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# Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish

The Finnic languages in education  
in Sweden



\* numerically small language communities

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## Foreword

### *background*

For several years now, Mercator-Education has made efforts to achieve one of its principal goals: to gather, store and distribute information on minority language education in European regions. Regional or minority languages are languages which differ from the official language of the state where they are spoken and which are traditionally used within a given territory by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the population.

To date, Mercator-Education has been successful in establishing a computerised data bank containing bibliographic data, information about people and organisations involved with minority language issues. It has published data collected during four inventory studies on pre-school education, primary education, learning materials and teacher training. In addition there is a need for documents which give a brief outline of the most essential features of the educational system of regions with an autochthonous lesser-used language. With the establishment of regional dossiers we intend to meet this need.

### *aim*

Regional dossiers aim at providing concise descriptive information and basic educational statistics about minority language education in a specific region of the European Union. This kind of information, such as features of the educational system, recent educational policies, division of responsibilities, main actors, legal arrangements, support structures and also quantitative information on the number of schools, teachers, pupils and financial investments, can serve several purposes.

### *target group*

Policy makers, researchers, teachers, students and journalists may use the information provided to assess developments in European minority language schooling. They can also use a regional dossier as a first orientation towards further research or as a source of ideas for improving educational provision in their own region.

*link with EURYDICE* In order to link these regional descriptions with those of national educational systems, it was decided to follow the format used by EURYDICE, the European education information network in the European Union. EURYDICE provides information on the administration and structure of education in member states of the European Union. The information provided in the regional dossiers is focussed on language use at the various levels of education.

*contents* The remainder of this dossier consists firstly of an introduction to the region being studied, followed by six sections which each deal with a specific level of the educational system. These brief descriptions contain factual information presented in a readily accessible way. Sections eight to ten cover research, prospects and summary statistics. For detailed information and political discussions about language use at the various levels of education, the reader is referred to other sources.

## 1 Introduction

*language* The two varieties of Finnish in Sweden, Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish, are to some extent inseparable and to some extent different, but the most practical approach is to treat them together here.

Both Finnish-related languages/varieties in Sweden belong to the Finnic group of languages, which is a branch of the Finno-Ugrian languages. In addition to Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish, Finnic includes e.g. Finnish in Finland (= Finland Finnish below) and Estonian in Estonia. The total amount of speakers of Finnic languages around the Baltic Sea is around 6.2 million, of which 4.7 million live in Finland and 1 million in Estonia. The third largest population of speakers of a Finnic language is the Sweden Finns.

*Meänkieli* Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish, which are seen by some as

varieties of Finnish, and by others as separate languages, both have historical roots in Sweden. Meänkieli is a regionally based historic variety, which ultimately dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has developed more independently from Finland Finnish since the Hamina Peace Treaty in 1809, when Sweden ceded Finland to Russia. About 8,000 of the 19,000 inhabitants in the border region of Tornedalen, in which Meänkieli is spoken, remained on the Swedish side, while about 11,000 remained on the Finnish side. Until about 1980, Meänkieli was mainly considered a dialect of Finnish, and referred to as Tornedalen Finnish.

The province of Norrbotten, in which Tornedalen is situated, covers about one fourth (98,911 sqkm) of the total area of Sweden, but is populated only by about 3 per cent of the total population.

#### *Sweden Finnish*

Sweden Finnish is a linguonym used frequently since about the same period of time as the term Meänkieli (instead of Tornedalen Finnish) came into more general use. Sweden Finnish is predominantly spoken in and around the capital of Stockholm, in the central Swedish Mälardalen region, in urban centres along the Baltic shore, and in and around the second largest city, Gothenburg on the West coast. It is also spoken in the region of Tornedalen at the border of Finland, and thus overlaps with the Meänkieli-speaking area. Additional “islands” of Finnish-speakers can be found in several municipalities elsewhere. Sweden Finnish and its predecessors have been spoken in Stockholm since medieval times. Thus, the two varieties are somewhat complementary in location: Meänkieli is spoken mainly in rural, Northern Sweden, and Sweden Finnish is mainly spoken in central, urban Sweden.

#### *Language characteristics*

The Finnic languages, along with the distantly related Saami languages, are influenced by Germanic languages (Swedish and Norwegian in Scandinavia, earlier also German; German has had a strong influence on Estonian), and to a lesser extent by Slavic languages (predominantly Russian).

Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish have been particularly influenced by Swedish. Meänkieli is more influenced at the phonological and lexical levels, than is Sweden Finnish. In the western and northwestern areas Meänkieli also shows local effects of language contact with Saami.

The linguistic distance between Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish is smaller than between Meänkieli and Finland Finnish (specifically the standard variety, which will be referred to as Standard Finnish). The distance between Sweden Finnish and Standard Finnish in turn, is smaller than that between Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish. This mainly concerns vocabulary, but linguistic dissimilarities *and* similarities occur at all levels of grammar (phonology, morphology, syntax). In the region of Tornedalen, the similarities between Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish, and also the local Finnish dialects on the Finnish side, are more evident.

Meänkieli lacks a standardised written code, even if it has been recurrently used in writing since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and by individual writers since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Sweden Finnish makes use of Standard Finnish in writing, with minor lexical and syntactic deviations. Standard Finnish was codified during the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century with the translation of the New Testament, and re-codified and standardised during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the relative youth of the written standard, the spoken standard Finnish variety has until recently been seen as very close to the writing of Finnish. The distance from the written code for Sweden Finnish is supposedly larger than for present-day Finland Finnish, but there are no extensive studies to confirm this.

*Population:  
Meänkieli speakers*

The population of Sweden is 8.9 million (2000). Questions of language use or mother tongue statistics have not been included in the Swedish censuses taken since 1930. Statistics on languages spoken are based on estimates of demographic statistics (citizenship and country of birth) and/or municipal and school statistics. In the case of Meänkieli, data have been collected through surveys done on listeners to Finnish/Meänkieli radio. Of the 260,000



inhabitants in the Norrbotten province (1999), the Tornedalen region comprises about 27 % of the population, or 70,000 inhabitants. The Tornedalen region consists of five out of 14 municipalities in the province. It covers an area which is more than twice the size of Denmark. In Tornedalen it is estimated that about 40,000 are competent in oral Meänkieli (meaning that they at least understand it), and the number of Sweden Finns is estimated to be 15,000. There is presumably some overlap in the figures, implying that some are represented in both groups. Within the Tornedalen region there is a complementary distribution among the Meänkieli speakers and the (Sweden) Finnish speakers: the further away one goes from Haparanda and the southern parts of the Tornedalen area, the higher is the proportion of Meänkieli users. Several thousand speakers of Meänkieli are also found in the capital region of Stockholm. The Tornedalen region has for several decades been, and still continues to be, an area of extensive out-migration to the southern and central parts of Sweden.

Most speakers of Meänkieli are bilingual in Finnish/Meänkieli and Swedish, with a dominance in Swedish, but some are trilingual, with Saami as a third language. Some Meänkieli-dominant exceptions may be found among the very old and infants. Intermarriage between Meänkieli-speaking men and Finnish-speaking women, as well as between Meänkieli-speaking women and Swedish-speaking men is by now a traditional marriage pattern in Tornedalen. Speakers of Meänkieli have for the most part become literate in their second language first, i.e. in Swedish, before gaining possible literacy skills in their mother tongue.

*Population: Sweden  
Finnish speakers*

The number of speakers of Sweden Finnish in all of Sweden is believed to be around 250,000, of which more than one-third live in the Stockholm area, which has in total about 1.6 million inhabitants. Most of the speakers of Sweden Finnish have a migrant background in Finland, going back in time up to four generations. Few have roots in the older populations of different varieties of Finnish in Sweden, despite the fact these have been spoken

continuously for five centuries in some parts of Sweden and since the 14<sup>th</sup> century in Stockholm.

Most speakers of Sweden Finnish are bilingual, with the possible exception of a few infants and some elderly. The majority of Sweden Finnish children have one parent of all-Swedish ancestry (according to country of birth). An increasing proportion has one parent from a third, immigrant background, especially in metropolitan urban areas. Also among Sweden Finns, the proportion of women who get married inter-ethnically is higher than among men.

*Legislation on  
Language Policy*

Sweden lacks an official language *de jure*. The *de facto* official language has been Swedish since the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the Constitution (RF 1976: Ch. 1, par. 2) support for the promotion of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups' characteristics is expressed. In 2000 Sweden ratified the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The Charter has been in effect since 1 April 2000. In Tornedalen, Meänkieli and Finnish (Sweden Finnish) are official minority languages according to level 3 of the Charter, and elsewhere in Sweden, Sweden Finnish is an official minority language according to the lower level 2. This supposedly ends majority assimilation of the Tornedalians, which was initiated in 1888 and was in full force from about the 1910s to the early 1960s. One of the formal decisions to introduce monolingualism in Swedish, was the introduction of state schools in Tornedalen in 1888, according to which only schools giving instruction in Swedish could benefit from state support.

In practice, the status of Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish has been supported, but not explicitly protected, to a varying extent since the early 1960s, particularly in the education system and in the media. Meänkieli speakers have had *formal* or occasional opportunities to receive some instruction in Finnish at different levels since the 1930s, but *in practice* this has mainly been possible since the mid-1950s.

In governmental policy formulations regarding the immigrant languages (1974), both Meänkieli and (Sweden) Finnish have been given explicit support in various parts of society. Thus, the progressive support for newly arrived immigrant groups assisted the Finnish-speakers as well. No coherent or explicit policy was formulated for the indigenous groups until the late 1990s, nor was there any stance on which groups should be counted as indigenous minorities.

The Nordic Language Convention of 1982 made it possible for citizens from one Nordic country (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) to receive public services from such institutions as social welfare, public administration and courts, in another Nordic country in their mother tongues. This convention has facilitated the use of Sweden Finnish/Finnish in contacts with Swedish officials. Although interpreting had already been provided for during the 1960s, before the Nordic Language Convention, it was guaranteed for all Nordic citizens when it became ratified. In practice, naturalised Finnish-speakers in Sweden could also benefit from this.

Beginning in the late 1990s, bilingual names on signs for villages, streets etc., have been actively retained or re-introduced in Tornedalen.

The present protection of the regional and minority languages is dependent on the local policies of the 289 municipalities and their political and administrative leaderships, such as boards of education. Since a strong decentralization of political decision-making took place in 1991-1992, the responsibility of school policy for example, has been transferred to the local authorities. The implementation of minority language decisions has accordingly become a matter of local, not national level, democracy. The municipality of Pajala in Tornedalen, for example, made Meänkieli a compulsory subject for most children in school in the year 2000. The target is to teach some basics in Meänkieli and some knowledge of the old Finnish and Saami place names of the region to all children. This decision was resisted by slightly less than half of the parents

in a municipality home- page billboard poll (summer 2000). Another municipality of the Tornedalen area, Haparanda, has developed a partly- merged education system with Tornio, its twin neighbouring town in Finland. The two towns are often referred to as the first 'Eurocity' of Europe. In both towns the pupils can choose instruction in the language of the other country, even at the upper secondary level, in the form of a modified two-way bilingual programme.

Elsewhere, especially outside the Tornedalen area, instruction in and about Sweden Finnish has been largely deconstructed since 1991-1992. This runs counter to most policy statements at national and local levels. In parallel with this deconstructive development, statements in support of mother tongue instruction in general, and of Sweden Finnish in particular, have become rare at local levels. There is a downward spiral between less teaching made available by the public school system through extensive cuts in funding, and fewer pupils/parents demanding teaching in Finnish.

*status of the  
education system*

The Swedish Education Act stipulates that all children and young people should have access to education of equal value (*likvärdig utbildning*). This concerns all pupils, irrespective of gender, geographical place of residence or social or economic conditions. Language is not specifically mentioned, but parents have used language as an issue of the equal value-principle in order to request instruction in the mother tongue.

The Swedish public school system comprises compulsory school and various types of voluntary schooling. Compulsory school, which is the responsibility of the municipality, includes compulsory basic school (*grundskolan*), school for the Saami people of northern Sweden, special school (for children with impaired sight, hearing or speech, the majority of whom are integrated into mainstream classes), and compulsory school for mentally handicapped. Voluntary schools include upper secondary school, municipal adult education (*Komvux*) and education for

mentally handicapped adults (Särvux).

Tuition and meals in the compulsory municipal and state schools are free. Higher education (tertiary education; högskoleutbildning), which is predominantly provided by the state, is also free of charge. Students may take state loans to cover living costs during their higher education.

Parents and their children have the right to choose a school outside their own municipality, but a vast majority of the children receive their instruction in the school which is geographically closest to them and within their own municipality. The location of the school has been a crucial factor influencing parents' willingness to choose a mother tongue/bilingual school.

Throughout the 1990s the Swedish education system has seen several major changes, which have not been evaluated. Two main reforms were initiated in 1990-1991. One reform was that decisions about matters concerning the school were transferred from the central governmental level to the municipal level, and to individual schools as represented by their directors. At the municipal level, the issues could be even further distributed to the local community boards (stadsdelsnämnder, kommundelsnämnder). The system of earmarked grants for education was simultaneously abandoned. The municipalities now receive state funding, but it is left to the local politicians to decide the amount to be spent on education, in order to fulfil the demands of the public school system as stated by the parliament. In parallel with this process of decentralisation, the supervisory power of the state, and especially the possibility to use sanctions against the municipalities, has been weakened.

Another main reform was the so-called "free school reform", for independent schools. Independent schools are open to all and must be approved by Skolverket, the National Agency for Education (see Administration below). This meant that parents, teachers, organisations, foundations and companies could start their own schools, with their own teaching, content profile, or type of administration. When the profile is in accordance with the central educational goals for core subjects, and in accordance with the

educational and democratic aims of the Swedish school system, the independent school's application is approved, and it receives grants from the municipality. However, if the independent schools are seen as impeding municipal education, or placing it at risk, the municipality is given the right to prohibit their approval. To date, almost 400 independent schools have been established. The increase has for some school types come to a halt. Earlier 14, but now eight of them, represent Sweden Finnish bilingual schools. One local independent school in Tornedalen has included Meänkieli as a compulsory subject. The number of independent upper secondary schools is generally increasing as well, even if ethnolinguistically oriented or bilingual ones have not been started yet.

The decentralisation of government puts the real political power in the hands of the municipalities, which are largely ruled by non-professional politicians. This has clearly reduced the support for mother tongue instruction and for minority languages and has left an open conflict between the rhetoric of national political aims and local praxis. The independent schools have thus become a means rescuing bilingual education programs, which were formerly provided by the municipalities. Some municipalities have actively contributed to the transfer of bilingual education to the independent schools.

A third major change of the school system was the introduction of goal-oriented evaluations, with the national tests for basic school in 1997. Individual evaluations are done in the period between the national tests, which are given in three basic subjects (basämnar): Swedish (or Swedish as a second language), mathematics and English. These tests are given in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. The national test administration points out that the three subjects mentioned are particularly important for all children. An acceptable mark in these subjects is needed for entrance into the national upper secondary school programmes. Marks are only given in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. Since they have not been accorded the same importance as Swedish or the core subject English, the mother tongues of mono- or bilingual

minority children have in this respect faced a reduced support and a loss of prestige in the schools. Meänkieli and Finnish also compete with English and other languages as school subjects (see below).

*specific provisions  
for regional/  
minority languages*

From the introduction of Swedish state schools in Tornedalen (in 1888), whose purpose was to Swedicise the region, until about 1957, there was an unofficial regional prohibition to use Finnish/Meänkieli in school-yards. It was abandoned due to criticism by the former National Board of Education (Skolöverstyrelsen). During the period of prohibition there were no coherent attempts to teach in or allow Finnish to be spoken in Swedish schools. From the early 1910s to about the mid-1950s, no provision was made for Finnish at primary school level (ages 7-14; since 1962, basic school has included ages 7-16). Formally, it was possible to receive voluntary instruction in Finnish at the secondary level, beginning in the 1930s, but in practice this functioned better beginning in the mid-1950s.

Between about 1962 and 1975, children of Meänkieli/Sweden Finnish language backgrounds were sporadically given hour-based instruction to some extent, and remedial instruction in the mother tongue for some hours per week. Around 1970, with the increase of immigrant Finnish speakers, remedial instruction and so-called home language teaching was initiated on a larger scale, and in new regions. This was a result of the fact that Swedish teachers faced difficulties in teaching non-Swedish-speaking children, who were submersed into monolingual mainstream classes: this was not any result of a deliberate bilingual or minority policy. On the other hand, ideas for a more coherent immigrant policy were being formulated at that time. In the 1970s and 1980s, Sweden treated immigrant languages in a progressive way, compared to other European countries. Through the Home Language Reform (1976), immigrant groups and their languages, including Meänkieli and Finnish, were given special support and the right to mother tongue provision in some form, before there were serious discussions about similar treatment of indigenous minority

groups.

During the last 30 years, a bilateral educational council (Finsk-svenska utbildningsrådet) has contributed to a dialogue between politicians and educational administrators in Finland and Sweden. This council has from time to time discussed and influenced the resolutions of many of the issues concerning language support for Finnish-speaking children in Sweden.

The support for mother tongue instruction, however, has also been based partly on the alarming reports about bilingual children from Tornedalen, who were claimed to suffer from *double semi-lingualism*, i.e. the double handicap of knowing neither language well. This type of argumentation was later transferred to be valid for all potentially bilingual children. A central issue that divided parents and school authorities was whether children should be given extensive teaching *in* the mother tongue, as many parents demanded, or hour-based instruction *about* and in the mother tongue, as the authorities offered. The professional discussions about semi-lingualism, which has not been established as a scientifically valid concept, were discontinued in Sweden during the late 1980s. The myth of semi-lingualism nevertheless continues to nourish public debate on mother tongue and bilingual issues.

Beginning around 1970, the bilingual/mother tongue classes for non-speakers of Swedish were in the form of *transitional* bilingual education. Some bilingual *maintenance* classes developed from this, however, some of which were retained throughout basic school. Nationally, most of these bilingual classes consisted of Finnish-speaking pupils, including children with Meänkieli backgrounds. Generally, the language of instruction and the target of teaching were in both cases Standard Finnish.

In reports produced by the Immigration Committee in 1974, it was stressed that the Swedish school system should support the development of *active bilingualism*, i.e. a fairly high competence in both languages, among potentially bilingual (minority, immigrant, aboriginal/Saami) children. This later resulted in the Home Language Reform (1976). It



aimed at the development of Swedish as well as the retention and development of the 'home language' (later 'mother tongue'). The regional/minority languages were covered by this general statement of policy. The mention of minority children has later been absent in some official policy documents, and present in others. After another committee recommendation on multiculturalism in Sweden in 1983 (in force beginning in 1985), the Tornedalen children were given a higher degree of support than those children considered to be merely immigrants, among which the Sweden Finns remained included until 1994.

The creation of educational units in basic school for a minority language was dependent on the amount of children who requested instruction in the mother tongue at the same school: 5 pupils wishing to receive mother tongue instruction in the municipality were needed to start a class/unit. Since 1985 this restriction no longer applies to Meänkieli. Parents of Meänkieli-speaking children may require instruction in their mother tongue, irrespective of number of children. Until 1991 municipalities would in practice offer instruction even when the number of pupils was smaller, but after 1991 this has rarely happened.

Another criterion for provision of mother tongue instruction is that the language is in daily use in the family. Since 1985 Meänkieli-speaking parents may require instruction, even if the language has ceased to be a daily language of interaction in the family. Since 1997 this is also possible for Sweden Finns, for one type of hour-based mother tongue provision (not defined as the mother tongue, but as an individual choice by the pupil instead of a modern language; see below).

Since 2000, the slight differences between Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish regarding the right to require provision of mother tongue instruction have been largely levelled in Tornedalen, but are retained elsewhere. This means that the right to receive mother tongue instruction in Meänkieli is somewhat better protected than in Sweden Finnish in the legislation.

*Structure*

Two *types* containing altogether seven *variants* of mother tongue provision possibilities exist for Finnish/Meänkieli. A division into types makes it possible to distinguish *class-based* (mainly, but not exclusively in the mother tongue) and *hour-based instruction* (mainly, but not exclusively *about* the mother tongue) from each other. First, three variants of bilingual (mother tongue) classes will be discussed. These provide a continuous support for both languages in: Ia) *merged classes* (50 per cent Finnish-speaking children, 50 per cent Swedish-speaking), Ib) *transitional classes*, which increase the amount of Swedish spoken as the child progresses, and Ic) bilingual/home-language/mother tongue *maintenance classes*. Of these the maintenance classes aim at developing the standards of both languages to the level of native speakers. They also provide the greatest degree of teaching *in* the language.

Secondly, four variants of hour-based instruction have been developed. Hour-based instruction includes the following four variants: IIa) *language choice* (språkval), IIb) the *pupil's choice* (elevens val), IIc) the *school's choice*, and IId) *mother tongue instruction* outside the regular curriculum. The last variant of instruction was before 1994 in the form of hour-based "pull-out" teaching. Until then it mostly took place within the ordinary school-day/curriculum. This has been decreased from an average of about 2 hours/week to 1-1.5 hours. In addition, there is *remedial instruction* (studiehandledning) in the mother tongue, which can be offered for pupils in need of extra support in specific subjects.

The objective of active bilingualism has been expressed for both types of instruction, bilingual classes and hour-based instruction, despite the differences in time allotted to and the language used for instruction.

The majority of children who are entitled to mother tongue instruction have either not chosen it or not been offered any instruction in the mother tongue. The majority of bilingual children who were offered mother tongue instruction and who chose from among the above-mentioned options, have chosen the hour-based variants. New classes are no longer

created, and the different class variants that have existed to date are being closed down.

Since the early 1960s, the School Act prohibits the proportion of teaching in any language other than Swedish to be higher than 50 per cent during the whole period of nine basic school years. This regulation has been prolonged in recent education acts (SFS 1994:1194, SFS 1997:599, Ch. 2, par. 7). Similarly, there is a restriction in the total amount and proportion of mother tongue provision in the various types of hour-based instruction for Finnish/Meänkieli throughout basic schooling. For those children who have chosen an hour-based option, the proportion of hours has been limited to between 5 and 10 per cent of the total number of hours in basic schooling. These limitations have influenced the extent of services and models of instruction that have been possible to offer to parents and minority language children.

In practice, the provision of Finnish/Meänkieli has been inconsistent and variable from one year to the next, both at school and class levels, due to local political or school priorities. The models or types of instruction have also functioned inconsistently, with the result that irrespective of what the model/type of instruction was officially labelled, the type of teaching and class-room activities offered overlapped between the variants as well as within the same variant. This concerns the different class variants in particular.

Among the Tornedalen children with Meänkieli as their mother tongue, few received instruction in Meänkieli before the 1990s. Instead, they were either integrated into mainstream Swedish-only classes or took part in Sweden Finnish classes/hours. The use of Meänkieli as a learning target and code of instruction has increased during the late 1990s.

From the early 1990s, mother tongue instruction in the form of pull-out, hour-based teaching has been removed from the ordinary curriculum. Mother tongue teaching in the public school system, in which Sweden Finnish and Tornedalian children participate, now largely takes place in the late

afternoon, after school time. In 1999/2000 more than one-third (37.4 %; this has increased annually during the 1990s) of all mother tongue teaching in Finnish (including Meänkieli) took place outside the normal school day (63.5 % for all languages nationally). Simultaneously, the mother tongue teachers have lost the chance to integrate their work with every-day school activities and to co-operate with other teachers and school staff.

About 75 per cent of the 289 Swedish municipalities offer some type of mother tongue instruction. Since Finnish/Meänkieli is the largest minority language population, and has the greatest geographical diffusion, these figures apply also to them. However, according to recent data about the municipalities from the National Agency of Education, only about 80 municipalities offer mother tongue teaching in Finnish/Meänkieli (in 2000), and some of these include the eight independent schools and some 8-10 municipalities, in which bilingual classes still exist.

Several mid-size or large cities with many Finnish-speaking pupils are among those municipalities, in which there is a great discrepancy between the number of pupils who receive instruction and those who are entitled to receive it, e.g. Huddinge. Similarly, a handful of municipalities have been criticised for their lack of compliance to other regulations – e.g. information about or organisation of the instruction – regarding other mother tongues than Swedish (for example Malmö, Gothenburg, Norrköping, Uppsala, Västerås).

*public and private*

The roles of private schools and education initiatives were limited in Sweden, up to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1962 the common and compulsory basic school (Grundskolan) was introduced, which centralised education politics and decisions, and made the school system both more coherent and almost without exception a matter of public education. This also concerns secondary education, most vocational and higher (tertiary) education.

The private or more independent schools that existed before 1990 were linked to social class (for example national boarding schools with tuition fees), were confessional (two

Jewish schools), foreign language-related/international (e.g. English Primary, the French or German schools in Stockholm), or ethnic (the Estonian school in Stockholm). Several of these have become independent schools. Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish were not served by this type of schools. An attempt to establish a public Sweden Finnish bilingual school in 1982 in Stockholm was stopped by the local and regional school authorities. The surrounding society and school politicians were not ready to accept such schools until the early 1990s.

Since 1991 both public and private schools have received competition by the independent schools, which are mainly run by parents and school staff, funded by the municipalities and supervised by representatives of the public education system. The funding is estimated according to the average cost per pupil in the public schools, and the grants are thus based on the number of pupils per academic year. Between 70 and 90 per cent of that average cost is transferred to the independent school chosen by the child's parents. The schools are under the supervision of the central National Agency of Education. If an independent school does not follow the guidelines set down by the Agency, the Agency can withdraw its approval. The independent schools may not ask for tuition fees from the parents. Beginning with a handful of schools in 1991, the numbers are increasing rapidly, and independent schools are competing with public schools in most municipalities, especially in urban regions. The earlier development of independent schools had a strong ideological flavour, with Social Democrats supporting the public schools, and Conservatives and Liberals the independent school system. The borders between private, independent and public education are, in general, less clear-cut today.

The independent schools offer specific profiles and specialise in certain fields of interest. These vary according to age of the child, specialisation (environmental, nature, handicraft, math, art, music, languages, sports, social sciences, chess, etc.), pedagogical ideology (Montessori, Steiner/Waldorf schools, etc), confessional/linguistic (e.g.

Islam/Arabic), International (e.g. English), or ethnolinguistic/bilingual (e.g. Sweden Finnish bilingual schools). It is clear now, at the verge of the new millennium, that the independent schools have become the main choice for parents striving for an advanced or balanced type of bilingual education for their children. These bilingual schools have become the backbone of mother tongue instruction as well for Finnish/Meänkieli. At the same rate as the withdrawal of municipal mother tongue/bilingual/home language classes has proceeded, independent schools have been started up. One difference is that such independent schools exist in far fewer municipalities than did the public bilingual municipal classes, among which a handful is still functioning. Attempts to de-construct the independent school system are launched from time to time, mostly by spokesmen within the Social Democratic party.

*administration  
general*

Curricula, national objectives and guidelines for state schooling in Sweden are defined by the parliament (Riksdagen) and the government (Regeringen). The national budget covers funding to the municipalities for their various functions. Within the goals and frameworks defined by parliament and the government, each municipality is free to give priority to the type of education it finds to be in accordance with its own goals. An education plan must be provided for, describing how schooling is to be funded, organised, developed and evaluated. A local working plan should be provided by the director of each school, based on the curricula, national objectives and the education plan. This should take place in consultation with teachers and other staff.

Some special education schools may be arranged by regional authorities (Landstinget), particularly those which are connected to special teaching and health care. Some state schools exist as well for pupils with special needs due to handicaps of various kinds. The state is also in charge of the Saami school. Any discussion about whether the more recently accepted national minorities, the Jews, Roma, and

Sweden Finns and Tornedalians, could be included in such a system has not come up.

*inspection*

The overall responsibility for both the compulsory public and voluntary secondary education systems lies with the National Agency for Education (Skolverket), which succeeded the National Board of Education in 1991. The National Agency has 11 regional offices and a main office in Stockholm. The National Agency of Higher Education (Högskoleverket), also in Stockholm, has the same responsibilities for the higher education.

The National Agency for Education should develop, evaluate, follow up and supervise public, state schooling. The Agency is required to present an overview report on Swedish schooling at three-year intervals for parliament and the government. This forms the basis for the next national development plan for the schools. In addition, during the late 1990s, the new role of the Agency has become one of informing and arguing for the solutions chosen by the government, rather than supervising and correcting the behaviour of the municipalities and schools. The Agency is also supposed to guarantee that the rights of individual pupils are respected.

The National Agency for Education supervises – through its regional inspectors – the outcomes of school policy decisions. Another control function consists of the municipal revision of the economic responsibility, the administrative/practical content in and the municipal organisation of the field of education. The system is basically two-level, with the national/central and local/municipal levels as the main actors.

The administrative and supervising function concerned with Sweden Finnish/Meänkieli and other minority languages lies with the National Agency of Education. During the 1990s these supervising functions have largely been deconstructed, but occasional evaluations have been done. One evaluation study (1997) on the commitment of the municipalities to equal education opportunities for all children in the Swedish school stated that if teaching in the mother tongue of the

child is to be considered a matter of equality, many Swedish municipalities break the target of equal education opportunities. The most recent evaluation (2001) is even more critical to the failure of the municipalities to support minority-language pupils.

*Parental  
involvement*

In general terms, parents are asked to join and support the work of present-day schools. They are invited to follow the everyday work of teachers, and encouraged to participate through parental organisations in the planning and directive work of individual schools. Likewise, students are organised to participate in decisions concerning the planning and work of their schools. Today parents and pupils may form the majority of the school boards of individual schools. One of the main tasks of parents, in addition to providing practical support in connection with special activities, is to lobby among local politicians. One main topic has been how to stop the decrease of funding to the municipal basic school, at the local levels. Parents are not normally involved in the pedagogical aspects of teaching.

According to one study, the parents of Sweden Finnish and Meänkieli-speaking children have, in this respect gone through several phases. First, in the early 1980s, they were invited to assist school staff in the development of bilingual and mother tongue instruction; then they were opposed and rejected, and later ignored as co-operating and supporting partners. From the late 1980s and onward, the general atmosphere among minority mother tongue parents can be summarised by two concepts: disillusion and fatigue. Some sparks of hope have, however, been ignited by the most recent governmental commission for the National Agency (2001; see Perspectives).

## 2

**Pre-school education***general*

Until 1997, pre-school activities were under the supervision of the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare and its municipal boards. In 1998 the responsibility was



transferred to the education authorities throughout the central and local administrative systems. This has decreased the differences in legislation concerning educational and social obligations for infants and school children. It has also eliminated one basic difference regarding the implementation of policies: when under school legislation, children are covered by acts of law, whereas earlier they were more the targets of the social authorities' recommendations for individual families. This concerned, for example, the establishment of mother-tongue groups in pre-schools, which contrary to mother tongue instruction, could not be required by the parents in reference to Swedish law.

Infants can be put into some form of pre-school care from the age of one, but this usually happens during the second or third year of the child's life. This is partly made possible by the parental leave system. This system makes it possible for parents to share one year of parental leave, and to use this time beyond the first year of the child's life.

Parents have the right to require day care of some kind from the municipality, provided they are working or studying. In addition to the full-time pre-school system, which must be arranged by the municipalities from the age of four (since 1998), open pre-schools, family day-nursery homes and part-time groups (4-6 year olds) are available to parents and children. Today both public, i.e. local/municipal, and private alternatives abound. The pre-school system is not free, and the system varies in the municipalities. Fees are usually related to parents' income.

The municipalities must organise preparatory pre-school classes (förskoleklass) for all children from the year of their sixth birthday up until school entrance. Although arrangements vary between the municipalities, the latter activities for 6-years olds are frequently located in or co-ordinated by an ordinary school, but they may also function in co-operation with some other municipal child care.

*minority language  
provision*

Provision for minority children's language support has been less developed in the pre-schools than in the compulsory

basic school. It has often been difficult for parents to get authorities to start and develop mother tongue or bilingual pre-schools, or even such classes within other schools. The use of the mother tongue for minority language children has in general been made possible through the formation of language groups within pre-schools, or the use of individual mother tongue-speaking staff, who work among the regular mainstream groups/classes. This means that a majority of the mono- or bilingual minority children get their first contact with reading and writing through their second language, Swedish. There are no data on how widespread a Swedish as a second language-approach might be for pre-school children. Fewer children have consistently received mother tongue support in pre-school than mother tongue instruction in the compulsory, basic school. During its initial phases, mother tongue instruction for the 6-year olds has also been poorly organised.

Many of the independent schools have decided to establish their own pre-schools. Some municipalities have attempted to stop such pre-schools, by arguing that group sizes are too small. In several cases, concerning both municipal and independent pre-schools, there has been a struggle even when the group size has been large enough according to the requirements of the municipality in question.

### 3 Primary education

#### *general*

Since 1999, the 6-year olds are integrated into the basic school system, in a preparatory pre-school class. The vast majority (about 95 %) of all children thus start their primary schooling during their sixth year. The pre-school class has some pedagogical aims similar to those of the first grade, but its contents overlap with activities at the pre-school level.

The basic school is for children between the years of 7 and 16, that is, it is a 9-year compulsory school. Compulsory basic schooling includes compulsory basic schools, schools for the Saami people of northern Sweden, special schools

(for children with impaired sight, hearing or speech), and compulsory schools for mentally handicapped. Parents may apply for an earlier school start for their children at six years old.

There are about 4,655 public basic schools, six state Saami schools, and more than 360 independent schools (1999). About nine per cent of the independent schools have a language profile, and five are "International". The latter generally offer teaching in English for children who are temporary residents of Sweden.

*the target groups*

About 1.1 million children are at compulsory school age. More than 123,000 have a background other than Swedish (11.9 per cent in 2000). About 13,500 of the children in compulsory school have a "Finnish" background, including both Sweden Finnish and Meänkieli (1999/2000), according to the criterion that the language is an everyday means of communication in their homes. The proportion of students in the public school system who receive mother tongue instruction in Finnish, has decreased from a top level of slightly less than 60 per cent of 40,000 children entitled it (22,000 received instruction) in the early 1980s, to 43 per cent in 1999/2000, when about 5,900 pupils received instruction. The decrease has been dramatic during the 1990s. Among the 5,900 pupils are about 1,500 Sweden Finnish children who participate in bilingual/mother tongue classes in either municipal or independent schools. More than half of this number, i.e. about 1000 to 1,200 pupils, consist of children attending the eight Sweden Finnish independent schools. The class type of mother tongue instruction has decreased from a high of 400 classes some 20 years ago to about one-tenth of that (46 classes) in 1998, and their numbers are shrinking rapidly.

Children of Meänkieli background have not been separated from Sweden Finnish children in school statistics until 2000/2001. It is estimated that 1,200 children receive instruction in Sweden Finnish/Meänkieli in the Tornedalen region annually. Among these, about half of them are likely to have Meänkieli background. This reflects a slow increase

throughout the 1990s for Meänkieli.

*Structure – the complex choices in bilingual education*

In addition to some bilingual (municipal or independent) mother tongue classes, the bulk of the mother tongue teaching takes place as hour-based tuition. The right to opt for mother tongue instruction in Finnish/Meänkieli is valid for all nine years in basic school (since 1994), whereas it has been restricted to the first seven years for other languages.

Finnish and Meänkieli can also, at least in theory, be chosen by the individual pupils in several ways. The pupil may choose Finnish/Meänkieli as a “language choice” (språkval; a maximum of 320 hours of a total of 6,665 instructional hours in basic school). In grades 6 and 7 they can be chosen as so-called second languages (earlier “B” languages), instead of French, German, Spanish or some other international European languages. The mother tongue can also become the “pupil’s choice” (elevens val; maximally 382 hours of 6,665) for one or several hours per week. This can take place earlier than in grade 6. If Finnish/Meänkieli is chosen as a pupil’s choice in grade 6 or later, it is referred to as a third or “C” language. In this case it can be chosen for 320 hours during three to four years. It is also possible to have Finnish and Meänkieli as a subject chosen by the school, which may take them as a “school’s choice” (skolans val; maximally 600 hours), i.e. according to a voluntary subject specialisation of the school. Also in this case it is sometimes referred to as the “C” language. For the two latter choices (which concern the “C” language), the prerequisite is normally that the language can be studied later on in the upper secondary school as well. The latter two types are rare.

The four choices offered depend on the economic situation of the school, availability of teachers, views of teachers and *all* parents of the school, and minimal number of pupils required to form a class (five for Finnish but with no limits for Meänkieli). In all instances the municipality may deny the right for students to receive mother tongue instruction, by failing to make suitable teachers available. The regulations regarding these rights are not well known among

teachers and school staff in general, and this is also the case among the parents of minority language children. In addition, there are several possible interpretations of the texts that state the rights and obligations. Even less well known are the facts, that the municipalities do not have the right according the Education Act, to deny the children and parents the right to receive mother tongue instruction, based on the municipalities poor economy. Nor does the rule of availability of teachers apply fully: it is possible to choose a person as a teacher if there is no trained teacher available, as a last resort.

Statistics on these matters have only been published separately for Finnish/ Meänkieli with regard to "B language as the language choice". Nationally, altogether 133 pupils chose 'Finnish' (not subdivided) as a B language in grades 6 through 9 (1999).

#### *learning materials*

The view of commercial Swedish publishers regarding learning materials for minority languages in Sweden has been that the market is too restricted. Until the early 1980s, materials were produced or initiated through the support of the National Board of Education, but since then materials have either been imported from Finland or developed ad hoc by individual teachers. The use of computers (Internet, e-mail and other types of electronic media), which has seen a major input of funding during the late 1990s, has to some extent increased the availability of Finnish and Meänkieli language materials. The former are basically created in Finland. Meänkieli teaching materials are produced exclusively in Sweden, but in small amounts. As in all types of instruction at the basic school level, mother tongue pupils construct individually or co-construct with their class-mates their own teaching/learning materials, through active fact-finding and presentation of data.

## 4

### Secondary education

#### *general*

After 1995, upper secondary education consists of 16

national programmes, which last for 3 years. Basically vocational and "theoretical" programmes exist in parallel, but they are frequently separated at the local level at different schools.

Almost all of the pupils attending compulsory basic school, about 97 per cent throughout the 1990s, continue directly to upper secondary school, and a vast majority of them complete their upper secondary schooling within three years.

Post-compulsory independent schools exist and can be of two kinds: those corresponding to municipal upper secondary schools, i.e. those which offer upper secondary school study programmes and which receive municipal grants, and those which supplement the main body of upper secondary schooling. Art colleges, technical and craft schools, for example, belong to the latter category. Independent upper secondary schools with an ethnolinguistic focus do not exist today, but it is not until now that the children passing through the compulsory school are becoming old enough to continue to upper secondary schools, since the first independent schools were founded in 1990-1991.

In addition to these there are a number of international schools in Sweden. These are state-aided and are intended primarily for the children of foreign nationals resident in Sweden for shorter periods. An increasing proportion of other children resident in Sweden, those with adequate language skills, are enrolling in international schools.

*structure*

Upper secondary school is divided into 16 three-year national programmes, which are intended to provide a broad education and confer general eligibility for higher education. Examples would be the programmes for construction (subdivided), the arts (subdivided), vehicle engineering (subdivided), business and administration (not subdivided), handicrafts, national science (subdivided), and social sciences (subdivided). In addition to the national programmes there are specially designed individual programmes. One of the reasons that pupils choose the individual programmes is insufficient knowledge of Swedish. Upper secondary school for mentally handicapped students

provides vocational education in national, specially designed or individual programmes in a similar way to the regular upper secondary school. However, only eight national programmes are generally available, all of which concentrate on vocational training. These programmes are of four years' duration.

The new curriculum provides students with a high degree of influence over instructional content and methods. Students are to be consulted for decisions on the school situation in general. The new curriculum also gives the students course options, which correspond to 10 per cent of all courses within the national programmes.

Both Finnish and Meänkieli may be chosen for hour-based mother tongue instruction, or as a so-called third language (earlier "C"-language at the beginner's level). English is the first default foreign language for all from grades 1 to 3 and a second foreign language may be chosen in the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The system makes it possible to build the teaching at upper secondary level upon earlier instruction, as well as to add new languages. Up to seven consecutive stages can be followed, if the language is chosen as a B language at the beginning, or a C-language in the basic school. Finnish/Meänkieli can also be chosen as the pupil's choice (eleven val). The rule for the minimal number of pupils (5) applies. The proportion of pupils choosing Finnish or Meänkieli as a third language has been consistently lower than that of pupils choosing them as a mother tongue. Further, the proportion of pupils choosing Finnish or Meänkieli as a mother tongue at the upper secondary level has been consistently lower than that of pupils choosing them as a mother tongue in basic school.

National programmes with (Sweden) Finnish or Meänkieli as a medium of instruction have not been developed. In the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, some bilingual vocational training in Finnish and Swedish existed locally (e.g. in Olofström, south of Sweden). In Stockholm (first in Skanstull and then in Kärrtorp) a programme at the upper secondary level existed for about 20 years (1976-1982 in Skanstull, 1982-1995 in Kärrtorp). Only students who could

not follow instruction in Swedish were offered this programme. A full national programme focused on economics and the Baltic area, with a bilingual profile, during 5 to 6 years in a municipal upper secondary school in the southern suburb of Botkyrka (Tumba) in Stockholm, from 1994-1995.

## 5 Vocational education

No separate programmes in Finnish or Meänkieli exist. A computer/media education programme has been planned in Pajala, Tornedalen, which would make use of Meänkieli. Earlier, industrial, economic and technical programmes existed in several municipalities. (See Adult education below.)

## 6 Higher education

### *general*

Almost one-fourth of all students continues to higher education within three years of leaving upper secondary school (during the 1990s). Sweden has, however, a comparatively high proportion of older, adult students. They have several possibilities to enter the higher education system. At universities and university colleges, students can take either individual courses or a specified study programme.

There are universities and university colleges at more than twenty urban centres around the country. Some of the more recent university colleges were founded in areas that not only needed institutions of higher education, but also needed a policy instrument to support the regional labour market.

### *structure*

Only at the universities are some courses including Finnish/Sweden Finnish or Meänkieli provided. At the moment, no full study programmes exist which include teaching in these languages. Separate preparations are being made for both Meänkieli and Sweden Finnish to start up study programmes for bilingual (Swedish + either language) journalists/media production in co-operation with two



journalism departments (Mithögskolan for Meänkieli, and Stockholm University for Sweden Finnish).

At five traditional universities teaching in and about Finnish has been offered: in Uppsala since 1894 (at the Department of Finno-Ugrian Languages), in Stockholm since 1930 (Department of Finnish), in Umeå (northern Sweden) since the early 1970s (Department of Finnish and Saami), in Lund (southern Sweden, close to the border with Denmark) since 1947 (Department of Finno-Ugrian Languages), in Gothenburg since the late 1970s (Finnish section). In 1996 a decision was taken to stop providing teaching in (Sweden) Finnish at Gothenburg University. The decision came into effect in 1999. In Lund, the Department of Finno-Ugrian languages will be closed in the fall of 2001, but some teaching will be made available, possibly in co-operation with the Finnish section at Copenhagen University in Denmark.

Higher education in Meänkieli is in its initial phase. Luleå Technical University has a pedagogical faculty and a language section. In the former, some aspects of Meänkieli didactics are included and in the latter there is some language training. Finnish has been taught in Luleå since 1972. Some earlier directions specific to Sweden Finnish or Finnish higher education were organised temporarily during the early 1980s, for economists in Uppsala, and for journalists in Stockholm. For teachers, such study programmes were initiated at several universities and Teacher Training colleges (Lärarhögskolor) in (Sweden) Finnish in the mid-1970s (see Teacher Training below).

In the traditional courses in and about the language, aspects of culture, history, literature etc. are included. Separate courses in 'Sweden Finnish and its society' have been provided since 1991 at Stockholm University, and at Uppsala University since the mid-1990s. Linguistics courses on Sweden Finnish have not been offered.

Courses on Tornedalen Finnish/Meänkieli have been given at Stockholm University, Department of Finnish, since 1991-1992. At Luleå TU, courses about the specific education aspects of Tornedalen have been offered, and

courses in Tornedalen Finnish/Meänkieli are planned. In 1994 a NGO, Academia Tornedaliensis, was certified to start teaching adults in Meänkieli at the public higher education level. This refers to local courses in the Tornedalen region. The bulk of the teaching of Meänkieli takes place at Stockholm University, either locally or as distance teaching, also for Umeå University.

At the universities of Stockholm, Uppsala, Umeå and (until 2000) Lund, it has been possible to study from beginning level to a Ph.D. in linguistic/cultural or literary subjects since the early 1970s. In Stockholm, a special decision was made in 1995 by the faculty of Humanities to make it possible to write the thesis in Finnish. The Department of Finnish at Stockholm University is one of the two largest institutions for higher education in Finnish outside Finland, with about 150-200 students annually, and about 15 Ph. D. students enrolled. More than half of the students have Sweden Finnish backgrounds while about 5 to 10 per cent have Tornedalian backgrounds. At the universities of Uppsala and Umeå, about 50 to 100 students take courses in Finnish.

*teacher training  
general*

In 1997 about 125,000 teachers worked in the various school forms. About 90 per cent had some type of professional teacher training. 60 per cent of the teachers were in the age span of between 35 to 54 years. About 3,700 teachers were involved in the independent basic and upper secondary schools.

*structure*

There will be a general reform of teacher training beginning in the fall of 2001. Earlier, there have been various types of teacher training available, with clear divisions between the different levels of the children: pre-school, lower level (years 1 to 3), middle level (years 4 to 6), upper level (years 7 to 9). This division was later replaced by one with 1-7<sup>th</sup> year and 4-9<sup>th</sup> year teachers. In the earlier forms of teacher training, the teachers of older children were subject teachers, and those of the younger children were classroom teachers. Teachers of upper secondary levels have had their own

training. Since 2000, the eight existing types of teacher training are being merged into one system.

Since the teacher training reform has general support from the majority of the political parties, its main ideas are presented here. At a minimum, all teachers will have the same 60 points (3 semesters) of training/instruction, which can be chosen at different points in time by the student. This part will include aspects that form a common basis for teaching and pedagogical training with a connection to education research. In addition to this, students can choose their special focus and the subjects of their interest (two to four semesters). Finally, one or several semesters can be used for specialisation or broadening the perspective in one subject. For teachers in vocational areas, the minimum amount of education will be 6 semesters. For other teachers, additional semesters will be needed (up to 11 semesters). In the version presented, the new teacher training model opens up renewed possibilities to include the mother tongues, which can become either a 2 to 4- semester subject choice, a specialisation or a complementary course. For the basic school, a 140 point (7 semesters) programme is proposed, and for the upper secondary school, a 160 point education (8 semesters) programme is proposed. A requirement of a high level of competence in both Swedish and the mother tongue is further proposed for mother tongue teachers.

*target groups*

Some training was offered for subject teachers competent in Finnish beginning in 1966. Later, during the period between 1977 and 1988-89, minority language or so-called 'home-language' teachers at most levels were trained. For class teachers of Finnish-speaking children, regular teacher training was available beginning in 1975. For pre-school teachers, regular training existed during about the same period, from 1977 to 1988/1989. The subject of language was first taught by the Teacher Training Colleges (mainly Stockholm and Gothenburg). Beginning in 1977 the linguistic subjects were also taught by the university departments of languages (Finnish and Finno-Ugrian). The university language courses have retained an outline up to now

that has been preparatory in nature for teaching in basic and upper secondary school.

Since the decision in 1988-89 to demand full formal competence in both Swedish and Finnish for teachers, the training of mother tongue teachers in Finnish and other mother tongues has, in practice, ceased to exist. Teachers from Finland are frequently hired when a need occurs. Between 1975 and 1989, about 1,400 teachers were trained, many of whom have been transferred to subjects other than Finnish-medium teaching and to mainstream classes.

A dramatic drop in the amount of pupils, combined with other factors such as the non-availability of instruction, since the municipalities have failed to offer it, and parents' unwillingness to put their children into highly unstable and short-term instruction, have made the labour market for teachers drop as well. Many former teachers of Finnish have moved to Finland. Retirement has been an additional factor in decreasing the number of Finnish-medium teachers.

## 7

### Adult education

#### *general*

Young persons are entitled to enter upper secondary school up to the age of 20. If they have failed to complete their basic or voluntary upper secondary school by that age, they can choose between different types of municipal adult education. The Swedish system which provides an opportunity for adults to either complete or complement their formal education at basic and upper secondary levels, is based on the Danish tradition (Grundtvigian ideology). The Swedish system comprises regular adult education (Komvux) and education for mentally handicapped (Särvux). The Komvux programmes comprise basic adult education which corresponds to compulsory and voluntary education, and Särvux programmes corresponding to the courses offered by compulsory and upper secondary school for mentally handicapped.

The National Schools for Adults (SSV) supplement adult education for students who cannot study at the place where

they normally live. Part of the instruction is in the form of distance teaching. In addition, students visit SSV schools at regular intervals for tutored instruction. There are two National Schools for Adults, one in Norrköping and the other in Härnösand.

Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) has the task of conferring knowledge of the Swedish language and of Swedish society. The municipality has an obligation to offer SFI to all newly arrived adult immigrants. These studies are organised in different ways in the municipalities, and may also be organised by commercial companies on a sub-contract basis.

*target groups*

No special provisions are offered for pupils or adults with a mother tongue other than Swedish, other than the courses at SFI. Provision of some courses for Finnish-speakers is made outside the compulsory school system, in the so-called folk high schools (Folkhögskolor; or 'community colleges'). Two of these, in Axevalla and Haparanda, are for Finnish/Sweden Finnish, and there is one for Meänkieli students, in Övertorneå/Matarenki. Additional ones have been started for example in the Gothenburg area. The folk high schools may give some or many of their courses in Swedish, since they are targeting not only speakers of Finnish or Meänkieli but also other people living in the region, as well as people living in more remote areas in Sweden. Some of the courses offer specialisation in specific professions or fields, like the media, computer literacy, theatre, creative writing etc. In some other folk high schools separate courses in and about Finnish may occur, for example in Stockholm. The folk high schools are administered by independent foundations, which receive their basic funding from the state. They may also have other supporting organisations and public administrative levels, such as the provincial or municipal administrations. In addition, the non-governmental organisations for Sweden Finns and Meänkieli speakers, respectively, may contribute with some funding and other types of support.

In addition to the courses offered by the universities, which

adults may take with the target of becoming professionally trained in Finnish/Meänkieli, language courses are offered by an extensive system of evening courses, arranged by private, corporate (unions), or cultural (ideologically based, 'folkbildningsorganisationer') organisations and centres. Such courses usually take place in the evenings and are paid for by the students themselves.

## 8

### Educational research

Occasional projects and Ph.D. studies in different departments at teacher training colleges, as well as the language/linguistic and social science departments at the universities, make up the bulk of research in this field. Many of these projects have received funding – in competition with other research – from national research councils. Some research is funded by or initiated by the National Agency of Education. Teacher training colleges have only occasionally, if at all, participated in mother tongue instruction research.

Some early research concerned the issue of inferred semi-lingualism. An extensive part of the research has addressed the learning of the second language, Swedish. Other early areas were what type of education model best correlates with positive identity development and active bilingualism. Organisational aspects, and the results of organisational models on achievement in language and other school subjects, were also highlighted in earlier studies. The share of Finnish and Meänkieli in this type of research, and funding for it, have decreased, beginning in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

In addition to straightforward research, some development programmes of a more applied type have existed. For Sweden Finnish, and to some extent for Meänkieli, a network of teachers, school staff and some researchers was created (PUFF(I); Pedagogisk utvecklingsverksamhet för finskspråkiga elever) during the mid-1980s. The purpose was also to invite the municipalities which had a specific interest in the Finnish-speaking groups to apply for funding

regarding the development of teaching in Finnish as well as bilingual education in Finnish and Swedish. Over time, 18 municipalities showed active interest in the PUFFI-network. It was funded by the National Board of Education (later the Agency) between 1985 and 1998. For teachers of Finnish and Meänkieli, the PUFFI-network was a main source of exchange of ideas and experience among teachers.

For Meänkieli children, evaluations of educational experiments within the PUFFI-framework indicated that they did better in school and had more positive identity development when taught in Meänkieli, and not Standard Finnish, which had been the case earlier. Similar results have been reported as a general outcome in the evaluations made for Sweden Finnish children receiving mother tongue instruction, both in municipal and independent schools.

Some research has also been funded by sources external to Sweden, for example by Nordic and bilateral (Sweden-Finland) research councils, by UNESCO and various Finnish higher education departments as well as by Finnish research centres and councils.

## 9

### Prospects

#### *Meänkieli*

For Meänkieli the future looks brighter and more positive today than it did only some ten years ago. One may ask, however, whether it is too late for the language to be transmitted to young speakers. The last young speakers to use Meänkieli in their everyday in-group interaction were a group of boys who finished basic school at the end of the 1980s. Despite more open parental support and some active political and education support in the five Meänkieli-speaking municipalities, the outcome is still threatening to any stable maintenance of Meänkieli. Much of the societal support comes from adult activists, who reclaim public space for their language, and who are very much encouraged by the official Swedish recognition of Meänkieli as a regional minority language in 2000. Books are now written and translated into Meänkieli, the media are getting

increasing, though comparatively little, support for broadcasting in the language, and theatre plays are written and performed in Meänkieli.

Among the future prospects for Meänkieli – following its new minority language status – is a programme for training pre-school teachers in Meänkieli (and Finnish), which is being planned presently. This may prove to be one way to re-establish language support for the younger generations.

*Sweden Finnish*

Sweden Finnish in the remainder of the country is moving towards language shift to Swedish, in a similar manner as has been the case during the earlier seven or eight centuries. Despite the fact that Finnish – and varieties of it, under different names – is now accepted as a part of Swedish national heritage, it seems that one of the factors that has earlier helped it, namely periodic increases of migration from Finland, will not be able to rescue it this time. A backlash in societal support for Sweden Finns has concerned not only education, but also most major cultural and social domains. On the other hand, though fewer Sweden Finnish children have learned Finnish since the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, it seems that more of them have acquired better productive oral and literacy skills during recent years. This is in part due to the independent school system. Today, the independent school system is the main means by which Sweden Finnish is being transmitted, and will remain so, unless some dramatic effects can be achieved through the new minority language status. In fact, in 2000 the National Agency was given the task of evaluating minority language instruction in the Swedish school system. This report has confirmed the negative development for both Sweden Finnish and Meänkieli, and the role played in it by the municipalities. In addition, the status of the Agency is at stake in this process, since an important point will be whether or not it will regain some of its earlier power to sanction. Following the official Swedish view on the minority language charter, this could become one of the implied “first steps” in a new minority language policy.

This gives us some hope for the future, but it still means that



the future of the languages is dependent on the maintenance or growth of the number of speakers. The independent school system is continuously threatened, because it is seen as a devastating competitor to the municipal school system in general. The present situation also means that the number of municipalities where positive language development can take place, has been dramatically reduced and now covers the Tornedalen border area, some Baltic shore towns, the capital Stockholm region, the Gothenburg region and some towns around Lake Mälaren, west of Stockholm. This is the backbone of the Sweden Finnish 'homeland'.

*general development*

A general picture appears in this process of language assimilation, namely a clear discrepancy between an official, mostly nation-level, basically supportive minority and language policy, and its implementation and the execution of laws at local levels. This is not only a recent characteristic, but confirms earlier treatment of Finnish/Meänkieli throughout Swedish history. In the summary discussion about the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages, the Swedish government merely states that, among other things, information about minorities among majority children and society will be improved, that the mother tongue instruction has had clear flaws, and that its development will be evaluated.

Even if some signs of improvement are at hand, the prospects are still not exceedingly positive. Sweden Finns and Tornedalians are awaiting concrete examples of progress, especially within the education field.

When discussing mother tongues in the Swedish education context, the issue is formally reduced to a question of bilingualism in cases where several languages would be involved; it is explicitly stated in the Education Act (SFS 1997) that one cannot have more than one mother tongue. The decision/rule is not based on scientific argumentation. A child with one Swedish-speaking and one Finnish-speaking parent, for example, who chooses mother tongue Swedish, may have difficulties in requiring mother tongue Finnish provision. Therefore, the possibilities discussed above



**Mother tongue instruction:**

*Mother tongue classes* (-----)-----•(-----•)

*Hour-based mother tongue instruction* (-----)-----•-----•

**Individual choices:**

*Language choice* -----•(-----•)

*Pupil's choice* (-----•)(-----•)

*School's choice* (-----)(-----•)

*Language as an individual subject option* (-----•)

**Remedial instruction**

(subject support in Swe Fi, Meänkieli)

(-----)-----•(-----•)

Figure 1. Eligibility of (Sweden) Finnish/Meänkieli as a minority language and as a subject in pre-school, basic and upper secondary school in Sweden

( ) = rare

In theory, the opportunities are considerable, but in practice, the options are not fulfilled to any great extent. This is mainly due to administrative and attitudinal resistance to the mother tongues in general and due the low prestige of Finnish/Meänkieli in particular. The failure of the municipalities to inform and to offer the different types of instruction also depend on the unclear formulations in the legal texts.

*discussion on statistics and a summary*

In general, it has become more difficult to receive statistical information about students with specific mother tongues, and especially if a subdivision is made between Finnish/Meänkieli as mother tongues. Neither Statistics Sweden nor the National Agency of Education published figures regularly for these languages during the 1990s. During the winter of 2001, some new data have been presented.

*pre-school*

In the most recent statistics available, data on the two Finnic

languages in question are generally not separated. The Sweden Finnish/Meänkieli children can be estimated to comprise about 10 per cent of all children with a mother tongue other than Swedish. Of the 372,027 children in the Swedish pre-school system (1999), 11.7 per cent are children with a mother tongue other than Swedish (37,432; 1999). About 13.5 per cent (5,049) receive some type of mother tongue support. The proportion decreases at the age of 6.

The proportion of children receiving mother tongue support is slightly higher in independent/private pre-schools than in municipal ones. If somewhat less than 10 per cent corresponds to the proportion of Sweden Finnish/Meänkieli-speaking children, about 400 are expected to receive support in Finnish/Meänkieli at pre-school age today.

The 6-year olds are not included here. Presumably as a result of the preparatory pre-school classes having existed for only two years, the proportion of children receiving mother tongue instruction is the lowest of all categories, 3.7 per cent for all children with an other mother tongue than Swedish. No statistics are available for Finnish/Meänkieli.

*compulsory basic school*

Sweden Finnish (including Meänkieli) is the third largest mother tongue group among basic school children in Sweden: 13,530 in 1999 (which is one thousand less than in 1998) of 123,057 children with other mother tongues than Swedish, were entitled to receive mother tongue instruction. The criterion for entitlement is whether or not the mother tongue is used as a daily means of interaction. After having been the outstanding group in size throughout the bulk of the twentieth century, the Finnish/Meänkieli-speaking group has been surpassed, first by the Arabic-speaking groups; taken together Arabic speakers became the largest linguistic group in the mid-1990s, represented by 16,962 children in 1999. Also, in 1999, children with different languages from the former Yugoslavia as mother tongues (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) became the second largest group (14,078 children). The total number of children at the basic school age is about 1.1 million, of which the 123,057

non-Swedish speakers make up 11.9 per cent. The Finnish-speaking children (Sweden Finnish and Meänkieli) altogether make up about 1.3 per cent of all Swedish primary school children. Their share of all bilingual children has gone down from about 50 per cent to about 10 per cent in the past 20 years.

The mono-/bilingual Finnish-speaking children receive the lowest proportion of mother tongue instruction out of the 10 largest language groups in the public school, at 43 per cent (52 per cent for all). All in all, about 120 languages have been reported as mother tongues among the children in the Swedish basic school during recent years. The Finnish speakers also have the lowest proportion of Swedish as a second language instruction out of the 10 largest language groups, together with English and Polish-speaking children, at about 26 per cent (48 per cent for all). Both figures reflect a continuous decrease in knowledge of and ability in Finnish/Meänkieli, as well as an increasing competence in Swedish as a second language or as a second mother tongue. The general trend during the years between 1991 and 1999 was that the number of children with mother tongues other than Swedish in the Swedish school system increased, but clearly fewer received mother tongue instruction. This has been interpreted as a result of both an economic recession and an ideological shift, which set in during the early 1990s. The same tendency is valid for Swedish as a second language instruction during the same period; that is, there is a higher total number of pupils and less instruction in Swedish as a second language proportionally. Swedish as a second language is compulsory for those in need of it, but mother tongue instruction is not. Recent proposals for providing a stronger support for the mother tongue which have taken place in various political and educational discourses, have not left any positive traces as yet in the educational statistics.

*upper secondary  
education*

Mother tongue instruction is not specified for Finnish/Meänkieli at the upper secondary level in the most recent statistics. In 1999, 305,579 students studied in upper secon-

dary school. Based on earlier conclusions above and elsewhere, it is estimated that about 400 pupils have chosen Finnish/Meänkieli as a subject or for hour-based instruction, in upper secondary school. This may, however be a high estimation.

**Levels, age**

Students	Pre-school, Totals (1-6)*	Basic compulsory school, totals (7-16)	Upper secondary School, totals (17-19)	Totals
Number <b>1989</b>	4530	26,120	4538	35,188
% receiving MTS or MTI	60 (N= 2718)	62 (N= 16,194)	40 (N= 1815)	59 (N= 20,727)
Number <b>1999</b>	4000 ?	13,530	4000 ?	21-22,000 ?
% receiving MTS or MTI	10 ? (N= 400 ?)	43 (N= 5865)	10 ? (N= 400 ?)	20 ? (N= 6700 ?)

Table 1: Figures of students with Finnish/Meänkieli as a mother tongue and the proportion who received mother tongue instruction.

MTS = mother tongue support in pre-school

MTI = mother tongue instruction in basic and upper secondary school

\*Six-year olds are not included for 1999. No statistics available.

?=uncertain

Table 2: General outline of the Swedish public education system

age	level of education	type of education provider	mother tongue provision
2e+07	Upper secondary	Municipal, State, Independent, (Private)	Mother tongue hours (1-2/week), pupil's choice, third or "C" language, language as subject option, remedial instruction
2e+16			Mother tongue/bilingual classes, mother tongue hours (1-2 /week), second or "B" language, language choice, third or "C" language, pupil's choice, school's choice, [most choices are 1-2 hours/week], remedial instruction
	Compulsory basic school	Municipal schools, State schools (e.g. Saami, special- etc), Independent (publicly funded) (Private) Municipal, Independent, (Private), (State)	(Mother tongue support), remedial instruction
6	Preparatory pre-school class	Municipal, Independent, Private, (State)	(Mother tongue classes/groups), (Mother tongue support)
54	Pre-school		
	Pre-school, Day nursery, part-time groups, family day nursery, open pre-school	Municipal, Independent, Private, (State)	(Mother tongue groups), (Mother tongue support)

Block letters = dominant/central representations

Education for children and adolescents (data from 1998):

Pre-school class (from 1998-01-01): 113,910 pupils

Municipal 110,906, private/independent 3,004

Basic compulsory school: 1,010,227 pupils

Municipal 979,374, private/ independent schools 36,682,

State (Saami school) 171

Special school: 809 pupils



Särskola: *11,585 pupils*

Municipal 11,278, independent schools 293, regional 14

Upper secondary education: *309,143 students*

Municipal 284,989, independent schools 10,916, regional 13,238,

Separate Upper secondary education: *4,510 students*

Municipal 4,112, independent schools 241, regional 157

Swedish schools abroad: *1,212 pupils*

State schools 1,212

**Adult education (data from 1998):**

Komvux: *237,510 students*

Municipal 231,674, independent schools 5,836,

Särvux: *4,137 students*

Municipal 4,137

SSV: *8,457 students*

State 8,457

SFI (Swedish for immigrants): *20,460 students*

Municipal 20,460

Education system Sweden  
(Eurydice)

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**[www.digitaldemokrati.nu](http://www.digitaldemokrati.nu)** (Minority issues home page, by earlier EU-project, Developing Digital Democracy, at the Department of Finnish, Stockholm University. Connected to ISPO, Brussels)  
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**www.scb.se** (Statistics Sweden)

**www.skolverket.se** (National Agency for Education, Stockholm)

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**www.svekom.se** (Svenska Kommunförbundet, Central organisation for the Swedish Municipalities)

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- Mercator-Media*            **[www.aber.ac.uk/~merc/](http://www.aber.ac.uk/~merc/)**  
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- European Union*            **<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/langmin.html>**  
At the website of the European Union an explanation is given of its support for regional or minority languages.
- Council of Europe*        **<http://conventions.coe.int/>**  
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- Eurydice*                    **[www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org)**  
Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site provides information on all European education systems and education policies.
- EBLUL*                        **[www.eblul.org/](http://www.eblul.org/)**  
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