



ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT
ADMINISTRATION, REFORM AND CHURCH AFFAIRS

Council of Europe
Directorate of Education and Languages
F-67075 Strasbourg
FRANCE

Your reference
ÓÓ/jrs

Our reference
201000132

Date
14.01.10

**European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages - 4th
evaluation report of the Committee of Experts on the application of
the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in
Norway – Comments on the report**

The Norwegian Government has received and noted with interest the fourth evaluation report of the Committee of Experts examining the fourth Norwegian report on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

There have been several developments regarding Norwegian policy and measures taken in compliance with Parts II and III of the Charter after Norway presented its fourth periodical report in July 2008.

In particular, we would like to draw the attention to a development concerning the registration of Sami personal names in their original form in the national population registers and other public institutions connected with it, which is relevant to *recommendation F* by the Committee of Experts. Reference is made to the discussion in the evaluation report, paragraphs 190 to 193.

Introduction of all the Sami characters in the national population register demands a new standard for the character set. This new standard will affect other institutions than the national population register and would have to be introduced coordinated for the entire public sector.

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Although a change of the character set standard has yet to be implemented, most of the Kven characters and one of the Sami characters is now, as of late 2009, in use in the national population register. The concerned Sami character is the one most commonly used, the “á”. This means that most individuals with personal names containing Sami characters can now have their name registered correctly in the national population register.

We will also take this opportunity to draw attention to the Plan of Action to strengthen Sami languages, presented by the Norwegian authorities in May 2009. One of the aims of White Paper No. 28 (2007-2008) Sami Policy, is to strengthen Sami languages. The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion was responsible for drawing up the plan. The work was carried out in cooperation with the ministries in charge of the various affected fields and in consultation with Sámediggi (The Sami Parliament).

The Plan of Action is intended to cover the period 2009 - 2014. The object of the plan is to lay the foundation for broad-based, long-term efforts to reinforce Sami languages. The main goals are to strengthen tuition in and of North, South and Lule Sami, increase the use of Sami languages in all areas of society, and highlight these languages in the public sphere. The plan contains 66 measures in several sectors. More specific information regarding the action plan and the follow up of its measures will be communicated in Norway's next periodic report.

Finally, we are pleased to inform the Council of Europe that the administrative district for Sami languages has been expanded, as Lavangen Municipality in Troms County, where North Sami is spoken, was included from October 1st 2009. This means that the territory where Part III applies now consists of seven municipalities. The administrative district was established by the Sami Act and is being augmented by Royal Decree.

We would kindly ask the secretariat to append this updated information to the evaluation report before submitting the report to the Committee of Ministers for consideration.

Other developments in Norwegian policy and measures taken since June 2008 will be communicated to the Council of Europe in the next periodic report from Norway, due in June 2011.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee of Experts for its diligent work and to express our support for the Committee's ongoing efforts.

Yours sincerely,

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Deputy Director General

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Permanent Delegation of Norway to the Council of Europe