to mother tongue tuition in national minority languages and bilingual teaching on national minority languages. The final report of the inquiry is to be submitted on 31 Aug. 2017.³

Government inquiries/commissions in Sweden usually consist of a chairman and staff and a number of independent experts as advisors. During the previous government inquiries/commissions on minority rights in the 1990’s and 2004-2006 a number of experts representing national minority interests were appointed as experts. By appointing experts with minority rights expertise or individuals representing various national minority organizations the Government has in the past secured effective participation for the national minorities. Such appointed expert have the right, if they do not agree with the findings of the chairman, to express a written divergent opinion as a part of the final report.

To the great surprise of the national minorities no such national minority experts or civil society representatives have been appointed for the ongoing inquiry by the Ministry of Education! We find this unacceptable. It is not sufficient that the chairman or staff have national minority background. Independent experts are necessary to secure effective participation for the national minorities, and

¹ <http://sverigefinne.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Marginalized-and-ignored-1.pdf>

² http://sverigefinne.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Lost-Momentum_Minority-Voices-on-the-Implementation-of-Minority-Rights-in-Sweden-2016_161003-3.pdf

³ Government Directives No. 116, 2016,
<http://www.regeringen.se/4b02ef/contentassets/155a307b642d4d7f9cdf2e7fe6462f1a/forbatttrade-mojligheter-for-elever-att-utveckla-sitt-nationella-minoritetssprak-dir.-2016116.pdf>

Additional comments to Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of
National Minorities

especially regarding the issues where Sweden has received the harshest criticism and in issues that are crucial for the survival of the national minority languages! By appointing independent experts with special knowledge of the educational needs and conditions of national minorities the quality of the inquiry would also improve. Nor is it sufficient that the national minority organizations are allowed to comment on the proposals after the report has been submitted to the Government.

We are very concerned when the Swedish Government is not securing effective participation of the national minorities.

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Mr. Bengt Niska Chairperson, National Association of Swedish Tornedalians/Svenska Tornedalingars Riksförbund – Tornionlaaksolaiset

Ms. Raija Metso Korpela Chairperson, The Sweden Finnish Delegation/Sverigefinländarnas Delegation/Ruotsinsuomalaisten valtuuskunta

Ms Laura Alamattila Chairperson, Youth Organisation of Tornedalians/Met Nuoret

Mr Dennis Barvsten Chairperson, Swedish Finn Youth Organization/Sverigefinska ungdomsförbundet /Ruotsinsuomalaisten nuorten liitto