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COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

24 May 2024

Report on the Follow-up dialogue to the 5th Opinion of the Advisory Committee on Sweden

Participants and programme

The follow-up meeting took place on 19 April 2024 in Stockholm, in the premises of the Ministry of Culture. The meeting was opened by the State-Secretary to the Minister for Culture, Karin Svanborg-Sjövall. Participants included representatives of the Swedish authorities from several departments such as the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, the National Agency for Education, the Ministry of Justice, the Swedish Police Authority, as well as the Sami Parliament, the Stockholm County Administrative Board and the Swedish Institute for Human Rights. Civil society representatives from the five recognised minorities (Jews, Roma, Sami, Sweden Finns and Tornedalians) were also invited.

The Advisory Committee was represented by Emma Lantschner, Vice-President of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC) and Elise Cornu, Head of the National Minorities and Minority Languages Division.

The programme and the list of participants are appended to this report. More information is available on <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/follow-up-dialogue>

Objective

The follow-up meeting took place two months after the publication of the 5th Opinion of the Advisory Committee and two weeks after the adoption of the Resolution of the Committee of Minister [CM/ResCMN\(2024\)3](#).

The objective of the event was to exchange on measures taken and to be taken to ensure the implementation of the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee. Special emphasis was placed on three themes connected to the recommendations for immediate action, the first one focusing on education and measures promoting knowledge of minorities, the second on combating discrimination, racism and hate crimes, and the third on participation of minorities representatives in decision-making.

Opening session

- In her opening speech, State-Secretary Karin Svanborg-Sjövall stressed that Sweden takes its international commitments seriously. She mentioned recent positive developments such as the funding extended for resource libraries for all minorities, the increase of funding for fighting antisemitism and racism, as well as the ongoing consultations on the recent [report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaïset](#) and on the [inquiry into Jewish cultural life in Sweden](#). The report of the Truth Commission for the Sami people is expected in December 2025.
- Elise Cornu welcomed the organisation of this follow-up meeting as an integral part of the monitoring process and underlined the Council of Europe's commitment to the protection of national minorities in Europe, as reaffirmed by the Reykjavík Declaration, adopted in May 2023 at the Fourth Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe.
- In a [pre-recorded video message](#), Marie B. Hagsgård, ACFC expert elected in respect of Sweden, presented the aim and methodology of follow-up meetings, and encouraged participants to identify concrete measures of implementation.
- Emma Lantschner highlighted that the ACFC welcomed in its opinion the improved legislation relating to the protection of minority rights, but that it also noted that concrete measures to implement this legal framework are sometimes lacking or could be improved and might require a more consistent oversight. In addition to the three recommendations for immediate action in focus for this meeting, Emma Lantschner conveyed the concerns of the ACFC regarding staff cuts in public service media, as well as the need to improve access to mental healthcare by persons belonging to the Sami people, in particular.

Session 1: On education and knowledge promoting measures

- Emma Lantschner presented the two dimensions of this topic: the promotion of knowledge about national minorities through the educational system and among the general public and public officials, and the learning of minority languages. She underlined that if this recommendation on immediate action¹ on knowledge about national minorities was implemented, seven out of the 13 recommendations made by the ACFC to Sweden would be directly or indirectly addressed. She provided several examples of how this recommendation could be implemented, for example by using more widely the works produced by the Living History Forum (see below) and informed the participants of the forthcoming adoption by the ACFC of a revised Thematic Commentary on Education.
- Minority representatives welcomed the introduction in 2022 of a new curriculum which requires that all pupils aged 7-15 learn about the history and present-day situation of Sami as an indigenous people and of other national minorities and their rights. However, they pointed out a shortage of teachers and a lack of teacher training in this regard. Some expressed concern about concentrating all information about national minorities in one subject, rather than spreading it out through various relevant subjects, including history teaching. Several participants said that minority associations do not have the capacity to respond positively to all requests from schools or public administration because of their limited financial and human resources. They indicated that teacher training on national minorities should be made compulsory and that the recruitment of minority language teachers should be financed. An additional issue concerned the absence of control of the quality of educational material about the history and culture of national minorities, which was often left to individual schools. Proposals were also made to celebrate national minorities days in schools and to create dedicated spaces where persons belonging to minorities and persons belonging to the majority population can meet and interact. The representative of Tornedalians explained that the absence of an institute studying the history of this minority contributes to its invisibility in the Swedish society.
- The Ministry of Education and the National Agency of Education highlighted measures already taken in this field. They indicated that the history and culture of the Sami people and national minorities are taught under the subject “social studies”, which will allow to improve the quality of teaching as the content will not be fragmented between several subject matters. Distance learning has been developed which allows more pupils to learn their minority language and could also address the lack of teachers. The Ministry of Education also mentioned that The National Agency of Education has been tasked to support the production and development of teaching materials in the national minority languages. Procurement of learning materials in all national minority languages is now underway. At university level, several arrangements and assignments have been concluded to improve teacher training. Since 2022, the Living History Forum has been tasked to increase knowledge of historical processes which have affected the national minorities and has produced teaching materials on historical events which affected national minorities and the connection of these events with today. These materials will be available to teachers from grade 7. For younger pupils, an exhibition is planned for Stockholm. Long-term funding for this task is not secured.
- During the discussion, the need for a mechanism assessing the implementation by Sweden of the recommendations made by international organisations was noted, as well as for linking the ACFC recommendations with the recommendations contained in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaïset, the inquiry into Jewish cultural life in Sweden, and the forthcoming report of the Truth Commission for the Sami people.
- Emma Lantschner concluded the session by stressing the need for implementation of the measures discussed. Knowledge about national minorities amongst the majority population will increase the esteem of minorities and self-identification to national minorities. She noted that the 2022 curriculum provides for the learning about the history and present situation of national minorities in the framework of the subject “social

¹ Recommendation for immediate No.2: “Foster intercultural dialogue and mutual respect between the population at large and persons belonging to different national minorities by taking concrete steps to promote the knowledge about national minorities, minority rights and the needs of national minorities, and by opting for a more inclusive and transparent approach on matters that affect persons belonging to more than one national minority”.

studies” and therefore teachers cannot opt out from teaching it. They therefore need to be trained, and be provided with material. To ensure that the new curriculum is properly applied, the government could consider assigning to the four competent institutions (the National Agency for Education, the Council for Higher Education, the Living History Forum, and the School Inspectorate) the responsibility of making sure that teacher materials and training are secured. Furthermore, staff in public administration need to be trained on the history and present situation of national minorities and knowledge about national minorities could be considered an advantage during recruitments in public administration.

Session 2: Combating discrimination, racism and hate crimes

- Emma Lantschner presented the recommendation for immediate action² and examples of good practice relating to the collection of disaggregated data on hate crimes, ideally in an integrated system, spanning from reporting to the police, investigation and prosecution to judicial decisions. She gave an example of online platform for reporting hate speech and hate crimes - the ban-hate app³ in Austria. The promotion of intercultural competences within the police could be strengthened and extended to training on national minorities. Reference was made to the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Recommendations on Policing in Multi-Ethnic Societies.⁴ Some recommendations from the inquiry report on Jewish life in Sweden should be taken up, such as conducting an in-depth study on antisemitic hate crime and providing further funding to ensure the security for institutions of the Jewish community.
- Concerns were expressed regarding websites openly targeting Roma and hostile discourse spreading in the media. The lack of oversight authority on media which would pro-actively ask for the removal of offensive content was regretted. A trend not to report antisemitic incidents was noted, mainly because these acts are not taken seriously enough. It was also noted that the definition of antisemitism by IHRA⁵ makes it difficult to address antisemitism in its new forms and to decode the antisemitic rhetoric. A survey conducted within the Jewish community of Sweden after the Hamas attacks against Israel of 7 October 2023 showed that half of the respondents feared for their security and were considering emigrating. Incidents of hate speech against Tornedalians occurred after the publication of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaieset. Hate speech on social media also increased against Sami following the 2020 Supreme Court Judgment on the Girjas case about reindeer herding. Cruelty against reindeer is categorised as vandalism or theft but the racial connotation of such acts remains uncovered by current legislation. Some participants called for language being included as discrimination ground in legislation.
- The Ministry of Employment indicated that there was no plan to include the ground of language in the Discrimination Act. A new action plan on racism and hate crimes is being prepared with the involvement of civil society. The Ministry of Justice mentioned that the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention regularly reports data on hate crimes disaggregated by minority groups. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention mentioned that a special report on hate crimes against Sámi was being produced. A report comparing the number of antisemitic hate crimes reported from October 7 to December 31 2023 with the same period 2022 was also to be published shortly. The importance for the police to better mark ethnically motivated crimes as hate crimes and to disaggregate data by minority groups was underlined. In addition, the need for more training for first line police officers dealing with hate crimes and for greater online presence by the police were noted. The setting up in January 2023 of an inter-ministerial task force on antisemitism and the fostering of Jewish life was mentioned. The task force also includes representatives from Jewish civil

² Recommendation for immediate action No.3: “step up their efforts to prevent and combat racism, hate crimes and hate speech, including on social media, in particular against the Jewish, Roma and Sámi minorities. To this end, the authorities should take appropriate measures targeting the entire population, such as awareness-raising and information campaigns, and evaluate them in close consultation with minority representatives. They should also record, investigate and sanction all cases of such offences and collect disaggregated data”.

³ <https://www.banhate.com>

⁴ <https://www.osce.org/hcnm/policing-recommendations>

⁵ Definition adopted in 2016 but the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA): “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

society organisations, administrative authorities and other experts. The Ministry of Justice mentioned that cruelty against a reindeer could be categorised as a hate crime if the motive of the committed offend was to insult a person or a population group on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression, or another similar circumstance (section 29, paragraph 2 in the Swedish Criminal Code). The court must, when assessing penalty value, always take into consideration whether a motive for a committed offence was to insult a person or a population group on the grounds of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity or expression, or another similar circumstance.

- Emma Lantschner concluded the session by concurring with the minority representatives that the audiovisual authority should be more strongly involved in the work carried out against hate speech and hate crimes. She reiterated the ACFC recommendation to include language as a prohibited ground in the Discrimination Act, which is wished for by the minorities because of the insufficient protection granted on the sole ground of ethnicity. She stressed again the need for disaggregated data collection and the importance of police training to combat hate speech and hate crimes against persons belonging to the Sami people and the national minorities.

Session 3: Participation in decision-making

- Emma Lantschner presented the recommendation for immediate action⁶ and referred to the ACFC Thematic Commentary No.2 on effective participation which specifies what the ACFC means by effective participation: “It is not sufficient for State Parties to formally provide for the participation of persons belonging to national minorities. They should also ensure that their participation has a substantial influence on decisions which are taken, and that there is, as far as possible, a shared ownership of the decisions taken.”⁷ She underlined that national minorities have different needs and that diversity within minorities must be taken into account, including the views of minority youth. Minorities need to be equipped, including through financial support, to ensure that they can meaningfully participate, and conditions must be such that effective consultation is possible, in particular by being timely informed and be provided with all relevant information. Finally, decisions should adequately reflect the needs and interests of the minorities.
- Several representatives of minorities mentioned lacunas in the consultation processes in Sweden. The consultation requests are often too vague, the language used too technical, and the methodology of consultation not sufficiently well explained to the national minorities. Municipalities should receive guidance on how to conduct a consultation in accordance with Articles 3 and 5 of the Act on National Minorities and National Minority Languages. It was also said that too often consultations are information meetings about decisions which have already been made. The very high number of consultation requests received in application of the Sami Consultation Act (565 requests in two years) is very difficult to handle because of insufficient human and financial resources, and priorities have therefore to be set. In addition, the importance for the authorities to include all those affected by a matter was recalled.
- The Ministry of Culture explained that since the visit of the ACFC took place (March 2023), the 2022 Sami Consultation Act was expanded to apply to municipalities and regions. An evaluation of the law, including this extension, will be carried out within a few years.. The Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure indicated that the report from the Commission on Reindeer Husbandry Act is being prepared and will be published in 2025. The Ministry of Climate and Enterprise also referred to ongoing consultation processes. The Stockholm County Administrative Board agreed with the need for increased funding and knowledge about national minorities. It indicated that guidance to municipalities with good practice for consultation has been published.

⁶ Recommendation for immediate action No.4: “improve, at all levels, the effectiveness of consultation processes, making them timely, inclusive, and meaningful, and ensure that persons belonging to the Sámi people and other national minorities are systematically consulted and able to participate effectively in decision-making processes on policy and legislative matters that are relevant for minority rights”.

⁷ Thematic Commentary on the Effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, 2008, para.19.

- Emma Lantschner concluded the session by noting that financial and human resources constraints may prevent national minorities to fully participate in consultations. Raising awareness on good practices for consultation is key and guidelines to municipalities are in that respect to be welcome. Timely information is necessary as well as giving more context to national minorities about consultations they are invited to take part in. Finally, she underlined the importance for authorities to make sure that the views of national minorities representatives are sought and heard, and referred to the Recommendation [CM/Rec\(2023\)9](#) of the Committee of Ministers to the member States on the active political participation of national minority youth.

Conclusions

- Emma Lantschner thanked the Swedish authorities and the representatives of the Sami people and national minorities for this exchange and invited all stakeholders to pursue the dialogue and the Swedish authorities to provide resources to the national minorities.
- Linda Nordin, Ministry of Culture, who moderated the meeting, thanked all participants for their contribution and closed the meeting.

Appendix 1 – Follow-up dialogue meeting programme

9:30-10:00 Registration

10:00-10:30 Opening

- Opening address, State-Secretary to Minister for Culture,
Karin Svanborg-Sjövall (10 min)
- Opening address, Head of National Minorities and Minority Languages Division, Council of Europe, Elise Cornu (2 min)
- Pre-recorded message on the objectives of Follow-up meetings,
Marie B. Hagsgård, national expert elected in respect of Sweden (5 min)
- Opening address, including the general findings of the 5th Opinion on Sweden, Emma Lantschner, First Vice-president of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention and expert elected in respect of Italy (10 min)

10:30-10:35 Short break

10:35-11:35 Session 1: Education and knowledge promoting measures

- The Advisory Committee presents the recommendations and examples of good practices (10 min)
- Comments on the recommendations and proposals for implementation measures by the representatives of the national minorities (30 min)
- The Government Offices and relevant public authorities react on proposals by national minorities and inform of implementation measures taken since the Country visit (10 min)
- Dialogue and conclusion (10 min)

11:35-12:20 Lunch

12:20-13:20 Session 2: Combating discrimination, racism and hate crimes

- The Advisory Committee presents the recommendations and examples of good practices (10 min)
- Comments on the recommendations and proposals for implementation measures by the representatives of the national minorities (30 min)
- The Government Offices and relevant public authorities react on proposals by national minorities and inform of implementation measures taken since the Country visit (10 min)
- Dialogue and conclusion (10 min)

13:20-13:45 Coffee break

13:45-14:45 Session 3: Participation in decision-making

- The Advisory Committee presents the recommendations and examples of good practices (10 min)
- Comments on the recommendations and proposals for implementation measures by the representatives of the national minorities (30 min)
- The Government Offices and relevant public authorities react to proposals by national minorities and inform of implementation measures taken since the Country visit (10 min)
- Dialogue and conclusion (10 min)

14:45-15:00 Conclusion

Appendix 2 – List of participants

All day:

Council of Europe

Emma Lantschner, expert of the Advisory Committee elected in respect of Italy

Elise Cornu, Head of National Minorities and Minority Languages Division, Council of Europe

Representatives of the national minorities:

Eva Kvist, National Association of Swedish Tornedalians

Charlotte Manderman, Official Council of Swedish Jewish Communities

Gregor Kwiek, Romano Pasos Research Centre

Jenny Wik Karlsson, Sámiid Riikkasearvi (SSR)

Kalle Kinnunen, Sweden Finnish Youth Organization

Markus Marttila, Sweden Finnish Delegation

Government Offices:

Linda Nordin, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Sophia Fensby, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Session 1: Education

The Government Offices:

Anna-Lena Sjölund, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Camilla Lindquist, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Magda Bergkvist Andersson, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Annika Risel, Ministry of Education: Division for Schools

Linda Mildner, Ministry of Education: Division for Upper Secondary and Adult Education and Training

Joel Westlund Hult, Ministry of Education: Division for Higher Education

Administrative Authorities

Anita Kitok, Sami Parliament

Ellen Omma, Sami Parliament

Malin Langenfors, Stockholm County Administrative Board

Helena Lundgren, National Agency for Education

Jenny Lindström, Swedish Council for Higher Education

Majlis Nilsson, The Living History Forum

Brittis Edman, Swedish Institute for Human Rights

Session 2: Combating Discrimination, racism and hate crimes

The Government Offices:

Dennis Wiklund, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Magda Bergkvist Andersson, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Rebecca Krus, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Klara Lundh, Ministry of Justice: Division for Criminal Law

Emma Tengwall, Ministry of Justice: Division for Crime Policy

Karolina Kral, Ministry of Justice: Division for Police Issues

Andrés Zanzi, Ministry of Employment: Division for Human Rights and Discrimination

Administrative Authorities

Anita Kitok, Sami Parliament

Ellen Omma, Sami Parliament

Malin Langenfors, Stockholm County Administrative Board

Lars Lindgren, Equality Ombudsman

Daniel Jacobsson, Swedish Police Authority

Cecilia Sandén, Swedish Police Authority

Lisa Wallin, Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention

Majlis Nilsson, The Living History Forum

Brittis Edman, Swedish Institute for Human Rights

Session 3: Participation in decision making

The Government Offices:

Daniel Wohlgemuth, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Linnéa Meyer, Ministry of Culture: Division for Languages, National Minorities and Archives

Susanne Gylesjö, Ministry of Climate and Enterprise: Division for Trades, and Industry

Anna Larson, Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure: Division for Fishing, Hunting and Reindeer husbandry

Administrative Authorities

Anita Kitok, Sami Parliament

Ulrika Hannu, Sami Parliament

Malin Langenfors, Stockholm County Administrative Board

Brittis Edman, Swedish Institute for Human Rights