



OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN IN FINLAND
MÁNÁIDÁITTAARDEADDJI

“Sápmelašvuohta
lea dego skeaŋka”
“Being Saami is a Gift”

Minna Rasmus

The Welfare of Saami Children and
the Realization of their Rights
in the Finnish Saami Region

Publications of the Ombudsman for Children in Finland 2011:4





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Foreword by the Ombudsman for Children in Finland



Children and young people are the best experts on their own daily lives. Their priorities may often be quite different to those of adults. Their participation in society demands of adults a change of attitude. Children need to be appreciated; time needs to be taken to listen to them and for willing adults to discuss with them. Decisions are better when children's and young people's knowledge and ideas are taken into account.

This report tells about the opinions of Saami children and young people living in the Saami region of Finland concerning their wellbeing and the realization of their rights. The report is a part a larger whole and results from Nordic collaboration. The ombudsmen for children of Sweden and Norway have investigated the opinions of Saami children and young people in their countries. The Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian reports have been compiled into a single report in Swedish.

The task of the Ombudsman for Children is to further the realization of children's interests and rights at a general level in society. The Ombudsman for Children monitors the welfare of children and young people and has an influence on legislation and decision-making. The tasks also include conveying children's and young people's opinions to decision-makers.

This report is particularly intended to be read by decision-makers at local, regional and national level. It concludes with the Ombudsman for Children's proposed measures for promoting Saami children's rights.

The basis of the Ombudsman for Children's work the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention pays attention in many ways to children belonging to indigenous communities. The rights of children include equality for all children,

regardless of their own or their parents' origins. All children have the right to participate, to exert an influence and to be heard. Priority must be given to taking account of the child's interests in decision-making concerning children. The term 'children' in the Convention mean people under 18 years old.

According to the Convention, education must cultivate the child's individual skills, respect for the human rights and the child's language and culture, as well as tolerance. Children of minorities or indigenous peoples have a particular right to their own culture, beliefs and language.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the primary responsibility of parents for their children's welfare. The state and municipalities must support parents in this. However, the child who cannot live with his or her family is entitled to receive special protection and support. Attention must be given in child foster and institutional care to the continuity of the child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic and linguistic background.

According to the law concerning young people, municipalities in Finland must listen to children and young people in decisions on matters affecting them. The Saami parliaments are important to the Saami community in realizing their own culture and self-government. I hope that this report encourages the creation of support structures and practices for children and young people to participate and exert an influence, in connection with the Saami parliaments and the schools and municipalities of the Saami region.

Special thanks for this excellent report go to *Minna Rasmus*, MA, who dedicatedly delved into the lives of Saami children and young people. ●

Jyväskylä 1.2.2011

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Maria Kaisa Aula".

Maria Kaisa Aula, Ombudsman for Children in Finland

The Saami in Finland



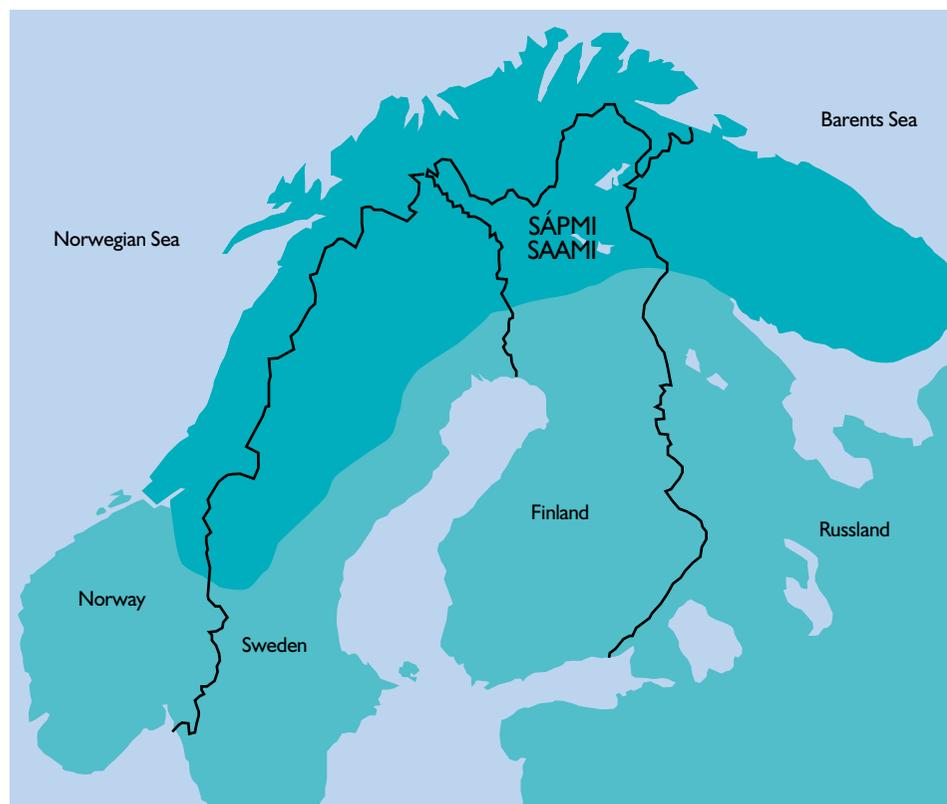
The Saami are the only ethnic group in the area of Europe classified as an indigenous people. They are a minority that lives on the territory of four states and has its own language and culture.

The Saami are split up geographically, with about 40,000 – 45,000 living in Norway, 15,000 – 25,000 in Sweden, 9,300 in Finland and about 2,000 in Russia. The Saami's traditional area of habitation extends from Central Norway and Sweden, across northern Finland to the Kola Peninsula.

The Finnish Saami region includes the entire municipalities of Enontekiö, Inari and Utsjoki, and the northern part of Sodankylä, the Vuotso district. The region covers 35,000 square kilometers. It contains the special Koltta area, to which the Skolt Saami moved when coming to Finland following the Second World War.

The Finnish Saami is divided linguistically into three groups: the Northern, Inari and Skolt, Saami. Regionally, the broadest language group is the Northern Saami, whose various dialects are spoken by Teno Saami, Kautokeino and Enontekiö Saami and Northern Swedish Saami. It is also the strongest written language, though Southern, Luulaja, Inari, Koltta and Kildin Saami are its own written language. (Lehtola 1997: 10.) There are no statistics on speakers of Northern Saami, so it is difficult to be precise about their numbers. According to a rough estimate, there are about 2,500 – 3,000 speakers of Northern Saami in Finland. (Sammallahti 2008.)

The Inari Saami are one of the smallest surviving minorities within the Saami group and the only language group that exists within the borders of a single state. There are reckoned to be about 900 Inari Saami, of who about 350 speak their mother tongue. As the Inari Saami public figure Matti Morottaja has said, if the Inari Saami disappeared from Finland, they would vanish from the whole world. (Lehtola 1997: 64.)



The Skolt Saami belong to the East Saami with respect to their language and traditions. Some 350 Skolt Saami speak their own mother tongue. They are Orthodox Christians by faith. There are also eastern traits in their dress, musical traditions, celebrations, customs and cuisine. The Skolt Saami had almost entirely to leave their original home area. Part of them came to Finland due to the Treaty of Tartu in 1920 and after 1944 the Petsamo Skolt Saami settled in the environs of Lake Inari.

As an indigenous people, the Saami are entitled under the Finnish Constitution (1990) to maintain and develop their language and culture. The Saami have self-government in their home area in matters concerning language and culture. To this end they elect members to the Saami Parliament. National decision-makers are responsible for conferring with the Saami Parliament if measures are planned that may affect the Saami indigenous people. The Saami Parliament decides on the use of funding received from the state budget for Saami self-government.

The law on Saami language prescribes the right of the Saami to use their language (Northern Saami, Inari Saami and Skolt Saami). Language rights are limited mainly to the Inari, Enontekiö, Utsjoki and Sodankylä municipal services of the Saami home area. In addition, certain national authorities and the Lapland State Provincial Administration have to render services in Saami. The law on the Koltta (1995) allows for the Skolt Saami living in that area to receive support for their livelihoods.

According to the law on basic education (1998), teaching for inhabitants of the Saami area with Saami language skills has to be given mainly in Saami. The state provides funding to the municipalities of the area in order to organize such teaching. Saami can also be the teaching language in high schools and technical colleges. It can be learnt as a mother tongue and as a second language at primary school, high school and technical college. However, education legislation does not guarantee Saami learners the right to study their language regardless of where they live. According to the law on day care, the municipality must ensure that day care is provided in Saami.

Under the Equality Act (2004) it is prohibited to discriminate against anyone on the basis of his or her ethnic background or language. ●

How was the study conducted?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the rights of children of indigenous peoples to their own language and culture: *“In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”* (Article 30)

■ The report by the office of the Ombudsman for Children charts the opinions and experiences of Saami children and youth concerning matters affecting their welfare. The purpose of the report has been to give Saami children and youth the opportunity to explain what they expect from local and national decision makers. The information used in the report was gathered from all upper secondary schools and high schools in the Finnish Saami region. The survey focused on 13–18-year-old young people, but their parents and people working with youth were also interviewed. The project is a joint Nordic initiative. The ombudsmen for children in Sweden and Norway have carried out similar reports. The results and conclusions from the different countries involved will be compared in a separate report. The European Union and the State Provincial Office of Lapland funded the report.

The project worker involved in producing the report visited all upper secondary schools and high schools in the Saami region in November 2007, spending two to three days at each school. The project worker held a class in each school to talk about the project and its objectives, the work and duties of the Finnish Ombudsman for Children and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The classes were held in both northern Saami and Finnish in almost all the schools.



The survey answers were elicited in two ways: by using a schematic questionnaire and small group interviews. Most of the questions were kept open in order to give the children themselves possibility to tell their priorities and opinions. The questionnaire applied questions on children’s rights previously drawn up at the office of the Ombudsman for Children. Some 87 completed survey questionnaires were returned. The small group interviews were attended by altogether 36 school learners. In addition, 14 Saami parents and 13 teachers were interviewed for the survey. ●

Summary of the main findings of the study



The Saami children and young people were asked about such things as their wellbeing at home, education, leisure time activities, their identity as salami and their views about the media.

■ The Saami children and youth particularly praised their parents and relatives. Good financial circumstances and parents' jobs were referred to in several of the questionnaires. According to the young people and children who took part in the survey, their parents enjoyed a good situation in life in all respects. The answers supplied by the parents of the Saami children were mainly along the same lines as those given by the children. Among the things considered good were openness within families, standard of living, work and family relationships. There were no unemployed people among those interviewed.

However, also improvements were sought on many issues in the field of family relationships. Girls especially would like more openness and discussion with their parents. Many young people wrote that they are lonely. The reasons given were that parents spend so much time at work; they do not care or do not want to have a presence in the life of young people. Alcohol use by parents was also raised. Eight girls wrote that one or both parents drank. None of the young people mentioned in their answers who look after them when one or both of their parents are drinking.

The majority of Saami youth are satisfied with their school and school instruction. The main gratitude was expressed for teachers, the level of teaching, and individual instruction due to small classes, good school friends, cultural activities and Saami language teaching. It is also seen as a positive thing that school bullying occurs rarely. Only three survey answers mentioned school bullying. All in all, school was seen as a secure growing environment.

The majority of Saami youth think that bilingualism and multiculturalism are given good attention at school. Saami language teaching received special praise. Although law guarantees the right of Saami children to their own language, Saami children are in a very unequal position with respect to Saami language learning and learning in Saami. Some young people receive two hours of Saami language instruction a week via the Internet, while others can learn practically all their subjects in Saami.

The lack of continuity in Saami language instruction is seen to be a problem. This is due to such things as the lack of qualified teachers using Saami language. The lack of Saami language teaching materials is also seen to be a problem. The situation is poor for all Saami languages, but especially for Koltta and Inari Saami. The discussions held in class and in the small groups revealed that Saami children are hardly taught a thing about the history of their people, who live in four national territories.

The majority of youth regard being Saami as a positive thing. The Saami teachers interviewed for the report say that they have noticed in their work that there has been a positive change in the identity and self-confidence of the youth. Almost all held the view that modern Saami youth have a strong sense of Saami identity. But while the majority of Saami youth have a strong sense of identity, there are some for whom being Saami is difficult. Some young people dropped out of the survey. Some of them said that they do not feel that they are Saami. Seven young respondents wrote on the questionnaire that being Saami meant nothing to them. One of this group was a girl and the rest were boys.

Based on the survey data, Saami youth are strongly attached to their home areas: just under 70% would not want to live south of Rovaniemi. 42.5% would like to return to the north after attending school and 25.3% would like to live in Rovaniemi. The rest mentioned Kemi and Oulu as possible places to live. The Saami youth feel that Rovaniemi is a good alternative as a northern city and in order to be near their home areas.

The Saami youth were asked about what recreational things they were and were not happy with. The young respondents are happy with their friends, the opportunities for recreation, youth clubs, local clubs and camps. The causes of dissatisfaction are the lack of enough club activities and recreational opportunities. The overwhelming majority of replies concerned the lack of youth centers. There were clear regional differences in the responses. Saami young people living in municipal centers are happier with their free time than those living in other areas.

The Saami youth were asked about what media services are designed for them and what they would like to have. There are very few radio programmes for young Saami and no TV programmes. Many of them would like to have Saami language Internet pages TV series.

In the small group interviews the Saami youth described the sort of image they think the media gives of Saami people. With one exception, they said that the mass media continues to give a very stereotypical view of Saami people. They are depicted as drunks, always dressed in traditional Lapland costume and who know nothing of modern life. Some of the young people were troubled at how the media depicts Saami people. The Saami youth would like to see the media giving a truthful and more contemporary view of Saami. ●



Discussion and evaluation of the results

Factors affecting the welfare of Saami children and young people were approached by this study through the issues of welfare at home and at school, the environment in which they grow up, and municipal and state services.

The intention was to keep the interview questions open, so that the replies received would as fully as possible depict the children's and young people's ideas. This summary presents the concrete themes raised by Saami children and youth, and by their parents and teachers, as potential welfare threats and opportunities. What kind of influence does this study therefore offer concerning factors affecting the welfare of Saami children and young people?

The role of school in the lives of Saami children and youth

School has an undeniable role in maintaining Saami language and culture in the Saami region. Since the early 1990s, the Finnish state has provided stronger support for Saami language teaching and the production of teaching materials. Legislation, too, obliges the arrangement of Saami language teaching and instruction in Saami in the Saami region. Each year about 500 children receive Saami language lessons. About 150 learners in primary school are taught either wholly or mainly in Saami. About 30 learners in secondary school learn Saami as a mother tongue.

Though the law guarantees Saami children the right to their own language, they remain in an unequal position among themselves in relation to Saami language teaching and teaching in Saami. Some young people receive two hours of instruction a week in the mother tongue via the Internet, while others are able to study practically all their subjects in Saami.



The problem facing Saami language instruction is one of constant shortages. This is due to such things as the lack of qualified teachers using Saami. The problem is also one where learners may have studied biology in Northern Saami but they cannot write on it in Saami for their high school certificate. The reason for this is that the Matriculation Examination Board has not wanted to address the issue.

This study also reveals that there is a lack of Saami language instruction material. The situation is poor concerning all the Saami languages, but especially so for Skolt Saami and Inari Saami. One surprising finding of the study is that Saami children are taught hardly anything about the history of their people living in the region extending over four states. Skolt Saami history is taught at Sevetijärvi School, but the history of other Saami groups is not dealt with. Five young people from other schools mentioned that they had heard ‘something’ about Saami history.

The teachers and principals interviewed considered that one reason for the lack of Saami history teaching was that it is not contained in the local curriculum. Another reason given was that there are no history textbooks on the subject. This means that Saami children can use Saami language at school for 12 years without being taught practically anything about local and general Saami history. Through the years, they become familiar with the history of all other peoples except their own.

The national principles of the basic education curriculum, adopted by the Finnish Ministry of Education (1.8.2006) nevertheless oblige that attention is paid when Saami learners are taught to the fact that the Saami are an indigenous people with their own language and culture. Teaching must, according to the curriculum, support learners’ indigenous identity and provide opportunities for them to learn their language and develop their linguistic facility. It must also promote knowledge of Saami culture, history and the Nordic Saami community, plus an awareness of the Saami as a people and as one of the world’s indigenous peoples. It would appear therefore that the principles of the curriculum are not, on the basis of the study, carried into practice in the school curricula drawn up by the municipalities and schools.

Saami children living outside the Saami home region constitute their own category. According to the Saami Parliament, 70% of Saami children under 18-years-old lived outside the Saami region in 2007. According to basic education legislation, Saami language and teaching in Saami must be provided in the Saami region. The right of Saami children and young people living elsewhere to the teaching of their mother tongue or to teaching in it is not mentioned in the law. Despite this, the City of Oulu and the municipalities of Haukipudas and Oulunsalo have, at the request of parents, offered Saami children the chance to learn Saami language at primary school, although this is not prescribed in legislation.

The right of Saami children and young people living outside the Saami home region to their language and culture remain unrealized. The position in relation to language and cultural rights is also in contravention with Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to this Article:

“ A child belonging to (...) a minority or who is indigenous should not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.”

The Article in question does not classify children according to their place of residence or limit rights to the Saami home region.



The Welfare of young Saami and their parents

The majority of young people who took part in the study are in a good situation. The same applies to their parents: almost all were content with their situation in life. It should be remembered, however, that the report does not include those young people who did not want to take part in the survey. For instance, there was only one Saami child among the group of interviewees who had been taken into care.

Although the majority of parents fare well, there were young people among the group both of whose parents drink. The problem concerned 9% of the young people. The number may be larger, as the questions were open in nature. The young respondents were not asked about their parents' use of alcohol, but wrote or told about it spontaneously. It is noteworthy that although some young people wrote about their parents' use of alcohol they said that all was well at home. None of the young people mentioned who looks after them when both their parents drink.

So far, there have been two studies of alcohol use among Saami in Finland (Laakso 2004, Näkkäläjärvi 2006). There is no more extensive research of the subject. The intoxicant service A-Clinic is located in Kemijärvi, to which travel from the northernmost Saami villages is several hundred kilometers. The northernmost place of institutional treatment is the Lapland drug and alcohol clinic in Muurola, which is 25 kilometres south of Rovaniemi. Intoxicant services need to be strengthened in the Saami region.

In the municipality of Enontekiö about 5 % of children under 18 are customers in non-institutional child welfare services (Vaittinen 2008). In Inari municipality child welfare (non-institutional) services involve about 7 % of children under 18 (Maukola-Juuso 2008). In Utsjoki municipality the same figure is 15 %. The municipality of Utsjoki will have in the future a new social worker whose work will focus on child welfare (Salminen 2008). These numbers are fairly high in comparison to the national average in Finland. Nationally about 5 % of under 18-year-olds are customers in non-institutional child welfare services.

The social welfare managers in the municipalities of Enontekiö and Utsjoki (Vaittinen 2008, Salminen 2008), explained that the municipalities have concluded a collaborative agreement with the crisis and incest centre in Karasjok, in Norway, which runs a 24-hour emergency service. The centre functions like a shelter. Karasjok is the only place in which there is a Saami-language child psychiatric ward.

The identity and living environment of Saami youth

The majority of young people who took part in the study were proud of their Saami identity. This is a far cry from the times when a Saami background was something to be concealed, even from one's closest friends. The decades of efforts on behalf of Saami language and teaching in Saami have clearly strengthened the ethnic identity of Saami youth. The young people were aware, however, that this had not always been the case. They had not been kept in the dark about the negative experiences of their parents at school and in dormitories in the past.

Though the majority of young people are proud of their Saami identity, there are those among them for whom ethnic identity is not an easy matter. These young people wrote that as far as they were concerned Saami identity meant nothing. It would be important to pay attention to those young people who need support in building their identity. The same applies to the young Saami living outside the Saami home region.

The young Saami are attached to their home area: just under 70% do not want to live further south than Rovaniemi. According to the survey, 42% would like to return north after school, 25% would like to live in Rovaniemi and the rest mentioned places such as Kemi and Oulu as possible places to live. Six young respondents did not know where they would like to live. The young Saami find Rovaniemi to be an acceptable alternative for its closeness to the north and their own home region. The biggest concern they had was whether they would find work in the north after their studies. If the desire is to keep Saami region inhabited, the state should pay attention to a regional policy so that Saami people can return to their home region if they so wish.

Young Saami's free time

One of the most discussed themes of the answers was free time. There are spaces or buildings set aside for youth in three municipal centers (Hetta, Ivalo, Utsjoki). The majority of young Saami were frustrated by the fact that they have no space where they can spend their free time with other young people. The only place to hang out may be the village pub. There is a strong need for youth centers in most of the Saami region. Also, there is a desire for guided recreational activities. These are organized fairly well in the municipal centers, but there may be nothing in the more remote areas.

Only a few young people expressed the hope for activities in Saami language, but this is according to expectation: if activities are not arranged in Finnish, few will think of demanding them in their mother tongue.

Reliability of the assessment

The target group surveyed was 13–18-year-old Saami children and young people. Information was collected using a questionnaire form and small group interviews. The young respondents could write about very personal matters on the forms but in the small group discussions discussed only general matters concerning young people, such as school, free time etc. All stages of the study were carried out in the school context, which may have influenced the replies to some extent.

Most of the young Saami and their parents were enthusiastic about the project. It was thought to be particularly good that the project worker visited all the schools in the Saami region. In one school only it was difficult to get the young people interested in the study. Some of them also doubted that there would be any improvements even though their opinions were surveyed. The teacher at the school in question said that the school was studied constantly but that nothing concrete happened. The teacher expressed the hope that the funds for the project would be used to improve matters: the results of the project must be carried out.

The reliability of the study depends crucially on whether the respondents understood the questions asked of them in the way they were intended by the author of the questions. The questions were mainly clear and there were hardly any misinterpretations. The question left blank most often was the one that asked the respondents to assess how their school pays attention to bilingualism and multiculturalism. The question may have been too difficult, especially for the younger respondents. None of the respondents criticized the questions for being difficult. Only a few of the boys criticized the open questions. The answers given by boys were markedly shorter than those given by girls. Boys rarely wrote about their worries, while girls were more open and would sometimes write in great detail about issues.

As was mentioned at the beginning, this report should be regarded as an initial survey. There are many welfare problems overlooked by the open questions. The study has nevertheless revealed many issues that should be able to be influenced at a politi-

cal level. It would also be important to study further the effect, for example, of parents' drinking on the welfare of Saami children and young people. The living conditions of children taken into care and of those placed outside the home region should also be studied. What are the families like in which these children are nowadays being raised and is their cultural background taken into account when looking for foster homes?

The survey questionnaire did not ask the young Saami about experimenting or using drugs. No one mentioned anything about drugs. The reason for this may be that recently the press labeled young people in one Saami municipality as drug users. The youngsters said that some of the news coverage was true but the fact that everyone was labeled a drug user was against their sense of justice. These young people were very concerned about what this study aimed for: was the intention to help them or continue the negative news coverage.

It would also be important to study the issue of child sexual abuse. There have been several cases of sexual abuse that have come to light in North Norway and which have been a shock to people in the Saami villages. Suspicions and revelations about sexual abuse have been reported widely and have been discussed in the media. The Saami community and Saami institutions have had to take a stand on the issue. The subject remains taboo among Finnish Saami – both communities and decision-makers.

Saami social problems have not been researched in great depth. The study of them within a small minority is always a difficult and challenging task. The great fear is the stereotyping of Saami communities. During the project a discussion was held with adults about who is entitled to raise problematic issues concerning Saami. Are the Saami entitled to do this, or researchers or institutions? And does this concern Finnish or Saami researchers and institutions? One of the people interviewed reckoned that talking about problems could also be seen as labeling, especially when the person raising a particular issue is a Finn. ●

Recommendations for further measures



Many aspects in the lives of Finnish Saami children and young people are positive. Over the last ten years the possibilities for them to exercise their own language and culture have improved.

But the rights of Saami children have not been realized in all aspects. These are listed in this report in the proposals concerning developmental needs for the state authorities, the municipalities in the Saami region and for the Saami Parliament.

Proposals have been gathered from the spheres of education, family and home welfare, identity and habitat, recreation, media and participation.

These proposals take account of all Saami children and young people living in Finland, though this report has been carried out among Saami children and young people living in the Saami region.

The right of Saami children to education

In the Saami region:

- Children and young people must have the opportunity to study their mother language and their culture throughout the Saami home region. The particularly concerns the Inari and Skolt Saami youth. The teaching and instruction of Saami must be added particularly in schools that do not yet provide it and to ensure the continuity of teaching. State support for the municipalities of the region must continue.
- High School children must have the opportunity to write in Saami when doing matriculation examination in general studies.
- There needs to be more university training of subject teachers using Saami.
- There is a need for more language teaching material in Saami. All Saami languages must be taken into account. There must be more collaboration among the governments of Finland, Norway and Sweden.
- All teachers in the area need to be trained to understand the north's multiculturalism and bilingualism from the

perspective of Saami people.

- Saami history must be included in the municipal and school specific curricula for elementary school and high school. To this end a Saami curriculum could be prepared for common use in all municipalities of the home region. There is a need for more history teaching material. There needs to be Nordic collaboration among Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian governments in curricula work.
- Schools need take account of Saami handicraft instruction, observe days important to Saami identity, use Saami language on other occasions than in class and strengthen contacts between schools in the Saami region.
- There is a need to consider changing the subject name of Saami language to 'Saami language and Saami culture', so that the teaching of Saami culture and Saami history would be carried out in parallel with language instruction.
- There needs to be a national evaluation of Saami language teaching and teaching in Saami language that takes account of the wider perspective of cultural education and examines the implementation of the

principles of the national curriculum.

Outside the home region:

- Legislation and funding regulations concerning elementary and secondary schools need to be reformed so that a sufficient amount of classes can be given in Saami language and culture and Saami language for Saami children living outside the Saami region.
- Saami history needs to feature in Finnish language school textbooks.

Welfare of family and home

- Parents must be supported and encouraged in their responsibilities in bringing up their children so that they would be more available and present in their children's lives.
- There needs to be more alcohol-related work in the Saami region that takes account of ethnic background. The aim of the work should be to reduce drinking among parents and the resulting harm caused to children. Families must be offered low threshold support services in Saami language. Examples include help-line services (for evenings and weekends) and online services.
- There is a need to study the experiences of personal security of Saami children and young people more precisely. Surveys should be directed to children and youth themselves so that they can express their own experience for example whether they have been victims of violence or sexual abuse at home, leisure time, at school or in institutions. Separate studies are needed because national studies do not give information about the situation of a small minority such as Saami children and young people.
- If a Saami child is placed in alternative care outside his or her family as a child welfare measure, the child's ethnic and linguistic background must be taken into account in the selection of foster care or institution in order to ensure the opportunity for linguistic and cultural continuity in the child's life.

Identity and habitat

- All Finnish Saami children and young people should be supported in building their ethnic and linguistic identity. For example, events and camps could be arranged for Saami youth living in different parts of Finland.
- The majority of children and young people involved in the survey were strongly committed to their northern surroundings and would like to return home to the north to work after they have finished their studies. This ambition needs to be supported by national regional policy.

Recreation

- Youth clubs, places to meet and opportunities for recreation need to be arranged for children and youth in the Saami region, as do library services (such as mobile libraries) outside municipal centers (Ivalo, Hetta, Utsjoki).
- Municipalities and local parishes must also arrange and support recreational youth activities in Saami language.
- Cultural services must be arranged for young people and the opportunity for activity at their own initiative in the cultural sphere in their own language in with Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian collaboration (e.g. theatre).

Media

- Media services (a youth magazine, radio and TV programmes and related internet services) must be organized for Saami children and youth in their own language, for instance in collaboration with Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian public broadcasters.
- The Ministry of Interior responsible for equality issues could, together with the Saami Parliament and the Giellagas Institute of Oulu University, carry out a broad and high profile campaign to make contemporary Saami culture known in Finland. The campaign could have the effect of bringing a more up to date image of Saami people and their culture in the Finnish media.

Participation and influence

- The Saami Parliament must disseminate information on its activities to Saami children and young people, canvass opinions from them on its work and give further support to Saami children's and young people's events and gatherings. Youth Council should be established in connection with the Saami Parliament whereby under-18-year-olds can influence matters in the areas of culture-self government.
- Children and young people must be able to take part and influence daily school matters. Schools in the Saami region must examine and listen to the opinions of children and young people concerning attention to being Saami.
- The municipalities of the Saami region must examine and listen to the opinions of children and young people on the organization of services from the angle of bilingualism and being Saami.





OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN IN FINLAND
MÁNÁIDÁITTARDEADDJI

The Saami are the only ethnic group in the area of Europe classified as an indigenous people.

This report tells about the opinions of Finnish Saami children about their wellbeing and about the realization of their rights.

The report includes recommendations to improve the implementation of the rights of the Saami children. The Ombudsman for Children Finland is an independent institution that promotes the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The original report was produced in 2008 in a co-operation project with Swedish and Norwegian Ombudsmen for Children and was funded by European Union.

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