

# Summary

## The Commission's remit

The remit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaiset (the Commission) was to investigate and review the assimilation policy pursued by the Swedish State and the Church of Sweden in relation to Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaiset (the minority) during the 1800s and 1900s. The remit has also entailed disseminating information to increase knowledge about the minority and its historical experiences. In accordance with the remit set out in this report, the Commission proposes further actions that can contribute to redress and promote reconciliation.

Personal accounts were a central part of the Commission's investigation. The Commission carried out the investigation by interviewing 166 individuals about their experiences of the assimilation policy, along with a small number of people with expertise in areas that have been subjects of the Commission's investigation. The Commission also commissioned 12 research reports on various themes and conducted searches in archives and other material. The Commission has made extensive efforts to reach out to the minority and inform a broad cross-section of the group about the Commission's work. Through 'coffee meetings', the Commission informed the minority about the possibility of being interviewed and through *toinen kuppi* (second cup) meetings, the Commission secured support for the investigation and potential proposals for actions to promote reconciliation and contribute to redress. The work was carried out in close cooperation and dialogue with the minority.

## **Sweden's obligations concerning national minorities' rights**

The Instrument of Government of Sweden (Chapter 1, Article 2) stipulates that the opportunities of the Sami people, and ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities to preserve and develop a cultural and social life of their own shall be promoted. Sweden has acceded to a number of international conventions concerning the rights of minorities. The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child deal with, among other things, the right of minorities to use their language and to practise their culture. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities aims to protect national minorities as well as individuals who belong to national minorities. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages aims to protect national minority languages. Sweden has been criticised in the Council of Europe's monitoring of the implementation of the Framework Convention for not fulfilling its undertakings under the Convention, including the right to home language tuition.

The Act on National Minorities and Minority Languages (2009:724) states that municipalities and other public authorities are obliged to protect and promote the languages and cultures of Sweden's minorities. In particular areas called administrative areas for Finnish, Meänkieli and Sami, the municipalities are obliged to organise preschool and elderly care in these languages. The objective of the Government's policy on the national minorities is to protect the national minorities, enhance their opportunities to exert influence, and help keep long-established minority languages alive. The Sami Parliament and the County Administrative Board in Stockholm have the Government's mandate to monitor developments in Sweden's national minorities policy annually. Their latest report on developments in the policy in 2022 concludes that the Government's objective is far from being achieved.

## **Other examples of truth and reconciliation commissions**

The Commission has been tasked with monitoring the work of truth and reconciliation commissions in other countries. The Commission to Investigate the Norwegianization Policy and Injustice against the Sami and Kvens/Norwegian Finns has reviewed the Norwegian State's

policies and rights violations. The Commission presented its final report in June 2023.

The remit of the ongoing Finnish Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sami People is to review the State's policy of assimilation in relation to the Sami people and violations of their rights.

The Swedish Truth Commission for the Sami People that was appointed in November 2022, has been tasked with investigating and reviewing past policies implemented in relation to the Sami and their consequences for the Sami people.

The Commission has also followed the work of truth and reconciliation commissions in Canada and Greenland. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada investigated how indigenous peoples (the Inuit, First Nations, and Métis) were forced to attend Indian Residential Schools to be Christianised and integrated. The Commission's work resulted in a list of Calls to Action addressed to specific actors, including non-government actors.

The Greenland Reconciliation Commission was set up to highlight the impact of the colonial era on the society in Greenland today. This was largely an internal process in Greenland, without the involvement of the Danish Government. However, a new commission of inquiry on relations between Denmark and Greenland since 1945 is in the process of being appointed, based on terms of reference adopted in June 2023.

In Sweden, a number of similar investigations have been carried out charting historical mistreatment of different groups, including mistreatment of Roma and violations of their rights (*Vitboken*) and a commission of inquiry into neglect of children's welfare (*Vanvårdsutredningen*). A reconciliation process between the Church of Sweden and the Sami has been going on since the 1990s and the Church of Sweden has initiated a process of redress for Tornedalians, Kvens and Lantalaïset.

The Commission has learned lessons from the work of other Commissions and chose to invite the minority to consultations at an early stage in order to secure their support for the Commission's remit and generate inclusiveness.

## Historical background

Finnish-speaking people have a long history in northern Scandinavia. Sources show that there was a Finnish-speaking population in the northern Gulf of Bothnia area in the 800s. Until the Middle Ages, this minority mainly supported themselves by fishing, hunting and livestock farming, and later also agriculture.

When Sweden lost present-day Finland to Russia in 1809, the Finnish-speaking peoples in the Torne Valley became a new kind of minority. At first, there were no major changes in the State's attitude towards this minority. The 1842 Elementary Education Statute did not restrict the language of instruction, which meant that both Sami and Finnish were initially used in tuition in the area in which the minority lived and worked (the minority area). However, concurrently with a growing nationalist ideology, the Swedish language became increasingly important, and in 1888 four elementary schools which required tuition in Swedish only were established in the minority area. Tornedalen Folk High School and Tornedalen Library were used to disseminate the Swedish language and culture. The Church of Sweden had a central role in disseminating the Swedish language and culture through the school system.

The *arbetsstugor* that were established in 1903 were a form of residential work cottages to which children were removed from the age of seven. The reasons given could be that they were living in impoverished circumstances, or that they lived a long way from the nearest school. One of the aims was to get the children to adopt the Swedish language and Swedish culture. This was done by prohibiting them from speaking their minority language. An underlying aim to Swedify the minority was a feature of all education provided in the minority area. Schooling became an effective tool in the assimilation policy.

There were also other factors that contributed to the State's negative and disparaging view of the minority. In the 1800s, the Laestadian revival movement spread among the Finnish-speaking population. Laestadianism, whose doctrinal language was Finnish, was seen as an alien element in the Church of Sweden. The racial biology ideas that emerged in the early 1900s meant that the Finno-Ugric group was considered to be at a lower level of development and was seen as a threat to the 'Swedish race'. The nationalist currents in

Finland and the criticism of Sweden's minority policy by Finnish nationalists were perceived as a threat in Sweden. For a long time, the minority area was also associated with a military threat, first from Russia and then from the Soviet Union.

In summary, there were multiple concurrent factors that contributed to the assimilation policy. After the Second World War, however, conservative nationalist values started being seen as more and more alien, and in the late 1950s the assimilation policy began to be criticised as well. The prohibition on speaking Finnish in schools was lifted, and the minority eventually got access to home language tuition. In connection with this, and as a reaction to the assimilation policy, the minority began to organise. The National Association of Swedish Tornedalians – Tornionlaaksolaiset (STR-T) was founded in 1981 to preserve the language and culture of the minority. The minority declared Meänkieli its own language in 1988, and in 1999, Meänkieli was recognised as a national minority language.

## The Commission's approach and method in the investigation

The Commission's work involved collecting and analysing interviews, research reports, archival material and other material. The Commission included the minority in its investigation from the start. In doing so, the Commission needed to take various ethical principles into consideration. For example, interviewees have given their informed consent to be interviewed and have been allowed to remain anonymous. The interview material remains confidential.

During the coffee meetings, the Commission initially provided information about its remit and invited individuals to be interviewed about their experiences of the assimilation policy. In a subsequent series of *toinen kuppi* (second cup) meetings, the Commission secured support for the investigation and the orientation of the proposals for further actions for reconciliation and redress. In addition, the Commission held other meetings and seminars aimed in part at disseminating knowledge about the minority and the Commission's work.

The Commission conducted 160 interviews with 166 individuals. The sex distribution among the interviewees was 47 percent women and 53 percent men. The youngest person interviewed was born in

1993 and the oldest in 1925. The majority of the interviewees were born in the 1950s or earlier.

The interviewees' accounts were one of the main sources for the Commission's investigation. Interviews in which painful memories are recalled can elicit physical as well as psychological reactions, and therefore the interviewees were offered professional psychosocial support.

The Commission also conducted a small number of interviews with people with expertise in areas that have been subjects of the Commission's investigation. In order to produce research that would shed light on the minority's relationship with the State, the Commission commissioned twelve research reports in different thematic areas. The Commission also carried out searches in archives.

## **Consequences of the assimilation policy on language, culture and identity**

The Swedification policy meant that the minority's language, culture and identity were disparaged and belittled, made shameful, and rendered invisible. The consequence was that Meänkieli was used less and less, and was passed on to the next generation to only a limited extent.

Generations born in the late 19th or early 20th century were mainly Finnish speakers with varying proficiency in Swedish. Generations born between 1920 and 1950 often have or have had proficiency in both languages, while subsequent generations have more and more limited proficiency in their minority language.

As a result of assimilation, many of today's parents are not proficient in the language and thus cannot pass it on to their children. The children have thus also lost some of their cultural heritage and belonging to the group.

The interviewees talk about experiences of loss of belonging within the minority group. Some state that they themselves do not feel that they fully belong to the minority because they have lost the culture and language. Many of the interviewees connect the disparagement of Meänkieli to the disparagement and belittlement of minority individuals and the group as a collective. Others talk about the minority having been rendered invisible to the community at large, and say

that there is limited knowledge in the wider community about the minority, the area from which it originates, and its history.

Several highlight the implications of the suppression of traditional occupations and livelihoods. Many also believe that there is a culture of silence surrounding their own cultural heritage. Names are a prominent marker of identity and more specifically changes to Swedish-sounding names. It is worth mentioning that some people are now switching back to their original names. Some say that they have been discriminated against in education programmes or when serving in government agencies and, as a consequence, their trust in government agencies and the State has been damaged.

## **Education and upbringing**

### **Elementary school**

To expand the education system and assimilate the population in the minority area, State-funded elementary schools were established in 1888 requiring that Swedish be used as the language of instruction. From Finnish having been used for tuition, a change was made at this time to Swedish-only education, which meant that Finnish-speaking children were required to use Swedish from the first day of school, not only during class time, but in practice even during breaks.

Many interviewees who attended school in the first half of the 20th century stated that they did not know Swedish at all when they started elementary school. Some say that they were punished if they spoke Finnish. The fact that Finnish-speaking pupils were taught in a language they did not know, i.e. Swedish, created inequality in the learning situation for these pupils in relation to the Swedish-speaking pupils.

The prohibition on the use of Finnish only ended in the 1950s. Two decades later, in 1977, the right to receive tuition in one's mother tongue was introduced in schools via home language tuition.

### **Arbetsstugor (residential work cottages)**

The first arbetsstugor in Norrbotten were established in 1903 to provide poor children with food, shelter and schooling. But their purpose was also to bring up children in the spirit of nationalism. In contrast to the children's home environments, the *arbetsstugor* were intended to promote 'cultural refinement', which meant that the children were required not only to speak Swedish but also absorb Swedish culture.

*Stiftelsen Norrbottens läns arbetsstugor* (the Norrbotten County *arbetsstugor* foundation) was responsible for the residential work cottages and was dependent on central government funding. The role of the Church of Sweden also became significant, partly because the priest sat on many of the bodies that governed the *arbetsstugor*.

The headmistresses were responsible for the day-to-day running of the *arbetsstugor*. Everyday life in the *arbetsstugor* was marked by fixed routines, with scheduled hours for daywork and school work.

The accounts of the interviewees bear witness to many having felt 'abandoned' at the *arbetsstugor*. Many of those who were at an *arbetsstuga* during the first half of the 20th century report that violence, rights violations and mistreatment took place. For many, it was an abrupt severance from the environment that they came from. Prohibitions on speaking Finnish were common. However, some interviewees had more positive experiences of the *arbetsstuga*.

### **Tornedalen Folk High School and Tornedalen Library**

Tornedalen Folk High School and Library both played a central role in the Swedification of the minority area. Tornedalen Folk High School, founded in 1899, offered edification for the population in the minority area'.

Tuition in Swedish was more extensive at Tornedalen Folk High School than at folk high schools in the rest of the country. Tornedalen Library was established as part of Tornedalen Folk High School in 1928, with the aim of spreading Swedish language books in the minority area and strengthening the population's ties to Sweden and all things Swedish. For example, according to its articles of association, the Library was to only offer the local inhabitants Swedish books. It was not until the 1950s that books in Finnish were permitted in this library.



## **Traditional livelihoods as identity and cultural heritage**

Besides agriculture, forestry, hunting, fishing, handicrafts and berry and mushroom picking were occupations that were all needed for survival. Each household was basically self-sufficient until the 1930s in terms of food, clothing, handicrafts, energy and labour.

Large quantities of animal feed were needed for agriculture. This was made possible in part by the hay-mires (mowable bogs). Even when agriculture was modernised, the hay-mires continued to be important for hunting and fishing. There is still discontent among the minority concerning the State's enclosure of the enclaves in 1921.

Many interviewees express a close relationship with nature and the importance of places in the landscape. At the same time, many say that they have lost their rights to land, forest, hunting, fishing and reindeer herding. In their view, the minority's history in the minority area needs highlighting, but they are also of the view that the minority must be able to influence matters relating to land and natural resources.

Many of their accounts bear witness to reindeer herding having been and still being an important part of daily life and identity for the minority. Several interviewees state that they have a reindeer mark or have relatives who have or have had a reindeer mark. Historically, reindeer were of great importance, among other things as draught animals to bring home the hay from the mires. However, reindeer herding has become an exclusive right for those who are members of a Sami village. The minority's limited opportunities to engage in reindeer herding, and the rights associated with reindeer herding such as hunting and fishing, are taken up in many of the interviewees' accounts.

## **The Church of Sweden's responsibility for assimilation**

Historically, the Church of Sweden has borne a great responsibility for general education, and for a long time religion was a big part of school education. It is therefore difficult to distinguish between the role of the Church of Sweden and the role of the education system.

From about 1560 to 1870, the Church of Sweden was marked by a permissive attitude to minority languages, its focus being more on religious practice. At the end of the 19th century, the Church of

Sweden adopted a nationalist stance and, via the diocese of Luleå, pursued a policy of assimilation of the minority in schools until the 1930s.

The Church of Sweden also played a role in racial biology examinations in that priests were the intermediaries for getting into contact with people in their parishes who were then subjected to racial biology examinations. Priests also gave racial biologists access to cemeteries, from which human remains were exhumed and removed.

The Church of Sweden initially opposed the Laestadian revival movement, which was perceived as a threat to its position. Because Finnish was used in the sermons of the revival movement and was a central part of its religious life, the movement contributed to the preservation of Finnish. The revival movement thus gained a strong foothold in the minority area.

The State and the Church of Sweden had a shared interest in controlling the minority and the minority area for nationalistic, defence policy, economic and racial biology ends. Representatives of the Church of Sweden enjoyed great authority and trust among the people and thus acted from a position of great power.

### **Racial biology, the collection of human remains and a feeling of inferiority**

Racial biology was based on a racist notion that there were inferior races with undesirable genetic traits that could lead to the “degeneration” of the Swedish population. In contrast to assimilation, the purpose of racial biology was to exclude and differentiate a group from the majority group – not to induce an ethnic group to adapt themselves to the majority culture.

Many of the people who were supporters of the assimilation policy were also proponents of racial biology. The role that language played in racial biology has, however, not been clarified, nor how racial biology impacted the Swedification of the minority.

In the interviews conducted by the Commission, it emerged that very few had themselves been subject to racial biology examinations. However, several stated that they had heard of racial biology examinations or that their own relatives or family members had told them about being subjected to such examinations. The Commission’s in-

vestigation has found evidence showing that research based on racial biology was occurring as late as in the 1950s.

Racial biology examinations were not only carried out on living persons. There are also examples of measurements of deceased persons' skulls. STR-T, in collaboration with several actors, has worked to ensure that human remains are repatriated to their native soil and buried there. A reburial of 23 skulls exhumed from Akamella cemetery for the purpose of racial biology research is planned in the summer of 2024. This is the first repatriation of human remains that also concerns the Meänkieli-speaking population.

Racial biology's notions and ideas, and the particulars of racial biology examinations, have served to reinforce the minority's sense of shame about their identity, language and culture. Even for those who were not examined themselves, the knowledge that racial biology examinations had occurred was distasteful and shocking.

## **The minority's work to preserve their language and culture**

The minority has opposed or questioned the Swedification process in various ways and worked to have their rights respected. During the first part of the 20th century, however, the State's assimilation policy was powerful, and the minority underwent a language replacement process in which Swedish increasingly replaced it as the dominant language. By and large there was a prevailing acceptance of the assimilation policy among the minority at the time, and no collective ethnopolitical organising occurred. However, there were individuals in leadership positions who advocated and promoted bilingualism in various ways, for example in school education.

Since the Second World War, the minority have become mainly bilingual except for the younger generation, who have become increasingly Swedish-speaking with limited knowledge of Meänkieli. During this period, voices started being heard that not only promoted bilingualism but also questioned the Swedification process. Various initiatives to promote language and culture were undertaken, for example within the framework of Nordic co-operation and with the aim of promoting literature in the minority language.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the minority's mobilisation and strategy changed, becoming more active, grassroots, and above all

ethnopolitical with the formation of STR-T. The language used in the work to preserve the minority's language and culture shifted from Swedish to Meänkieli as well. The minority declared Meänkieli its own language on 27 February 1988, and in 1999 Meänkieli was recognised as a national minority language.

In the 2000s, the minority formed more organisations, such as the Association of Swedish Kvens and Lantalaiset and *Meänmaa*. *Met Nuoret* was founded in 2014 and is an association for young people who feel a connection to Meänkieli and the culture and history of the original language area. A new generation emerged who are mainly 'ummikko', i.e. people who do not speak Meänkieli but who identify with the language, and showed that a person can identify with the minority even if they do not speak the language.

## The Commission's assessment of the accountability issue

The Commission has needed to consider a number of circumstances deriving from an assessment of events that took place in the past. One dilemma is that it is difficult to distinguish between the actions of the State and the Church of Sweden, because the Church of Sweden was part of the State. Another dilemma concerns the extent to which it is possible to hold a contemporary actor accountable for historical injustices that affected an ethnic group in another time and under different circumstances – known as the *retroactivity dilemma*. The Commission has not been tasked with considering accountability in individual cases nor financial compensation to individuals, and on that basis has therefore not examined the issue of accountability in this regard.

During the period that the *arbetsstugor* were operating in the minority area, between 1903 and about 1950, views on childrearing and physical punishment differed from those that predominate today. At the same time, incidents occurred that, even in those times, would have been considered to be a rights violation or mistreatment. The Commission's conclusion is that the vulnerable position of children in the *arbetsstugor* should have been obvious to the actors responsible for them.

Another issue is that many of those who were subjected to the assimilation policy are no longer alive. However, if we are to under-

stand the conditions today, we also need to talk about some historical injustices as ‘enduring injustices’. In relation to the minority, these injustices persist in the form of the minority’s inherited shame over their language, culture and identity. Another enduring injustice is the minority’s exclusion and invisibility in general, especially in relation to natural resource and land rights.

The State and the Church of Sweden have a moral responsibility to make amends for the damage caused to the minority by the assimilation policy. How this should be done must be based on the needs of the minority today.

## **Redress and reconciliation**

The interviewees’ own thoughts on redress and reconciliation largely concern making the minority visible and spreading knowledge about their culture, language and history. Their attitudes to a possible public apology from the State or the Church of Sweden vary. For some it is important, for others it is not. Many believe that it is important for the State to acknowledge that mistakes were made and that the State as an actor had a responsibility. Many believe that the most important thing for the future is that Meänkieli survives. This requires opportunities to use the language in practical ways in schools and other environments. Many interviewees also raised questions about natural resources such as rights to hunting, fishing and reindeer herding.

The Commission considers that, for reconciliation to be possible, the historical violations of the minority’s rights must be acknowledged. The damage caused by the assimilation policy must be repaired. The reconciliation process needs to be sustained over the long term even after the Commission’s work has concluded. The Commission’s investigation and review should therefore be seen as a basis for a continuing, long-term reconciliation process.

## **Proposed actions for reconciliation and redress**

The Commission considers that the Government should take responsibility for a continuing, concerted reconciliation process in close consultation with the minority, government agencies and other stake-

holders. In such a process, the Government should acknowledge without delay the responsibility of the State for the rights violations committed against the minority and that these caused harm to the minority. The Government should also enter into a dialogue with the minority without delay on the basis and form for a public apology.

The Commission is submitting a list of proposals for further actions for redress and reconciliation and proposes that the Government, in close cooperation and dialogue with the minority, draw up an action plan for the implementation of these proposals. The Commission proposes that the action plan should be approved by the Riksdag and include a clear monitoring mechanism that gives the minority insight into, and the opportunity to influence, the Government's work with the action plan.

The Commission's proposals for actions that can contribute to redress and promote reconciliation are structured on the basis of the following overall objectives:

- visibility and autonomy
- implemented and increased rights
- language revitalisation and promotion of the minority's culture
- enhanced Nordic co-operation for the language.

The Commission's assessment and proposals are based on what has emerged in the investigation, and also on the criticism directed at Sweden in the context of the monitoring of Sweden's compliance with its undertakings under international law. However, this is not just about Sweden needing to live up to its obligations under national and international law. The damage done to the minority by the State-sanctioned assimilation policy also gives rise to a moral obligation to repair the damage.

The Commission also presents a number of questions that require further inquiry, for example that the Government should appoint a commission of inquiry to provide a balanced picture of the minority's historical tradition of reindeer herding.

Finally, the Commission calls on a number of other actors to take action within the context of their areas of responsibility. These actors include the municipalities concerned, the Norrbotten County

Administrative Board, the Church of Sweden, and the Norrbotten County *arbetsstugor* foundation.

All the Commission's proposals and calls are listed below.

### **Actions to continue the reconciliation process**

The Swedish Government:

- should assume responsibility for a continuing, concerted reconciliation process in close consultation with the minority, government agencies and other stakeholders
- must acknowledge without delay the rights violations committed against the minority
- should immediately enter into a dialogue with the minority on the basis and form for a public apology
- without delay and in close cooperation and dialogue with the minority, should draw up an action plan for the implementation of proposals for further actions that can contribute to redress and promote reconciliation.

### **Overall objective: visibility and autonomy**

The Swedish Government:

- should grant the minority greater influence and autonomy
- should recognise Kvens and Lantalaiset as part of the national minority of Tornedalians
- should provide support for the establishment of a main museum
- should provide support for the establishment of an information centre
- should expand the mandate of the Living History Forum with the aim of highlighting historical mistreatment and violations of the minority's rights
- should increase the organisational grant to the minority organisations

- in the next public service broadcasting licenses (2026–2031), should ensure an increase in original broadcasts and the overall range of programming in Meänkieli
- should task the Swedish Research Council with implementing a research initiative on the history, language and society of the minority
- should ensure that the Commission’s entire final report is translated into Meänkieli
- should ensure that the minority is represented on the Place-Name Advisory Board
- should ensure that the repatriation of human remains also covers the minority.

#### **Overall objective: implement and increase the minority’s rights**

- The proposals in the report ‘*Nationella minoritetsspråk i skolan – förbättrade förutsättningar till undervisning och revitalisering*’ (National minority languages in schools – better conditions for tuition and revitalisation) should be implemented.
- Sweden’s undertakings under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages should be increased.
- The Government should inquire into the issue of language as a basis for discrimination in the Discrimination Act.

#### **Overall objective: language revitalisation and promotion of the minority’s culture**

The Swedish Government:

- should make current initiatives for the language permanent
- should task the Swedish National Agency for Education with ensuring the integration of tuition in Meänkieli in municipalities in the administrative area
- should investigate how central government grants for literacy courses in Meänkieli can be implemented



- should boost opportunities to learn Meänkieli in combination with cultural and creative livelihoods.

### **Overall objective: enhanced Nordic co-operation**

- The Government should initiate cross-border co-operation with Norway and Finland to promote the minority language and culture.

### **Issues that require further inquiry**

- In close consultation with the minority, the Government should appoint a commission of inquiry to provide a balanced picture of the minority's historical tradition of reindeer herding.
- In close consultation with the minority, the Government should appoint a commission of inquiry into how mowable bog, *ströäng*, were enclosed in order to investigate legal ambiguities surrounding rights such as hunting and fishing linked to mowable bog, *ströäng*.
- In close consultation with the minority, the Government should appoint a commission of inquiry to investigate the minority's status as an indigenous people.

### **The Commission calls on the following actors to take action:**

- The Church of Sweden should recognize its involvement in the assimilation process and adopt measures that can contribute to redress and reconciliation, in close dialogue with the minority.
- The Norrbotten County Administrative Board should review its role in relation to the *arbetsstugor* and its actions in relation to education.
- The municipalities concerned should review their role in relation to the *arbetsstugor* and student residence.
- The Norrbotten County *arbetsstugor* foundation should facilitate access to archival material and channel funds to studies that can lead to the promotion of Meänkieli.

- Universities and higher education institutions should inquire into their role in racial biology examinations and the collection of human remains and adopt a minority policy strategy.
- Tornedalen Folk High School should review its role and responsibility in the assimilation of the minority in more detail.
- Region Norrbotten and the municipalities should actively highlight the minority through Filmpool Nord.

## Consequences of the proposals

The minority needs to be provided with sufficient resources to enable their active involvement in continuing reconciliation efforts. The question of increased funding to minority organisations is an important part of the continuing reconciliation process and needs to be designed in close dialogue with the minority.

The Commission's assessment is that the implementation of the proposed measures will contribute to Sweden's compliance with its obligations under national and international law and the stated objectives of Sweden's minority policy.

A well-implemented reconciliation process, in which the minority is guaranteed its rights and given great influence, can also be expected to promote the well-being of the minority in the form of better self-esteem, improved health outcomes, and increased autonomy among other things. Measures that clearly show that the language and culture of the minority are valued may in turn contribute to positive social development through greater equality and a more resilient and prosperous society. In the event that the Government chooses not to implement the Commission's proposals, there would be consequences in a number of respects. Above all, this would be felt as yet another wrong committed against the minority, resulting in an erosion of trust. It would also result in damage to Sweden's international reputation, which could have negative consequences for Sweden's role in international efforts for human rights.