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The Minister
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Dear Sirs,

25 November 2009

The German minority's letter regarding the effect of the Local Government Reform on the definition of the homeland of the German minority.

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KOPI

The German minority contacted the Danish Government in connection with the Liaison Committee meeting on 20 April 2009 regarding the effect of the Local Government Reform on the definition of the homeland of the German minority.

The German minority has pointed out that the area that the minority traditionally has considered their homeland and which geographically covers the former County of Sønderjylland cannot in the same way be defined by the current local and regional borders. Specifically, the minority has pointed out that the former municipalities Christiansfeld and Rødding, which before the reform were part of the County of Sønderjylland, are now part of the municipalities of Kolding and Vejen, respectively, and therefore not a part of the four municipalities where the minority in connection with the Local Government Reform has obtained a specific arrangement regarding representation.

For this reason the minority has requested clarification from the Danish Government regarding the historic & geographic homeland of the minority. The minority has emphasized that it is not a question of the minority wanting to expand the existing specific arrangements in the legislation regarding representation to include municipalities other than Haderslev, Sønderborg, Tønder and Aabenraa.

The Danish Government is aware that the Local Government Reform has in some respects had special implications for the German minority. In this connection I would like to compliment the minority for its constructive attitude and the good dialogue that the Ministry has experienced when cooperating with

the minority. It has contributed very positively to finding a good solution for the minority which I understand the German minority is very satisfied with.

In connection with the ratification of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages the Danish Government has indicated that the conventions apply to the German minority in South Jutland. The declarations reflect the fact that the German minority in Denmark traditionally have lived in South Jutland. The most part of the minority lives in the border area in the southern and eastern part of South Jutland and the rest lives in an area that constituted the former County of Sønderjylland.

The Danish Government hereby informs the German minority that the new borders in connection with the Local Government Reform do not change the homeland of the minority, nor have they any influence on the Government's definition of the application of the Framework Convention and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe.

The Danish Government would also like to point out that in accordance with the wishes of the minority it has no plans to expand the obtained specific arrangements in the legislation regarding representation in the local councils.

I enclose a copy of my letter to the Region of Southern Denmark and the municipalities of Haderslev, Kolding, Sønderborg, Tønder, Vejen and Aabenraa in which I have notified the region and the municipalities that the Local Government Reform does not alter the homeland of the minority and the application of the mentioned conventions. In addition, I will as soon as possible inform the Council of Europe accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Ellemann