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**EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES**

**Information Document**  
**on the implementation of the**  
**Recommendations for Immediate Action**  
**based on the 5th monitoring cycle**

**Submitted by Finland**  
**on 4 March 2020**



Ulkoministeriö  
Utrikesministeriet  
Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland

## European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

### Information by the Government of Finland on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action under the Charter

3 March 2020

#### Recommendations by the Committee of Ministers (CM/RecChL(2018)5)

#### **1. Further strengthen education in the Sami languages, also outside the Sami Homeland, especially by providing permanent financing for language nests and adult education**

##### *Teaching of the Sámi languages*

The status of Sámi-language education is taken into account in the Government Programme of the Prime Minister *Sanna Marin's* Government Programme.

In December 2019, the Ministry of Education and Culture appointed a working group for the development of Sámi languages and Sámi-language teaching. The task of the working group is to make the required proposals to:

1. Develop Sámi languages and Sámi-language teaching, education and training and strengthen their availability throughout the country, and improve the availability of teaching staff;
2. Develop and strengthen the availability of Sámi-language early childhood education and care and language nest activities, and improve the availability of early childhood education and care personnel;
3. Secure the availability of Sámi-language learning material;
4. Increase awareness on Sámi languages, history and culture, especially in school education;
5. Strengthen cooperation between Nordic schools in providing education to the Sámi; and
6. Ensure the availability of Sámi-speaking social and health care personnel and anticipating training needs.

The discretionary government transfer for the teaching of Sámi has been on the rise since 2010 and now totals around EUR 2.25 million annually. During the same period the amount of teaching has increased by around 10,000 hours. The said transfer has allowed the municipalities in the Sámi Homeland to organise well over 38,000 hours per year of teaching of Sámi languages.

Sámi-language teacher education for early childhood education and care has been implemented with separate funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture (just under EUR 400,000).

The Sámi languages (Northern Sámi, Inari Sámi, Skolt Sámi) education and Sámi-language teacher education was launched with separate funding from the Ministry (EUR 750,000) in 2018.

The municipalities in the Sámi Homeland have organised pre-primary and basic education in all Sámi languages spoken in Finland. Under the Basic Education Act (*perusopetuslaki; 628/1998*), education to Sámi-speaking pupils in the Sámi Homeland shall mainly be provided in Sámi. The requirements of the Basic Education Act are well met in years 1–6, whereas in years 7–9, teaching in Sámi can only be provided in certain subjects.

The availability of Sámi teachers has improved considerably in recent years in Inari Sámi. Several qualified teachers have been obtained through teacher training. However, no Skolt Sámi-speaking teachers holding an education qualification have been recruited for teaching. In subject education, the situation has improved somewhat but challenges remain in respect of all of the Sámi languages spoken in Finland.

The Giellagas Institute for Sámi Studies is located at the University of Oulu. The Institute has the national task of providing highest education and research on the Sámi language and Sámi culture. This also applies to teacher training. The funding level to the Institute has been approximately EUR 800,000 a year. The Giellagas Institute together with the Faculty of Education and the Sámi Education Institute based in Inari have in place a project for training Sámi-speaking subject teachers (<https://www.oulu.fi/giellagas/kettera>). The project aims to train formally qualified Sámi-speaking teachers on a fast schedule. Intensive basic and intermediate studies in Inari, Skolt and Northern Sámi were initiated within the project in autumn 2019 in the form of contact teaching in Inari. The studies in literature required for qualified teachers of Sámi native language and literature are organised as studies in Sámi literature for the first time. These studies are to be completed online. Pedagogical studies will be organised in the final year of the project (2021) in the form of blended learning. One focus area of these studies will be the new discipline of Sámi didactics. Dozens of students are enrolled in the project. Inari Sámi has been available as a major subject since 2015 and Skolt Sámi since 2019.

Sámi language and culture is a compulsory subject for all students at the Sámi Education Institute, which provides education leading to a vocational upper secondary qualification in the fields of crafts and design, natural science, hotel and restaurant business, health and social services, ICT and tourism. In addition, the Sámi Education Institute offers a broad range of education in Sámi culture. In teaching Sámi, the Sámi Education Institute works together with the Giellagas Institute.

### *Continuing education for teachers*

The Regional State Administrative Agency organises short-cycle training for education and early childhood education for the staff designed to promote the lifelong learning and equal opportunities to develop the expertise required for the duties of the staff. Staff training supports the implementation of the Government's education policy reforms and develops the expertise required to adapt to changes in the operating environment. The training seeks in particular to deepen the personal and workplace community expertise of participants, to reform and experiment pedagogics, learning environments and operating culture, to support development and learning, and to embrace cultural diversity.

### *Teaching of Sámi outside the Sámi Homeland*

Over 60% of Finland's Sámi people and around 70% of Sámi under the age of 18 live outside the municipalities of the Sámi Homeland.

Outside the Sámi Homeland, contact teaching to supplement the basic teaching of Northern Sámi is provided in Helsinki, Tampere, Jyväskylä, Laukaa, Tampere, Oulu, Rovaniemi and Kittilä (2019-2020). A bilingual (Northern Sámi/Finnish) primary education class also started at Pasila comprehensive school in Helsinki in autumn 2018. Oulu and Rovaniemi also have plans to launch bilingual Sámi/Finnish education.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has provided funding for a project coordinated by the Sámi Parliament aiming at safeguarding the teaching of the Sámi languages outside the Sámi Homeland. The project runs from 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2020.

### *Revival of the Sámi languages*

An Action Plan for the Revival of the Sámi Languages was prepared in 2012. The Action Plan includes an assessment of the current status of all three Sámi languages spoken in Finland, the key challenges to the preservation and advancement of the languages, a vision for revival of the languages by 2025, and actions to improve the situation. All Sámi languages spoken in Finland remain endangered. Skolt Sámi and Inari Sámi are seriously endangered languages.

### *Sámi language nest activities*

Language nest activities have been described as the most effective way of reviving a language. The Sámi Parliament has prepared a study on the standing and future of language nest activities. The study also addresses the main challenges of these activities. According to the study, around 26% of Sámi children attended Sámi-language early childhood education and care and pre-primary education in 2015. In the same year, around 82% of Sámi children in the Sámi Homeland and around 7.5% of those outside the Sámi Homeland could attend Sámi-language early childhood education and care.

The 2020 State Budget includes funding of EUR 1.2 million for Sámi cultural and language nest activities both in the municipalities in the Sámi Homeland and elsewhere. The appropriation is sufficient to maintain the activities of ten cultural and language nests.

### *Distance teaching of the Sámi languages*

A pilot project on the distance teaching of the Sámi languages was launched in summer 2018 and is intended to run until the end of 2020. The project provides, as a supplement to pre-primary, basic as well as general upper secondary education, two weekly hours of instruction per group in the Sámi languages. In 2019–2020, the project involves a total of 26 education providers and 63 pupils. The purpose of the project is not only to arrange teaching but has the aim of identifying the need for the teaching of the Sámi languages, the current situation and the possibilities for organising education outside the municipalities in the Sámi Homeland.

The project will generate an operating model that will allow the teaching of the Sámi languages outside the municipalities of the Sámi Homeland to be put on a permanent footing and made a natural part of the daily school attendance of Sámi pupils across the country. The project website can be found at [www.saamenetaopetus.com](http://www.saamenetaopetus.com).

### *Conscript training*

Conscript training in Finland is provided in Finnish and Swedish. The command language is Finnish. In the Sámi Homeland, the Finnish Defence Forces safeguard services in Sámi in accordance with the Sámi Language Act (*saamen kielilaki*; 1086/2013). In practice, this means that the regional Lapland office provides customer service also in Sámi and has documents such as call-up notices and instructions translated into all three Sámi languages. Military service cannot be deemed to constitute 'dealing with an authority' but rather the fulfilment of the duty of national defence laid down in the Constitution of Finland (731/1999). Consequently, the right to deal with an authority in Sámi has not been extended to apply to the performance of military service.

## **2. Take further measures to ensure the accessibility of social and health care in Swedish and in the Sami languages**

Linguistic rights and the securing of these rights are included in the Government Programme of Prime Minister *Marin*. Among other things, the Government Programme states that linguistic rights will be secured in practice in the health and social services system and especially for Swedish speakers, Sámi speakers and sign language users. The Government Programme moreover specifically notes that disability services will be secured for Swedish speakers.

The Government Programme furthermore states that the health and social services reform will safeguard quality, client-oriented services on an equal basis for Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers. Based on the Government Programme, basic health and social services will thus be developed on the basis of regional needs such as the need to develop services in different languages.

The Government Programme additionally states that the Current Care Guidelines (independent evidence-based national clinical practice guidelines) will be translated into Swedish. An appropriation of EUR 600,000 is set aside in the 2020 Budget proposal for this purpose.

The availability of services in Swedish continues to vary greatly from one municipality to another. Problems appear to arise in municipalities where Swedish speakers make up less than 30% of the total population.

A customer survey conducted in 2018 in Uusimaa (*the Uusimaa 2019 project*) revealed that the situation of health and social services in Swedish is particularly poor in the bilingual municipalities in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Other areas problematic in terms of Swedish include some of the coastal municipalities in Southwest Finland as well as the municipalities of Kokkola and Kruunupyy in Ostrobothnia.

Customers may view the documents prepared on them in the *My Kanta* service, where the information is presented in the language used by the professional who prepared it (Finnish or Swedish).

The Emergency Services Academy Finland launched in autumn 2018 an 18-month course to train Swedish-speaking (bilingual) emergency response centre operators on a regional basis in the interests of improving and streamlining the availability of emergency response centre services in Swedish.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health grants a separate appropriation annually for safeguarding health and social services in Sámi in the Sámi Homeland. The separate funding is of particular importance in securing the availability of services in Inari and Skolt Sámi.

A study on cross-border cooperation between Finland and Norway, and its obstacles, was published in February 2020. The study reviews issues relating to the availability of services in the Sámi languages in matters relating to health and social services, business services, rescue services and the taxation of cross-border workers, for example. The municipalities in the region were represented in the study's steering group alongside representatives of ministries and agencies. Key issues relating to the topic of the study were slow administrative decision processes, flow of information, and issues relating to the availability and training of workers. In respect of services to the Sámi, particular attention was paid to the lack of services in the Sámi languages and Sámi culture services. Services provided in the Sámi languages should be coordinated in a more centralised manner, and effective e-services should be developed to improve the availability of services. The study took into account all three Sámi languages spoken in Finland.

The Ministry of Justice together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Sámi Parliament visited the municipal authorities in the Sámi Homeland in summer and autumn 2019 to discuss matters such as the availability of health and social services in Sámi. The visits will continue in 2020. In addition, the Ministry of Justice arranged training in spring 2019 on the topic of Sámi issues and the linguistic rights of the Sámi people. The training was attended by a broad spectrum of representatives from the various authorities.

### *Report on Entering Several Languages in the Population Information System*

One of the key observations contained in the Report of the Government on the Application of Language Legislation 2017 is that the possibility of entering several mother tongues for a person in the Population Information System should be examined. A recommendation issued by the Committee of Ministers also stated that the expression of multiple identity and language affiliations in the Population Information System should be facilitated.

The Report on Entering Several Languages in the Population Information System, published by the Ministry of Justice on 2 March 2020, assessed the benefits for the individual of entering several mother tongues in the Population Information System. They include providing a fuller picture of a person's language identity, and avoiding situations where parents who speak different languages have to choose a language for their child. The possibility of recording several languages could additionally give a more diverse idea of the language resources in Finland.

The impacts of the proposal on the public administration were also assessed. The mother tongue information in the Population Information System is used for such purposes as determining the linguistic division of municipalities, service planning, selecting the language used to contact a person, as well as the criteria for determining the amounts of central government transfers to local government and discretionary government transfers.

The Report on Entering Several Languages in the Population Information System concludes by examining two alternatives. Alternative A is entering several mother tongues in the system, however always also recording either Finnish or Swedish as the person's service language. Alternative B is recording the mother tongue and service language as before but incorporating in the Population Information System the possibility of entering one or more languages spoken at home. Opinions on these alternatives are currently invited via the online service [Lausuntopalvelu.fi](https://lausuntopalvelu.fi) which allows also private individuals to submit their contributions.

### **3. Increase and improve the training of Romani teachers, extend the production of teaching materials in Romani and increase the provision of teaching of Romani**

The main objective of Finland's National Policy on the Roma 2018-2022 (ROMPO2) is to support the positive social integration of the Roma and the positive development of linguistic, cultural and social rights. One of the objectives of the National Roma Policy is to support the development and preservation of Roma culture by taking determined steps to improve the status of the Romani language and Roma art and culture. This will happen through formulating various separate development and revitalisation programmes and through programme monitoring.

Action no. 48 within the Policy is to draw up a national action programme for the revitalisation the Finnish Romani language. The actors responsible for this action are the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Justice and the University of Helsinki.

Action no. 50 within the Policy is to produce a variety of learning materials for Romani language teaching and for the various language proficiency levels, taking into account in particular the need for digital materials, language learning games, audio resources and video materials. The actors responsible for this action are the Finnish National Agency for Education, Roma organisations and publishers.

Action no. 51 within the Policy is to provide continuing education for Romani language teachers and instructors relating to language and language pedagogy. The actors responsible for this action are the Finnish National Agency for Education, providers of continuing education and the University of Helsinki.

Action no. 52 within the Policy is to create Romani language teaching models utilising remote connections in cooperation with the University of Helsinki to extend Romani teaching also to schools where it is otherwise not possible as they do not have a Romani language teacher. The actors responsible for this action are the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Finnish National Agency for Education and the University of Helsinki.

Since 2012, the University of Helsinki has offered basic and intermediate studies in the Romani language and culture. Access to these studies, having a scope of 60 ECTS credits, is possible either through open university or a separate admissions procedure. The studies provide the competence *i.a.* to teach Romani language and culture at schools. Action no. 49 within the Policy is to expand the university study programme in Romani to cover also advanced studies.

The Roma portal ([www.romanit.fi](http://www.romanit.fi)) maintained by the Ministry of Justice is a source of information on the Roma. It also includes a section for teachers, providing information on topics such as Roma history and customs. The Roma portal also includes classwork assignments for use in schools in subjects including history, social studies, ethics, religion and native language.

The MAARO guide published in autumn 2019 (*Guide for planning the regional and local implementation of the Finnish Roma integration strategy*) is intended for local and regional actors to support the local implementation of the National Roma Policy for 2018–2022. The guide reviews the key phases of the development of the MAARO programme and measures containing regional and municipal level responsibilities. It also contains proposals for reinforcing Roma access to all forms and levels of education and training and promoting the occupational competencies, employment, entrepreneurship and labour market integration of the Roma. The guide moreover provides proposals on assigning responsibility for monitoring.

The Finnish National Agency for Education has a Roma population education unit, the task of which is to develop the education and training of the Roma and to promote the Romani language and Roma culture. The Finnish National Agency for Education's grants discretionary government transfers from the Ministry of Education and Culture's appropriations to the municipalities to support the early childhood education and care and the basic education of Roma children.

During the 2017-2020, the University of Helsinki has had the national task in connection with rare languages and cultures of providing basic and subject studies in the Roma language.

#### ***4. Take measures to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis the regional or minority languages of Finland***

The Ministry of Justice will launch in spring 2020 a project to target measures both to the national languages of Finnish and Swedish and to other languages. The project aims to improve attitudes towards Finnish and Swedish and to improve the language climate in Finland from the perspective of Finnish and Swedish speakers. The project furthermore aims to create the conditions for a positive language climate, to reduce confrontation between language groups, and to bring together different societal actors interested in improving the overall language climate in society. The project consists of three modules: influencing attitudes (national and other languages), raising awareness of language groups and linguistic rights, and increasing engagement between language groups (with a particular focus on the national languages and children and young people).

Since 2016, the Sámi Parliament, with funding from the Finnish National Agency for Education, has been developing the website [www.oktavuohta.com](http://www.oktavuohta.com) which provides information on the Sámi to be used in education. A large amount of support materials suitable for thematic education has been published on this website.

The Sámi media Yle Sápmi produces news and current affairs content, programs for children and young people and religious programs in all three Sámi languages. While vital in terms of the Sámi languages, Yle Sápmi also serves as an important news channel to the entire population for news on Sámi topics in Finnish.

Press subsidies to minority language media, Sámi-language press amounted to a total of EUR 500,000.

### **Recommendations by the Committee of Experts (MIN-LANG(2018)3)**

#### ***2.1.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Inari Sami in Finland***

##### *a. Work towards extending the Giellagáldu project, in co-operation with Norway and Sweden.*

In spring 2019, a study was launched by the Nordic Sámi Civil Service Collaboration, which assessed various organisational options for the Nordic Sámi Language Centre (Sámi Giellagáldu). According to the study, the best solutions included either to organise the function in connection with the Norwegian Sámi Parliament or to establish a separate decision-making body in Norway to utilise the administrative services of the Norwegian Sámi Parliament.



The Sámi Parliaments of all Norway, Sweden and Finland have authorised the Sámi Parliamentary Council to choose the organisational model. Finland is prepared to contribute to the funding of the activities of Sámi Giellagáldu.

*b. Make the funding for the promotion of Inari Sami sustainable.*

Under section 31 of the Sámi Language Act, an appropriation shall be included in State Budget to municipalities, parishes, herding cooperatives within the Sámi homeland and certain private entities for covering the specific additional costs of applying the Act. This appropriation increased to EUR 150,000 in 2019.

*c. Take measures to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis Inari Sami, both in education and in the media.*

The Ministry of Justice will launch in spring 2020 a project to target actions relating to the national and other languages. The project aims is to improve the language climate in Finland and to create the conditions for a positive language climate, to reduce confrontation between language groups and to bring together different societal actors interested in improving the overall language climate in society. The project will address the following modules in which the Sámi languages will also be taken into account: affecting attitudes prevailing in society and increasing awareness of language groups and their linguistic rights.

The project seeks to increase the visibility of the various language groups in the media and in the public setting and thus to influence attitudes concerning them. Awareness-raising targets in particular municipal authorities as well as education and early childhood education and care in order to broaden the understanding of children and young people about language groups and their individual linguistic rights.

*e. Ensure the effective implementation of the legislation pertaining to Inari Sami in State and local administration as well as in social and health care services.*

As stated in the Government Programme, linguistic rights will be secured in practice in health and social services. A particular area of emphasis will be to secure linguistic rights for speakers of Swedish and Sámi and users of sign language. Separate mention is made of securing linguistic rights in all services to the elderly and safeguarding disability services to Swedish-speakers. The structural reform of health and social services builds on preparations put in place in the previous Government term, which also included proposals to secure linguistic rights.

Please also see response to Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. 2.

### **2.2.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Karelian in Finland**

*a. Take measures to increase awareness vis-à-vis Karelian, both in the general curriculum at all stages of education and in the media.*

The Action Plan for the Revival of the Karelian Language has been implemented for a period of three years. The action plan was launched when Parliament added EUR 100,000 to the 2017 State Budget for the launch of the Action Plan for the Revival of the Karelian Language. Since then, Parliament has added another EUR 200,000 to ensure the continuation of the action plan in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

The appropriation entered in the State Budget has been distributed through the Ministry of Education and Culture to the Society for the Karelian Language, which has implemented the action plan in cooperation with speakers of the language, municipalities and educational institutions as well as the third sector. Over the past three years, the appropriation has been used to promote teaching, publishing and cultural activities in Karelian as well as to improve the provision of information and online materials.

As part of the implementation of the action plan, the Society for the Karelian Language established a Karelian Language Committee in 2018. In the scope of its activities, the Karelian Language Committee takes into account the varieties of the Karelian language used in Finland and serves all of them.

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2.c.

### **2.3.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of North Sami in Finland**

*a. Work toward extending the Giellagaldu project, in co-operation with Norway and Sweden.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 a.

*b. Make the funding for the promotion of North Sami sustainable.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 b.

*c. Take measures to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis North Sami, both in education and in the media.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 c.

*e. Ensure an effective implementation of the legislation pertaining to North Sami in State and local administration as well as in social and health care services.*

Please see responses to Committee of Experts Recommendation 2.1.2 and Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. 2

**2.4.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Romani in Finland**

*d. Take measures to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis Romani, both in the general curriculum at all stages of education and in the media.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 c.

**2.5.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Russian in Finland**

*a. Take measures to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis Russian, both in the general curriculum at all stages of education and in the media.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 c.

**2.6.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Skolt Sami in Finland**

*a. Work toward extending the Giellagaldu project, in co-operation with Norway and Sweden.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 a.

*b. Make the funding for the promotion of Skolt Sami sustainable.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 b

*c. Take measures to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis Skolt Sami, both in education and in the media.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 c.

*e. Ensure the effective implementation of the legislation pertaining to Skolt Sami in State and local administration as well as in social and health care services.*

Please see responses to Committee of Expert's Recommendation 2.1.2 and Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. 2

### **2.7.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Swedish in Finland**

*a. Ensure that the linguistic rights of the Swedish speakers are preserved, in practice, in the context of administrative reforms.*

The Ministry of Justice issued in 2016 a set of guidelines for linguistic impact assessment in law drafting. These guidelines are still in force.

*b. Take measures to increase tolerance vis-à-vis Swedish in the general public.*

Please see response to Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. 4.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has appointed MSc. *Gun Oker-Blom* as the rapporteur to prepare a report on the special features, challenges and development needs of Swedish-language early childhood education and care and education and to draw up an action plan on the basis of the development needs that were observed during her work. The report will cover the entire field of education from early childhood education and care to higher education.

*c. Ensure the use of Swedish within regional and local authorities.*

The Ministry of Justice is launching a project to improve the language climate and one particular focus in this project will be to raise awareness of linguistic rights among municipal authorities. The aim is to produce a set of training materials on linguistic rights for municipal authorities, which will serve to promote the realisation of linguistic rights with the authorities and thus also the use of Swedish within the authorities. In addition, the Ministry of Justice will also engage in other cooperation with the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities to promote linguistic rights in practice within municipal authorities.

According to the Government Programme of Prime Minister *Marin* one of the focus areas of the Strategy for the National Languages of Finland is to ensure that everyone has the right to receive services in the national languages. The Strategy will include both strategic guidelines and actions for accomplishing this aim. The specific actions will be specified when the strategy is drawn up.

*a. Ensure the effective use of Swedish in social and health care facilities.*

Please see response to Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. 2.

### **2.8.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Tatar in Finland**

*a. Take measures to increase awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis Tatar, both in the general curriculum at all stages of education and in the media.*

Please see response to Recommendation 2.1.2 c.

## **2.9.2 Recommendations by the Committee of Experts on how to improve the protection and promotion of Yiddish in Finland**

*c. Take measures to develop awareness of Yiddish as a minority language of Finland.*

Please see reply to Recommendation 2.8.2. a. as applicable.

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### *Decisions of the Parliamentary Ombudsman*

According to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the number of language complaints concerning health and social services submitted to the Ombudsman is pretty low. Preliminary statistics indicate that in 2019, the Ombudsman dealt with a total of well over 6,000 complaints, fewer than 70 of which concerned language issues. Of the 70 complaints, around 20 had to do with health and social services and action was taken in only a few of the 20 cases. These cases involved the language rights of Sámi speakers when applying for urgent basic social assistance, the language to be used when issuing a response to an objection made under the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (*laki potilaan asemasta ja oikeuksista*, 785/1992), access to services in Swedish over the telephone, and the name of a centre established at a bilingual central hospital.

The Ombudsman assessed in general terms applications for urgent basic social assistance and the availability of related service in Sámi at the Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela. According to the Ombudsman, the requirements of the Sámi Language Act and the Non-Discrimination Act (*yhdenvertaisuuslaki*; 1325/2014) were not met in all respects in the said service provided by Kela. For example, services in Sámi by telephone or remote connection are only available for a very limited amount of time, *i.e.* four hours a week, while the same limitations do not apply to customers speaking Finnish or Swedish. Moreover, service is only provided in Northern Sámi, with no equivalent service available in either Skolt or Inari Sámi despite the rights and obligations laid down in the Sámi Language Act applying equally to all three Sámi languages.

While expressing an understanding of the practical difficulties involved in fully meeting the requirements under the Sámi Language Act, the Ombudsman nonetheless emphasised that Kela was to strive to meet this objective, especially in cases involving urgent basic social assistance, the application for which for which Kela requires to be submitted in person. Kela was made aware of the Ombudsman's opinion and asked to inform the Ombudsman by 30 April 2020 of the action taken following the Ombudsman's decision (3774/2018).

In the matter concerning the language used in responding to an objection under the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients, the substitute for the Deputy Ombudsman held that a bilingual healthcare unit was to issue such a response in the language used in the objection, either Finnish or Swedish (EOAK/6127/2018).

According to the substitute for the Deputy Ombudsman Services by telephone were not completed in a lawful manner when the complainant had been unable to receive service in Swedish when calling the advisory services line of the joint emergency duty services of a bilingual joint municipal authority. The emergency duty services had subsequently put in place special arrangements in an effort to ensure that customers could be served also in Swedish (EOAK/5971/2018).

In the opinion of the Deputy Ombudsman, a social services office had provided inadequate service when a social worker contacted by a customer on an urgent matter could not speak Swedish, nor was there anyone else available at the office or even in emergency social services to provide service in Swedish. The department of social services acknowledged the inadequacy of its service and announced steps to be taken to prevent any similar future occurrences. The department also apologised for the delay in access to service in Swedish. The matter warranted no further action (EOAK/3753/2018).

The Parliamentary Ombudsman gave his opinion on the appropriateness of the choice of name for a centre that acts as a national cooperation network in the field of patient safety in connection with a bilingual central hospital. The centre was originally only given an English name (*No-Harm Center*). The Ombudsman has previously expressed the view that using only an English name (*Stroke Unit*) for a monolingual health care unit was an example of bad administrative practice and in breach of the regulations concerning linguistic rights (ref. 4032/4/08). The Ombudsman's conclusions in the Stroke Unit case also applied in principle to the name *No-Harm Center*. The name of the centre has since been translated into both of the national languages of Finland (*Potilas- ja asiakasturvallisuuden kehittämiskeskus, Utvecklingscentret för klient- och patientsäkerhet*). The centre likewise intends to use both national languages of Finland in its outward activities, first and foremost in its communications. The Ombudsman considered these actions to be appropriate and no further action to be warranted.

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