

Coordination and follow up

Since 1 January 2010, the Stockholm County Administrative Board and the Sami Parliament have a joint national task to:

- coordinate the goals of the minority policy
- follow-up the implementation of the minority policy
- report on compliance with the Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages
- highlight the national minorities and disseminate knowledge about their rights
- distribute government subsidies to municipalities, county councils and national minority organisations

The Sami Parliament also has a specific task to:

- create and operate a national website to increase knowledge about the national minorities, www.minoritet.se
- be the principal for two Sami language centres to conduct operations to develop and stimulate an increased use of the Sami language.



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From recognition to empowerment – from words to deeds

A minority-based approach



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In December 1999, the Swedish Riksdag decided to approve ratification of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. The Riksdag also adopted a minority policy and recognised five national minorities and their languages.

Sweden's national minorities

The five recognised national minorities in Sweden are the Jews, the Roma, the Sami (an indigenous people), the Swedish Finns and the Tornedalers.

Sweden's national minority languages

The historical minority languages in Sweden are Yiddish, Romany Chib (all varieties), Sami (all varieties), Finnish and Meänkieli.

The government's strategy for the minority policy

During 2009, the government presented a new minority policy strategy, with measures to further strengthen the rights of the national minorities. The goals of the strategy are to:

- clarify the legal regulation of the rights of the national minorities through a new Act
- ensure better compliance of the minority conventions and monitoring of measures taken
- counteract discrimination and exposure of national minorities
- strengthen the national minorities' empowerment and influence
- promote the preservation of the languages of the national minorities

The Act

All five national minorities are covered by the Act (2009:724) pertaining to national minorities and minority languages. The so-called **basic protection** means that:

- administrative authorities must inform the national minorities about their rights in an appropriate manner when required
- the community has a specific responsibility for protecting and promoting the languages of national minorities and shall also promote opportunities for the national minorities to retain and develop their culture in Sweden
- children's development of a cultural identity and utilisation of their own minority language shall be particularly encouraged
- administrative authorities shall give the national minorities the possibility to influence issues that concern them and consult with minorities' representatives in such issues as far as possible.

In addition, **specific rights** apply to Finnish, Sami and Meänkieli-speaking people in each administrative area:

- individuals are entitled to use their languages in oral and written contacts with administrative authorities where the matter entirely or partially corresponds to the minority languages' administrative area
- administrative authorities are obligated to provide an oral response in the same language and if requested, provide written translation of decisions and justifications *
- administrative authorities shall strive to have access to personnel with knowledge of minority languages
- the municipalities have specific obligations to organise care for the elderly and children, operated solely or partially in minority languages if requested by someone in the administrative area

Increased administrative areas

The Act entails that the number of administrative areas for three of the minority languages – Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami – will be increased.

The administrative area for the **Finnish language** includes Borlänge, Borås, Botkyrka, Degerfors, Enköping, Eskilstuna, Fagersta, Finspång, Gällivare, Gävle, Göteborg, Hallstahammar, Haninge, Haparanda, Hofors, Huddinge, Håbo, Hälsjöfors, Kalix, Karlskoga, Kiruna, Köping, Lindesberg, Ludvika, Luleå, Malmö, Mariestad, Motala, Norrköping, Norrtälje, Nykvarn, Oxelösund, Pajala, Sandviken, Sigtuna, Skinnskatteberg, Skövde, Smedjebacken, Solna, Stockholm, Sundbyberg, Sundsvall, Surahammar, Södertälje, Tierp, Trelleborg, Trollhättan, Trosa, Uddevalla, Umeå, Upplands Väsby, Upplands-Bro, Uppsala, Västerås, Älvkarleby, Örebro, Österåker, Östhammar and Övertorneå.

The administrative area for the **Sami language** includes Arjeplog, Arvidsjaur, Berg, Dorotea, Gällivare, Härjedalen, Jokkmokk, Kiruna, Krokoms, Lycksele, Malå, Sorsele, Storuman, Strömsund, Umeå, Vilhelmina, Åre, Älvdalen and Östersund.

The administrative area for **Meänkieli** includes Gällivare, Haparanda, Kalix, Kiruna, Pajala and Övertorneå.

Other municipalities also have the possibility to be included voluntarily in an administrative area. The government decides on such voluntary affiliation following application from the municipality that wants to be included.

* The authorities may determine a specific time and place where the service is provided in minority languages