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**EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR REGIONAL OR MINORITY LANGUAGES**

**Evaluation by the Committee of Experts  
of the Implementation of the Recommendations for Immediate Action  
contained in the Committee of Experts' eighth evaluation report on  
NORWAY**

## Introduction

1. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter referred to as “the Charter”) is a treaty of the Council of Europe putting obligations on its states parties to protect and promote the country’s traditional minority languages in all fields of public life: education, judicial authorities, administrative authorities and public services, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life, and transfrontier exchanges. The Charter was ratified by Norway in 1993, entered into force on 1 March 1998 and applies to the following languages: Kven<sup>1</sup>, Romanes, and Romani by Part II only, and Lule Sámi, North Sámi and South Sámi by both Part II and Part III of the Charter.<sup>2</sup>

2. The Committee of Experts monitors the implementation of the Charter. Each state party shall present a periodical report on the implementation of the Charter every five years. On the basis of the periodical report, the Committee of Experts adopts an evaluation report in which it makes “**recommendations for immediate action**” and “further recommendations” on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in the state concerned. Based on this evaluation report, the Committee of Ministers adopts its recommendations to the state party.

3. Two and a half years after the due date of its periodical report, the state party shall present information on the implementation of every recommendation for immediate action<sup>3</sup> that the Committee of Experts has made in its evaluation report. The Committee of Experts then adopts an evaluation of the implementation of these recommendations. The “further recommendations” by the Committee of Experts are examined after reception of the next periodical report and the on-the-spot visit to the state party. Five-yearly periodical reports shall contain comprehensive information about the implementation of all Charter undertakings and all recommendations by the Committee of Experts and the Committee of Ministers.

4. Norway submitted the **information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action** contained in the Committee of Experts’ eighth evaluation report<sup>4</sup> on 6 January 2023. This evaluation of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action is based on the information received from the Norwegian authorities, as well as from representatives of the minority language speakers pursuant to Article 16.2 of the Charter.<sup>5</sup> As far as the compliance of Norway with all its undertakings under the Charter is concerned, the Committee of Experts refers to its eighth evaluation report. The Committee of Experts will examine the implementation of all of the undertakings concerning all of the minority languages in the next evaluation report.

5. This evaluation was adopted by the Committee of Experts on 15 March 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> “In the eighth periodical report, the Norwegian authorities declared being aware that [...] *some users of the traditional language use other names for their language, such as Old Finnish, Our Finnish, Kven Finnish and Finnish*. Therefore, the Committee of Experts understands the denomination *Kven*, as employed in this evaluation report, to mean all variants of the Finno-Ugric language used by Kven people on the territory of Norway.” (MIN-LANG(2021)20, para. 39)

<sup>2</sup> Following a decision of the Norwegian Government by means of a formal declaration sent to the Council of Europe on 1 September 2021, Norway expanded its obligations with regards to Lule Sámi and South Sámi to be covered by Part III of the Charter too.

<sup>3</sup> In accordance with [Committee of Ministers Decisions “Strengthening the monitoring mechanism of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages” \(CM/Del/Dec\(2018\)1330/10.4e\), para. 1.a.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Eighth Evaluation Report of the Committee of Experts on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Norway](#)

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with the [Rules of Procedure of the Committee of Experts \(MIN-LANG\(2019\)7\), Rule 17, paras. 1-6.](#)

## **Examination of the implementation by Norway of the recommendations for immediate action**

### **I. General issues**

#### **Consultation of representatives of the minority language users**

6. The Committee of Experts welcomes the consultation meetings held by the Norwegian authorities with the representatives of speakers on 23 and 24 November 2022, as a follow up to the publication of the eighth evaluation report. Both representatives of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages were present on the second day of the meetings. It nevertheless reminds the authorities that in conformity with Articles 6 and 7.4 of the Charter, it is necessary to also have the views of speakers of regional or minority languages included when preparing the information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action.

7. The Committee of Experts reminds the Norwegian authorities to ensure dissemination of the Committee of Experts' evaluation reports and related Committee of Ministers recommendations on their official websites, including through their translation into the national language(s).

### **II. Recommendations for immediate action**

#### **1. Kven**

##### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**a. Take measures to ensure stronger presence of Kven in the media, including reintroducing Kven in radio broadcasting.**

##### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

8. The authorities report that a statement by the Norwegian Media Authority (*Medietilsynet*) called for the Public Broadcasting Company in Norway (NRK) to increase visibility of Sámi and national minorities. As a result, the authorities submitted a proposal to the *Storting* (Parliament of Norway) in 2022 providing a specific obligation to the NRK to offer content in Sámi languages, national minority languages and sign language (without any specific quantitative requirements).

9. In 2021, NRK Troms and Finnmark, the NRK regional office with the mandate to promote Kven, had employed a journalist with Kven language skills, responsible for developing content in Kven (both original and in translation). NRK therefore now offers an online weekly summary of national and international news both in written and audio version, among other content. In addition, the authorities report that throughout 2021, local broadcasts in Troms and Finnmark had regular features about Kven culture.

10. The authorities report that the Kven New Year's speech was broadcasted on nationwide television for the fourth year in a row in 2022, and that good viewing figures were reported. In addition, in 2021 a collaboration between NRK and the Language Council led to the broadcast of the awards ceremony of the Kven Language Prize on NRK Kvensk. This collaboration was the first of its kind and its success set a precedent for potential future collaborations to promote the Kven in the media.

11. According to the speakers, the media offer in Kven remains insufficient and it is primarily available online, which means that in practice it does not reach some elderly Kven speakers.

### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

12. The Committee of Experts welcomes that the Norwegian Media Authority highlighted the role of NRK in promoting minority languages as it strengthens the accountability of the national public broadcaster towards them. It also welcomes the proposal of the Norwegian authorities to further promote Sámi and minority languages in the media. It however points out that specific quantitative and qualitative requirements would help to provide a better framework for NRK to ensure adequate and meaningful contribution for each one of the languages, including Kven, and to be able to evaluate the impact of the measures and steps taken. Kven is in a particularly vulnerable position, so bearing in mind that each minority language has its own specific needs, individual plans should be drawn in co-operation with speakers on a case-by-case basis for a more targeted and effective approach. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving more information on the conclusion from the proposal submitted to the *Storting* and on how this has benefited the promotion of Kven in the media in particular.

13. The Committee of Experts welcomes the efforts to promote Kven culture and to produce some material in Kven, including weekly news, and it looks forward to receiving information on the results of these initiatives. The current offer in Kven remains limited and therefore the revitalisation of Kven is hindered. The Committee of Experts underlines the importance of regular radio and TV broadcasts in Kven in order to promote its preservation and daily use in public life for all Kven speakers and encourages the authorities to take effective measures to ensure its stronger presence in the media.

14. The Committee of Experts welcomes the continuation of the initiative to have the Kven New Year's speech and encourages the authorities to make it a regular occurrence, as it helps give visibility to the Kven language as a language of Norway and beyond Kven speakers. It encourages the Norwegian authorities to find similar opportunities to increase the visibility of Kven as a language of Norway to the wider society.

15. The Committee of Experts welcomes the collaboration between the Language Council and NRK, but it is not aware of any other initiatives being prepared. It therefore encourages the authorities to continue to create synergies among stakeholders as a way to strengthen the presence of Kven in the media.

### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**b. Improve the situation of Kven in primary and secondary education and enhance the offer of Kven language nests in kindergartens.**

### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

16. The authorities report that a permanent budget allocation was established for projects for Kven in kindergartens and that all kindergartens in Troms and Finnmark receive information on these available funds.

17. The right to be taught Kven in primary and lower secondary education in Troms and Finnmark is guaranteed where at least three pupils request so. According to the speakers, in practice, schools in the region have been providing Kven education in situations where only one pupil requested it, even though this is not provided for in the law. Nevertheless, there is no right to be taught Kven in upper secondary education. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training had recommended to include Kven education as an individual right throughout the country in the new Education Act, recommendation welcomed by the speakers.

### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

18. The Committee of Experts welcomes the allocation of permanent funds for projects related to the Kven language in kindergartens but underlines that guidance on how to apply for such funds should be disseminated more broadly, and that sufficient funds should be provided to meet the demand for Kven language. The Committee of Experts is nevertheless concerned that important services such as language nests and kindergartens rely on project grants, which creates uncertainty about continuity. It underlines that

language revitalisation requires long-term effective measures and encourages the authorities to allocate permanent structural funding for the promotion of Kven in kindergartens and language nests, as well as to find other incentives for kindergartens to offer Kven services.

19. The Committee of Experts regrets that no information has been provided on the situation of Kven in primary and secondary education. However, bearing in mind the vulnerable situation in which Kven language is at present and noting the information provided by Kven speakers with regards to the minimum threshold for schools to offer Kven education, it considers that the recommendation given by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training to ensure the provision of Kven as an individual right would help strengthen the language. An increase in the possibilities for learning Kven could in turn allow for a higher number of teachers, potentially allowing Kven education to expand further.

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**c. Ensure that there are incentives for students who have opted for Kven as a second language in the compulsory education to continue these studies at upper secondary level, as this is the recruitment base for teacher training for Kven.**

#### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

20. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has increased its efforts to promote Kven language education at different levels, by means of promotional videos, as well as the inclusion of earmarked funding within a grant scheme for teaching support materials in Kven or Finnish as a second language, and a pilot project to develop learning resources for Kven or Finnish on *digilaer.no*.

21. Kven speakers welcome the initiative, but they are not sure whether these videos will be sufficient to motivate students at upper secondary school to study Kven. In addition, Kven speakers note that it may lead to a higher demand for Kven in upper secondary level, and therefore more teachers of Kven will be needed.

#### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

22. The Committee of Experts welcomes the efforts made by the authorities to promote and support the teaching of Kven but encourages the authorities to include the representatives of speakers in these. It regrets that no information is provided on incentives for students who have opted for Kven as a second language in the compulsory education to continue these studies at upper secondary level. It therefore asks the authorities to start a dialogue with speakers and to report about incentives for students in the next periodical report.

## **2. Lule Sámi**

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**a. Ensure that the new administrative division does not have a negative impact on Lule Sámi in education.**

#### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

23. The authorities refer to information already provided in the eighth periodical report and state that the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation had consulted with the Narvik Municipality, the *Sámediggi* (the Sámi Parliament) and local Sámi interests on providing Lule Sámi education in Narvik.

24. As a result of this new administrative division, the northern part of the former Tysfjord Municipality is no longer within the Sámi administrative area, as it now belongs to the Narvik Municipality. According to the speakers, the teaching in Sámi is now possible only if there is a minimum of ten pupils. The authorities

report that they are unaware of any demand for education in Lule Sámi as a language of instruction in the Narvik Municipality, and that teaching of Lule Sámi remains a right outside of Sámi language administrative districts.

25. According to information received from the speakers, this new administrative division entails a weakening of the rights of Sámi speakers. The norther part of the former Tysfjord Municipality followed the “National Curriculum for Knowledge – Sámi”, a parallel teaching plan for Sámi education, whereas after the administrative reform, this is no longer the case. According to the Kindergarten Act, municipalities in Sámi administrative areas are responsible for ensuring kindergarten provision is based on Sámi language and culture. In municipalities outside Sámi administrative areas, conditions have to be created to ensure the development of Sámi language and culture.

#### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

26. The Committee of Experts underlines that administrative reforms should not have a negative impact on the promotion of Lule Sámi, including in education, as it contravenes Article 7.1.b of the Charter. The Committee of Experts therefore urges the authorities to refrain from further administrative reforms that leave traditional Sámi areas outside Sámi administrative areas and hinder access to education in Lule Sámi. It calls upon the authorities to consult with Lule Sámi users and the *Sámediggi* in order to find long-term solutions to ensure that all pupils in the Narvik Municipality can access Lule Sámi education if they wish so, and that all families are informed of the possibility of requesting Lule Sámi education at all levels.

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**b. Ensure that there are incentives for students who have opted for Lule Sámi as a second language in the compulsory education to continue these studies at upper secondary level, as this is the recruitment base for teacher training for Lule Sámi.**

#### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

27. The yearly white paper on “Sámi language, culture, and way of life” for 2023 will have a focus among other topics on “competence and recruitment”. It will be submitted to the *Storting* in the spring 2023 and will look into ways of increasing the recruitment of students with Sámi background for teacher training (for Lule, North and South Sámi), among other issues.

#### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

28. The specific focus of the white paper on development and recruitment of Sámi language teachers is a good step in understanding the barriers currently leading to the low numbers of Sámi language teachers and in finding targeted measures to effectively change the situation and guarantee Sámi language education and the preservation of Sámi languages.

29. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving information on the outcomes of the white paper and on follow up measures to effectively redress the current situation. These should include incentives provided for students to continue to study Lule Sámi as a second language in upper secondary level and subsequent budget allocated to the implementation of the measures.

### 3. North Sámi

#### Recommendation for immediate action

**a. Ensure that health and social care facilities such as hospitals and retirement homes offer services in North Sámi.**

#### Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities

30. North Sámi interpretation is available in the Northern Norway Regional Health Authority. A North Sámi interpreter is permanently employed at Hammerfest Hospital (from 7.30am to 3pm on weekdays) and the University Hospital North Norway (UNN) plans to hire a day interpreter. In addition, there are six part-time North Sámi remote interpreters who take shifts and ensure interpretation on weekdays from 8am to 10pm. The Sámi National Centre for Mental Health and Substance Abuse (SANKS) works together with remote interpreters who can also provide in-person interpretation at *Sámi Klinihkka* on an “as needed” basis. There is also the possibility to pre-book interpreters both by General Practitioners and patients alike.

31. According to the speakers, following the entry into force of the Interpreting Act on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022, all public bodies requiring an interpreter shall use a qualified interpreter listed in the National Registry of Interpreters. In light of this, the Sámi University of Applied Sciences completed the preparatory work for training of interpreters to ensure the long-term availability of qualified interpreters in Sámi languages. Nevertheless, the speakers pointed out the lack of funds stalling the project and at present, training for Sámi interpreters is not being offered.

32. The authorities allocated NOK1.2 million (around €109.000) from the national budget through grants for the period 2019-2022 to enhance the competences of care services for Sámi users. The grant scheme aims to offer better targeted health and care support for Sámi users in the areas where speakers of North, Lule and South Sámi traditionally live.

#### Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed

33. The Committee of Experts commends the efforts by the authorities to increase the number of interpreters available and the use of technology to facilitate the provision of interpretation services for North Sámi speakers in situations where there are no interpreters available in person. This model should be replicated in other health care facilities in North Sámi speaking areas to guarantee the right of North Sámi users to receive the care needed in their language.

34. The Committee of Experts encourages the Norwegian authorities to ensure that there are sufficient funds available for putting in place the training of interpreters of Sámi languages in compliance with the new Interpreting Act.

35. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving more information on how the allocation of funds to enhance competences of care services and retirement homes for Sámi users is being done and what specific measures are being put in place to do so. It also reminds the authorities of the risks of providing grants rather than structural funds for the provision of Sámi language interpretation in health and social care facilities, which can put Sámi users in a situation of further vulnerability, due to the lack of sustainability. Availability of interpretation should be systematically guaranteed.

#### Recommendation for immediate action

**b. Ensure that there are incentives for students who have opted for North Sámi as a second language in the compulsory education to continue these studies at upper secondary level, as this is the recruitment base for teacher training for North Sámi.**

36. For information on measures taken by the authorities and the evaluation of the Committee of Experts, please see paragraphs 27-29.

#### **4. Romanes**

##### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**a. Encourage the use of Romanes, in speech and writing in public life, particularly in education in co-operation with the speakers.**

##### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

37. The authorities, in co-operation with Romanes speakers, are currently looking into measures to promote Romanes in public life, in particular in education. As a result of this dialogue, a Norwegian-Romanes bilingual pre-school programme was organised by *Skolelosene*, a school mediator service at the Municipality of Oslo, in co-operation with the organisation Romano Kher. Through this programme, Roma mediators together with non-Roma teachers seek to promote formal education attainment among Roma children. The presence of Roma mediators, at the same time contributes to the use of Romanes in the school. In addition, *Skolelosene* is developing a pilot course for the study and teaching of Romanes at university level, in co-operation with the University of Bergen and based on a similar programme developed in Sweden.

38. According to the speakers, several audiovisual productions currently exist in Romanes, produced also at the Romano Kher centre. Nevertheless, the language is virtually invisible in NRK, and these materials are not being used and promoted.

39. As referred to in paragraph 31, public bodies requiring interpretation should use qualified interpreters from the National Registry of Interpreters. However, speakers stated that at present there are no certified interpreters of Romanes. According to information received from the speakers, this is particularly worrisome for cases where Romanes-speaking children are in the welfare system or dealing with courts or police. The certification requirement may be waived in cases of emergency or other grounds, which in practice means that informal or no interpretation is provided.

##### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

40. The Committee of Experts welcomes the initiatives by *Skolelosene*, as they are a step in the right direction. Setting up a Norwegian-Romanes pre-school is of great importance to help preserve the language and give it visibility within Norwegian society. Equally, the presence of Romanes-speaking mediators in the school can provide a bridge between schools and children and their families, and facilitate mutual understanding as well as promote the use of the language in public life. In addition, the Committee of Experts commends the pilot project to include a programme for the study and teaching of Romanes at university level as having trained Romanes-speaking teachers can have a great impact in the promotion of Romanes in education, and in public life in general. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to continue to co-operate with Romanes speakers' representatives to find targeted measures to encourage the use of Romanes in public life. The Committee of Experts looks forward to reading about the outcomes of these projects in the next periodical report.

41. The Committee of Experts encourages the authorities to use already existing material in Romanes to promote the language and give it visibility in the media.

42. The Committee of Experts considers the lack of certified interpreters of Romanes worrying when it concerns children who are in the welfare system. Children represent a group requiring special protection and they should be able to speak their own language when dealing with difficult situations where they are separated from their families. It therefore invites the Norwegian authorities to look into possible ways to



certify interpreters of Romanes in order to guarantee availability of quality interpretation as needed, in particular when dealing with children.

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**b. Promote the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Romanes among the objectives of education, teacher training and media.**

#### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

43. A new Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination will be presented by the Norwegian government at the end of 2023. The Action Plan will also include national minorities and the Sámi, among other groups, and will focus on the labour market and the challenges faced by young people when it comes to racism and discrimination.

#### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

44. The Committee of Experts welcomes the preparation of the new Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination and encourages the authorities to actively involve the speakers of Romanes in its development and implementation. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving more information on how the plan foresees to include the promotion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Romanes among the objectives of education, teacher training and media in the next periodical report.

45. The systematic use of existing material about Romanes speakers' history (paragraph 38) would help the general public understand the history of one of Norway's national minorities and hence its language. This could contribute to promote respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Romanes. The Committee of Experts underlines that this should be a first step towards developing a more systematic approach to giving visibility to Romanes and the history of its speakers.

### **5. Romani**

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**a. Encourage the use of Romani, in speech and writing in public life, particularly in education in co-operation with the speakers.**

#### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

46. The authorities report that they are currently looking into measures to promote Romani in public life, in particular in education.

#### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

47. The Committee of Experts is concerned that no specific information is provided about what measures are currently being discussed to promote Romani in public life, in particular in education, and encourages the authorities to implement this recommendation in the immediate future in co-operation with the speakers.

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

**b. Promote the inclusion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Romani among the objectives of education, teacher training and media.**

48. A new Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination will be presented by the Norwegian government at the end of 2023. The Action Plan will also include national minorities and the Sámi, among

other groups, and will focus on the labour market and the challenges faced by young people when it comes to racism and discrimination.

#### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

49. The Committee of Experts welcomes the preparation of the new Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination and encourages the authorities to actively involve the speakers of Romani in its development and implementation. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving more information on how the plan foresees to include the promotion of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to Romani among the objectives of education, teacher training and media in the next periodical report.

### **6. South Sámi**

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

<b>a. Provide forms and means for the teaching and study of South Sámi at all appropriate stages, including distance learning.</b>
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#### **Implementation measures taken by the Norwegian authorities**

50. For information on measures taken by the authorities, please see paragraph 27.

#### **Evaluation by the Committee of Experts and further action needed**

51. The Committee of Experts looks forward to receiving information on the outcomes of the white paper and on follow up measures to ensure adequate forms and means for the teaching and study of South Sámi at all appropriate stages.

#### **Recommendation for immediate action**

<b>b. Ensure that there are incentives for students who have opted for South Sámi as a second language in the compulsory education to continue these studies at upper secondary level, as this is the recruitment base for teacher training for South Sámi.</b>
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52. For information on measures taken by the authorities and the evaluation of the Committee of Experts, please see paragraphs 27-29.

## Communication to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, while acknowledging the efforts of the Norwegian authorities to comply with their undertakings under the Charter, has in its eighth evaluation report (CM(2022)32) made “recommendations for immediate action” and “further recommendations” on how to improve the protection and promotion of the regional or minority languages in Norway.

In accordance with the Committee of Ministers Decisions of 28 November 2018 ([CM/Del/Dec\(2018\)1330/10.4e](#)). Norway had to present information on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action, which contain the priority measures that should be taken by the state party. Norway presented this information on 6 January 2023. In the present evaluation, the Committee of Experts has examined the implementation of these recommendations.

In accordance with its Rules of Procedure, the Committee of Experts invites the Committee of Ministers to:

1. take note of the evaluation made by the Committee of Experts of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action by Norway and invite the Norwegian authorities to disseminate it to the competent national authorities and relevant stakeholders;
2. reiterate its Recommendation CM/RecChL(2022)3 and invite the Norwegian authorities to present their next periodical report by 1 July 2025 in the required format.