

THE SÁMI

The People, Their Culture and Languages



THE SÁMI

The People, Their Culture and Languages



*The opinions expressed in this work are
the responsibility of the authors and
do not necessarily reflect the official
policy of the Council of Europe.*

All requests concerning the
reproduction or translation of all
or part of this document should
be addressed to the Directorate of
Communication (F-67075 Strasbourg
Cedex or publishing@coe.int).
All other correspondence concerning
this document should be addressed
of the Directorate General
of Democracy.

Cover and layout: SPDP,
Council of Europe

Credit photo: Council of Europe

© Council of Europe, June 2015
Printed at the Council of Europe

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
INTRODUCTION	7
THE SÁMI, WHO ARE THEY?	8
SÁMI YOUTH	13
SÁMI WOMEN IN A CHANGING SOCIETY	20
SÁMI LANGUAGES	27
SÁMI MEDIA	35
SÁMI COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS	39
MONITORING BODIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE	45
CLOSING REMARKS	48
THE WAY AHEAD	50



FOREWORD

// The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation, combating all forms of discrimination and promoting equality, empowerment and participation of all groups in society. In particular, the organisation works to ensure that people in vulnerable situations have full access to their rights, like the Sámi – an indigenous people living in the northern reaches of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. As a minority, numbering 80,000-100,000, the Sámi need protection and support to ensure the survival of their nine languages, their culture and their way of life. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe deal with the protection and promotion of minorities and minority languages – an increasingly important challenge in today's diverse modern societies.

■ Recommendations made in monitoring reports on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages have directly benefited the Sámi. For example, there is now an action plan in Norway to ensure the use of Sámi in hospitals and, in Sweden, the Sámi Parliament is involved in the monitoring and implementation of the Swedish Minority Act. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has called for Sámi to be empowered to participate in all decisions concerning them, such as land rights, education and culture. In addition, the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance has made recommendations regarding the Sámi concerning their participation in decision-making and teacher training, to help revive Sámi languages.



Marja Ruotanen

■ In 2014, the Council of Europe organised a seminar in Inari, Finland, to allow Sámi from different sectors – young people, women, LGBT, media, politicians, social workers, educators, reindeer herders and musicians – to share their stories, experiences, concerns and needs. It was an important opportunity for Council of Europe representatives to listen, learn and speak with the Sámi. At a time when intolerance, hate speech, and physical attacks against people from minority groups are on the rise, it is vital for them to have an opportunity to express their opinions and contribute to public debate. In the years to come, the Council of Europe will continue to support vulnerable groups like the Sámi, while doing everything in its power to enable them to thrive on their own."

Marja Ruotanen,

Director of Human Dignity and Equality, Council of Europe



INTRODUCTION

Seminar: Sámi – The People, Their Culture and Languages and the Council of Europe

The Seminar “Sámi – The People, Their Culture and Languages and the Council of Europe” was held in Inari, Finland on 27 – 29 November, 2014. It was organised by the Council of Europe and the Sámi Parliament in Finland. The Seminar was comprised by 4 panels as well as an introductory and a concluding panel. The four panels included a Sámi youth panel, a Sámi women panel, a Sámi language panel and a Sámi media panel in which Sámi representatives of each group held presentations and discussions. Representatives of the Council of Europe, of the Sámi Parliaments and of other various sectors also took the floor during the introductory and the concluding panels. This publication attempts to assemble some of the points and problems evoked during the Seminar and the quoted extracts are directly taken from the speeches of the Seminar.

The aims and expected outcomes of the event were to: Provide insight into the specific identities, traditions, cultures and languages of the Sámi; Increase understanding of the common challenges faced by Sámi in Finland, Norway and Sweden in the fields of equality, effective participation in public life, and preservation of languages and cultures, reflecting also the perspective of youth, women and diverse groups within the minority; Enable the sharing of experiences, creative solutions and good practices, and; Serve as a pilot exercise for the relevant Council of Europe “kin-monitoring mechanisms” to enhance synergies.

THE SÁMI, WHO ARE THEY?





The Sámi are an indigenous people living in the very north of Europe, in a land called Sápmi, which stretches across the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. They are descendants of the people who first inhabited the northern regions of Europe shortly after the end of the last Ice Age, approximately 10,000 years ago. They are a minority in today's Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russian Federation. There are about 80-100,000 Sámi altogether: 50,000 - 65,000 in Norway, 20,000 - 40,000 in Sweden, about 8,000 - 10,000 in Finland and about 2,000 in Russia. Currently an increasing number of Sámi live outside the Sámi homeland. This brings challenges to services and to the future of the Sámi Culture. The Constitutions of Norway, Sweden and Finland have recognised the Sámi as an indigenous people. The Sámi are the only indigenous people in the European Union.



Language Map

- 1 South Sámi
- 2 Ume Sámi
- 3 Pite Sámi
- 4 Lule Sámi
- 5 North Sámi
- 6 Inari Sámi
- 7 Skolt Sámi
- 8 Kildin Sámi
- 9 Ter Sámi
- 10 Akkala Sámi

© Oktavuohta web magazine,
Sámi Parliament Finland

SÁMI LANGUAGES

— The Sámi languages are very distinct from the majority languages in Scandinavia. There are nine different Sámi languages alive but they are all highly endangered. They can be divided into Eastern and Western language groups. Western languages are North, South, Pite, Ume and Lule Sámi. The Eastern language

group consists of Skolt, Inari, Kildin and Ter Sámi. Akkala Sámi in Russia died out in the 1990's. North Sámi is the most widely used language and is spoken in all the four countries. Some of the Sámi languages are further divided into various dialects. The languages are protected by legislation in Finland, Sweden and Norway. The Sámi have the right to education in their own languages. About half of the Sámi speak Sámi as a native language.



SÁMI CULTURE

■ Hunting, fishing, gathering, reindeer herding, Sámi handicrafts and small-scale agriculture are traditional Sámi livelihoods. Today, the Sámi commonly make a living by combining these traditional livelihoods with tourism and services. Many are also employed in the public and private sector. Nature-based occupations play a small role in terms of making a living but are of considerable cultural significance as a traditional way of life.

■ Their culture, languages, traditional clothing, handicraft and music are distinctively different from other ethnic groups in Scandinavia. Reindeer herding is still fundamental to the Sámi culture and society, even though nowadays a majority pursue other careers. However, most Sámi have a family member or a relative who in some way is involved in reindeer herding.

■ Other important elements of the culture are the different languages and the yoik, the Sámi traditional song. Typical features of the yoik include an original use of tones and unrecognisable words, improvisation and a cappella. A personal yoik is tied to a person and is meant to reflect the essence of this person.



ONE FLAG – ONE PEOPLE

■ The Sámi flag was approved by the Nordic Sámi Council in 1986 and was designed by Astrid Båhl from Skibotn in Norway. The circle is a symbol for both the sun (red) and the moon (blue). The flag's colours - red, blue, green and yellow - are the colours of the traditional Sámi costume, the kolt. There are several official Sámi flag-flying days. One of them is the Sámi National Day, which is celebrated in memory of the first Sámi Congress held in Trondheim, Norway, in 1917.



SÁMI YOUTH

Finding your identity in a world between two cultures

Growing up as a Sámi person is a challenge in many ways. On the one side, you have a traditional heritage, culture and language and on the other side, there is the mainstream, majority culture that is developing at another pace. Finding yourself and staying connected to your own identity is not always easy under these conditions, when you want to fit into both the modern and the traditional societies. Many suffer from so called “etno stress”: being unsure of where they belong.

This is a challenge when growing up in the Sámi homeland and even more so when growing up outside of it. Many young Sámi do not grow up in the Sámi homeland as many Sámi of all generations have moved away and now live among the majority population. Staying connected to your roots and identity is even more challenging when you are far away from it and you may or may not even speak the language anymore.



Minna Lehtola

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR ROOTS

■ **Minna Lehtola** is a 26-year-old Inari Sámi from Solojärvi, Finland. She is North Sámi from her father's side and Inari and Skolt Sámi from her mother's side. She was brought up in a Sámi home of reindeer husbandry work. Growing up, she did not speak Sámi at home as her parents thought that the children would have a better future if they spoke the majority language, Finnish, instead of Sámi. She has learned to speak Sámi as an adult.

” I feel a responsibility to ensure that I am a part of the Sámi culture by living it. It would be easy to just move away for an easier life and for work, but it is good to be here, because I have grown up here and in this way of life. I do not consider it as a challenge but as an opportunity. Although I belong to a minority in a minority, or however you would call it, I do not feel that is a bad thing, it made me plucky and has increased my perseverance and character. I want to work for my people and I want to act so that in the future, we will be a living people, and not only a memory in the history books.”

Minna Lehtola

A photograph of Ande Trosten, a young person with short brown hair, wearing a white jacket with red and yellow accents. They are standing behind a wooden podium with a microphone and a white mug. A vase of red flowers is on the podium to their right.

Ande Trosten

A photograph of Tuomas Aslak Juuso, a young man with long brown hair, wearing a dark blue jacket with colorful geometric patterns. He is standing at a podium with a microphone, looking towards the right.

Tuomas Aslak Juuso

■ **Tuomas Aslak Juuso** is a native of Enontekiö, Finland. He is chairman of the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC). He is now working as an advisor in the indigenous resource centre Gáldussa in Norway.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

■ **Ande Trosten** is a member of the Youth Policy Committee of the Sámi Parliament in Norway.

” We need our languages easily accessible in everyday life, every day from birth to grave. Giving young people their language is also giving them their identity.”

Ande Trosten

” The Sámi have an active youth engagement. The question is not whether or not we want to preserve and continue our own culture and identities, but if we are provided with the possibilities do to so or not. Even though there are instruments in place, we do not have opportunities to actively engage and to promote our views, to preserve our culture, identities and languages and to continue our traditional livelihoods. In addition, the lack of financial resources is a continuous challenge.”

Tuomas Aslak Juuso



Aleksi Ahlakorpi



YOUTH ACTIVITIES USING THE SÁMI LANGUAGES

— **Aleksi Ahlakorpi** is the only North Sámi youth worker in Finland. In Utsjoki, the northernmost municipality of Finland and of the European Union, he has created a space for the youth where they can speak Sámi while socialising with other young persons. Most young persons that attended his activities spoke Finnish in the beginning but now speak more Sámi with each other. Aleksi explained the importance of his work and how this space is very important for the Sámi youth in this area. However, he encounters many challenges in his work due to the limited funding for the youth workers and the great distances in this area of Finland.

” *The financial situation and the long distances are a challenge. For some activities I have to drive as much as 260 kilometres in one evening.*”

Aleksi Ahlakorpi



Per-Jonas Partapuoli



ACCESS TO TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

■ **Per-Jonas Partapuoli** from Sáminuorra in Sweden explained the difficulties often encountered by young reindeer herders and the sad fact that many commit suicide as a result of identity crisis. The Sámi, especially reindeer herders, have to compete with others, including mining companies, for their land rights.

” This is the truth, the reality for many people. It isn't just a threat to a job. It is a livelihood, a life, an identity that

is threatened. Some people in reindeer herding are so fed up with their life conditions that they do not want to live anymore. Do I have any pasture for my animals, how many caucuses will I find today, do I have a future? These are examples of why reindeer herders and young people are suffering so much and are doing worse than other citizens. The mental health of many Sámi needs strengthening. I do not want to bury anymore of my friends because the Swedish State is not shouldering its responsibility. I hope that the future is bright. I hope that Sweden implements the rights of the Sámi and the obligations that the State has. It is time to turn these fine words into reality.”

Per-Jonas Partapuoli

SÁMI YOUTH OUTSIDE THE SÁMI HOMELAND

■ **Juho Keva** is a member of the Association City Sámit Finland that was founded in 1988. The Sámi living in the cities wanted to highlight on the one hand their ethnicity, and on the other hand the urban residential environment. More than half of Finland's 8,000 Sámi live outside the Sámi homeland and about 1,000 live in the Helsinki region. The capital areas in Scandinavia hold the most Sámi; Oslo is home to about 5,000 and Stockholm to about 2,000. The urban Sámi people live between two cultures - the Sámi and the majority. The City Sámit association opens a channel for communication and offers the Sámi an opportunity to practice their own culture which will likely strengthen both the individual and communal Sámi identity. The City Sámit association also advocates for more Sámi language teaching. The Sámi are entitled to mother tongue teaching but it is very difficult for young Sámi who live outside the Sámi region to receive teaching in Sámi in schools in practice.

” For the Sámi who live outside of their region, inequality is a daily reality. Linguistic inequality, gaps in the law and the fact that they cannot always speak in Sámi in various contacts with the authorities cause problems. Besides, in an urban setting, the Sámi people no longer live together as they do in the traditional homelands and this is important when trying to maintain links with the traditions.



It is very difficult for young Sámi who live outside the Sámi region to receive teaching in Sámi in schools. Therefore young people and children who are brought up in urban environments can hardly learn and speak their language anymore. Many efforts are made but it is very difficult to coordinate them in order to preserve the Sámi culture.

Additionally, more and more young people share different identities and find it hard to know what community they belong to – are they part of the Sámi community or have they become Finnish citizens who barely have any contact with their original culture or people anymore? These people are now encountering stress and various difficulties but they do not get any support from the community. How can you strengthen the feelings of belonging for the Sámi people? How can you enable young Sámi to realise that they have rights and to exercise those rights? It is very important to be able to maintain the Sámi culture and efforts should be made at the level of the State.”

Juho Keva



SÁMI LGBT – BEING A MINORITY WITHIN A MINORITY

■ **Tobias Poggats** and **Stiina Roos** are representatives of the Queer Sápmi association. The LGBT Sámi experience a double discrimination. On the one hand, they are part of a minority group that has had their rights trampled upon for generations, and on the other hand, they constitute a minority group within this minority where they have very little or no room to be who they are.

■ In an attempt to make their voices heard, the first Queer Sámi meeting was held in Haparanda, on the border of Finland and Sweden, in April, 2014, where about 15 people from 3 countries (Norway, Sweden and Finland) gathered to talk about their experiences, lives and wishes for the future. The first Sámi Pride was organised in 2014.

” Due to the brokenness of the Sámi culture in the societies, our position within the Sámi culture is very vulnerable. It is a sign of broken culture if it forces some of its members to be left out from society, if it forces members to be invisible. I believe that if the communities were healthier, and not so broken, there would be a lot more understanding towards each other and that there would be space for the LGBT Sámi. There are a lot of problems with sexual, mental and physical abuse that have become silenced in our communities. I really wish that there would be a space for open discussion for us to be able to discuss our wounds and traumas, to realise that by handling these issues, we could become more united than we are now.”

Stiina Roos, Queer Sápmi

” At our first board meeting, many expressed that there is no safe place for them to talk about their experiences. With whom should we talk? There is a lack of Sámi LGBT recognition in the Sámi world in most aspects of society. It is either completely missing or not visible enough, as if we would not even exist. At the meeting, all participants had stories about being shut out by friends, by family and by society, thus neglecting our participation in the everyday life of the Sámi people. These are experiences that have left wounds that are not treated and still very much alive.”

Tobias Poggats, Queer Sápmi

SÁMI WOMEN IN A CHANGING SOCIETY



” Sámi women and women of indigenous peoples experience discrimination in many ways - a multiple discrimination. Sometimes it is rather difficult for women to raise such issues related to women on a national level or in an international forum because their own group of indigenous people, the Sámi themselves, experience so much discrimination that they feel like those need to be raised first in society. I however, claim that you cannot have one without the other. The rights of minorities mean that rights of women and men are realised on an equal level.

Sámi women bear perhaps a particular responsibility and burden. It is often thought that women are those who bring the culture forward or pass it on to the next generation. They bear a lot of responsibility for bringing up children and to ensure that their culture, knowledge about their livelihoods and languages are passed on to future generations. This responsibility may sometimes seem of great weight, especially when the existence of the Sámi languages is threatened and the culture exists in a very restricted area.

The more secure the situation is for a minority or an indigenous people in society, the more they can be different within their group and the more possibilities there are for interaction with others and for diverse development. On the contrary, the more threatened a minority feels, the



more important they feel the need to have a homogenous appearance to show a common front. This could of course mean that problems and challenges faced by women do not get enough space. Thus, it is very important that in all international policy forums, all women's questions are treated as a separate section and that they get the attention that they deserve. They should be part of all the discussions in all policy areas.

If we look worldwide, women of indigenous peoples face particular problems. The misery and the poverty that affects indigenous peoples affect in particular the women. There is unawareness among these people, particularly among women about their rights as an indigenous people.”

Eva Biaudet, Ombudsman for Minorities, Finland



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY

■ **Silje Katarine Muotka** works for the Sámi Parliament Executive Council, which is responsible for executing the roles and responsibilities of the Sámi Parliament in Norway. The 39 members of the parliament are elected from 7 constituencies every fourth year.

After the elections in 2001, in-depth evaluations were made to correct the imbalance in the gender representation. The Norwegian Sámi Association initiated a project with the aim to ensure that more women were nominated as top candidates. Since 2001, the gender representation has been about 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men. For the current period (2013-2017), 20 representatives out of 39 are women.

” *The fact that we have gender equality in the Sámi Parliament in Norway is not something that has happened by accident. This is unique, even in the gender equality nation Norway. This proves that results like these require active work. Awareness of gender equality issues and a willingness to rectify undesirable imbalances have paid off.*

Silje Katarine Muotka



Gudrun E Lindi



Heli Huovinen

■ **Gudrun E Lindi** works for the Sámi Nissiforum, a Sámi Women's Forum set up 20 years ago. It is the only organisation bringing together Sámi women from all four countries.

” *Not including Sámi representatives in equality programmes is an example of clear discrimination. A matter that has been important for the Sámi Women's Forum for many years is the fact that the Nordic Council of Ministers is drawing up an equal opportunities programme without any Sámi representatives. The Sámi Nissiforum has complained about this but there is no signal for any willingness to change. Recently, a new 4-year equal opportunities action plan has been drawn up but the Sámi Parliament has not even been consulted.*

Gudrun E Lindi

■ **Heli Huovinen** is a Sámi radio journalist. She explained the challenges encountered by many Sámi women as they often are responsible for passing on the Sámi culture, languages and knowledge to the younger generations. Assimilation leads to that many Sámi are losing contact with their origins and their culture and knowledge may be lost forever if not passed on by these women.

” *Sámi women have a very important part to play as they have a responsibility to pass on the languages and the culture to future generations. This burden can be very heavy to bear.*

Heli Huovinen



LACK OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

The life of reindeer herders is not easy. They encounter many challenges in exercising their livelihoods. Female reindeer herders encounter even more difficulties. Women are often not allowed to become reindeer herders unless their husbands are too. The future of reindeer herding is endangered and risks to die out.

■ **Berit Marie Eira**, Yoik-Musician and Reindeer Herder from Norway

” The situation is difficult for reindeer herders in Norway as forced slaughter of reindeer is taking place. The number of reindeers affects the whole livelihood, which is an important part of the Sámi culture. Without enough reindeer, this livelihood risks to die out.”

Berit Marie Eira



Berit Marie Eira



Ellen Marit Haetta

■ **Ellen Marit Haetta**, Reindeer herder from Finnmark, Norway

” There are no opportunities for young people; they have no future in reindeer herding, and our traditions will die out and become history. Young females are being excluded from reindeer herding. Herding and handicrafts have always gone hand in hand which is very important in our society. If we don't have reindeer, we lose our handicrafts too. We need it because our livelihood has been trampled upon and risks dying out.”

Ellen Marit Haetta



NORTH BEND

SÁMI LANGUAGES

The Sámi languages are central for the entire Sámi people. They are not just a means of communication; they bind the people to a certain region and are a link to the traditional livelihoods, culture and nature. The languages are rich and their terminology depicts the way of life at the Sámi people and connection to the nature and the weather.

Throughout history, the Sámi languages have been threatened, and today only about half of the Sámi speak a Sámi language as their mother tongue. The Sámi have not always been allowed to use their languages in schools and in public; instead, they have been forced to use the majority languages. This has led many to lose their mother tongue.

Another big challenge is the emigration by Sámi outside their home region. Organising education in and of the Sámi languages and maintaining a natural link between language and culture in order for it to be preserved and strengthened becomes an even greater challenge outside the Sámi region. At the same time, emigration means that the minority has declined in terms of numbers and this causes difficulties for providing and organising services.

In order to preserve and promote the languages, many Sámi work in different ways to teach and spread the languages. Diverse methods are used and cooperation across the borders is vital.

LANGUAGE RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN AND ELDERLY

■ **Håkan Jonsson**, President of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden.

” *The Swedish legislation concerning Sámi children’s and elderly’s linguistic rights is inadequate and unclear. It states that the activities for these groups ought to be conducted wholly or partly in Sámi, but at present, the local authorities determine how many hours per week there is of language activities without taking into account the individuals’ true needs. This hampers the individuals’ right to influence and empowerment. The current wording at the legislation should be clarified to promote the individuals’ rights to define their needs in terms of language. Older people are a vulnerable group. Older persons that are Sámi speakers are particularly vulnerable.*

The Sámi languages are endangered in Sweden. South Sámi is today actively spoken by only about 100 people. The situation for Ume and Pite Sámi is even worse. With the knowledge that schools have the greatest expertise and possibility of revitalising languages, greater effort and responsibility is needed from the authorities in terms of teaching materials in the Sámi languages. There is a lack of teachers and teaching materials and the few schools that actually offer Sámi do it in many cases only



40 minutes per week. Only a very limited number of Sámi students currently have the opportunity to learn Sámi and it is very difficult to preserve and revitalise a language under these conditions.

To get our voices heard, we need help from the Council of Europe. There has been a forced assimilation into the Swedish language and for three generations the Sámi have been denied their languages. For example, my grandparents had to attend a Swedish school and if they spoke Sámi, they were slapped with a rod on their hands. This has led to that many Sámi, especially in the southern Sámi parts of Sweden, have lost their language. We need help to save our Sámi languages. Our languages are spoken nowhere else in the world and if they die out in Sápmi, they are gone for good and valuable knowledge that is hidden in the languages will be lost.”

Håkan Jonsson



Marko Marjomaa

CROSS-BORDER LANGUAGE COOPERATION

■ **Marko Marjomaa** is the Secretary for the language section at the Sámi Parliament in Finland. In 1971, the Sámi language board was set up and in 2008, a language project was launched. One of the most important objectives was the setting up of a Nordic Resource and Occupational Centre called Sámi Giellagáldu. The objectives of the Sámi Giellagáldu were to develop and strengthen Sámi language cooperation, to gather professional language services aimed for language users, to monitor all of the Sámi language issues in cooperation with the Sámi Parliaments as well as to standardise and ensure language maintenance. Providing language users with a place where they can get assistance is a question of equal opportunities as these services exist for the majority languages. The Sámi Giellagáldu had to close in June 2014, due to lack of finance.

” *In Sápmi, there is a natural need for cross border cooperation because of the geographic situation. The geographic area is large; it covers four countries and the state borders cut through the areas of the different Sámi languages. Many Sámi speakers also live outside the traditional areas where the languages are spoken.*

The majority languages affect the Sámi languages. For example, new terminology is borrowed from the majority languages or from English, and these changes do not always reach the whole language community. As a result, members of the community may not be able to fully communicate with each other. That is why there is a need to build up terminology so that Sámi language speakers can understand each other in different countries irrespective of where they live. The cross border cooperation is important in order to dispel the influence of state borders as much as possible.”

Marko Marjomaa



THE IMPORTANCE OF MOTHER TONGUE TEACHING AT AN EARLY AGE

■ **Petra Magga-Vars** is member of the Board of the Sámi Parliament in Finland and Director of an educational day care centre. The day care centre uses Sámi as their main language in order to give children to possibility to learn the language at an early age outside of the home.

” Our languages should not just be used for education and information. They should be used in every part of our daily life - otherwise they will be impoverished. There are many challenges for preserving minority languages, they are threatened. Much has been done for the revival of the Sámi languages but much still remains to be done.”

Petra Magga-Vars

■ **Sven Roald Nystø**, Researcher, Árran Lule Research Centre, Norway

” When my grandparents grew up, they lived in the fjords and Lule Sámi was the everyday language. We used



Petra Magga-Vars



Sven Roald Nystø

to learn Sámi as children but now it is the other way around. We now live in towns, and the Sámi languages have to compete with the Norwegian language every minute of the day. In order to promote Sámi, it is the main language in the day care centre.

We are also trying to increase language teaching. Lule Sámi is today taught in two schools both as first language and as second language. There is also distance learning for high school students in Norway and elsewhere. We have to take into account children who live outside the traditional Lule Sámi region, people who have moved outside because of work or studies. We try to keep in touch with them through distance education.”

Sven Roald Nystø



Lisa Monica Aslaksen



Bamse is a comic for young children aged 3-10. It is a comic that is well known in the majority languages and we have now translated it into Northern Sámi. We have had a lot of positive feedback from parents who say that it is so much easier to read it directly in Sámi instead of translating from the majority language when reading to their children.

ENCOURAGING THE USE OF THE SÁMI LANGUAGES

— **Lisa Monica Aslaksen** works with the “Sámás muinna – talk Sámi to me” campaign of the Sámi Parliament in Norway. The goal of the campaign is to raise awareness of, to encourage teaching in and to increase the use of the Sámi languages in public contexts. “Talk Sámi to me” is a nationwide awareness campaign that aims to include all Sámi youth, regardless of prior Sámi knowledge. The campaign has had great success.

” The language Campaign ‘Talk Sámi to me’ is an important task for strengthening the Sámi languages. The target group is young people; those who speak fluently, a little bit or not at all. The Campaign has had a high profile and has been very successful so far. It has led to a lot of activity in the social media in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Our aim is to raise awareness and to encourage people to speak Sámi more. We wish to extend the use of Sámi languages to new areas in order for them to be seen and heard publicly - in media, schools, football practices, playgrounds, etc. We want young people and children to use the languages every day and we want more people to learn Sámi across the country. It is the only way to ensure the preservation and the future of the languages. The Sámi parliament in Norway has elected 24 language ambassadors to promote the languages during the campaign. We are proud that we have these ambassadors on board and we are happy with the way they have been able to involve young people.

Moreover, we have come up with a Sámi dictionary for those who do not yet speak Sámi. We also have badges that say “Talk Sámi to Me” in Sámi. When wearing this, I have encountered several people who, when they have seen the badge, have started speaking Sámi to me which would probably not have happened otherwise.”

Lisa Monica Aslaksen



Kirsi Paltto

Eeva-Liisa Rasmus-Moilanen

TRADITIONAL LANGUAGES MEET MODERN TECHNOLOGY

■ **Eeva-Liisa Rasmus-Moilanen** is the project leader of the Virtual School of the Sámi Education Institute in Finland. The Sámi Education Institute is a secondary degree school which provides a variety of vocational training in both Finnish and Sámi, as well as promoting Sámi culture in the whole Sámi region. The Virtual School provides distance education in the Sámi languages.

” *The distances in Sápmi were one of the main reasons to why we developed the distance learning. Distance learning is therefore very encouraging; it has become much easier for both teachers and learners than it was before. Cooperation is paramount. There are only a few*

of us but we have a common goal which is to develop and preserve our languages and it means that we need to work in networks beyond our borders.

As the learners are both adults and young people we need different kinds of learning environments and different topics to keep it interesting. We would also like to be able to develop our teaching in order to ensure that Finnish speakers who wish to learn Sámi could be able to do so.”

Eeva-Liisa Rasmus-Moilanen

■ **Kirsi Paltto** is the Managing Director for ABC Company E-skuvla AS, which is a Sámi e-learning institution set up in 2000. They create online learning materials in and on Sámi and offer distance education in Sámi. Kirsi is also the editor of the comic Bamse in Northern Sámi.

” *The reason for starting E-skuvla was to be able to reach all people in Sápmi, despite the long distances. In the 1990’s when the internet spread, it was said that it would be a threat to small languages. On the contrary, we thought that it could be useful to us.*

We want to enable people who have not been able to learn Sámi as a child to do so through these courses. If you have someone in the family or a friend who speaks Sámi, you can easily practice with them. But those who do not have this opportunity can use our services online where they can practice through our various methods of teaching.”

Kirsi Paltto



SÁMI MEDIA

The role of the media is very important for a democratic society and especially for indigenous peoples. Without the possibility to receive information on what is happening in society in their native language, minority groups easily get excluded and are not able to fully participate in public debate. At the same time, media is a tool for revitalisation and preservation of languages. Media is also a space to tell stories and to inform about issues from different perspectives – including minority perspectives. Without this, media risks to become one-sided and the information that people receive may not include all aspects, but solely the majority's point of view. The indigenous media creates a space in which the indigenous people can have their voices heard since their challenges are not always brought up in the majority media.



From the left: Piritä Näkkäljärvi from Yle Sápmi, Berit Marie Lise Eira from Yle Sápmi and Kari Lisbeth Hermansen from Avvir.

SÁMI NEWS FOR EVERYONE

■ **Piritä Näkkäljärvi**, Head of Yle Sápmi Radio and TV, Finland.

” One of the goals since I took over Yle Sápmi three years ago has been to bring all three Sámi languages in Finland (Northern, Inari and Skolt Sámi) on an equal standing. I want all of these languages to be heard and seen. By doing this, we have increased the understanding between the language groups during the past years. There is an enormous need to report our own news, our own stories, and our own children’s and young people’s programmes.

Our objective is to tell the stories from our own Sámi perspective. That is the added value that we bring to the Finnish society, to the world. That is the reason for our existence. We get to decide what our priorities are, what stories we report on and what points are raised to discussion.

We also provide a window for the majority population to understand the Sámi world, for example by texting our news in the majority languages. By some people we are seen as dangerous because we bring the Sámi point of view to the agenda. But we have a very strong self-determination in that sense – it is important that the media is free and that the freedom of expression is respected. It is important that we can contribute to the general debate with the points of view of the Sámi.”

Piritä Näkkäljärvi

■ **Kari Lisbeth Hermansen**, Editor in Chief of the North Sámi Newspaper Avvir, Norway.

” We have the responsibility to preserve the written Sámi languages as Avvir is today the only newspaper in Sámi in Norway that is produced on a daily basis and one of the very few bodies producing written Sámi in print and online. We think that there will be a need for Sámi news in the future and we hope that the media is up for the challenge.”

Kari Lisbeth Hermansen

INCREASING TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING

■ **Thomas Nielsen** is the Editor for Barents Observer, a newspaper based in Kirkenäs, Norway, between Northern Finland and the Russian Kola Peninsula. The trademark of the Barents Observer is to cooperate and facilitate cross border news in Northern Europe. It is today the only news agency that exclusively publishes in English and Russian in this region. The Barents region is a bit larger than Sápmi; it also includes the Russian regions of Karelia, the Komi Republic and the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. They also have many readers in the arctic part of North America, Canada and Alaska. It is not only because of the indigenous peoples' issues that they are reporting on, but because the same challenges found across the borders in the Northern part of Europe are also found in the parts of the Arctic.



” Our aim is to make the people on the different sides of the borders in the Barents region understand each other. We unfortunately do not have the resources to publish in the Sámi languages but we have cooperation with Sámi media. We have cooperation with all of the countries in the Barents region and we have a wide circle polar network of information. As this region has several different languages, cross border cooperation is the key for cultural understanding and harmony among the people living here. Our main audience is the Russian Federation.”

Thomas Nielsen



SÁMI COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS

THE SÁMI PARLIAMENTS

■ The Sámi have their own representative organisations, Sámi Parliaments, established by law. Their legislation, funding and tasks differ between the countries. The purpose of the Parliaments is to strengthen the Sámi's political position and to promote their interests by contributing to equal and equitable treatment of the Sámi people and assembling efforts to safeguard and develop their languages, culture and society. The Parliaments are the voice of the Sámi people in the political arena.

- ▶ The Sámi Parliament in Norway was established in 1987. Norway has ratified ILO Convention 169 on the rights of indigenous and tribal people. It has 43 representatives elected on the basis of a Sámi census every four years. Approximately 15,000 of the 60,000 Sámi are registered to vote in the elections.
- ▶ The Sámi Parliament in Sweden was established in 1992. It has 31 representatives, who are elected every four years. Some 8,000 of the 25,000 Sámi have registered to vote.
- ▶ The Sámi Parliament in Finland was established in 1996. It has 21 representatives and 4 deputy representatives, who are elected every four years. Less than 6,000 of the 9,000 Sámi are registered voters.
- ▶ The Skolt Sámi have their own representative organisation, the Skolt Assembly, in the Skolt area in the eastern part of the Inari municipality in Finland.
- ▶ The Russian Sámi have established a Sámi Parliament, but the parliament is not legally recognised by the Russian Federation.
- ▶ The Sámi Parliamentary Council is the cooperative organ between the Sámi Parliaments of Norway, Sweden and Finland and Sámi representatives of the Russian Federation.



Håkan Jonsson

Silje Karine Muotka



Klemetti Näkkäljärvi

■ **Håkan Jonsson**, President of the Sámi Parliament in Sweden

”The Sámi Parliamentary Council is a coordinating body for the three Sámi Parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland and represents the Sámi people internationally. In addition, elected representatives of the Russian Sámi have observer status in the Council and our objective for them is to obtain full membership in the Council. The Council’s overall aim is to strengthen cross-border cooperation and to represent the Sámi point of view in international forums. Sámi research, linguistic infrastructure, language cooperation and youth work are some of our priorities.”

Håkan Jonsson

■ **Silje Karine Muotka**, Sámi Parliament in Norway

”The purpose of the Sámi Parliament is to strengthen the political position of the Sámi people and promote their interests in Norway, contributing to an equal and equitable treatment of the Sámi people and paving the way for efforts to safeguard and develop language, culture and society.”

Silje Karine Muotka

■ **Klemetti Näkkäläjärvi**, President, Sámi Parliament in Finland

” In Finland, the rights of the Sámi are developing, but the economic downturn and the anti-Sámi attitudes are very problematic for their full implementation. The key point for the future is collective rights and their development. The rulings and decisions of today do not only affect the current generation but also future generations. In order for the Sámi languages and culture to remain dynamic, the Sámi people must have natural opportunities to use the languages, to practice traditional livelihoods, as well as a genuine opportunity to influence their future. Although the Sámi languages are quite vibrant among the current generations, the future is not secure. The emigration from the Sámi homeland may lead to a change in the shape of the Sámi culture.

The biggest threat for the future of the Sámi culture in Finland is anti-Sámi attitudes that are on the rise. The Sámi people still have to face intolerance, hate speech and racist writings. I have had contact with many Sámi who feel that they have no future in their own homeland and who cannot act, move, or to pursue their livelihoods without fear of being bullied or threatened. It is difficult to live as a Sámi in your own homeland.”

Klemetti Näkkäläjärvi



■ **Tauno Haltta**, Skolt Assembly in Finland

” The future of the Skolt Sámi culture is not secure in Finland. The possibility of seeing this culture flourish is based on recognition given to the rights of this community. There are only about 600-700 Skolt Sámi left, about half of whom speak Skolt as their mother tongue. Many Skolt families have moved to the cities and this has an impact on the future of the Skolt Sámi culture. I myself am a returnee. Our language is endangered and in order to secure that our children and young people learn it, we must do our uttermost to ensure that the Skolt Sámi are able to use their own language in their homeland, in their activities and when in contact with the authorities.”

Tauno Haltta





Valentina Sovkina

■ **Valentina Sovkina**, representative of the Sámi in the Russian Federation

” *The Sámi collective rights in the existing Russian legislation should not be confined to agreements on compensations and cultural events. They should involve government representation, a quota number of places so that the Sámi are represented in the government and so that the Sámi traditions are taken into account.*

‘Traditional’ modern legislation, regulations and practices in the Russian Federation in the context of indigenous communities make it difficult to use modern technologies and innovations in order to facilitate the exercise of economic activities and livelihoods. This kind of logic is not in line with international legal standards, which refers to the indigenous unconditional right to develop their livelihoods and culture. Culture is not static, it evolves.

Difficult questions are not taken up by the authorities in the Russian Federation and it is impossible to have constructive discussions regarding the rights of the Sámi people. Our rights are constantly trampled upon, including our freedom of movement when obstacles are put in our way to prevent us from participating in international events.”

Valentina Sovkina



MONITORING BODIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Advisory Committee to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), the Advisory Committee to the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) are three of the several monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe. They consist of independent experts.

The monitoring work is based on country reports in which each state explain the situation of the minorities and the minority languages in their country. The monitoring bodies make country visits where they have an open dialogue with authorities, NGOs and minority representatives. The committees draft an opinion in which they advise the State to take action on particular issues to improve the situation for the minorities. The monitoring work helps the member States to better implement the standards that they have agreed to comply with and thus ensuring that persons belonging to minorities can enjoy the rights that they are entitled to.



Ivana Jelić



Vesna Crnić-Grotić

During the seminar, one representative of each of the three monitoring bodies of the Council of Europe were present.

■ **Ivana Jelić** is member and Equality Rapporteur of the Advisory Committee to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) of the Council of Europe. The Framework Convention is a multilateral treaty aimed at protecting the rights of national minorities in its member States.

■ **Vesna Crnić-Grotić** is the Chairperson of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML) of the Council of Europe. The Charter is a convention designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe's cultural heritage and to enable speakers of a regional or minority language to use it in private and public life. It covers regional and minority languages, non-territorial languages and less widely used official languages.

■ **Christian Åhlund** is the Chairperson of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe. ECRI has the task of combatting racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination on the principles of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). ECRI's main activity is to monitor on an on-going basis the 47 member countries and how they live up to their obligations in this field on the basis of the European Convention on Human Rights. Christian Åhlund



Christian Åhlund



CLOSING REMARKS





■ **Krista Oinonen**, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

” I believe that this substantive day has been a very good learning experience for all of us. We have learned a lot about the very rich Sámi culture in four different States and it has been a very good opportunity to share good practices. We hope that this Seminar will provide new opportunities to strengthen cooperation between these mechanisms.

The Finnish Ombudsperson for Minorities, Eva Biaudet, stated that instruments do not solve problems by themselves; they must be implemented. This means constant work and it means constant dialogue with the monitoring bodies. We need to do more awareness raising of the rights of indigenous peoples including of the mechanisms working on these issues. We need to raise awareness among the Sámi and we also need to raise awareness of the Sámi and their culture among the public at large. Despite the measures already taken, much remains to be done.”

Krista Oinonen



■ **Christian Åhlund**, Chairperson of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe.

” One aim of this Seminar was to create a dialogue between the Council of Europe and the Sámi people. Another was to create a new method of work within the Council of Europe to deal with what we have learned and the impressions that we take away from today. I think that this aim has been accomplished. Let us make today’s Seminar the starting point between a new and dynamic relationship between the Council of Europe and the Sámi people.”

Christian Åhlund

Christian Åhlund

THE WAY AHEAD



Carlien Scheele

■ **Carlien Scheele**, Chairperson of the European Committee for Social Cohesion, Human Dignity and Equality (CDDECS)

” *The Council of Europe promotes and protects human rights through international conventions which the member States implement in their respective territories. Two of the key items in the work of the Council of Europe are equality and the protection of minorities. The way to achieve these is by increasing solidarity and protection of human dignity, equality and equal opportunities for all, as well as the prevention and combatting of violence and discrimination on any ground. The aim is to improve everyone’s full enjoyment of and access to human rights, including social and economic rights, and to reduce the vulnerabilities of sustainable democratic societies.*

With all this in mind the seminar on indigenous Sámi people was organised in Inari in Finland to get a unique view into an example of a living diversity of persons, languages and cultural traditions. The seminar gave us a useful opportunity for a better understanding of the common challenges faced by Sámi in Finland, Norway, Sweden and the Russian Federation in the fields of equality, effective participation in public life and preservation of languages and cultures. It also reflected the perspectives of youth, women and diverse groups within the minority.

Respecting diversity in the society means that people are equal; they are accepted, recognised and valued for their backgrounds, skills, experiences, knowledge and needs. It is absolutely essential that effective measures are taken to combat discrimination, stereotypes and racist attitudes at all levels in practice. It is not enough to state this on paper, be it legislation or other standards. Participation and representation of minority groups is essential in this respect. How can a group or an individual be assisted in his or her needs, if those needs are not known to the ones able to help? They need to be heard and their rights need to be promoted, respected and valued.

I hope that similar initiatives as the Sámi seminar in Inari can be duplicated in the future around another cross-sectorial topic and I’ll be very pleased if some examples of best practices regarding Sámi can be used in other areas. We should share and profit from each other’s experiences, good practices and creative solutions. We need to make the diverse European societies successfully inclusive. This is what we aim for in the work of the Council of Europe. And this is what individuals and governments should strive for in all possible ways and with all possible means.”

Carlien Scheele

The Seminar “Sámi - The People, Their Culture and Languages and the Council of Europe” was organised in Inari, Finland on 27 – 29 November, 2014 by the Council of Europe and the Sámi Parliament in Finland. The event provided insight into the specific identities, traditions, cultures and languages of the Sámi and the common challenges faced by Sámi in Finland, Norway and Sweden in the fields of equality, effective participation in public life, and preservation of languages and cultures, reflecting also the perspective of youth, women and diverse groups within the minority. This publication attempts to assemble some of the points and problems evoked during the Seminar.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent’s leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

