



To:
Chair of the Committee, Mr. Stefan Oeter and
Head of the Charter Secretariat, Mr. Alexey Kozhemyakov

The Committee of Experts
of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages,
Council of Europe, Directorate General IV
F – 67075 Strasbourg Cedex, France

Translation

Supplement to Folktinget's statement (8 January 2009) addressed to the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages regarding Finland's fourth periodical report on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

Svenska Finlands folkting (in English the Swedish Assembly of Finland, henceforth Folktinget) issued a statement addressed to the Committee of Experts regarding the application of the Charter in Finland. Because the statement was written in November 2008 (the English translation is dated 8 January 2009) and because there has since been changes to the ongoing Reform Project for Regional Administration (ALKU), Folktinget wishes **to add a supplement to its earlier statement regarding the Charter.**

The supplement consists of **additional statements regarding the Reform Project for Regional Administration:**

One purpose contained in the mission statement of the Reform Project for Regional Administration (ALKU) was to conduct an evaluation of the implications on the official languages of Finland in accordance with the Government Programme, in order to safeguard the availability of public services in Finnish and Swedish. Despite this condition the Government Proposal for the reform project, which the Government submitted to Parliament in May 2009, lacks such an evaluation of the implications for the status of the two national languages of Finland. The proposal is currently being handled by Parliament (August 2009). The parliamentary Constitutional Law Committee will, in a statement to the Administration Committee, take a position on, among other matters, the propositions which have implications for the fundamental linguistic rights of the citizens.



PDF Complete

*Your complimentary use period has ended.
Thank you for using PDF Complete.*

[Click Here to upgrade to Unlimited Pages and Expanded Features](#)

Folktinget has been participating actively in the Reform Project for Regional Administration. Folktinget was represented in a working group within the project and has also issued three

statements concerning the various propositions in 2008 and 2009. Folktinget wishes to point out that some of the propositions are problematic in relation to the Finnish Constitution, because the consequences of these propositions are that the capacity of the authorities to safeguard services in Swedish will decline radically. For instance, if the bilingual region of Central Ostrobothnia, including the city of Kokkola, is joined with the region further north for public services, the fundamental right of the Swedish speakers of Kokkola to receive services in their own language will be significantly weakened.

Folktinget stresses that this restructuring has far-reaching consequences both for the linguistic rights and the legal protection of the citizens. In its statement to the parliamentary Constitutional Law Committee (4 June 2009), Folktinget highlighted the importance of carrying out an evaluation of the implications for the status of the national languages of Finland before Parliament has finished handling the matter.

Folktinget also finds it necessary to **examine and evaluate the forthcoming decision concerning the Reform Project for Regional Administration in relation to article 7 of the European Charter**, which in the section concerning the general objectives and principles states that

the Parties shall base their policies, legislation and practice on the principle of respect of the geographical area of each regional or minority language in order to ensure that existing or new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of the regional or minority language in question. (7b)

Moreover, article 10 regarding administrative authorities and public services prescribes that the authorities undertake to ensure that the regional or minority languages are used in the provision of the service. (3a)



With reference to our statements above we ask the Council of Europe to take the initiative to commission such an investigation.

Helsingfors, 10 September 2009

SVENSKA FINLANDS FOLKTING
THE SWEDISH ASSEMBLY OF FINLAND

Stefan Svenfors
Secretary General

Peggy Heikkinen
Language Rights Secretary

The Swedish Assembly of Finland, Svenska Finlands folkting (Folktinget), is an organisation with the statutory (1331/2003) task of safeguarding the Swedish language and the interests of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. Folktinget participates in the law-drafting process and issues statements to governmental institutions on issues concerning the Swedish-speaking population.

NB! This supplement was sent in August 2009 to the Finnish Delegation to the Council of Europe, to be forwarded to Rapporteur József Berényi, Council of Europe.