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EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

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in accordance with Article 15 of the Charter

FINLAND

SIXTH PERIODIC REPORT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF FINLAND
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES

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INTRODUCTION

1. This is the sixth periodic report by the Government of Finland on the implementation of the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Treaty Series of the Statutes of Finland No. 23/1998). It covers the period from November 2017 to May 2023.
2. The Charter classifies minority languages into three groups. The first group contains regional or minority languages. These refer to languages traditionally used within a given territory of a State by nationals of that State who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the State's population. In Finland, this group contains the Sámi language.
3. The second group comprises official languages less widely used on the territory of the State. Of the languages spoken in Finland, Swedish has this status.
4. As a third group, the Charter defines "non-territorial languages". These mean languages which, although traditionally used within the territory of the State, cannot be identified with a particular area in it. A typical representative of this group in Finland is the Romani language. Non-territorial languages in Finland also include Russian, Tatar, Yiddish, and Karelian.
5. The report also covers Estonian and sign languages in Finland.

PART I

1. BASIC INFORMATION ON FINLAND'S POPULATION AND LANGUAGES

Finland's population according to mother tongue

6. According to Statistics Finland's preliminary data, Finland's population at the end of December 2022 was 5,565,519.¹ The population grew by 17,128 persons in 2022. Population growth was fuelled by migration gain from abroad, as immigration exceeded emigration by 34,780 persons.
7. Statistics Finland² produces statistics on persons living in Finland according to their nationality, language and country of birth. The statistics may also be compiled according to origin which, as in the other Nordic countries, means the country in which the individual's parents were born. As the census is based on register data, official statistics on ethnic groups cannot be produced in Finland.
8. While processing sensitive data is prohibited in Finland under section 11 of the Personal Data Act (523/1999), collecting and publishing data on ethnic origin is allowed for statistical research purposes.
9. Under the Constitution of Finland, the national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish. The Language Act (423/2003) lays down specific provisions on the right to use both Finnish and Swedish before State authorities, the authorities of municipalities, courts and otherwise in the discharge of public administration duties.
10. The strategy for the national languages of Finland adopted by the Government in 2012 promotes the vitality and equal status of the national languages.³ Under the Constitution of Finland, the Sámi as an indigenous people as well as the Roma and other groups have the right

¹ [Preliminary population statistics - Statistics Finland](#)

² https://www.stat.fi/artikkelit/2013/art_2013-09-23_003.html?s=0#5 (available only in Finnish)

³ [Strategy for the national languages of Finland: Government Resolution](#) (available only in Finnish)

to maintain and develop their own language and culture. The Sámi Language Act (1086/2003) in turn governs the use of the Sámi language before the authorities.

11. Statistics Finland produces population structure statistics on Finnish and foreign citizens who reside permanently in Finland. One of the details noted in the statistics is the person's language. The data produced by Statistics Finland, meanwhile, are based on the Population Information System maintained by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency and the mother tongue data recorded in it. The language given as a child's mother tongue when the Population Information System is notified of the child's name is regarded as that child's mother tongue in population statistics.

12. There are also many people in Finland who, for a number of reasons, are bilingual or multilingual. However, only one mother tongue can be recorded in the Population Information System. In addition to this, either Finnish or Swedish can be entered as the preferred contact language. The mother tongue recorded in the Population Information System does not affect a person's linguistic rights. The language data entered in the Population Information System are used for various official purposes, including the compilation of statistics and anticipation of service needs.⁴

13. Each person in Finland can make a personal decision about the language they wish to declare as their mother tongue. An authority must find out on its own initiative which mother tongue has been registered for a person. A citizen of another country has the same rights as a Finnish citizen to use Finnish or Swedish before the authorities.

Table 1. Population according to language at 31 December 2022

Mother tongue	2019	2020	2021	2022	%
Domestic languages, total	5,112,648	5,100,946	5,090,199	5,067,978	91.1
Finnish	4,822,690	4,811,067	4,800,243	4,778,891	85.9
Swedish	287,954	287,871	287,933	287,052	5.2
Sámi	2,004	2,008	2,023	2,035	0.0
Foreign languages, total	412,644	432,847	458,042	495,992	8.9
Russian	81,606	84,190	87,552	93,535	1.7
Estonian	49,427	49,551	50,232	50,318	0.9
Arabic	31,920	34,282	36,466	39,069	0.7
English	22,052	23,433	25,638	29,448	0.5
Somali	21,920	22,794	23,656	24,647	0.4
Farsi, Persian	14,118	15,105	16,432	18,097	0.3

⁴ Digital and Population Data Services Agency forms for recording/changing mother tongue designation <https://dvv.fi/en/forms>

Kurdish	14,803	15,368	15,850	16,603	0.3
Chinese	13,064	13,778	14,780	15,735	0.3
Albanian	11,806	12,664	13,830	15,576	0.3
Vietnamese	11,094	11,562	12,310	13,138	0.2
Total	5,525,292	5,533,793	5,548,241	5,563,970	100

Source: Statistics Finland:

https://www.tilastokeskus.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_vaesto_en.html#Population%20by%20language%20on%2031%20December

2. NUMBERS OF SPEAKERS OF REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES IN FINLAND

Numbers of speakers of regional or minority languages in Finland

14. The information provided in this report on the numbers of persons speaking a regional or minority language originates from the Population Information System maintained by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.⁵ The registration of data is based on statutory declarations made by individuals and authorities. The data registered in respect of each natural person are their name and personal identity code, address, nationality and mother tongue, family relations, and date of birth and death. Statistics Finland compiles statistics on nationalities, languages and countries of birth, etc. on the basis of data provided by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency.⁶

15. The underlying principle applied to the registration of languages is that each person has a single own language chosen by that person. In other words, a person's language is determined according to their own declaration. Everyone is entitled to change the data registered for them in the Population Information System at a later date.⁷

Swedish

16. Under the provisions on fundamental rights in the Constitution of Finland, Finland is bilingual and Finnish and Swedish have equal status as national languages. The Constitution also safeguards the rights belonging to individuals and groups associated with this status. Rather than the term "mother tongue," the English translation of the provision uses the expression "own language".

17. Under the Constitution of Finland, in the organisation of administration, the objective shall be suitable territorial divisions, so that the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking populations have an opportunity to receive services in their own language on equal terms. More specific provisions on linguistic fundamental rights are contained in the Language Act (423/2003).

⁵ <https://dvv.fi/en>

⁶ https://www.tilastokeskus.fi/index_en.html

⁷ Personal Data Act, section 11; (523/1999). However, sensitive data may be collected in a personal data file on conditions laid down in acts or a decree. Separate provisions have been laid down on the openness of sensitive personal data.

18. One of the key aims of the Language Act is to ensure the right enshrined under section 17 of the Constitution of Finland of every person to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before courts and other authorities. The goal is to ensure the right of everyone to a fair trial and good administration irrespective of language and to secure the linguistic rights of an individual person without him or her needing specifically to refer to these rights.

19. As Swedish is the second national language of Finland, Swedish speakers cannot actually be referred to as a national minority but mainly a language group, or a *de facto* linguistic minority.

20. At the end of 2022, a total of 287,052 people had declared Swedish as their own language in the Population Information System.

21. The rights of Swedish speakers in Finland are promoted by *Svenska Finlands folkting* (Swedish Assembly of Finland), which works to improve the cultural and societal conditions of the Swedish-speaking population and to promote the status of the Swedish language in Finland. Its tasks include supporting and developing the Swedish-language culture in Finland. The duties of the Swedish Assembly of Finland are laid down in an Act (1331/2003).

Sámi languages

22. Under section 17, subsection 3, of the Constitution of Finland, the Sámi, as an indigenous people, as well as the Roma and other groups, have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. Provisions on the rights of the Sámi to use the Sámi language before the authorities are laid down in an Act (1086/2003).

23. According to data collected by the Sámi Parliament, there were 10,759 Sámi people in Finland in 2019. The Sámi constitute a minority among the roughly 18,600 residents of the Sámi Homeland. More than half (7,353) of the Sámi in Finland live outside the Sámi Homeland.

24. At year-end 2022, a total of 2,035 persons had declared Sámi as their mother tongue in the Population Information System. Under section 7 of the Sámi Language Act, a Sámi resident in Finland has the right to declare Sámi as his or her mother tongue for purposes of the Population Register. Since all persons speaking Sámi as their mother tongue have not exercised this right, the number of Sámi shown by the official statistics does not indicate the real number of persons using the Sámi language. Only one language can be recorded as a person's mother tongue in the Population Information System. A Sámi speaker may have two or even three mother tongues, in which case they often record Finnish as they mother tongue. A significant share of those who use Sámi languages are also speakers of another language, and no data is available on their numbers.

25. Since 2013, it has been possible to record a specific Sámi language as your mother tongue in the Population Register: Southern, Inari, Kildin, Skolt, Lule or Northern Sámi.

26. The Sámi Parliament is the self-government body of the Sámi people in Finland established by an Act (974/1995). The Sámi Parliament operates within the Ministry of Justice's administrative branch but it is independent of central government authorities. The task of the Sámi Parliament is to fulfil the duties assigned to it under the Constitution of Finland: to implement the cultural self-government of the Sámi and safeguard the preservation and development of the indigenous Sámi culture. The cultural self-government of the Sámi applies to the Sámi Homeland, provisions on which are contained in the Act on the Sámi Parliament. The Homeland comprises the municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki as well as the area of the Lapland reindeer herders' cooperative in the municipality of Sodankylä. The municipalities in the Sámi Homeland are Finnish speaking under the language legislation.

Under the Sámi Language Act (1086/2003), Utsjoki is a municipality with a Sámi-speaking majority.

27. Additionally, funding for Sámi culture and associations, youth activities, Sámi-language early childhood education and care services, healthcare and social welfare services as well as the production of learning materials in Sámi is channelled through the Sámi Parliament.

3. NON-TERRITORIAL LANGUAGES AND NUMBER OF PERSONS USING THEM IN FINLAND

Romani

28. The generally applied estimate of the Roma population in Finland is 10,000 persons. However, the Romani Language Board has pointed out that the estimate of the Roma population in Finland is around 30 years old and that certain researchers have been of the view that it is outdated and that the current Roma population in Finland is, in fact, considerably larger. The regional Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs estimate that there are around 4,500 Roma living in southern Finland, around 2,000 in western, southwestern and central Finland, around 1,500 in eastern Finland and around 1,200 in northern Finland and Lapland.⁸ There are Roma living all across Finland and their geographic distribution is uneven. Most of the Roma live in Finland's large cities. The number of Roma migrating to Finland from other EU Member States is steadily increasing and the number of native speakers of, for example, Bulgarian and Romanian Romani dialects is likewise on the rise in Finland. It is estimated that some 3,000–4,000 Finnish Roma live in Sweden.

29. About 30–40% of the Finnish Roma speak the northern Romani dialect, or Kalo. The Roma mainly use their language within their own communities. Finnish Romani is an endangered language and Finland has published a programme for its revitalisation. While Romani may be recorded as a person's mother tongue in the Population Information System, hardly any have exercised this option in practice, as the Roma fear ethnic registration based on language.

30. The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs, which operates in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, serves as a cooperation body between the Roma and the authorities. The Board's tasks include monitoring the development of the Roma population's opportunities for civic participation and living conditions. The Board has influenced the development of Finnish legislation and administration in Roma affairs.

31. Finland also has four regional Advisory Boards on Romani Affairs serving as cross-administrative cooperation bodies between the Roma population and the authorities. The purpose of the activities of these Advisory Boards is to improve the status of the Roma at regional and local level and to include the Roma in decision-making that concerns them. The regional Advisory Boards also strive to promote equality and combat discrimination against the Roma. The activities and status of the Advisory Boards are provided for in Government Decrees (Government Decrees 1019/2003 and 1350/2009).

Russian

32. At the end of 2022, there were 93,535 people in Finland whose mother tongue was Russian. The historical Russian-speaking population in Finland has been joined by a large

⁸ Rajala S. and Schwartz M. (2020). Romanilapset varhaiskasvatuksessa ja esiopetuksessa. Selvitys vuosilta 2018–2019. Opetushallitus. Raportit ja selvitykset 2020:26, s.8 [Roma children in early childhood education and care and in pre-primary education Review of 2018–2019. Finnish National Agency for Education. Reports and reviews 2020:26, p. 8.] (available only in Finnish).

number of new immigrants in the past decade. Russian speakers are currently the largest group of foreign-language speaking immigrants in Finland. Geographically, Russian speakers are concentrated in the larger municipalities. The greatest numbers of Russian speakers living in small municipalities are found in the vicinity of the eastern border.

33. The Finnish Association of Russian-Speaking Organisations (FARO) represents, negotiates for and protects the interests of the Russian-speaking population in Finland. The Association has 30 affiliated organisations which cover almost the whole of Finland. The purpose of the Association is to serve as a free and open cooperation body for the NGOs of the Russian-speaking population in Finland, promote the linguistic, cultural, legal, religious and social interests of the Russian-speaking population, protect the interests and rights of Russian speakers and manage other special issues of this population group, make initiatives and proposals as well as give statements to the authorities and societal organisations on issues that concern the Russian-speaking population in Finland. Representatives of the Association participate in national bodies, the advisory boards of different ministries and organisations, and various working groups.

Tatar

34. The number of Tatars of Turkish ancestry in Finland is estimated to be about 700 to 800, most of whom live in the Helsinki region.⁹ More than half of them still speak Tatar as the mother tongue. The mother tongue of Finnish Tatars¹⁰ is a western dialect of the Tatar language, or Mishar Tatar, which belongs to Turkish languages.

35. In 2022, 234 persons had declared Tatar as their mother tongue in the population data.¹¹ Most Tatars live in the Helsinki region. No separate statistics on the Tatars have been published.

36. The members of the Tatar community have forged themselves a balanced identity consistent with the values of the mainstream Finnish society. Adaptation was required to make a living and to have access to education, and the Tatars thus naturally became part of Finnish society. This has made it possible for them to preserve the unique features of their culture down to the fifth generation.

37. The majority of the Finnish Tatars belong to the Finnish Islamic Congregation, which was established in 1925. The Islamic Congregation is not only a religious association but also a coherent linguistic and cultural community that fosters their cultural heritage while also providing both spiritual and financial support to the cultural associations and sports clubs that operate within it. The cultural association *Finlandiya Türkleri Birliği* was established in 1935, and the sports club *Urheiluseura Yolduz* in 1945.

38. The community has its own notation, which is based on the Latin orthography of Turkish and Finnish.

39. The Finnish Tatar community has a rich and varied cultural heritage. Folk songs and heritage music are alive within the community and attract its members to cultural soirées and other common events. Theatrical performances based on the classics of Tatar literature are also popular. The Finnish Tatars have also created their own literary works: song books, religious textbooks, poetry, literature, periodicals and, in recent years, also a newspaper.

⁹ [Turkin kieliset kansat - Tataarit - Turkin Uutiset](#)

¹⁰ https://www.rauhanpuolustajat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/National_minorities_in_Finland.pdf

¹¹

https://pxweb2.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin_vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11r1.px/table/tableViewLayout1/

Yiddish

40. The Jewish communities in Helsinki and Turku comprise some 100 Yiddish speakers, while some 20 people speak this language as their mother tongue. In 2022, only one person had declared Yiddish as their mother tongue in the population data.¹² Approximately 150 people speak Hebrew as their mother tongue, and additionally, at least 200 people speak Hebrew as a second language at home. No official statistics on Yiddish and Hebrew speakers are available.

41. Yiddish is disappearing as a spoken language in Finland. Yiddish cultural heritage will, however, continue to be significant for the Jewish identity, and for this reason members of the Jewish community will continue to study and use the language. Finnish is the principal language spoken by Finnish Jews, and also the mother tongue for most of them. As a result of the unrest in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, Russian has also made a comeback as a language of the Jewish community in Finland, even though it is only a language spoken at home by a small minority. The Finnish Jews are increasingly multicultural, and the Jewish community in Finland thus reflects the multicultural revolution in Finnish society in a broader sense.

Karelian

42. There are approximately 5,000 Karelian speakers in Finland who speak this language as their mother tongue. In addition, another 20,000 people have a Karelian identity and can understand and speak the language to some extent. No comprehensive statistics on Karelian speakers in Finland are available, however. As from 2011, Karelian has been one of the mother tongue options in the Population Information System maintained by the Population Register Centre (the current Digital and Population Data Services Agency). At year-end 2021, a total of 186 persons had declared Karelian as their mother tongue.¹³

43. The cornerstones of the Karelian identity are the Karelian language, the Orthodox religion as well as the Karelian culture based on folk poetry.

44. The language policy programme includes measures concerning the Karelian language. Under the programme, a Government-level Karelian language expert working group is to be set up and a plan to revitalise the Karelian language as well as a related action plan will be prepared.

Project to revitalise the Karelian language

45. In 2021–2022, the University of Eastern Finland continued its implementation of the Karelian language revitalisation programme. The University works together with the language community, taking account of all Karelian dialects and consulting with experts in the Karelian language. By spring 2022, the special grant of EUR 200,000 awarded by the Ministry of Education and Culture had supported the written use of Karelian by producing learning materials in Karelian as well as Karelian-language content openly available online and on social media, by promoting cooperation between Karelian speakers and Karelian organisations, and developing the status of the Karelian language in society, particularly in the context of preparing the language policy programme. A cooperation network has been established for Karelian language instructors in liberal adult education. The core studies in the Karelian language at the University of Eastern Finland have been made available at Open University. The language policy programme published in summer 2022 proposes (1) setting up a

¹²

https://pxweb2.stat.fi/PxWeb/pxweb/en/StatFin/StatFin_vaerak/statfin_vaerak_pxt_11r1.px/table/tableViewLayout1/

¹³ Information obtained by email on 1 March 2023 from Statistics Finland.

Government-level Karelian language expert working group and (2) preparing a plan to revitalise the Karelian language as well as a related action plan.

46. The Ministry of Education and Culture made a grant of EUR 100,000 to the Karelian Language Society in 2017 and awarded EUR 200,000 in 2018 towards launching the Karelian language revitalisation programme and in 2019 for continuation of the programme. Established in 1995, the Society was declared bankrupt by the District Court of Northern Karelia in September 2020.

Estonian

47. The number of Estonian speakers has increased considerably in Finland and they are now the country's second largest group of foreign language speakers. At year-end 2021, there were 50,318 persons in Finland whose mother tongue was Estonian. The migration of Estonians to Finland started in the 1990s (in 1990, there were 1,394 Estonian speakers living in Finland) and increased when Estonia acceded to the EU in 2004, being often motivated by work.

Sign language

48. Under section 17, subsection 2 of the Constitution of Finland, the rights of users of sign languages and of those who need interpretation and translation because of disability shall be guaranteed by Acts of Parliament. According to a recommendation contained in the language policy programme for the national sign languages in Finland, the Government should ensure that the status of minority languages, including sign language, is promoted at the European level, for example under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and other instruments relevant to languages. Sign language users are a linguistic and cultural minority in Finland.

49. Sign language users are a linguistic and cultural group, the core of which consists of the deaf and those with severe hearing impairment for whom sign language is their mother tongue. However, sign language can also be regarded as a child's mother tongue when at least one of their parents or an older sibling is a sign language user, and the sign language has been used to communicate with the child from birth. According to the Finnish Association of the Deaf, there are around 10,000–14,000 people in Finland who are able to use sign language and some 4,000–5,000 of them are deaf.¹⁴ Finnish sign language is the mother tongue of roughly 5,500 persons, some 3,000 of whom are deaf. Some sign language users in Finland are Swedish-speaking Finns. Living mainly in southern Finland and Ostrobothnia, their language is the Finnish-Swedish sign language. Around 100 of them are deaf.¹⁵

Advisory Board on Sign Language Matters

50. As laid out in the Programme of Prime Minister Sanna Marin's Government (2019–2023), a broad-based Advisory Board on Sign Language Matters was appointed for a term running from 11 February 2021 to 10 February 2025. The Advisory Board was established to assess the implementation of the objectives of the Sign Language Act (359/2015) and to promote the equality, inclusion and fundamental rights of sign language users. The Ministry of Justice is preparing an assessment memorandum on the implementation of the Sign Language Act. The Prime Minister's Office has appointed a working group tasked with preparing the launch of a national reconciliation process, as laid out in the Government Programme, concerning the historical violations of the rights of the deaf in Finland. The working group has been appointed for a term running from 26 October 2022 to 23 June 2023.

¹⁴ <https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/sign-language>

¹⁵ <https://kuurojenliitto.fi/viittomakieliset> (available only in Finnish)

Sign Language Barometer 2020

51. The first ever Sign Language Barometer survey¹⁶ was carried out by the Ministry of Justice in 2020 to ask users of Finnish and Finnish-Swedish sign language how well their linguistic rights had been realised. Issues particularly raised in the survey involved challenges relating to interpretation when dealing with authorities and the lack of information in sign language.

52. The language policy programme includes several proposals for measures relating to the sign languages.

53. In 2019–2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture funded a project to disseminate information about the Finnish-Swedish sign language and also launched a cooperation network for it. In 2020 and 2021, the Ministry of Education and Culture awarded funding for the coordination, planning and implementation of a programme to revitalise the Finnish-Swedish sign language. The funding has been used not only for revitalisation relating to education and training but also to promote language advisory services, inspire language users and boost communications.

54. The UN Association of Finland expressed its concern about the arrangement of teaching in sign language. According to the Association, the right of children whose mother tongue is sign language to instruction in their own language is nowadays seldom realised. The presence of a sign language interpreter is not equal to providing instruction in sign language. The varying resources of the municipalities to allocate assistance resources to children who use sign language also present a challenge to the achievement of equality and the realisation of the right of children and young people to be taught in their mother tongue. There are considerable difficulties in implementing instruction of Finnish sign language and in Finnish sign language, and the same applies to Finnish-Swedish sign language.

4. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME, STRATEGIES, REPORTS AND STUDIES

Government Programme 2019–2023

55. The Programme of Prime Minister *Sanna Marin's* Government (2019–2023) states that Finland is an open, international country. As a western democracy, Finland promotes the rule of law and human rights. Thanks to our two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, Finland is a strong part of the Nordic countries. One of the measures under the Programme to promote non-discrimination is to secure linguistic rights in practice, especially for Swedish speakers, Sámi speakers and sign language users. In relation to promoting wellbeing and health, the Government intends to strengthen linguistic rights in practice in the health and social services system. In addition, the Programme states that the Government will respect and promote the realisation of the linguistic and cultural rights of all Sámi people and Sámi groups in a way that takes the relevant international conventions into account. The health and social services reform will safeguard quality, client-oriented services on an equal basis for Finnish speakers and Swedish speakers. The Government will also ensure the implementation of linguistic rights in all actions of public authorities, public administration and the drafting of legislation. Training and recruitment of staff will help to ensure that the actual ability of security authorities (particularly the police and emergency response centres) to provide services in Finnish and Swedish is safeguarded. The Programme further states that a comprehensive review will be

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https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/162839/OM_2021_4_SO.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y (available only in Finnish)

carried out of the special features, challenges and development needs of education provided in Swedish (from early childhood education and care to higher education), and a long-term action plan will be created to ensure parity.

56. Parliamentary elections were held in Finland on 2 April 2023. A new Government is being formed and a new Government Programme is being drawn up.

Finland's third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2020–2023

57. Finland's third National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2020–2023 (Appendix 1) focuses on developing the monitoring of fundamental and human rights. The Action Plan has involved the development of fundamental and human rights indicators producing data that, insofar as possible, can be disaggregated by population group in respect of topics where data capable of disaggregation is available. Certain indicators moreover focus specifically on monitoring the realisation of minority rights. The indicators are also used to monitor developments in the rights of language minorities and the monitoring objects include Finland's national languages, the Sámi languages, the sign languages and the Romani language. Several indicators are in place to monitor the realisation of the Sámi right to self-determination. The indicator framework also covers topics including the realisation of gender minorities' right to self-determination, hate crimes, the promotion of non-discrimination and the experiences of housing-related discrimination among the Roma.

58. The Action Plan moreover points out that there is a need from the perspective of monitoring the realisation of fundamental and human rights and, in particular, in order to detect structural inequality, to obtain research and statistical data that can be disaggregated by population group. A research project has been launched with a view to the potential development of such data collection. The project reviews the legal and ethical conditions for collecting human rights-based data disaggregated by population group and the current status of data collection and also outlines potential future developments for data collection.

Language policy programme

59. In line with its Programme, Prime Minister *Sanna Marin's* Government (2019–2023) drew up a language policy programme¹⁷ dealing with languages spoken in Finland other than the national languages, in particular the Sámi languages, Romani, Karelian and the sign languages. This programme is the first comprehensive language policy programme to examine the status of languages other than the national languages in Finland. The language policy programme aims to respond to challenges identified for different language groups. Its objectives are to protect, revive, support and strengthen the autochthonous languages of Finland. Children and young people are at the heart of the programme: the aim is to be able to secure the intergenerational transmission of languages in the future, too.

60. The language policy programme is yet to be fully implemented. Programme implementation spans a longer time horizon, as it takes sustained efforts to secure linguistic rights. Since the language policy programme is a Government programme, the entire Government has responsibility for implementing its objectives and measures.

Strategy for the national languages of Finland

61. In line with the Programme of Prime Minister *Sanna Marin's* Government (2019–2023), a revised strategy for the national languages of Finland has been drawn up to ensure that

¹⁷ Language policy programme. Government Resolution.

https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163014/OKM_2021_25.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (available only in Finnish)

everyone has the right to receive services in the national languages and to improve the language climate. The strategy was adopted as a Government resolution in late 2021. It was prepared in an inclusive process involving extensive consultation with experts, interest groups and citizens. The strategy concerns the national languages of Finland, Finnish and Swedish, and is a declaration of the Government's intent with regard to language policy. The aim of the strategy is to ensure that Finland continues to have two viable national languages. With regard to the Finnish language, the main objective is to prevent the narrowing of the field of use of the language. With regard to Swedish, the aim is to ensure the functionality and availability of services in Swedish and to strengthen the vitality of the language community.

62. The strategy also aims to promote the integration of immigrants in both national languages. The strategy sets out three guidelines: 1) right to services in one's own language, 2) safeguarding the status of the national languages, and 3) living bilingualism. Goals have been set and concrete measures established in order to implement the vision of the strategy. One of the aims of the strategy is for both national languages to have a visible and audible presence in society. Several measures have been determined in order to accomplish this, concerning aspects such as support for cultural productions and cultural and sports services in both Finnish and Swedish as well as Finnish and Swedish dialogue with the third sector. Another aim of the strategy is for the language climate to be tolerant and unbiased and for there to be natural interaction between the language groups. Measures relating to this involve matters such as language instruction, bilingual leisure and hobby activities, and training materials geared to the authorities. The strategy also pays attention to the active use of both national languages in public administration, in both internal and external communications.

63. Responsibility for the implementation of the strategy has been assigned to several operators, while the overall responsibility rests with the Ministry of Justice. Each year, the Ministry of Justice will collect progress reports from the other ministries on the measures for which they are responsible through the Government's network of contact persons for the national languages

64. A separate appropriation has been set aside for the preparation and implementation of the strategy for the national languages of Finland.

Education Policy Report

65. Completed in 2021, the Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government includes several mentions of languages and language skills and the significance of these, and the aim of the Report is to promote the national languages, support work-based immigration, strengthen skills in Finnish and Swedish as a second language and boost language awareness.¹⁸

Report on the application of language legislation 2021

66. The Government report on the application of language legislation is a follow-up report that is submitted to Parliament once every parliamentary term (Appendix 2). There are provisions on the language report in the Language Act (423/2003) and the Government Decree on the Enforcement of the Language Act (433/2004). As laid down in the Government Decree, the report deals not only with Finnish and Swedish but also with at least Sámi, Romani and sign language, as well as the linguistic conditions in the country at a more general level whenever necessary. The report must discuss the application of language legislation, the implementation of linguistic rights, the language relations in the country, as well as the development as regards to Finnish and Swedish. The previous reports were published in 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2017.

¹⁸ Government (2021): Education Policy Report of the Finnish Government. Publications of the Finnish Government 2021:64 Helsinki: Finnish Government.

67. The Government report on the application of language legislation 2021¹⁹ contains up-to-date information about the language situation in Finland, structures supporting linguistic rights, the impact of administrative changes on language groups and experiences of the implementation of linguistic rights when dealing with the authorities. Key themes include digitalisation and the implementation of linguistic rights in education, the police, rescue services and emergency response centre services. The report also covers the language service obligation of private companies pursuant to section 25 of the Language Act. At the end of the report, there is a summary of the experiences gained during the monitoring period on the application of language legislation and the current language situation in Finland.

5. NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Reform of the Act on the Sámi Parliament

68. As laid out in its Programme, the Government has continued its efforts to reform the Act on the Sámi Parliament. The Sámi Parliament and the Government parties were represented on a committee chaired by Pekka Timonen, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Justice (1 December 2020 – 15 May 2021). The starting point of the work of the committee was fundamental rights and other obligations under the Constitution, international human rights instruments binding on Finland, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other developments and recent decisions in law and international law. Recent decisions refer to the two decisions of the UN Human Rights Committee concerning Finland on complaints involving inclusion in the electoral roll of Sámi Parliament elections. The Committee found that Finland had violated Article 25 of the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (rights to political participation, among others) read alone and in conjunction with article 27 (rights of minorities). In its decision, the Committee emphasised the right of self-determination of the Sámi with regard to their status and membership in the community. The Committee held that among other actions, Finland was to review section 3 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament. In addition, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) issued on 13 June 2022 its decision (No. 59/2016)²⁰ in a case concerning persons included in the electoral roll of the Sámi Parliament elections and found Finland to have violated the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

69. The Committee preparing amendment of the Act on the Sámi Parliament submitted its report, inclusive of a dissenting opinion by the representative of the Centre Party, on 11 May 2021. In other respects, the report was unanimous.

70. The key proposals of the Committee are:

- to reform the conditions under section 3 of the Act on the Sámi Parliament for inclusion in the electoral roll and re-compiling the electoral roll;
- to establish a new, independent and autonomous appeal board for electoral roll matters;
- to develop the elections;
- to strengthen the obligation of the authorities to negotiate and to introduce a new provision on taking account of the rights of the Sámi in activities of the authorities;

¹⁹ [Government Report on the application of language legislation 2021- Valto \(valtioneuvosto.fi\)](#) (available only in Finnish)

²⁰ [UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination adopted an opinion on a matter concerning eligibility to Sámi electoral roll](#)

- a reference to the right of self-determination of the Sámi would be included in the section of the Act on its purpose and the competence provision would be developed;
- it is proposed that in the future, the report of the Sámi Parliament be submitted directly to the Finnish Parliament; and
- it is proposed that the Sámi Parliament be added to the provisions of the Criminal Code concerning offences in office.

71. The aim of the changes proposed by the committee is to protect and promote the realisation of the right of self-determination of the Sámi and to improve the operating conditions of the Sámi Parliament, and in particular to address the current status in the manner required by the UN Human Rights Committee.

72. The definition of Sámi person regarding the right to vote in the elections for the Sámi Parliament is proposed to be revised so that the provision would specifically apply to inclusion of the person in the electoral roll of the Sámi Parliament elections, *i.e.* the right to vote in those elections, instead of defining who is to be considered Sámi in the first place. The right of the Sámi as an indigenous people to define for themselves who is Sámi is proposed to be reinforced by reforming the objective conditions for inclusion in the electoral in a manner drafted in cooperation with the Sámi Parliament and by expanding the composition of the election board. The pan-Nordic provision of the initialled Nordic Sámi Convention has been taken into account in the formulation of the objective conditions.

73. The manner of requesting a review of a matter concerning inclusion in the electoral roll would be reformed so as to make an independent and impartial review board the first review instance. Its decisions could be appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court provided that the Court grants leave to appeal. The electoral roll would be re-compiled on the basis of the revised criteria to apply for inclusion. The time of submission of electoral roll applications is proposed to be brought forward so as to allow sufficient time for the appropriate processing of the applications and requests for review.

74. The Government proposal on amending the Act on the Sámi Parliament was submitted to Parliament on 18 November 2022.²¹ The Government was not unanimous in its decision to submit the proposal to Parliament. The proposal was considered by several Committees of Parliament in 2023 but no position on the proposal was adopted in plenary session in Parliament. As the reporting committee, the Constitutional Law Committee held that owing to the timetable restrictions arising from the upcoming parliamentary elections, the Committee was not in a position to prepare an appropriate report on the matter. The Committee considered it important that in order to safeguard the status and rights of the Sámi laid down in section 17, subsection 3 and section 121, subsection 4 of the Constitution of Finland and to fulfil Finland's international human rights obligations, the Government should immediately at the start of the new parliamentary term submit a new proposal in the matter. Finland's parliamentary elections were held on 2 April 2023.

6. OVERSIGHT OF THE REALISATION OF LINGUISTIC RIGHTS

Ex-ante and ex-post supervision

75. Each authority supervises compliance with the Language Act and the Sámi Language Act in their own branches of administration. This is done to ensure that the special characteristics of each administrative branch can be addressed appropriately in the implementation of

²¹ https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/vaski/HallituksenEsitys/Sivut/HE_274+2022.aspx (available in Finnish only)

linguistic rights.²²

76. Oversight of fundamental rights, which include linguistic rights, takes place at two stages of the Finnish legislative process: before new legislation enters into force, and later as the legislation is applied. The *ex-ante* oversight of fundamental rights is carried out by the Chancellor of Justice of the Government and the Constitutional Law Committee of Parliament. Once legislation has entered into force, the realisation of fundamental rights is also supervised by the Chancellor of Justice of the Government, the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the courts.

77. The task of the overseers of legality is to monitor that courts of law and other authorities as well as public officials, public entity employees and other persons who discharge public duties comply with the law and fulfil their obligations.²³

Chancellor of Justice of the Government

78. Under the Constitution of Finland, the Chancellor of Justice oversees the realisation of linguistic rights as part of overseeing the activities of the authorities, public officials and others discharging public duties. In the oversight of legality, the contents of section 17 of the Constitution, on which the Language Act is based, are stressed in implementing linguistic rights and taking linguistic rights into consideration as an element of good governance.

Decision concerning the development of the Sámi-language services of the Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela

79. Decision OKV/1161/1/2018 issued by the Deputy Chancellor of Justice concerned the development of the Sámi-language services of the Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela in the manner required under the Constitution of Finland and the Sámi Language Act. According to the decision, Kela had neglected to develop these services. The decision found that the lack of a Sámi-language online service violated the equality of Sámi speakers in accessing Kela services. According to the Deputy Chancellor of Justice, in the Sámi Homeland in particular, Kela personnel should be able to provide services in Sámi. The Deputy Chancellor of Justice urged Kela to pay serious attention to remedying this shortcoming.

Parliamentary Ombudsman

80. In the activities of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, language matters consist of issues related to an individual's right to use their own language enshrined in section 17 of the Constitution of Finland, the duty of public authorities to see to the cultural and societal needs of the Finnish and Swedish-speaking population in the country on equal grounds, and also protecting linguistic rights in general. The oversight of legality in language matters is mainly based on investigating individual complaints. The realisation of linguistic rights can also be assessed on inspection visits. No inspections have been carried out with the sole purpose of overseeing the implementation of linguistic rights, and attention has been paid to the right to use and access services in one's own language as part of other inspection activities.

81. In complaints submitted to the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the status of minorities has been raised in language matters, among others. The percentage of language cases resulting in measures has traditionally been high, generally higher than the average for all of the cases considered by the Office. The Parliamentary Ombudsman issued a total of 86 decisions on language matters in 2021. Thirty of these decisions resulted in measures (34.5%). As in previous years, the majority of the decisions involved the right to service in Swedish. The cases concerning the use of foreign languages in the activities of the authorities had to do with the

²² Language Act, section 36, Government proposal HE 92/2002; Sámi Language Act, section 28.

²³ Constitution of Finland, section 108, subsection 1; section 109, subsection 1.

status of both national languages. Two of the decisions were about arranging sign-language interpretation at a briefing held by the authorities. An observable trend in recent years has been for language complaints to an increasing extent to concern the provision of information and guidance in its various forms rather than concrete customer service situations or dealings in a matter with the authorities.

Decision concerning the right of a child to social services in Swedish

82. Decision EAOK 488/2021 of the Parliamentary Ombudsman addresses non-discrimination, right to own language, right to adequate healthcare and social welfare services, and safeguarding of fundamental and human rights. In the case, the City of Helsinki had not been able to arrange special care for a Swedish-speaking child with mild intellectual disabilities and psychiatric challenges in the child's mother tongue in the housing unit during the assessment period (guidance in the housing unit).

83. The Parliamentary Ombudsman found that the procedure at the housing unit had violated the Social Welfare Act (1301/2014) and also violated the child's equality and social, cultural and linguistic rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Finland. The Ombudsman emphasised that, from the perspective of the implementation of the right to self-determination and other rights of a child in need of special support, it is particularly important that the child's right to receive services in the language of their choice be realised.

84. In the decision, the Ombudsman remarked that the language used plays an important role in encountering the child and in the mutual understanding of matters. The Ombudsman emphasised that inadequate resources are not a valid reason for not offering a client a service in the language of their choice. In the Ombudsman's view, the city – as the entity providing and purchasing the service – should have taken the necessary measures in time to realise the child's right to special care in Swedish on an equal basis with Finnish-speaking children

85. The Ombudsman emphasised that the implementation of fundamental rights requires active measures by public authorities to create effective preconditions for the implementation of fundamental rights. In practice, this means continuous measures from the service provider in a situation where the organised service does not implement the client's fundamental rights.

Decision on the realisation of the linguistic rights of Sámi speakers when applying for urgent basic social assistance

86. Decision EOAK/3774/2018 issued by the Parliamentary Ombudsman concerned the conduct of the Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela in case that concerned the right/opportunity of Sámi speakers to apply for urgent basic social assistance in their mother tongue. According to the complaint, Kela had published the application forms for various benefits (including the application for basic social assistance) in Northern Sámi and stated that without exception, an application for urgent basic social assistance was to be filed in person, either by visiting a Kela office or calling Kela customer services on the phone. According to the complaint, under no circumstances could an application for urgent basic social assistance be filed by only submitting a written application. At the same time, Kela had informed customers that it provided customer service by phone in Sámi (Northern and Skolt Sámi) only on certain weekdays and even then, for only two hours daily. Customer service by phone in Inari Sámi could only be obtained by booking such service in advance and the instructions for booking the service were to call the Finnish-language service number.

87. The Parliamentary Ombudsman found that the requirements of the Sámi Language Act and the Non-Discrimination Act (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 were 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 was 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.

Reprimand to the Population Register Centre for conduct concerning the entry of the diacritic marks of the Sámi language in the Population Information System

88. The Deputy-Ombudsman issued a reprimand (3592/2017) to the Population Register Centre for conduct which prevented the entry of all of the diacritic marks of the Sámi language in the Population Information System.

89. The Deputy-Ombudsman investigated the matter on the basis of a complaint, according to which it was not possible to enter the correct spelling of the name of the complainant's daughter in the Population Information System. For this reason, it was also impossible to correctly print out the name in official documents, such as a passport or the Kela card.

90. According to the Deputy-Ombudsman, by virtue of the Constitution of Finland and international conventions that are binding on Finland, the government should have ensured, without undue delay, that the names of the Sámi people can be entered in the Population Information System with their correct Sámi spelling. According to the Deputy-Ombudsman, this was essential to realising the rights of the Sámi people in order to maintain and develop their culture and preserve their identity. Information obtained in the matter indicated that a technical solution that would enable the entry of the full Sámi alphabet in the Population Information Register had been possible for several years, yet the Population Register Centre had not found it necessary to implement it due to the changes in the information systems this would have required.

91. The Population Register Centre (the current Digital and Population Data Services Agency) has, after the abovementioned complaint, taken measures to implement the appropriate set of characters as specifically required by the Council of Europe.

7. STRUCTURES PROMOTING LINGUISTIC RIGHTS

Advisory Board on Language Affairs

92. The duties of the Advisory Board on Language Affairs are to monitor the implementation and application of the Language Act and related legislation and to promote the use and standing of the national languages. It also promotes dialogue between the various language groups and the Government. The Advisory Board is appointed by the Government for four years at a time. The term of the current Advisory Board, appointed in 2021, runs from 2 September 2021 to 1 September 2025. The Advisory Board operates in conjunction with the Ministry of Justice.

Network of contact persons for the national languages

93. On 20 March 2020, the Ministry of Justice appointed the members of the Government's network of contact persons for the national languages for a term running from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2023. This was the third term in which the network was in place. The network served as a cross-sectoral, low-threshold cooperation forum that supported the ministries primarily in matters involving Finland's national languages, Finnish and Swedish, but also on other language issues as required.

94. The duties of the network were to promote the implementation of language legislation in government and the activities of the authorities, to share and develop best practices between the different branches of government and to create new opportunities for cooperation, in respect of the national languages in particular, both within government and in stakeholder relations, to monitor and deploy the Government Programme modules relating to language policy, to monitor and assist the Ministry of Justice in the preparation and deployment of the Government report on the implementation of language legislation and to monitor the implementation of the recommendations relating to language matters issued by the human rights treaty bodies of the UN and the Council of Europe as well as to implement and develop other language matters as a whole.

Government network for fundamental and human rights

95. Finland's third Government network for fundamental and human rights²⁴ was appointed on 12 February 2020. The purpose of the network is to strengthen the realisation of fundamental and human rights by improving information flows and cooperation in the Government's activities in matters pertaining to fundamental and human rights. Besides representatives of the ministries, the network membership consists also of representatives of the supreme overseers of legality, *i.e.* the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Chancellor of Justice of the Government, and of the Human Rights Centre, in the capacity of experts.

96. The network will consider any new recommendations issued to Finland by the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers regarding the implementation of the Charter and monitor the implementation of the recommendations.

8. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS' RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation – Strengthening education in the Sámi languages outside the Sámi Homeland

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

Measures under the language policy programme

97. The language policy programme highlights good examples of language promotion. In respect of the Sámi languages, the following are some of the matters raised: the situation of the Sámi languages has been extensively reviewed and a clear situational picture has been obtained, language nest activities have been successful in revitalising all three Sámi languages, the pilot project on remote instruction in the Sámi languages is being implemented and the number of students enrolled has increased. Various projects have been put in place to address the teacher shortage; the Giellagas Institute and the Faculty of Education at the University of Oulu, for example, implemented in 2019–2021 a three-year education project leading to qualification as a Sámi-language subject teacher.

98. The language policy programme's suite of measures concerning the teaching of languages includes the following:

- Learning materials are central to learning languages and efforts will be made to ensure their availability.

²⁴ [Government network for fundamental and human rights 2020-2023 - Ministry of Justice \(oikeusministerio.fi\)](https://oikeusministerio.fi) (available only in Finnish)

- Opportunities to develop teaching in the autochthonous languages that utilises remote connections in the entire country will be explored.
- Development of teaching that utilises remote connections will be developed by enhancing teacher competences by means including staff training.
- It is important to promote the teaching of languages besides the autochthonous ones. The challenges relating to other languages should be examined separately in greater detail.
- Efforts will be made to increase awareness of the different language groups in teaching (giving visibility to language groups in learning materials, for example).

99. Measures in the suite on language maintenance and revitalisation include a measure to encourage higher education institutions to invest in resources for research into the various languages. Efforts will be made to increase language nest activities, language clubs and other activities which promote language vitality, taking account of the different needs and potential of the different languages.

100. The Government Resolution on the language policy programme includes a measure on allowing more than one language to be recorded for a person in the Population Information System. According to the programme, preparatory work towards this aim will be launched in a manner that does not endanger the current system to safeguard linguistic rights. The preparatory work will take account of information security and privacy protection as well as the costs of modification and maintenance.

Working group for the development of teaching in and of the Sámi languages

101. The Ministry of Education and Culture appointed a working group for the development of teaching in and of the Sámi languages in February 2020. The task of the working group was to conduct a holistic examination of Sámi-language early childhood education and care as well as instruction of Sámi and education and training in Sámi. Four separate reports were commissioned to support the work of the working group and experts were widely consulted. The reports concerned the availability and education paths of Sámi-language staff in education and early childhood education and care, the visibility of knowledge about the Sámi people, languages and cultures in the learning materials in basic education, the situation vis-à-vis Sámi-language learning materials, and the current situation and development needs in the education and training of Sámi-language healthcare and social welfare personnel. The report²⁵ was submitted to the Ministry of Education and Culture in April 2021. The conclusion of the report is that remote connections should be used and changes to the operational and funding provisions of education should be introduced if Sámi languages and Sámi-language education are to be on sustainable footing throughout Finland.

102. Sámi education is seeing strong advances outside the municipalities in the Sámi Homeland. In May 2018, the Ministry of Education and Culture awarded the municipality of Utsjoki funding for a project on the remote teaching of the Sámi languages. The project has since received additional funding extending until 2023. Teaching via remote connection allows students to study Inari, Skolt and Northern Sámi regardless of where they reside. The aim of this pilot project is to improve the accessibility of Sámi education and to extend Sámi-language teaching to an increasing number of students via remote connections. The funding awarded consists of development financing intended to be used to build the foundation for more

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https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163014/OKM_2021_25.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (available only in Finnish)

permanent solutions in the future. The project seeks practices that would make the teaching of the Sámi languages an established element of education in the entire country.

Recommendation – Further measures to achieve health and social services in Swedish and Sámi

Take further measures to ensure the accessibility of social and health care in Swedish and in the Sámi languages.

103. Linguistic rights in health and social services are governed by legislation including the Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services (612/2021), the Language Act (423/2003), the Healthcare Act (1326/2010), the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients (785/1992) and the Act on the Status and Rights of Social Welfare Clients (812/2000).

Accessibility of health and social services in Swedish and Sámi in respect of secondary education

104. The Act on Vocational Education and Training (531/2017) entered into force on 1 January 2018. It lays down provisions on vocational qualifications within the administrative branch of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the education and training required to obtain vocational competences, and the demonstration and verification of vocational competences.

105. The reform of vocational education and training involved amalgamation of the earlier Vocational Education and Training Act and the Vocational Adult Education Act into a customer-driven and competence-based entity. On-the-job learning and individualised study paths were increased, while regulation and overlaps were eliminated. The reform of vocational education and training also involved a reform of funding, guidance, operating processes, the qualification system and organiser structures in vocational education and training.

106. Providing vocational education and training and awarding vocational qualifications are subject to authorisation from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Within the remit of their authorisation, vocational education and training providers are responsible for providing vocational education and training in accordance with the competence and education needs in their operating area. The providers also decide on the number of campuses they wish to maintain.

107. The Ministry of Education and Culture grants funding for the provision of vocational education and training within the confines of the relevant appropriation in the Budget and the municipalities' funding contributions. The funding goes directly to the provider of vocational education and training, who then decides how to allocate it. Funding is earmarked for the Sámi Education Institute. The appropriation is included annually in the Budget as a separate item.

108. At the beginning of 2022, there were 139 providers of vocational education and training that held a valid authorisation issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture to provide vocational education and training and to award qualifications. Of these, 50 held authorisation to provide vocational education and training leading to the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care (Practical Nurse). Five of these are authorised to provide vocational education and training leading to this qualification in Swedish and one in Sámi. This network of providers is sufficient to respond to the need for practical nurses holding the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care throughout the country while correspondingly responding to the education and training needs as well as labour needs in Swedish- and Sámi-speaking areas.

109. Vocational education and training providers may seek from the Ministry of Education and Culture authorisation to award qualifications and to provide vocational education and training in the language indicated in their authorisation and the Ministry grants the authorisation by a decision. New applications for Swedish-language authorisation to award

qualifications and to provide vocational education and training leading to the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care have not been submitted in years and the current network of providers has thus responded to the needs to provide vocational education and training leading to this qualification in Swedish in their respective operating areas and the entire country. When necessary, they may also allocate a greater portion of the student-year volume under their authorisation to this vocational education and training. No new applications to provide vocational education and training in social and health services in Sámi have been filed, either.

Education and training in Swedish in the sector of health and social services

110. The authorisation to provide vocational education and training and award qualifications granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture specifies the language of instruction of the vocational education and training provider. Seven providers have Swedish as their only language of instruction. Of these, three providers have Swedish as the language of instruction in their authorisation to award the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care. In 2022, these providers had a combined student-year volume of 5,391 student-years from which to allocate to vocational education and training leading to the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care in accordance with the competence needs and educational needs of their primary area of operation. Vocational education and training in Swedish was provided in the regions of Uusimaa (Helsinki, Espoo, Raasepori) and Ostrobothnia (Kruunupyy, Pietarsaari, Vaasa, Vöyri).

111. Two vocational education and training providers had both Finnish and Swedish specified as their language of instruction in their authorisation and to provide vocational education training and to award qualifications. The authorisation of both covers the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care and they may thus provide vocational education and training leading to this qualification also with Swedish as the language of instruction. In 2022, these providers had a combined student-year volume of 4,895 student-years from which to allocate to vocational education and training leading to the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care with Swedish as the language of instruction in accordance with the competence needs and educational needs of their primary area of operation. These providers provide vocational education and training in Finnish and Swedish primarily in Uusimaa (Helsinki, Porvoo, Raasepori), Southwest Finland (Parainen, Turku) and Ostrobothnia (Vaasa). Education and training providers may provide vocational education and training, including in the health and social services sector, also elsewhere in the country apart from the region of Åland.

Education and training in Sámi in the sector of health and social services

112. Vocational education and training in Sámi leading to the Vocational Qualification in Social and Health Care has one provider, the Sámi Vocational Institute. Since the Institute is owned by the State, no minimum student-year volume is defined in its authorisation to provide vocational education and training and to award qualifications. The Sámi Vocational Institute is subject to a separate Act (252/2010) and receives separate funding in respect of vocational education and training. The vocational education and training provided by the Institute is governed by the Act on Vocational Education and Training (531/2017) and the Act on Compulsory Education (1214/2020) unless otherwise provided in Act 252/2010. The primary operating area of the education and training provider is Lapland, which is home to the majority of Finland's Sámi-speaking population. The Institute has its main campus in Inari. However, when necessary, the Institute may provide vocational education and training in accordance with competence needs and educational needs also elsewhere in the country except in the region of Åland.

Funding to develop education and training in health and social services in Sámi

113. The Ministry of Education and Culture funds projects headed by the University of Oulu and the Lapland University of Applied Sciences to educate and train Sámi-speaking health and social services personnel and to develop their education and training. The aim of the funding is to improve the availability of Sámi-speaking personnel and the knowledge of Sámi culture required in health and social services. The projects are an element of the response to health and social sector needs raised in the final report of the working group for the development of the instruction in and of the Sámi languages.

114. Funding of EUR 1,000,000 goes to the project on Sámi language and cultural education for the sector of health and social services implemented jointly by the Universities of Oulu and Lapland. The project on the joint development of culturally sensitive education and training in health and social services for the Sámi receives funding of EUR 918,634.93. It is being implemented jointly by the Lapland, Oulu and Diaconia Universities of Applied Sciences.

Funding for education of Sámi-language health and social services personnel at higher education institutions

115. The Ministry of Education and Culture has opened a call for higher education institutions to apply for funding for the education of Sámi-language health and social services personnel and for the development of education to improve the availability of such personnel.

Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services

116. The Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services (612/2021) maintains the status quo in respect of regulation of the language of health and social services. Health and social services shall be organised in both Finnish and Swedish in bilingual wellbeing services counties so that the client is provided with the services in the language of their choosing, either Finnish or Swedish. In unilingual wellbeing services counties, healthcare and social welfare are organised in the language of the county. Bilingual wellbeing services counties shall agree on mutual cooperation and division of duties in the delivery of health and social services in Swedish when certain requirements laid down in the Act are met. Clients have the right to use Sámi in healthcare and social welfare services provided in the municipalities of the Sámi Homeland and in the Lapland wellbeing services county in such healthcare and social welfare services that are provided only in units located outside the municipalities of the Homeland. In addition, clients have the right to use Sámi in healthcare and social welfare services provided in the area of the Lapland wellbeing services county in units located outside the municipalities of the Sámi Homeland which the Lapland wellbeing services county has designated to be used by the residents of the municipalities in the Homeland based on accessibility of services.

117. In addition, the Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services provides that the wellbeing services county of West Uusimaa shall be responsible for supporting the development of Swedish-language healthcare and social welfare services in the entire country. Under the Act, bilingual wellbeing services counties shall also conclude a cooperation agreement in order to safeguard the realisation of the linguistic rights of Swedish speakers in healthcare and social welfare. Implementation of the cooperation agreement shall be monitored and assessed annually.

118. The regions belonging to a collaborative area for health and social must conclude a cooperation agreement for the regional integration of health and social services. Measures to ensure linguistic rights shall also be covered by this agreement. Every four years, the Government confirms the strategic objectives for organising healthcare and social welfare that

complement legislation. The objectives shall also define the objectives in safeguarding linguistic rights.

Act on Wellbeing Services Counties

119. Under the Act on Wellbeing Services Counties (611/2021), a bilingual wellbeing services county shall have a national languages board. The members of the board shall be drawn from the minority-language population of the wellbeing services county. The duties of the national language board are to:

- 1) examine, assess and issue opinions on how the decisions made by the county council affect the practical realisation of linguistic rights;
- 2) examine, assess and define the need for services available in minority languages in the wellbeing services county and monitor the availability and quality of these services;
- 3) on the basis of reports, assessments and monitoring, propose measures to the executive of the health and social services county to improve services and service chains for language minorities, set the language proficiency requirements for county personnel and promote the language skills of county personnel; and
- 4) make proposals regarding the content of the agreement on cooperation and the division of labour between bilingual counties, issue a statement on the agreement to the county council and monitor the implementation of the agreement.

120. The board must provide the executive of the wellbeing services county with an annual report on the provision of services intended for language minorities. The county executive shall provide the county council with a statement on the measures arising from the assessment report.

Rights of Sámi speakers in the context of the health and social services reform

121. As a rule, the development of healthcare and social welfare services in Sámi takes place as part of the service system as a whole and it has therefore been important to ensure that major reforms, such as the health and social services reform and the Future Health and Social Services Centres project, could support this aim as well as possible.

122. Parliament passed the legislation on the health and social services reform in summer 2021. The wellbeing services counties established in the reform launched operations on 1 January 2023. Under the Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services (612/2021), the wellbeing services counties must have sufficient competence, functional capacity and readiness to take responsibility for organising health and social services and they must attend to the availability of health and social services commensurate with their residents' service needs in all situations. The Lapland wellbeing services county has responsibility for healthcare and social welfare services in Sámi. Negotiations between central government and the counties allow developments to be monitored also in respect of linguistic rights.

123. In order to secure the linguistic rights of the Sámi in the context of the health and social services reform, a Sámi language board was established pursuant to the Act on the Wellbeing Services Counties. Only Sámi speakers may become members of this board. The Sámi language board is tasked with issuing opinions as to the impacts of the county council of the Lapland wellbeing services county on the realisation of linguistic rights. The board also assesses the need for and availability and quality of services in Sámi. Based on this information, the board submits to the county executive proposals on improving services and service chains for language minorities as well as the language proficiency requirements for county personnel and their language skills. The board provides the executive of the wellbeing services county with an

annual report on the provision of services intended for language minorities. The county executive in turn submits a proposal to the county council on the measures to which the report should give rise.

Development of Sámi-language services as part of the Future Health and Social Services Centres project

124. One of the four areas of emphasis for the Lapland region in the Future Health and Social Services Centres project funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and intended to support the implementation of the wellbeing services county reform is to develop culturally appropriate Sámi-language services. The aim here is to improve the availability of culturally appropriate Sámi-language family services and boost their quality. Family services will be built up into a networked and multi-channel approach in cooperation among healthcare and social welfare as well as education and youth services and specialised services. Professional support to employees will also be strengthened.

125. Further aims are to make culturally appropriate low-threshold mental welfare and substance abuse services better available in Sámi, to improve service coordination and service compatibility between primary and specialised healthcare and social services, to instil in the services an understanding of being indigenous people-driven and to ensure that the methods used recognise the specific needs relating to the Sámi language, culture and way of life.

Discretionary government grant to secure Sámi-language health and social services

126. The annual discretionary government grant awarded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is distributed within the Sámi Homeland in accordance with the agreement concluded by the municipalities (as of 2023, the Lapland wellbeing services county) and the Sámi Parliament. The grant is used in particular to subsidise services for the ageing that are provided at home and are consistent with Sámi language and culture. The aim is to support and enable living at home and to accomplish this in a way that maintains Sámi culture. Having remained long at the same level, the discretionary government grant was increased by EUR 82,000 in the 2021 Budget and the annual grant is now EUR 562,000.

Strategy for the national languages of Finland

127. One of the aims of the new strategy for the national languages of Finland is to safeguard linguistic rights in the health and social services reform. Related measures include introducing tools with which to safeguard linguistic rights in the services of the wellbeing services counties as well as initiating dialogue between clients and authorities in order to boost understanding of the importance of language in safeguarding the standard of service. Another aim of the strategy is also to safeguard the status of the national languages as well as linguistic rights in administrative reform projects. Related measures here include preparing a plan, in connection with the implementation of reforms, for organising services and service paths in minority languages and for coordinating language services within the authority, preparing a template for the planning and coordination of language services and, when establishing new authorities, complying with the principles of the Institute for the Languages of Finland in the naming of the authorities. The strategy also seeks to ensure the availability of language-skilled labour in both national languages and to create and maintain environments in dealing with the authorities where it feels natural to speak either Finnish or Swedish. An additional aim of the strategy is to ensure that digitalisation supports the realisation of linguistic rights and the availability of services in both national languages.

Language Barometer 2020

128. One of the topics explored in the Language Barometer survey in 2020 was how well health and social services as well as early childhood education and care functioned in one's own language. Service in one's own language refers to the service-providing authority using the person's own language, Finnish or Swedish, and to both languages being visible in the activities of the authority. According to the survey, Swedish-speakers living in municipalities where the majority language is Swedish have the highest degree of satisfaction in services with regard to language. The services provided in the minority language, Finnish, in these municipalities were also fairly well rated. Receiving service in Swedish is more of a challenge for those living in municipalities where Swedish is the minority language. In general, Finnish-speaking minorities are more satisfied with health and social services with regard to language than Swedish-speaking minorities. Maternity and child welfare clinics function very well in both languages, as does early childhood education and care. The greatest differences are to be found in the Finnish- and Swedish-language services in the fields of dental care, mental health care, hospital care and emergency medical services. While this was the case in 2016 as well, the disparity between services in Finnish and in Swedish has increased somewhat. In respect of many services, Swedish-language services received a slightly higher rating, while the rating of Finnish-language services had declined somewhat.

Discretionary government grant for specific costs under section 31 of the Sámi Language Act

129. Each year, the Ministry of Justice awards discretionary government grants for the specific costs under section 31 of the Sámi Language Act (1086/2003). According to section 31 of the Sámi Language Act, an appropriation shall be included in the Budget for purposes of discretionary government grants to the wellbeing services county, municipalities, parishes, herding cooperatives within the Sámi Homeland and private entities referred to in section 18 for covering the specific additional costs of applying this Act. In 2021, grants awarded totalled EUR 150,000 and the sum of EUR 290,000 has been earmarked for grants in 2023. Discretionary government grants may be awarded to cover the costs of substitutes arising from participation in instruction in the Sámi language in fields including health and social services.

Counties Act

130. Under the Counties Act under preparation, the county executives in bilingual counties are required to appoint a body for exerting influence in the county in minority language matters. The members of this body shall represent the county's minority language-speaking residents. The purpose of the body is to examine, assess and define the service need of the county's language minority and to monitor and develop the availability and quality of these services.

131. The county executive shall appoint a body for exerting influence in the county on Sámi language matters in counties where a municipality belonging to the Sámi Homeland is located. The members of this body shall represent the Sámi-speaking residents.

Sámi Truth and Reconciliation Process

132. The Government appointed the Sámi Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 28 October 2021. The matter was prepared in close cooperation with representatives of the Finnish State, the Sámi Parliament and the Skolt Village Assembly.

133. The objective of the Commission's work is to gather Sámi people's experiences of the actions of the Finnish State and authorities and their effects on the Sámi people, and to make this information visible.

134. The Sámi Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an impartial and independent body. It consists of five commissioners, two of whom are appointed based on a proposal from the Government, two based on a proposal from the Sámi Parliament and one based on a proposal from the Skolt Village Assembly.

135. The purpose of the truth and reconciliation process is:

- to identify and assess historical and current discrimination, including the assimilation policy of the state and violations of rights;
- to find out how they affect the Sámi and their communities in the current situation;
- to propose ways to promote links between the Sámi and the state of Finland and among the Sámi people; and
- to raise awareness about the Sámi as the indigenous people of Finland.

136. The Commission shall draw up a report on its work, including proposals for measures. The aim is to submit the report to the Government, the Sámi Parliament and the Skolt Village Assembly by 30 November 2023.

137. Strengthening the overall psychosocial support available to the Sámi people is an element of the truth and reconciliation process. Adequate psychosocial support is a vital condition for embarking on this taxing process. Effective psychosocial support was a precondition of the Sámi Parliament as well for undertaking the truth and reconciliation process.

Views as to realisation of linguistic rights in health and social services

138. The Sámi Parliament pointed out that despite the municipalities' statutory obligations, the right of the Sámi-speaking population to services in their mother tongue has not been realised in the Sámi Homeland equally well as in respect of the Finnish-speaking population. The availability of professional personnel who are speakers of Inari and Skolt Sámi in particular requires positive action on the part of Finland.

139. The association SámiSoster noted that the linguistic and cultural rights of the Sámi in healthcare and social welfare are not realised in a sufficient manner and to a sufficient degree. According to SámiSoster, the realisation of linguistic rights has been left solely up to the provisions of the Sámi Language Act. It further noted that since municipalities and joint municipal authorities do not maintain and develop in a systematic and goal-oriented manner services that are provided in Sámi and are consistent with Sámi culture since they are not subject to a statutory obligation to organise such services. Even today, there are very few Sámi-speaking personnel in the employ of health and social services units. This is true also in the Sámi Homeland. Consequently, Sámi clients are forced to use Finnish or to rely on awkward interpretation in order to be able to use Sámi in the services. Interpretation, in turn, is an inconvenient option in the context of health and social services usage, as the matters discussed in these services are often of a highly personal and sensitive nature and the presence of an interpreter in the situation may be perceived as embarrassing and unpleasant. SámiSoster also noted that under section 5, subsection 1 of the Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services, wellbeing services counties are not obliged to organise, maintain or develop Sámi-language services in their regions. Where a client or a patient wishes to use the health and social services of the Lapland wellbeing services county in Sámi, under the Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services they have the right to do so in the manner referred to in the Sámi Language Act. From the viewpoint of the health and social services unit, this right of the client only means an obligation to see to it that in that specific service situation, the client may use Sámi either via an interpreter, or very seldom, without an interpreter. In most cases, Sámi speakers need to separately ask for the right to use Sámi and

have to resort to an interpreter if the unit cannot assign a Sámi-speaking professional to handle the service situation. Therefore, according to SámiSoster, the Sámi are on an unequal footing relative to the majority population and the requirement of equality in the services under section 4 of the Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services is not met in respect of the Sámi.

140. Svenska Finlands folkting (Swedish Assembly of Finland) pointed out the challenges in accessing health and social services in Swedish and the variation in these services from one municipality to the next. It noted that the lack of planned Swedish-language service structures and the acute shortage of Swedish-speakers contribute to the shortcomings in care in Swedish. Nowadays, the availability of mental health services in Swedish is a huge problem. The Covid pandemic caused demand for mental health services to increase considerably. The current shortage of Swedish-speaking psychotherapists and the fact that very few digital services are translated into and made available in Swedish are serious problems. This puts the Swedish-speaking population at a disadvantage compared to the Finnish-speaking population. According to Svenska Finlands folkting, it is vital for the Government to take action to remedy this acute situation. It also pointed out that the implementation of bilingual wellbeing services counties' cooperation agreements must be monitored closely to ensure that linguistic rights are realised and that the population in bilingual wellbeing service counties truly has access to services in their own language and on equal grounds.

141. The Ombudsman for Children stressed that when organising healthcare services, for example, children must be consulted for their views regarding the practical implementation of the services. In autumn 2021, Sámi children related to the Ombudsman their experiences with interpretation arrangements that were considered inappropriate. In addition, based on information obtained in numerous contexts, the Ombudsman is very concerned over the lack of Swedish-speaking professionals in fields such as early childhood education and care, special education and child welfare.

Recommendation – Increasing the training of Romani teachers, extending the production of teaching materials in Romani and improving the provision of teaching of Romani

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

142. The status of the Romani language in Finland is highly endangered, especially among young adults, teenagers and children. It is also included on the UNESCO list of languages in danger. The Romani language no longer passes organically to new speakers. One of the challenges lies in empowering the Roma community so as to encourage them to speak their language. This is the overriding objective of the measures to revitalise the Romani language.

143. Romani language instructors are in short supply. Romani language and culture studies may now be pursued at the University of Helsinki and the number of students enrolled in these studies is on the rise. The Finnish National Agency for Education is preparing a project that seeks to develop remote instruction in the Romani language. This would allow language instruction to be provided to Roma pupils in multiple locations.

Romani language revitalisation programme

144. On 12 June 2020, the Finnish National Agency for Education appointed a group of experts to prepare a programme for the revitalisation of the Romani language. The Romani language revitalisation programme is one of the actions under Finland's National Roma Policy 2018–2022, the fourth policy guideline of which, 'Supporting the preservation and

development of the Romani language and Roma art and culture,' contains a total of 17 actions. The education of Romani-language teachers has also been taken into account in the preparation of the programme. The work on building a revitalisation programme for the seriously endangered Finnish Romani language was largely informed by the experiences and best practices seen in respect of the Sámi language, where much work has been done over a long period of time. The measures under the Romani language revitalisation programme will take place in the term of the third National Roma Policy covering the years 2023–2030.

Measures under the language policy programme

145. Measures introduced in the language policy programme in respect of promoting the Romani language include the following:

- the Romani language revitalisation programme has been completed and was published in November 2022²⁶;
- the study module on Romani language and Roma culture at the University of Helsinki provides students with capabilities to teach Finnish Romani and Finnish Roma culture at various levels of education; and
- the discretionary government grants awarded by the Finnish National Agency for Education make it possible to teach Romani in education supplementary to basic education and general upper secondary education.

Views on the Romani language and the teaching of Romani

146. As part of the implementation of the National Child Strategy, the Ombudsman for Children inquired into the views of Roma children and youths as to the availability of teaching in Romani. The preliminary findings from the interviews indicate that a significant portion of the children interviewed would like to learn the Romani language as a school subject. In addition, the children hoped that the Romani language could be revitalised as a language spoken at home, and wished there were leisure activities where they could speak the language.

147. The National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland pointed out that the Church's Advisory Board on Romani Affairs attaches importance to increasing the education of Romani-speaking teachers at the various levels of education, rolling out the existing materials in Romani and producing new materials. Moreover, digital learning materials geared specifically to children and young people should be developed. Language instruction should take place during the school day so as to make attendance easy. The National Church Council considers it important that the revitalisation programme receives funding and is launched.

Recommendation – Increasing awareness and tolerance vis-à-vis the regional or minority languages of Finland

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

Awareness of the results of the fifth monitoring cycle

A. Publication of the results of the fifth monitoring cycle

148. The Charter, together with its Finnish and Swedish translations, has been published in the Treaty Series of the Statutes of Finland. The Statutes of Finland are available in the largest

²⁶ Finnish National Agency for Education. Reports and reviews 2022:6 (available only in Finnish).

public libraries. In addition, the text of the Charter is available on the FINLEX database of legislation²⁷ and on the website of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs²⁸, where the text of the Charter is also available in Northern Sámi. Internet access is available free of charge at public libraries.

149. The Government's periodic reports on the implementation of the Charter have been published on the website of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where the Charter has its own page²⁹. The site also includes the Committee of Experts' reports on Finland, the Government's comments on these reports and the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers in four languages (English, Finnish, Swedish and Northern Sámi).

150. Immediately after their adoption, the recommendations of the fifth monitoring cycle were translated into both national languages of Finland, *i.e.* Finnish and Swedish, and also into Northern Sámi. They were widely distributed to bodies including the Office of the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister's Office, all the ministries, Parliament and the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Office of the Chancellor of Justice, the Office of the Prosecutor General, the Supreme Court and the Supreme Administrative Court, specialised Ombudsmen, Advisory Boards, churches and religious communities, the Swedish Assembly of Finland, the Sámi Parliament, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, research institutes specialised in human rights and a number of non-governmental organisations representing minorities. The recommendations of the Committee of Ministers were accompanied with a letter encouraging the recipients to disseminate them as widely as possible.

151. The Unit for Human Rights Courts and Conventions of the Legal Service of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will, upon request, provide materials relating to the text of the Charter, the legislation implementing it and the monitoring of its implementation, and respond to enquiries concerning the rights and obligations deriving from the Charter.

B. Follow-up of the results of the fifth monitoring cycle

152. The final conclusions and recommendations of the Committee of Ministers concerning the implementation of the Charter have been distributed to a large number of authorities, and the responsibility for taking any measures lies within each branch of administration. The recommendations were presented to the Government network for fundamental and human rights with representatives from each ministry. Representatives from the Office of the Chancellor of Justice, the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Human Rights Centre also participate in the work carried out by the network. The Charter is an integral element of Finland's language policy programme and the strategy for the national languages of Finland. Both address the Committee of Experts' conclusions and recommendations as well as the recommendations of the Committee of Ministers. Follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations is carried out by the Advisory Board on Language Affairs and the network of contact persons for the national languages.

C. Contribution of civil society to the implementation of the Charter and measures to develop this contribution

153. Matters within the scope of the Charter are dealt with by bodies including the Advisory Board on Language Affairs, the network of contact persons for the national languages, the Advisory Board on Non-Discrimination, the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs and the Advisory

²⁷ <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/>

²⁸ <https://um.fi/euroopan-neuvoston-voimassa-olevat-ihmisoikeussopimukset>

²⁹ <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/>

Board for Ethnic Relations with the participation of the authorities and minority representatives.

D. Other measures for increasing awareness of the Charter

154. A study on the impacts of the human rights treaties of the Council of Europe in Finland was conducted with Government research funding in 2021–2022³⁰. Carried out by Tampere University, the project examined the effects of the human rights treaties of the Council of Europe on national legislation, policy measures, case law and national human rights structures. The study provides a holistic picture of the functioning and impacts of the current system and, on the basis of the data collected, proposes recommendations to more efficiently accomplish and implement the treaties and the decisions of their respective treaty bodies at the national level.

155. The examination under the project focused on three levels in particular. Firstly, the project looked into the national implementation of the treaties. In this context, the impacts on necessary legislative amendments and other reforms necessitated by implementation were examined. The second level had to do with the post-implementation effects of the human rights treaties at various levels, be it law drafting, policy measures, case law or human rights structures. The third element of the examination was enforcement of treaty obligations and the further development of this sector.

156. Among other things, the study addresses the impacts of the Charter on national legislation. It was observed that advances have been made in the legislation relating to minorities in the period in which the Charter and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities have been in effect. However, rights promotion and increasing awareness have focused more on various kinds of projects and action plans while direct legislative amendments have taken a back seat.

PART II

ARTICLE 7: OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

157. Article 7, which sets out the objectives and principles of the Charter, is applied in Finland to Sámi and Swedish. When ratifying the Charter, Finland also declared that it undertakes to apply, *mutatis mutandis*, the principles listed in Part II of the Charter to the Roma language and the other non-territorial languages in Finland.

1a) Recognition of the regional or minority languages as an expression of cultural wealth

158. The teaching of one's own mother tongue has been recognised as vitally important to the various language groups. In education, the diversity of languages and cultures is expressed as wealth and a source of creativity. The degree of cultural diversity varies across the country. Schools in Finland have become much more diverse, as stated already in the value base for education.³¹

³⁰ Euroopan neuvoston ihmisoikeussopimusten kansallinen täytäntöönpano ja seuranta. Valtioneuvoston selvitys- ja tutkimustoiminnan julkaisusarja 2022:17 [Evaluation of the Implementation and Monitoring of the Council of Europe Human Rights Treaties. Publications of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities 2022:17] Jukka Viljanen, Tarja Seppä, Petra Järvinen, Nelli Keskilampi. https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/163872/VNTEAS_2022_17.pdf (available only in Finnish)

³¹ Language policy programme. Government Resolution. <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164216>

1b) Administrative divisions

Legislation on the health and social services reform

159. Parliament passed the legislation on the health and social services reform in summer 2021. The wellbeing services counties established in the reform launched operations on 1 January 2023. Under the Act on Organising Healthcare and Social Welfare Services, the wellbeing services counties must have sufficient competence, functional capacity and readiness to take responsibility for organising health and social services and they must attend to the availability of health and social services commensurate with their residents' service needs in all situations. The Lapland wellbeing services county has responsibility for healthcare and social welfare services in Sámi. Negotiations between central government and the counties allow developments to be monitored also in respect of linguistic rights.

160. The health and social services reform means that responsibility for organising health and social services transfers from the municipalities to the wellbeing services counties (with the exception of Helsinki). The objectives of the reform are to safeguard equal and quality health and social services as well as rescue services for all residents of the wellbeing services counties, improve the availability and accessibility of services, reduce inequalities in health and wellbeing, ensure the availability of skilled labour, respond to the challenges arising from the ageing population and declining birth rate, and curb the growth of costs.

Reform of the network of district courts

161. When adopting the Government proposal to Parliament on amending the Courts Act and certain other Acts (HE 270/2016), Parliament approved the following statement:

"Parliament requires the Government to monitor the effects of the structural reform of the district courts and the related possible reform concerning the consideration of summary civil cases and to pay particular attention to the regional availability of legal protection, the realisation of linguistic rights, economic impacts and the provision of legal services, and to submit to the Law Committee a report on these by the end of 2022."

162. The report of the rapporteur appointed by the Ministry of Justice to examine the impacts of the reform was submitted to the ministry in autumn 2022. It formed the basis for the report required by Parliament and submitted to it in December 2022. The report drew attention to the fact that the share of cases heard in the district courts in Swedish had been in a slight decline for the past ten years. Further examination of this development is likely warranted.

163. The restructuring of the network of district courts implemented in 2019 reduced the number of district courts from 27 to 20. Later in the same year, summary civil cases, which were previously considered by all district courts, were centralised to nine district courts.

164. The report³² prepared by Professor *Mikko Aaltonen* examined the effects of the district court restructuring implemented in 2019 and the related centralisation of summary civil cases, *i.e.* undisputed debt collection cases resolved in summary (written) procedure.

165. The report examined the regional availability of legal protection, the realisation of linguistic rights, economic efficiency and the supply of legal services. Based on several statistical datasets and interviews conducted with district court personnel, the report was prepared on the impetus of the statement of Parliament requiring assessment of the effectiveness and impacts of the reform by the end of the current year.

³² <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/164529> (available only in Finnish)

166. Statistical analyses suggest that there are no great differences in the post-reform development of indicators describing court caseloads, case processing times and efficiency of operations between the merged district courts and other district courts. Because of the Covid pandemic, however, the economic efficiency of the reform is difficult to assess. At least in the short term, the savings pursued were not achieved and the combined operating costs of the district courts instead increased considerably in the years of the pandemic.

167. No strong signals of a deterioration in the regional availability of legal services were observed. Legal aid would appear to remain available in the towns where district court seats were closed down.

168. No significant changes were observed in respect of the realisation of linguistic rights, either. However, interviews with personnel highlighted the difficulty of hiring Swedish-speaking office staff, especially in Uusimaa. A further observation of concern is the fact that the share of criminal cases heard in Swedish has been in clear decline since at least 2010. According to the report, it appears that an increasing number of Swedish speakers are, for one reason or another, waiving their right to use their own language before the court.

169. Based on the interviews, one area of development to improve the realisation of linguistic rights would be to ensure, already at the initial stages of the criminal proceedings, that the case is heard in the appropriate language.

170. Svenska Finlands folkting pointed out that in the district courts reform, the number of bilingual district courts was reduced from eight to five, in addition to which district court seats in four bilingual municipalities were closed down. It notes that as a result of the reform, there is not a single court in Finland, apart from Åland, where the majority language is Swedish. The consequences of this include greater difficulty in hiring Swedish-speaking staff.

1c) Action to promote regional or minority languages

171. The aspect of increasing awareness is an integral element of the language policy programme. The suite of measures entitled 'Language awareness and the digital environment' includes awareness boosting as a distinct measure. Under the measure, awareness in society of the different languages and language groups will be increased. Responsibility for implementing this measure resides with all ministries.

172. The Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE produces diverse content for the various language groups and minorities. In order to cater for diversity, YLE ensures that people from different backgrounds, such as language minorities and cultural minorities, are treated equally. The aim of YLE is for representatives of special and minority groups to be seen, to an increasing extent, as participants, experts and contributors also in content geared to the mainstream population. YLE provides content and services not only in Finnish, Swedish and Sámi but also in sign language and easy Finnish as well as English, Russian, Romani and Karelian. Accessibility has become an increasingly integral element in planning the supply of YLE and it is one of the areas of emphasis in the company's strategy for the coming years.

Views on the promotion of regional and minority languages

173. The Ombudsman for Children related how in 2021, Sámi children had said that they encountered ignorance and prejudice about being Sámi. The children had said that people living elsewhere in Finland or coming to Finland from abroad seldom knew hardly anything about the Sámi languages, culture or living conditions. Both Sámi and Roma children had told the Ombudsman that they hoped to do more things together with the majority population and wished for 'dialogicity' with them. Roma children had said that one way to prevent

discrimination could be to talk more about the Roma and their culture both at school and elsewhere.

174. The Sámi Parliament pointed out that the educational office of the Sámi Parliament maintains and develops the website www.oktavuohta.com that provides information about the Sámi to schools. The Sámi Parliament also took part in the University of Helsinki's project 'Democracy and Human Rights' which produced for teachers and teacher training departments a set of materials on the Sámi, the human rights foundation and history of indigenous peoples, the role of schools, linguistic and cultural human rights, the impacts of climate change on the Sámi and tips for teachers and educators. In addition, the Sámi Parliament in cooperation with Youth Academy launched the Kulttuurien koulu [School of Cultures] project (2021–2022)³³ funded by the Finnish National Agency for Education to provide teachers with free in-service training on engaging Sámi and Roma young people.

175. The Sámi Parliament expressed its concern at not having received permanent or adequate funding in order to provide information on the Sámi (Sámi languages, communities, culture, history) for use in schools, for example. The materials produced in the projects implemented (Oktavuohta.com, Dihtosis, Kulttuurien koulu, human rights materials) have been in high demand and the Sámi Parliament considers that the production of information on the Sámi in the form of digital learning materials in Finnish and Swedish should be made a permanent activity. The Skolt Village Assembly also pointed out that in respect of the Sámi languages, measures continue to largely rely on the project approach. It finds that the funding should be made permanent and sustainable.

1d) Facilitation and/or encouragement of the use of regional or minority languages, in speech and writing

176. There are many good practical examples and experiences of language revitalisation. Language nest activities, for example, have successfully revitalised languages and language clubs of various kinds have created encouraging and safe environments for using languages.

1e) Maintenance and development of links between groups using a regional or minority language and other groups

177. A key challenge common to all language groups is their geographic dispersion throughout Finland and the lack of organic environments where one's own language could be used with other people in the same language group to experience a sense of belonging. The aim of the language policy programme adopted in 2022 is to respond to challenges identified for different language groups. The objectives of the programme are to protect, revive, support and strengthen the autochthonous languages of Finland. Children and young people are at the heart of the programme: the aim is to be able to secure the intergenerational transmission of languages in the future too. Efforts will be made to increase awareness of the different language groups in teaching (giving visibility to language groups in learning materials, for example). The language policy programme also briefly addresses the status of autochthonous languages and the challenges related to them.

1f) Provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of regional or minority languages

178. The range of languages in education has grown in recent years. Instruction in different languages has been made available, yet diversity in the languages chosen by pupils to study

³³ <https://www.nuortenakatemia.fi/hankkeet/kulttuurien-koulu> (available in Finnish only)

has deteriorated. The teaching of one's own mother tongue has been recognised as vitally important to the various language groups.

1g) Provision of facilities enabling non-speakers of a regional or minority language living in the area where it is used to learn it if they so desire

179. One of the aims of the strategy for the national languages of Finland is to promote the integration of immigrants in both national languages.

1h) Promotion of study and research on regional or minority languages at universities or equivalent institutions

180. The language policy programme encourages higher education institutions to invest in resources for research into the various languages.

1i) Promotion of transnational exchanges for languages used in two or more States

181. Nothing new to report.

2. Elimination of unjustified distinction relating to the use of a regional or minority language

182. Nothing new to report.

3. Respect, tolerance and mutual understanding between all language groups

General language climate

Project for the improvement of the language climate

183. In 2020–2022, the Ministry of Justice implemented a specific project for improving the language climate. The aim of the project was to create the conditions for a positive language climate, to reduce tensions between the language groups and to bring together different societal actors interested in improving the overall language climate in society. The project's outcomes included a campaign in support of a positive language climate geared to the wider public, the accumulation of best practices in promoting and implementing bilingual service in municipalities, and the production of communications materials on linguistic rights for children and young people in particular. While the communications campaign in autumn 2020 was implemented mainly in the national languages, it covered also the Sámi languages, Finnish and Finnish-Swedish sign language, Romani and Karelian. The campaign focused on creating positive perceptions of linguistic diversity and improving the conditions for a positive language climate. The campaign was implemented in both social and traditional media in cooperation with various stakeholder groups.

Strategy for the national languages of Finland

184. The language climate is affected by awareness of the language groups, linguistic rights and language skills in Finland. The strategy for the national languages of Finland was adopted as a Government Resolution on 2 December 2021 and seeks to gain improvement in all these areas. One of the main aims of the strategy is a tolerant and unbiased language climate and for there to be natural interaction between the language groups of Finnish and Swedish speakers. The strategy also contains a number of measures designed to strengthen competence in the second national language and to increase awareness of Finland's national languages, in particular Swedish, which has minority status, and Swedish speakers in Finland.

185. The Ministry of Education and Culture has prepared a programme to develop and strengthen the teaching and learning of the second national language in basic and general

upper secondary education in 2022–2023. The programme supports the opportunities and motivation of children and young people to study the second national language. It also includes measures to increase encounters between the language groups from a young age by means including support to the ‘twinned class’ activities and visits of representatives of language groups to early childhood care and education as well as basic education. The programme furthermore covers language immersion and language shower activities.

Language Barometer 2020

186. The Language Barometer survey³⁴ in 2020 indicated that the clear deterioration in the language climate seen in 2012–2016 has subsided and that the current language climate was much the same as it was in 2016. Compared to the 2016 survey, a higher proportion of respondents to the 2020 survey felt that the language climate had improved. However, the language groups differed in their views as to the development of the language climate. Swedish-speaking minorities living in municipalities where the majority language is Finnish were the group who perceived the language climate to have deteriorated the most. Swedish speakers felt that attitudes toward other language groups had grown worse in mass and social media as well as in national politics. A quarter of Swedish speakers and a fifth of Finnish speakers had encountered prejudice and harassment because of language, while roughly a fifth of both groups had encountered discrimination because of language. While the figures are not directly comparable with previous surveys, the current survey estimates that the above share has not increased.

Sámi Barometer 2020

187. Questions on language climate were included for the first time in 2020 in the Sámi Barometer³⁵ survey. Half of the survey respondents in the Sámi Homeland and two thirds elsewhere in Finland had experienced no discrimination, prejudice or harassment for speaking Sámi. These had been experienced at least occasionally by a fifth of respondents in the Sámi Homeland and a sixth of respondents elsewhere in Finland. The same number of respondents reported having experienced them at least once. The Sámi Barometer indicates that experiences of the language climate vary. A third of those in the Sámi Homeland felt relations between language groups had improved, 15% said they had deteriorated. Nearly half of the respondents said that the relations varied. Outside the Sámi Homeland, a fifth reported improvement while half responded ‘don’t know’ or ignored the question.

Combating hate speech

188. Finland has carried out considerable development work in order to combat hate crimes. Some of this work has been project-based and the need to move from such work to more systematic work organised with an eye to a longer time frame has been identified also in national efforts to combat hate crimes.

Anti-Racism Action Plan

189. The Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups³⁶ is based on the Government Programme, the situation assessment carried out during the preparation, research data on discrimination, equality and relations between population groups, and international recommendations and good practices.

³⁴ [Language Barometer 2020 - Valto \(valtioneuvosto.fi\)](#) (available only in Finnish).

³⁵ [Sámi Barometer 2020](#) (available in Finnish and Sámi only).

³⁶ [Government Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups](#)

190. Topics addressed in the Action Plan include action against hate speech and hate crimes, achieving non-discrimination in working life, and influencing attitudes and relations between different population groups. The Plan also aims to strengthen a culture of calling out racism in Finland.

Follow-up survey on hate speech and harassment and their effects on different minority groups

191. The follow-up survey on hate speech and harassment and their effects on different minority groups was prepared by the Ministry of Justice.³⁷ The overall objective of this follow-up survey was to show how hate speech and harassment are perceived by different minority groups. The aim was to provide information on the effects of hate speech and harassment on the sense of security among persons belonging to different minority groups and to produce follow-up and comparative data for a similar survey conducted by the Ministry of Justice in 2016. The purpose was also to provide information on the effects of the Covid pandemic on the situation. The premise was that any recommendations to be given should take into account the policy measures implemented since the previous survey. The target groups of the survey were Roma people, Sámi people, persons with an immigrant background, foreign-language speakers, foreign nationals, persons racialised due to skin colour or presumed ethnic origin, Swedish-speaking Finns, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to sexual and gender minorities, persons belonging to religious minorities, and persons not belonging to any religious community. The collected material was analysed to describe the phenomenon and people's experiences but not to draw general conclusions on how common harassment and hate speech are among each target group. Better identification and increased visibility of the phenomenon can help develop measures to intervene in and prevent hate speech and harassment and provide better support services for victims.

Steps taken by the police to identify and combat hate speech

192. The project Facts Against Hate organised a social media campaign against hate speech in autumn 2020 in cooperation with the police. The key message of the campaign geared to young people was "Say no to hate speech". The campaign aim was to raise awareness of hate speech and its detrimental nature and to improve young people's capabilities in recognising the hate speech they encounter online. Online training mandatory to all police officers and civilian police employees as well as Police University College staff on the topics of hate crimes, non-discrimination and customer encounters was also implemented under the project. The training package developed by the project was also rolled out by the Border Guard and Customs. Finally, the project also produced a manual for police officers to support them in identifying and preventing acts of hate.

Police performance guidance

193. One indicator in the performance agreement of the National Police Board is the number of hate crimes identified and investigated by the police. The aim of this indicator is to boost active measures on the part of the police to detect hate crimes on their own initiative. The hate crime classification data in the information system of the police are compared to the hate crime statistics compiled in the annual hate crime study conducted by the Police University College.

National Police Board guidelines to the police on classification of hate crimes

³⁷

https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164248/OM_2022_10_SO.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (available only in Finnish)

194. The National Police Board has issued guidelines to the police on the classification of hate crimes. New guidelines on identifying, investigating and classifying hate crimes are currently under preparation and are expected to be issued in 2023. In order to facilitate hate crime identification and improve classification, the National Police Board has also implemented technical upgrades in police e-services. When reporting offences against life, health or honour in the e-services, the reporting person is asked if they believe they became victim of the crime because of their ethnicity or nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity or disability. When the answer is yes, the police information system instructs the person handling the report of an offence to classify the report accordingly.

Hate speech against Russian speakers

195. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has had many kinds of impacts also on the sense of security and attitudes of people living in Finland and on interactions between groups. Both organisations and private individuals have reported rising hate speech against Finland's Russian-speaking minority. Such hate speech has been condemned by Prime Minister Sanna Marin and Non-Discrimination Ombudsman Kristina Stenman, among others.

196. The Ministry of Justice has also sought to influence societal dialogue and discrimination against Russian speakers since the start of the war of aggression. Besides posting a blog on the subject³⁸, the Ministry of Justice has also attended events organised by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment in relation to the war of aggression to speak on the topics of hate speech, population group relations and equality. The Ministry of Justice is kept abreast of the situation by the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations and the expert working group for monitoring discrimination. The situation is also monitored by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman.

Views on the language climate

197. The UN Association of Finland noted that the targets of the hate speech and harassment that is growing ever more commonplace especially on social media are, to an increasing extent, minorities and minority language groups. Targeting the various minority groups also in societal dialogue only feeds into 'us vs. them' thinking. The Association hopes for the diversity of minority languages to be taken into account and a positive language climate to be discussed in public more widely than at present. Language awareness and the visibility of the different language groups in public debate and mass communication plays a pivotal role in bringing about linguistic diversity and a positive language climate.

4. Needs and wishes expressed by the groups using regional or minority languages in determining the policy with regard to these languages

Advisory boards

198. Several advisory boards tasked with duties relating to the realisation, promotion or monitoring of fundamental and human rights, linguistic rights included, operate under the umbrella of the Government. Advisory boards play a key role in terms of civic participation, as they provide an opportunity for regular interaction with the administration. Non-governmental organisations indeed perceive the system of advisory boards as important.

³⁸ <https://oikeusministerio.fi/blogi-hakutulos/-/blogs/milla-aaltonen-anna-bruun-ja-mia-luhtasaari-vihapuheelle-ei-pida-antaa-tilaa> (available only in Finnish)

Annual consultation on language affairs

199. The annual consultation on language affairs promotes dialogue between the various language groups and the Government. It provides a forum for hearing the needs and wishes of the language groups.

5. Implementation of the principles listed in paragraphs 1 to 4 of Article 7 to non-territorial languages

Initiative concerning Romani language

200. The Romani Language Board at the Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotus) pointed out that the status of Romani should be re-assessed in light of the commitments in the Charter. The Board proposes that Romani be defined as a regional language, thus making it subject to the provisions in Part III of the Charter. The Board considers that the Articles (8–14) of Part III of the Charter apply to the Romani language. The rationale of the Board for re-assessment is the estimate of the current status of the Romani language appearing in Finland's National Roma Policy (ROMPO 2) adopted in 2020: "The Northern Romani dialect (Finnish Kalo) spoken in Finland is a severely endangered language and urgent actions are required for its revitalisation. The language is threatened by death unless several simultaneous language revitalisation measures are initiated immediately as both the number of speakers and their language proficiency have deteriorated further in recent years." The Board also makes reference to the recommendations under the language policy programme for the Romani language prepared on 30 March 2009. Under the programme, Finland should broaden and clarify its ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in respect of Romani to apply also to some of the Articles in Part III of the Charter.

201. The initiative moreover notes that only a third of the Roma are proficient speakers of Romani while two thirds never use the language. In addition, the majority of the Roma live in larger cities or in southern Finland (Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo, Järvenpää, Hyvinkää, Nurmijärvi, Hämeenlinna, Tampere, Turku, Jyväskylä, Oulu, Rovaniemi, etc.) and the number of users of Romani has increased over the past 30 years.

PART III

III.1 SWEDISH: THE LESS WIDELY USED NATIONAL LANGUAGE

ARTICLE 8: EDUCATION

Report on the state of Swedish-language education in Finland

202. The comprehensive report on the state of Swedish-language education in Finland commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Culture was issued on 11 March 2021. The report addresses the special features, challenges and development needs related to Swedish-language education. The conclusion of the report is that Swedish-language education should be developed in parallel with Finnish-language education to meet future needs and that Swedish-language education should be of high quality and equally available throughout the education path.

203. As recommended in the report and in order to strengthen overall coordination and guidance of services in Swedish, a new public post was established at the Ministry of Education and Culture. The tasks of the post are to develop Swedish-language services in the fields of education, training and research as well as the arts, culture, youth activities and sports and to

carry out coordination and preparation tasks, among them increasing awareness in the ministry and its administrative branch of the linguistic rights of Swedish speakers.

ARTICLE 9: JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

Working group on the guarantees of the rule of law and development of the justice system

204. The Ministry of Justice appointed on 1 February 2023 a working group on the guarantees of the rule of law and the development of the justice system³⁹. One of the tasks of this working group is to evaluate the justice system as a service provider and generate proposals that would enable improvement of its capabilities to provide service, especially with regard to the realisation of linguistic rights, e-services and the trackability of proceedings in individual cases. A representative of the Swedish Assembly of Finland has been appointed as a permanent expert on the working group, with particular emphasis on issues of the linguistic availability of services.

Establishment of language affairs coordination groups in the police

205. By its decision of 7 October 2021, the National Police Board appointed an internal language services coordination group with a member from each of the National Police Board units. The aim of the internal coordination group is to maintain an overall picture of the realisation of linguistic rights, as these cut across all police activities, and to mainstream linguistic rights into the shared decision-making structures of the National Police Board. The coordination group also monitors the implementation of the strategy for the national languages of Finland within the police administration.

206. In addition to the aforementioned coordination group, the National Police Board also appointed, by a decision issued on 11 October 2021, a national network of police contact persons for language affairs. The network draws its members from all National Police Board units, local police departments and the national units of the police. Besides maintaining a situational picture of the realisation of linguistic rights, the network also aims to provide a channel to address challenges relating to language services. It furthermore shares information, training and practices among the various units. The network meets at least twice annually.

207. The awareness of the national network of contact persons for language affairs and through them, the entire police administration, of the regional and minority languages of Finland and tolerance vis-à-vis them has been increased by means including the provision of training to network members. This training has concerned the guiding norms relating to linguistic rights and the status of language services from the viewpoint of the overseer of legality. The network has also addressed the development of language services as whole on the basis of challenges identified and the norms that guide activities.

Linguistic rights in police training

208. The promotion of language affairs remains an area of strong emphasis in police training. The performance agreement for 2023 between the National Police Board and the Police University College includes a performance target stating that the College shall for its part attend to promoting the language strategy under the Government Programme and achieving the target. Additional training in the Swedish language has also been provided by external service providers to pre-determined groups of personnel within the police. The aim here has

³⁹ [Working group on the guarantees of the rule of law and development of the justice system \(valtioneuvosto.fi\)](#) (available only in Finnish)

been to improve the opportunities of bilingual persons to conduct their business and receive service in the language of their choosing. In respect of training other than in-house training within the police administration, efforts have been made to promote the linguistic rights of Sámi speakers in particular by launching a pilot project in which police personnel are given the opportunity, with support from their employer, to complete Sámi-language education organised in cooperation with the University of Lapland and the Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The aim here is to boost Sámi-language skills in the police, which in turn will foster the realisation of the rights of Sámi-speaking clients of the various services of the police.

209. Holistic advances in language affairs are pursued in the police administration through centralisation. At present, the National Police Board is carrying out a project in cooperation with the National Bureau of Investigation to establish a national language services centre at the Bureau. In implementing the project, the police will seek to centralise the language services offering and boost its self-sufficiency in these services, thus promoting the realisation of linguistic rights especially with regard to criminal investigation and communications. A further aim of centralising language services is to reap overall benefits in the identification of language service needs and the availability and enhancement of services on an expedited timetable.

210. Activities to promote bilingualism among police staff and to enhance their understanding are provided in the police administration by means of voluntary public servant job rotation. Public servants taking part in job rotation are provided with the opportunity to take up a fixed-term position in a bilingual or Swedish-speaking police department with the aim of strengthening language proficiency and gaining more understanding of features characteristic to bilingual or fully Swedish-speaking areas.

ARTICLE 10: ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Digital and Population Data Services Agency

211. The Digital and Population Data Services Agency came into being on 1 January 2020 through the merger of the Population Register Centre, the Local Register Offices and the Development and Steering Unit for the Local Register Offices. The Agency has service locations in 32 towns across Finland. It maintains a nationwide approach to operations, meaning that people may conduct their business at any customer service location of the Agency.

212. The national Digital and Population Data Services Agency was assigned duties that had earlier been managed in a bilingual State central administration agency and bilingual State regional administration agencies and, in part, unilingually in Finnish-language regional administration agencies. The status of both Swedish and Sámi in the Digital and Population Data Services Agency is described below.

213. The Digital and Population Data Services Agency is a bilingual authority (Finnish/Swedish). Upon establishment of the Agency, it was considered important for the merger not to weaken the availability of bilingual services. The Agency has separate phone numbers and email addresses to provide service in Swedish to its individual clients. Clients are also served in Swedish at the Agency's service locations. Administrative texts and forms are available also in Swedish.

214. In order to safeguard the availability of services to the Swedish-speaking population, six public posts of registrar at the Digital and Population Data Services Agency were made subject to a language proficiency requirement of excellent spoken and written Swedish as well

as satisfactory spoken and written Finnish. In addition, the Agency imposed on 21 public posts for which a higher education degree is not required the language proficiency requirement of good spoken and written Swedish as well as satisfactory spoken and written Finnish.⁴⁰

215. Imposing language proficiency requirements creates the conditions in which the Digital and Population Data Services Agency can deliver services in Swedish and safeguard linguistic rights. This also ensures that in the future, too, the Agency will be able to recruit public officials with language proficiency.

216. At the time the Digital and Population Data Services Agency was being established, an amendment was made to the Sámi Language Act (1086/2003) to expand the scope of application of the Act to cover the entire national Digital and Population Data Services Agency. This amendment expanded the right of the Sámi to use Sámi in their own affairs and in affairs in which they are consulted. Previously, this right only applied in the former Local Register Office of Lapland but it was expanded to the entire operating area of the Digital and Population Data Services Agency, *i.e.* the entire country, by the amendment. The change represents a definite improvement to the linguistic rights of the Sámi. The nationwide character of the Digital and Population Data Services Agency allows the transaction of business to be concentrated on Sámi-speaking personnel. Interpretation services may moreover be utilised locally as necessary. The Agency maintains one service phone number and email address for Sámi speakers.

217. Earlier, it was not possible to record the name of a Sámi person in the Population Information System with the correct Sámi spelling. Nowadays, the Population Information System has introduced special characters that allow Sámi names to be recorded correctly, as required by the language. It should be noted that when name data is transferred via information services, it does not show as correctly spelled in Sámi unless the receiving system also contains all of the characters required to spell Sámi names.

Government Decree on the linguistic status of municipalities

218. The Government issued in December 2022 a Decree (1385/2022) on the linguistic status of municipalities in the ten-year period of 2023–2032. The Decree brings about no changes to the current situation. The Decree is used to regulate which municipalities are bilingual, what is their majority language, and which municipalities are unilingual in either Finnish or Swedish.

219. The linguistic status of a municipality is determined on the basis of official statistics. In addition, a municipality may, on the motion of the local council, be declared bilingual even if statistics would indicate it to be unilingual. Therefore the municipalities of Korsnäs and Luoto and the cities of Lohja and Närpio were declared bilingual under the Decree pursuant to the decisions taken by their respective councils.

Emergency response centre operations

220. The emergency response centre information system Erica introduced throughout the country in 2019 allows all Swedish-speaking emergency response centre operators who are on shift to be utilised in the networked operating model of the Emergency Response Centre Agency. Besides taking into account the need for Swedish-speaking operators in shift planning, the Emergency Response Centre Agency has organised a separate service queue for handling emergency calls in Swedish, and calls in Swedish may be transferred to this queue whenever necessary.

⁴⁰ Government Decree on the Digital and Population Data Services Agency (53/2020), section 6.

221. The service queue is resourced according to a staff complement based on time of day with separate Swedish-speaking operators who log in with the Swedish-language profile. In addition, a specific bilingual language profile has been set up for operators who speak both national languages and the operators with this profile step in to handle the Swedish-speaking emergency call queue for support or during the breaks of operators with a Swedish-language profile. According to the Rescue Department, Swedish-speaking callers are provided with service in Swedish and their waiting times for calls to be answered have been no longer than those for Finnish-speaking callers.

222. The Emergency Response Centre Agency has instructed operators that interaction with the caller may not be allowed even indirectly to give the impression that the caller would need to switch to the other national language. Operators who have passed the Swedish language proficiency examination are paid a language supplement.

223. Progress has been made on sign-language interpretation in cooperation with the Social Insurance Institution of Finland Kela. A pilot project is currently underway where Kela arranges remote interpretation in Finnish sign language for emergency calls from hearing-impaired persons by making use of the 112 Finland app. The possible permanent establishment of this service and any related further development will be examined in 2023.

Rescue services

224. In recent years, the rescue departments have improved their communications and service availability in both national languages. Bilingual rescue departments maintain website content in both Finnish and Swedish. Instructions for the general population and operators in various sectors as well as safety communications materials have been translated into Swedish more widely than before. The rescue departments have harmonised the fire safety materials distributed to detached houses. The fire safety guide for detached houses and the related fire safety self-assessment form are currently available not only in Finnish and Swedish but also in English, Russian and all three Sámi languages.

225. The Emergency Services Academy has implemented bilingual emergency response centre operator training in keeping with the wishes of the Emergency Response Centre Agency. The intake for the bilingual 18-month course that started in autumn 2015 was sixteen students, fifteen of whom graduated. This helped improve capabilities to handle emergency calls in Swedish. The Finnish-language courses have also had individual bilingual graduates.

226. There have been four Swedish-language rescue worker courses: in 1995–1996, 2002–2003, 2005–2006 and 2012–2013. There is also a course currently underway (No. 122, 2022–2023) whose students will graduate in autumn 2023. The average number of graduates per course is fifteen. The Finnish-language rescue worker courses have also had individual bilingual graduates. The next bilingual course is slated to take place in 2025.

227. If they wish, applicants to the Emergency Services Academy may take the entrance examination in Swedish. Course examinations may also be taken in Swedish. The policy of the Emergency Services Academy is to have all new key publications translated into Swedish, too. Core course materials in the training system for contract-based personnel are also translated into Swedish.

Emergency warnings

228. The Act on Emergency Warnings (466/2012) and its clarifying guidelines have made it possible to set up a system of emergency warnings that safeguards linguistic rights. The system caters for the national languages and the Sámi languages. Besides Finnish and Swedish,

emergency warnings shall be issued also in Sámi when the hazardous incident or its consequences concern the Sámi Homeland.

229. The notices in Skolt, Inari and Northern Sámi for various kinds of emergencies have been prepared in advance inasmuch as possible, as translation may not be readily available. The additional instructions for Sámi-language emergency warnings provided as an appendix to the Ministry of the Interior's Guide to Emergency Warnings determines the model phrases and gives the names of places in the different Sámi languages so as to allow warnings in Sámi to go out at the same time as warnings in Finnish and Swedish.

Translation of Current Care Guidelines into Swedish

230. The programme of the Government of Prime Minister *Sanna Marin* (2019–2023) states that the Current Care Guidelines will be translated into Swedish. This was accomplished at the start of 2022 and the translations have been published on the website kaypahoito.fi.

ARTICLE 11: MEDIA

Support to national minority-language newspapers and e-publications

231. The Government may grant aid to support the publication of newspapers and online publications in the national minority languages, *i.e.* Sámi, Karelian and Romani as well as sign languages, and to support the production of news services in Swedish. The appropriation may also be applied to producing content in the Sámi or Karelian languages that is included in newspapers published in Finnish or Swedish.

232. In 2022, the only applications for the aid were received from Swedish-language media. The Government granted EUR 0.5 million to support the publication of newspapers in the national minority languages and the equivalent online publications as well as the production of news services in Swedish.

Radio and TV in Swedish

233. The Swedish-language public service of the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE is handled by Svenska Yle. In 2022, Svenska Yle content and services reached 91% of Swedish-speaking Finns weekly, an increase of two percentage points from the year before (2021:89). The service's reach was thus restored to the same level as two years ago. Finland's Swedish-speakers feel that Svenska Yle has done well in performing its public service duties. In the annual survey, Svenska Yle was given a rating of 4.6 for its performance of public service duties (on a scale of 1–6, 2021: 4.4) Traditional radio and television remain very important for Swedish-speaking and bilingual Finns. The radio station Yle Vega geared to people over the age of 30 reached 52% of Swedish-speaking Finns weekly. This represented an increase from the previous year. The reach of radio station Yle X3M, geared to a younger audience, fell to 19% weekly, which reflects the changed media use of the target group. On television, the Swedish-speaking channel Yle Fem, which shares a programme channel with Yle Teema, reached 43% of Swedish-speaking Finns. This is two percentage points less than the year before.⁴¹

234. YLE's online service in Swedish, Yle Arenan, meanwhile reached 48% of Swedish speakers weekly, which is slightly less than in previous years.⁴²

⁴¹ Yleisradiation hallintoneuvoston kertomus eduskunnalle yhtiön toiminnasta vuonna 2022 [Report of the Administrative Council of Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE to Parliament on the operations of the company in 2022]. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LdGF11eh0bzZxJx9otiS23VpdTMh2uzG/view> (available in Finnish only)

⁴² Ibid.

235. Svenska Yle also offers a diverse selection of non-fiction and cultural content from a Swedish-speaking Finnish perspective. One of its new offerings is the TV show “Livet – berättelser från Svensfinland” showcasing the everyday life, experiences and life stories of people from across Swedish-speaking Finland.⁴³

ARTICLE 12: CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

Promotion of arts and other cultural activities

236. The final report Art, Culture and Diverse Finland⁴⁴ proposes several measures aimed to promote the position of people whose mother tongue is other than Finnish or Swedish in the fields of art and culture, for example:

- Multilingualism and knowledge about different cultures will be appreciated in work organisations in the field of art and culture. Finnish and/or Swedish language proficiency will only be applied as a recruitment criterion when this is a statutory requirement or otherwise justified. Employers will understand that art and culture professionals can manage their work successfully even without being native-level speakers of Finnish or Swedish. (Implementation: Cultural administration of central and local government, art and cultural institutions and organisations).
- Artists and cultural professionals who have migrated to Finland will be provided with opportunities to learn Finnish or Swedish or to develop their language proficiency through on-the-job learning. Language awareness, or understanding of the different situations in which language is used as well as the characteristics of language and their significance, will be improved among art and cultural actors. Each language user is also a language teacher. (Implementation: Field of art and culture).
- Easy Finnish and Swedish will be used more in the planning, communication and activities of art and cultural institutions, festivals and cultural events, and competence in the use of easy language and clear general language will be improved. Not only verbal but also visual expression will be used. (Implementation: Art and cultural institutions, festivals and events, the Finnish Centre for Easy Language and LL-Center).
- The offer of art and culture in the largest minority languages and, where possible, other languages will be increased. Multilingual events will be organised. Minority groups will be supported in organising their own cultural activities open to everyone, both in the group’s own language and in Finnish or Swedish. (Implementation: Arts Promotion Centre, art and cultural institutions, festivals and events, the audiovisual sector)

ARTICLE 13: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

State-owned companies

237. In 2020, the Ministry of Justice conducted the most recent Language Barometer survey on the availability of services in Finnish and Swedish. Based on the survey, the Swedish-speaking minority was the most dissatisfied with the Swedish-language services of State-owned companies: Posti, Finavia and VR State Railways. The difference in the satisfaction felt by Finnish and Swedish speakers was also the greatest in respect of these companies’ services.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ [Art, Culture and Diverse Finland : Final Report of the Working Group for Cultural Policy, Immigrants and Promotion of Cultural Diversity](#)

ARTICLE 14: TRANSFRONTIER EXCHANGES

238. Nothing new to report.

III.2 SÁMI: A REGIONAL MINORITY LANGUAGE

ARTICLE 8: EDUCATION

Early childhood education and care

Funding for education of Sámi-language teachers for early childhood education and care

239. Education of Sámi-language teachers for early childhood education and care has been provided with earmarked funding of just under EUR 400,000 from the Ministry of Education and Culture. In addition, the Ministry granted to the University of Oulu in late 2021 funding of EUR 620,000 to respond to the shortage of talent and labour in the field of early childhood education and care teachers and to promote the achievement of qualifications through fast-acting measures.

Language nests

240. The Ministry of Education and Culture has continued to support language nest activities in cooperation with the Sámi Parliament. Language nests are a specific approach developed to revitalise endangered languages and they apply the early total immersion method. In terms of manner of organisation, language nest activities are similar to early childhood education and care/day care for children. However, they do not aim to provide general early childhood education and care but rather to pass on to the child a language lost by their immediate or extended family to produce new speakers of the language. Studies show that language nests have proven the most effective way of revitalising the Sámi languages and the activities are now pursued in all three Sámi languages spoken in Finland. In the Sámi Homeland, children whose early childhood education and care was provided in language nests were most likely to move on to pre-primary and basic education in Sámi. Sámi language nests have already boosted the numbers of active speakers of Finland's Sámi languages by hundreds of persons. The language nest activities are invaluable to the intergenerational continuity of the Sámi languages spoken in Finland.

241. Sámi language nest activities are currently provided in twelve language nests: three in Inari Sámi, two in Skolt Sámi and seven in Northern Sámi. Nine of the language nests are located in the Sámi Homeland, three outside it in Sodankylä, Rovaniemi and Oulu.

242. The Ministry of Education and Culture makes an annual appropriation to the Sámi Parliament, which in turn distributes the funding to the municipalities which operate the language nests. The procedure is based on the cultural self-government of the Sámi under the Act on the Sámi Parliament.

243. In recent years, the Ministry of Education and Culture has provided the following support to language nest activities:

2020	EUR 1,200,000
2021	EUR 1,400,000
2022	EUR 1,520,000

Education and teacher training in the Sámi languages

244. Education and teacher training in the Sámi languages (Northern, Inari and Skolt Sámi) was launched in 2018 with earmarked funding of EUR 750,000 from the Ministry of Education and Culture. The project has developed new and more effective models for training Sámi-speaking teachers and teachers of the Sámi language and also provided training to teachers speaking Northern, Inari or Skolt Sámi. It also involves the preparation, together with the universities in Northern Finland and stakeholders, of a ten-year plan for training Sámi-speaking special education teachers, early childhood education and care teachers, and subject teachers. The Ministry of Education and Culture granted the project an extension until the end of 2022 to allow its completion.

Sámi-language learning materials

245. The report on knowledge about the Sámi people and their languages and cultures in Finnish- and Swedish-language learning materials in basic education⁴⁵ indicated that there is little such knowledge in these learning materials and what there is, varies in quality. The report breaks down subject-specific observations as to Sámi knowledge in the learning materials. Recurring features in the various subjects are a focus on history rather than current society in knowledge about the Sámi people and their languages and cultures, stereotypical illustrations, and the reduction of the Sámi languages and cultures into a single language and culture.

246. The Sámi Parliament pointed out that the funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture for Sámi-language cultural and language nest activities is not a permanent form of funding and fails to fully meet needs. The Sámi Parliament considers the development of remote education important, as the Sámi are scattered across some 230 municipalities in Finland and because of this, most schools are not in a position to organise contact teaching in or of Sámi, even if they wish. Outside the Sámi Homeland, contact teaching in Northern Sámi supplementary to basic education is provided in Helsinki, Oulu and Rovaniemi (2022–2023). A bilingual Northern Sámi/Finnish early basic education class is based at Pasila comprehensive school in Helsinki. The cities of Oulu and Rovaniemi also have plans to launch bilingual Sámi/Finnish education. Around 2,000 Sámi children and young people under the age of 18 live outside the Sámi Homeland.

247. The Ombudsman for Children remarked how the Sámi children with whom the Ombudsman met had pointed out that they valued the qualifications and education of Sámi-speaking teachers. It is vital that education can be pursued alongside employment. Teacher training should be flexible in terms of both scheduling and location.

248. In addition, the Ombudsman for Children emphasised that in strengthening the teaching of the Sámi languages, attention should be paid to the inequalities between the languages. When meeting with Sámi children in autumn 2021, the Ombudsman learned that one Northern Sámi group had access to nearly all education in Sámi and that Northern Sámi was in fact a stronger language than Finnish for the pupils in this group, whereas another Northern Sámi group only had two lessons per week of instruction of the Sámi language. In the Skolt Sámi group, there was also other education available in Sámi besides the two Sámi-language lessons per week, but since the mother tongue of most of the pupils was Finnish, they studied in Finnish. The pupils in the Inari Sámi group were in a Sámi-language class where they were taught in Inari Sámi but from Finnish-language textbooks. The Ombudsman indeed draws

⁴⁵ Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2020:29 (available only in Finnish).

attention to the availability of learning materials. Even if the teaching takes place in the minority language, learning materials may not necessarily be available and it may be left up to the individual teacher to produce such materials.

249. The National Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland remarked that parishes had made their premises available for language nest activities in the Sámi Homeland and that language instruction in Northern Sámi had been provided to parish employees on a project basis in 2020–2021. The National Church Council stated that while the Evangelical Lutheran Church was not able to serve Skolt Sámi-speaking congregants in their mother tongue, the Church had taken active steps towards giving all Sámi languages spoken in Finland an equally visible presence in the work of the Church. There are only a few Sámi-speaking priests and hardly any Sámi speakers among the Church's other personnel.

250. The Sámi Parliament drew attention to the lack of knowledge about the Sámi indigenous people (history and position in society, Sámi languages and their statuses, culture and heritage) in the teaching provided in Finnish schools.

251. The UN Association of Finland expressed its concern over the scant resources of schools in respect of minority languages and hoped that municipalities would more effectively safeguard the opportunities of schools to implement instruction in people's own mother tongue. Investment is also needed for acquiring adequate and stimulating learning materials, the in-service training of teachers, the availability of assistant resources who speak minority languages, and enhancing cooperation among the various actors. The Association encouraged examination and promotion of enabling people to have two mother tongues in order to safeguard instruction in people's own mother tongue.

ARTICLE 9: JUDICIAL AUTHORITIES

Police e-services and adding to the Sámi-speaking personnel of the police

252. The police have continued to develop their e-services with regard to languages. The aim is to produce passport, ID card and reporting of an offence in Northern Sámi on the police website by the end of the year. The police also seek to increase the amount of easy Finnish on their website, build a landing page for notices, blogs and other content in Ukrainian, and to review the need and implementation potential of instructions in sign language.

253. In order to add to the Sámi-speaking personnel of the police, a recruitment campaign is being organised in the Sámi Homeland by the police together with other agencies. The aim of the campaign is to recruit more Sámi-speaking personnel to the police as well as other agencies and in this way improve the availability of services in Sámi and also increase awareness of the minority languages.

ARTICLE 10: ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Emergency response centre operations

254. When service in Russian or Estonian is required, emergency response centre operators may make use of an interpretation service acquired by the Emergency Response Centre Agency from the company Semantix Finland Oy. Simultaneous interpretation has been made available in 27 languages, with potential to further expand the language pool. The challenge lies in the Sámi languages, as the Emergency Response Centre Agency has no Sámi-speaking operators in its employ and simultaneous interpretation in Sámi is also currently unavailable. The Agency

has looked into obtaining Sámi interpretation from another provider of interpretation services, but has been unsuccessful as yet. The Agency reports, however, that their statistics contain no emergency calls in Sámi in recent years.

Rescue services

255. The website of the Lapland Rescue Department is available only in Finnish. The lack of Sámi-speaking personnel in rescue services may pose a risk, for example in a situation where place names given in Sámi are not recognised. In the view of the Sámi Parliament, education and training in the rescue sector should be developed to better suit young people living in the Sámi Homeland, for example by enabling blended studies.⁴⁶ The Department for Rescue Services at the Ministry of the Interior will assess any development needs in education and training in the rescue sector in this respect.

256. Sámi-speaking personnel are involved in contract fire department activities in the Sámi Homeland and their input has often been significant in rescue missions in the Homeland.

257. The Lapland Rescue Department is currently updating its website and the main sections of the site will be translated into the Sámi languages. The website pelastustoimi.fi is to be updated in the current year with Sámi-language summaries of the site's main contents as well as Sámi translations of the national e-forms used by the rescue services.

ARTICLE 11: MEDIA

Sámi-language content and services of YLE

258. Yle Sápmi is the Sámi-language branch of YLE responsible for YLE's public service in Sámi. Its duties cover content and services in Sámi and about Sámi culture which are produced in three Sámi languages spoken in Finland, Inari, Skolt and Northern Sámi, as well as in Finnish. In addition to news and current events programming, the offering also includes cultural content, content for children and young people, and devotional content for radio, television and online. These play an important role in strengthening the vitality of the Sámi languages and culture.⁴⁷

259. In 2022, the station Yle Sámi Radio broadcasted roughly 8.5 hours of Sámi-language programming every weekday. This represents a slight increase on the year before. The station broadcasts content in three Sámi languages spoken in Finland every day. While content in Northern Sámi dominates, the less common Inari and Skolt Sámi languages are also heard almost daily. From the perspective of endangered Sámi languages, an even more important platform than radio is the online service Yle Areena, where content can be accessed also from outside the Sámi Homeland. Not only young Sámi but also older generations are to an increasing extent accessing Sámi-language content on mobile devices and on Yle Areena alongside traditional radio and television. This also impacts on the production of Sámi-language content.⁴⁸

260. In November 2022, YLE launched the world's first news and current events podcast in Skolt Sámi entitled *Má'st jiõm mainste'če ääkkain* [What I would not discuss with Granny]. YLE

⁴⁶ See Government report on application of language legislation 2021, p. 100 (available only in Finnish).

⁴⁷ Yleisradion hallintoneuvoston kertomus eduskunnalle yhtiön toiminnasta vuonna 2022 [Report of the Administrative Council of Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE to Parliament on the operations of the company in 2022]. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LdGF11eh0bzZxJx9otiS23VpdTMh2uzG/view> (available in Finnish only)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

intends to develop a similar service also for Inari Sámi- and Northern Sámi-speaking audiences and make it available in its digital services.⁴⁹

261. The content offered by Yle Sápmi to Sámi-speaking television audiences mainly covers news, current events and children's shows. The average number of viewers of the initial broadcast of the Yle *Ođđasat* news increased by more than a quarter in 2022, to 209,000 viewers, which speaks to the public's interest in domestic news delivered in Sámi.⁵⁰

ARTICLE 12: CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES

Dihtosis project

262. In 2018–2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture supported the Dihtosis project in which information about the Sámi and their culture was disseminated to schoolchildren by means of school visits and materials such as games. Implemented by the Sámi Youth Council, the project proved a success and was well received at schools. The Ministry also continues to support the activities of the Finnish Sámi Youth Association (Suoma Sámi Nuorat). The Association's activities are ideal for spotlighting Sámi as a part of society. The Ministry has also awarded annual support to the Young Sámi Art Event that showcases the culture of Sámi youth as expressed in the arts. The support to this event is granted via the Sámi Parliament.

ARTICLE 13: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

263. Nothing new to report.

ARTICLE 14: TRANSFRONTIER EXCHANGES

Nordic Sámi Convention

264. The Nordic Sámi Convention is the result of five years of negotiations between the Governments and the Sámi Parliaments of Norway, Sweden and Finland. The negotiations concluded in success in autumn 2016 and the Convention was initialled in January 2017. The Convention's key role is to enable better cooperation, especially in order to ensure that the conditions for maintaining the Sámi languages and culture are met. The Nordic Sámi Convention would not establish any new rights to land use or livelihoods, for example. The Convention would also be relevant from the perspective of the development of international law, as it would be the first regional human rights instrument on the rights of an indigenous peoples. The fact that the instrument was the result of negotiations between States and the indigenous people has also been the subject of international interest.

265. According to the Convention, in each country it shall be approved by the relevant Sámi Parliament before being signed by the country's Government. The Sámi Parliamentary Council has issued a joint proposal of the Sámi Parliaments on topics in respect of which the negotiations should be re-opened. Talks are ongoing between State officials and the Sámi Parliament as to alternative ways to proceed.

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⁴⁹ Ibid.

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Restriction of cross-border traffic between Finland and Russia

268. Finland restricts the travel of Russians to Finland on Schengen visas for purposes of tourism and for purposes of transit to other parts of the Schengen area. The restrictions on entry remain in force until further notice. The entry into Finland on a visa by certain specifically defined special groups is not, as a rule, subject to restriction.

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APPENDICES

[National Action Plan on Fundamental and Human Rights 2020–2023](#)

[Report on the application of language legislation 2021](#)