



SWEDISH IN FINLAND

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SWEDISH IN TRANSITION

The Constitution states that Finnish and Swedish are the national languages of Finland, and as such the Swedish language has a strong constitutional position. When Finland declared independence in 1917, the deep roots of Swedish in the country's history meant that both languages carried equal importance. During Finland's years as an autonomous Principality of the Russian Empire, the Swedish language continued to be used as an administrative and educational language, a legacy of the 600 years it had spent tied to Sweden.

However, it seems a lot can happen in 90 years and the linguistic ratio within the republic has changed significantly. Although the migration of Swedish-speaking Finns to Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s was an important factor in this changing demographic, it was the industrialization and affluence of the coastal regions that really changed the Swedish-speaking areas for good. Nowadays, less than half of the Swedish-speaking population lives in an area in which the Swedish language predominates, meaning that the majority of Swedish-speaking Finns live in areas dominated by Finnish. As a consequence, Swedish linguistic identity cannot be linked to the place of residence to the same extent as before.

According to the Language Act, Finnish and Swedish are equal. In practice, however, it has become increasingly difficult to treat Swedish speakers as equal partners. This is particularly problematic in the provision of public services in Swedish by the Finnish authorities in areas where the Swedish-speaking minority is small. In areas dominated by the Finnish language, trade and industry often neglects providing services in both official languages, and in some situations English has tended to become the second language.

As a result of all this, Swedish speakers come to rely on their own institutions, and schools are particularly important. Swedish-speaking schools have an almost autonomous standing on a par with the Finnish ones, but are naturally also dependent on municipal decisions and funds. Education in Swedish, from daycare up to university level, is safeguarded for those who choose to pursue it. Many children and youngsters from families in which both Finnish and Swedish are spoken have been enrolled in Swedish-speaking schools, as the educational system has an excellent reputation.

The future for Swedish in Finland is not entirely trouble-free, and in order for it to survive as a language group, three major problems must be tackled. In a society that is to a large extent driven by economic considerations, administrative reforms can easily weaken Swedish administrative structures, which in turn endanger the services provided in Swedish by the authorities. Furthermore, the large amount of marriages between the two language groups has led to an increase in the number of children enrolling in Swedish schools, but also to a new perception of a bilingual identity. Finally, the increasing number of immigrants means that the proportion of native Finns, including Swedish-speaking Finns, is reduced. Swedish-speaking Finns are open to new impulses from other Nordic countries and from the global community, and youngsters can easily adjust to new multicultural models. At the same time, older generations are preserving their cultural heritage with pride, meaning that Swedish culture and language will live on in Finland.

FUNDAMENTAL LINGUISTIC RIGHTS

The administration of Finland is bilingual by law. All Acts are made and published in both Finnish and Swedish, and all regulations and decrees are also issued in both languages, meaning that both language versions are equal.

Linguistic rights are guaranteed in the Constitution, according to which the national languages of Finland are Finnish and Swedish. As such, public authorities are required to provide for the cultural and societal needs of Finnish- and Swedish-speaking populations on an equal basis. This means that the languages are formally equal, but it also assumes that the real equality between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking populations is secured. The regulation is of particular significance when it comes to the provision of important social services, education, information or healthcare in Finnish and Swedish.

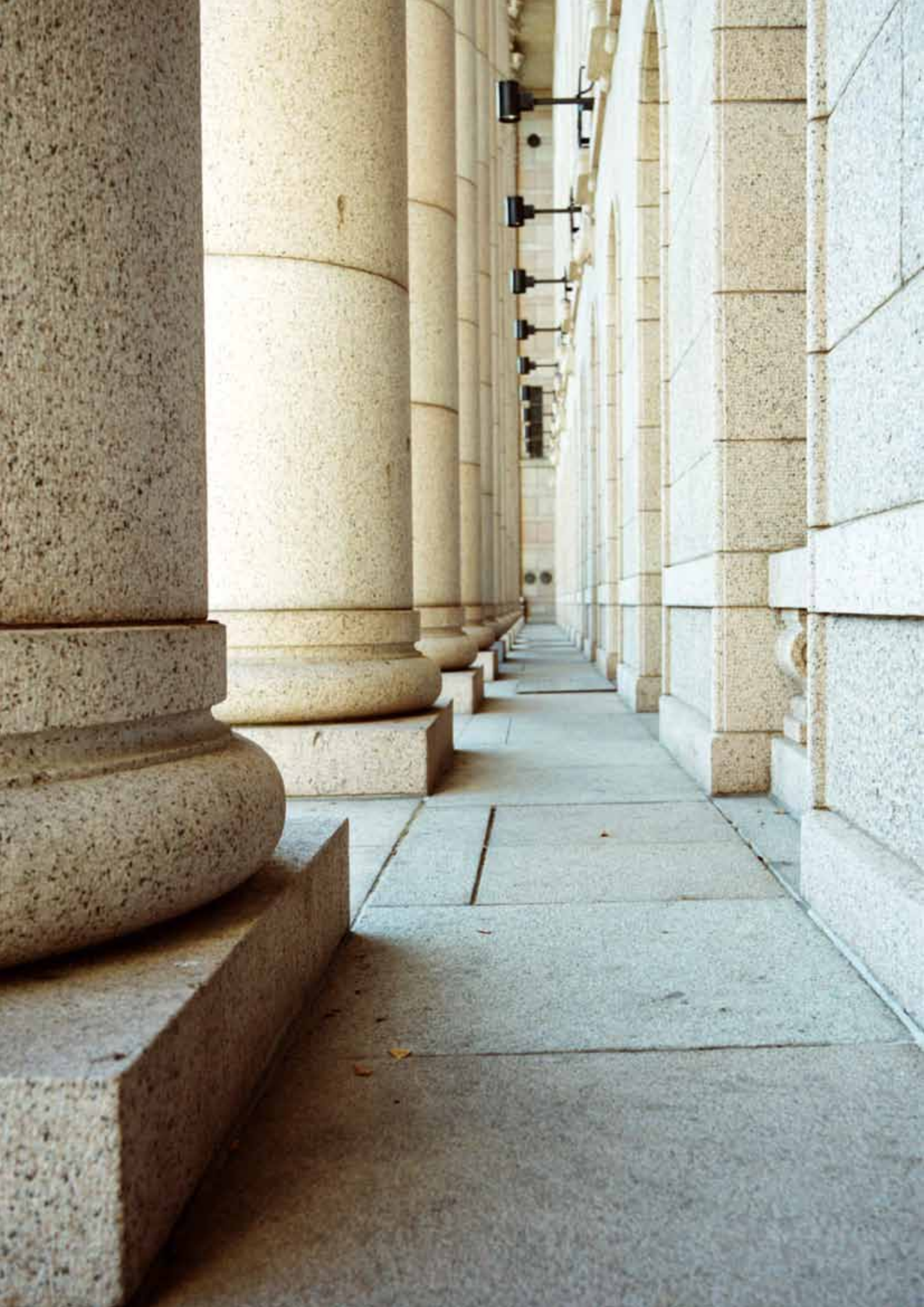
Fundamental linguistic rights are specified in the Language Act. This law is based on the needs of the individual, the starting point of which is an individual's right to their own language. The Act prescribes that authorities shall, on their own initiative, guarantee the realization of an individual's linguistic rights, without them having to call attention to the rights themselves. The Language Act contains exact provisions on the right to use Finnish and Swedish before courts of law, in contact with state authorities and with municipal authorities in bilingual municipalities.

Municipalities can be unilingual or bilingual, with either Finnish or Swedish as the majority language. A municipality is considered bilingual if at least 8% or 3,000 people are registered as belonging to the minority language group.

Everyone has the right to use Finnish and Swedish in contact with bilingual authorities. This right applies regardless of whether a person is officially registered as Finnish- or Swedish-speaking; in other words, one can choose which language to use. The authorities are obliged to guarantee the linguistic rights of individuals and they must, on their own initiative, ensure that this right to service in Finnish and Swedish is implemented in practice.

An individual may use Swedish in contact with State authorities even if the municipality is unilingual Finnish. For example, the police, the ERC administration, the social insurance institution and the tax office are therefore obligated to offer inhabitants services in Swedish, a situation that exists throughout the country. Furthermore, state-owned companies such as VR (railways and transportation) and Posti (the Post Office) are obliged to offer services in Swedish to a certain extent.

However, the Language Act does not apply to the private sector, even though many companies are more than willing to offer services in Swedish. Neither does it apply on the Åland Islands, which is a unilingual Swedish province. The Act on the autonomy of Åland contains regulations both on the usage of Swedish in contact with the authorities and on linguistic rights for Finnish-speaking inhabitants of the Åland Islands. Finally, the Language Act does not apply to universities or the Church; these institutions are governed by their own legislation.







WHAT IS SWEDISH IN FINLAND?

The 17th paragraph of the constitution of Finland states that 'Finland has two national languages; Finnish and Swedish', meaning that legislation is drafted in both Finnish and Swedish, and that Swedish is taught as a native language in Swedish schools.

Every now and then somebody questions whether the Swedish spoken in Finland should be considered a separate language with its own linguistic norms. The reason for this is because the pronunciation is quite different from the Swedish spoken in Sweden and because the Swedish in Finland contains quite a few unique words and idiomatic expressions, known as 'Finlandisms'.

The differences between the languages have evolved due to the need to use different kinds of words to describe the Finnish society and because of differences in culture and tradition. These differences cannot be used as the only criteria for seeing Swedish in Finland and in Sweden as different languages, as there are many known examples of languages that are spoken in somewhat different ways depending on the country in which it is spoken. Linguists call this phenomena natiolects. The Swedish spoken in Finland is not to be taken for a dialect of Swedish as there are many local dialects of the language in Finland.

In order for it to be considered a separate language, the Swedish spoken in Finland needs to be self categorized: speakers of the language must perceive the language as something different from Swedish and should develop it in an independent direction. The language would also have to have separate norms that include more than a number of words, expressions and inflectional forms. It has to affect the entire language system.

These criteria are not met. Very few Swedish-speaking Finns assert that their language is not Swedish. The rules for spelling and conjugation are the same as in Sweden with a few spoken exceptions. The sentence structure is the same even though there are some violations, especially in badly translated texts. Both the general linguistic vocabulary and the terms of society have quite a few exceptions but they apply only to 1 or 2 percent of all words, whether we examine the vocabulary or fluent text.



Nygifta

BIG-79



IS THE ICEBERG MELTING?

According to the language census that began in 1880, some 295,000 people in Finland spoke Swedish, and this population continued to grow until the mid-fifties when close to 350,000 people were registered as Swedish speakers. However, this was then followed by period of sharp decline, precipitated in the main by a wave of emigration to Sweden.

As most of the emigrants were young people, this led to an unfavorable age structure and the Swedish population showed a negative nativity rate into the late sixties. During this time marriages between the two language groups were seen as a threat, as most families and children in bilingual marriages tended to speak Finnish. From a demographical point of view at least, the future seemed bleak.

However, progress has been made in several directions during recent decades. Emigration all but stopped and bilingual families have shown a rising interest in the Swedish language. This can be seen both in how parents register their children according to language and in the large

number of pupils that are enrolled in Swedish schools. Nowadays, marriages 'over the language border' are much more bilingual and about two-thirds of children born in these families are registered as Swedish speakers. An even larger number of these children are enrolled in Swedish schools. As a result of this change, bilingual families have become a favorable factor from a statistical point of view and are one of the reasons that the decline of the Swedish population has all but stopped. Registered Swedish-speakers now number almost 290,000, and projections show that this number will be maintained during the coming decades.

The early metaphor for the Swedish-speaking population as a large but melting iceberg is therefore no longer correct. Although the iceberg may still be decreasing at its core, the total mass of ice surrounding it is actually on the rise. In other words, it is becoming increasingly difficult to draw a line between the language groups as there are a growing number of people with a bilingual identity.

*The actual number of
Swedish-speakers and the percentage
of the whole population:*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>1880</i>	<i>294 900</i>	<i>14,3</i>
<i>1910</i>	<i>339 000</i>	<i>11,6</i>
<i>1940</i>	<i>354 000</i>	<i>9,6</i>
<i>1970</i>	<i>303 400</i>	<i>6,6</i>
<i>1990</i>	<i>296 700</i>	<i>5,9</i>
<i>2005</i>	<i>289 675</i>	<i>5,5</i>





SWEDISH-SPEAKING FINLAND: A CULTURE WITHOUT BORDERS

When a Finnish-speaking person from Vaasa moves to the greater Helsinki area he or she will seldom brood upon what social networks to establish; time will tell. However, when a Swedish-speaker from the same town makes the same move, he or she will already know.

An article entitled 'Children of the Duck Pond', published in *Citylehti* magazine in 1985, noted that when two Swedish-speakers meet for the first time they nearly always search for something that connects them. According to the magazine this is to find out where their paths have crossed before. It might have happened during military service in Nylands Brigad, at the large track meet known as *Stafettkarnevalen*, or maybe as students at Hanken [the Swedish business school] or Åbo Akademi [the Swedish university in the city of Åbo]. It may have happened at a music festival, a religious conference, or at an annual meeting of some kind. These meetings are made possible by the network of institutions and societies that exist in the geographically fragmented area inhabited by Swedish-speaking Finns.

These networks provide a great number of meeting places, which are of great importance. Even though the Swedish-speakers in many cases are bilingual, many cultural values are inherent in Swedish-speaking areas. Societies, associations, non-profit organizations and clubs are important to the Swedish-speaking community and their identity. This can sometimes be regarded by the majority in Finland as an attempt to isolate themselves and form cliques and the language community can sometimes be seen as an obstacle to the culture of the majority. This, however, is only one side of the story.

An old joke goes that when two or three Swedish-speaking Finns meet they will form a club, if for no other reason than to form an association against other associations. This is of course an exaggeration, but Swedish-speaking Finns typically have slightly greater engagement in associations than the Finns do as a whole. The numbers of associations are a bit higher, per capita, partly because the associations are smaller due to demographics. The structure of these asso-

ciations is also different. The number of political societies and trade unions are fewer due to the fact that Swedish-speaking Finns are slightly more homogenous when it comes to politics and because of the fact that most trade union affairs are conducted in Finnish.

Associations that are connected to traditions, native regions, cultural manifestations and language are more important to a minority, and this is certainly true when it comes to Swedish-speaking Finns. It has long been said that Swedish-speaking Finns always sing in choirs and that therein lies the key to their quality of life. The reality is that less than 15 percent of the language group are members of a choir, but the metaphor for a well working collective is nevertheless a good one.

The fact that Swedish-speaking associations are so widespread means that it's also easier to make contacts outside the local area. Those who are involved in specific organizations meet with like-minded people on local, regional, language group and sometimes on national or even Nordic levels.

Information about their activities is published in small but hard-working membership magazines that are focused on the importance of the collective.

On the whole, Swedish speakers are not particularly religious, even though involvement in the Swedish diocese is much higher than among their Finnish counterparts. In this regard, it should be noted that regional differences are significant, and the social role played by the parish is much more important than many would like to admit. Indeed, the nonconformist church plays a strong role in Swedish speaking regions as part of revivalist movements that have established themselves after moving in from the west. They have since spread to other parts of Finland.

Swedish-speaking regions have long been a natural bridge between Sweden and Finnish speaking Finland, and many international movements have based themselves in Swedish regions before spreading to the rest of the country. Examples of this can be found in the history of peace, environmental, consumer affairs and other movements.

Statistics show that Swedish-speakers work longer than the majority of the population: their retirement age is two years higher. As a counterbalance to everyday working life, many Swedish-speaking Finns are actively engaged in a range of cultural activities.

Without the help of numerous trusts and funds it would not be possible to maintain such a diverse array of cultural activities. Organizations such as Svenska kulturfonden, Svenska litteratursällskapet, Konstsamfundet, Stiftelsen för Åbo Akademi, and Svenska Folkskolans vänner, all play a major part in upholding Swedish education and mass media. While the creativity and engagement of individuals can never be replaced by economic resources, the contribution of these funds and trusts cannot be emphasized enough.

Tensions between Swedish-speaking Finns occasionally arise, which go against the 'duck pond' mentality. They may be triggered by regional differences, differences in social class, in urban versus rural living, and once in a while by preferences for high or low culture. In an ideal world, these kinds of debates can breathe new life into a culture that sometimes may seem a little suffocating. The contradiction between high and low culture is a natural consequence of that fact that both are necessary, and both enrich and are dependent on each other. The broad variety of amateur performances in variety shows, summer theaters and village festivals, often involving regional dialects, lives side by side with professional theaters, artists and film producers.

The strength of the Swedish-speaking population lies in its diversity; the only thing that unites Swedish-speakers is the language. Other than that, they live in different social, cultural and linguistic environments. This is both a strength and a challenge because the availability of Swedish-speaking activities cannot be the same in all areas inhabited by Swedish-speaking Finns.

In duck ponds the pecking order is often clear and the supply of fresh water can be limited. As such, the duck pond metaphor might not be the best, even though the Swedish daily *Hufvudstadsbladet* has made the duck a symbol for Swedish speakers and uses it as a part of its marketing.

Another common metaphor for Swedish-speaking Finns is the well-known children's comic strip *The Moomins*. Their home, Moominvalley, is a place where feelings of wellbeing, security and co-dependency are commonplace, but even there it's not a perfect world. Tove Jansson's Moomins live with the threat of disaster striking their home. In years gone by, predictions about the future in the Swedish-speaking Moominvalley have been bleak, at a time when the future of the Swedish language in Finland has been challenged. And yet, life is good in for *The Moomins*, who enjoy a wholesome lifestyle, rich in social capital.

Nowadays, Swedish speakers are influenced both by Finnish speaking Finland and by Sweden, depending on a person's place of residence and bilingual capacity. However, these cultural influences can never replace the Finnish-Swedish dimension.

The culture of Swedish-speaking Finns is not exclusively a minority culture. An increasing number of bilingual Finns and Swedes in Sweden can participate in the culture through literature, theater, film, music and mass media.



UUSIMAA AND THE GREATER HELSINKI AREA

During the years 1960–1980 the coastal regions of southern Finland changed dramatically due to an industrialization and urbanization process that was faster than in Western Europe. The process started later in Finland, but once it got going change came very quickly. The result is that many areas that for a long time had been inhabited by Swedish-speaking Finns became areas with a Finnish majority. The strong attraction of the capital led to continued migration after 1980.

While many inhabitants of Österbotten [Ostrobothnia] still live in a Swedish-speaking environment with Swedish neighbors, able to watch Swedish television, the situation in Nyland is quite different. There is only one large area in this region, stretching from the town of Raseborg to Ingå municipality, that has a Swedish speaking majority. Most of the Swedish-speaking Finns in the southern part of Finland exist in a bilingual environment in which Finnish is becoming increasingly dominant. The majority of Swedish speakers now work in places where the working language is Finnish. The linguistic reality for the 3 percent of the population that speaks Swedish in the city of Vantaa is quite different from the 66 percent of Swedish-speakers in Raseborg.

However, four out of the five cities in which the total number of Swedish-speakers is the largest are located in southern Finland – Helsinki, Espoo, Raseborg and Porvoo. Furthermore, there are some 134,000 Swedish speakers in Nyland, from Hanko to Loviisa, which is more than the 96,000 in the corresponding coastal area in Ostrobothnia, from Kokkola to Kristinestad. Consequently, Finland has two similarly sized blocks of Swedish speakers that have a totally different everyday use of the language. Indeed, the distinctions continue to grow as more people in the south are getting married ‘over the language border’.

Swedish is still widely spoken in Uusimaa, where many bilingual families want their children to speak both languages and enroll them in Swedish schools. It’s thanks to this schooling system, as well as the variety of mass media, that Swedish is still alive and well in Uusimaa. Nevertheless, it is often hard to receive services in Swedish around the capital, and the availability of Swedish meeting places is quite limited.

The most significant trend of the 21st century has been the increase in immigration. The global phenomenon of foreign labor and refugees being drawn to capital cities is certainly evident in Finland. While the number of Swedish speakers has stayed at around 64,000 in the four major cities in the area, the number of people who speak neither Finnish nor Swedish increases annually by around 7,000, and overtook the Swedish-speaking population in 2005. As a result, one of the main challenges for the coming years will be maintaining the bilingual nature of an area that is becoming increasingly multicultural.

POHJANMAA (OSTROBOTHNIA)

Svenska Österbotten is a term used to describe Swedish-speaking areas of Ostrobothnia, a coastal region in western Finland that encompasses the city of Kokkola in the north and the city of Kristinestad in the south. The area contains a number of bilingual municipalities in the province of Ostrobothnia, as well as the city of Kokkola, which is located in the province of Central Ostrobothnia.

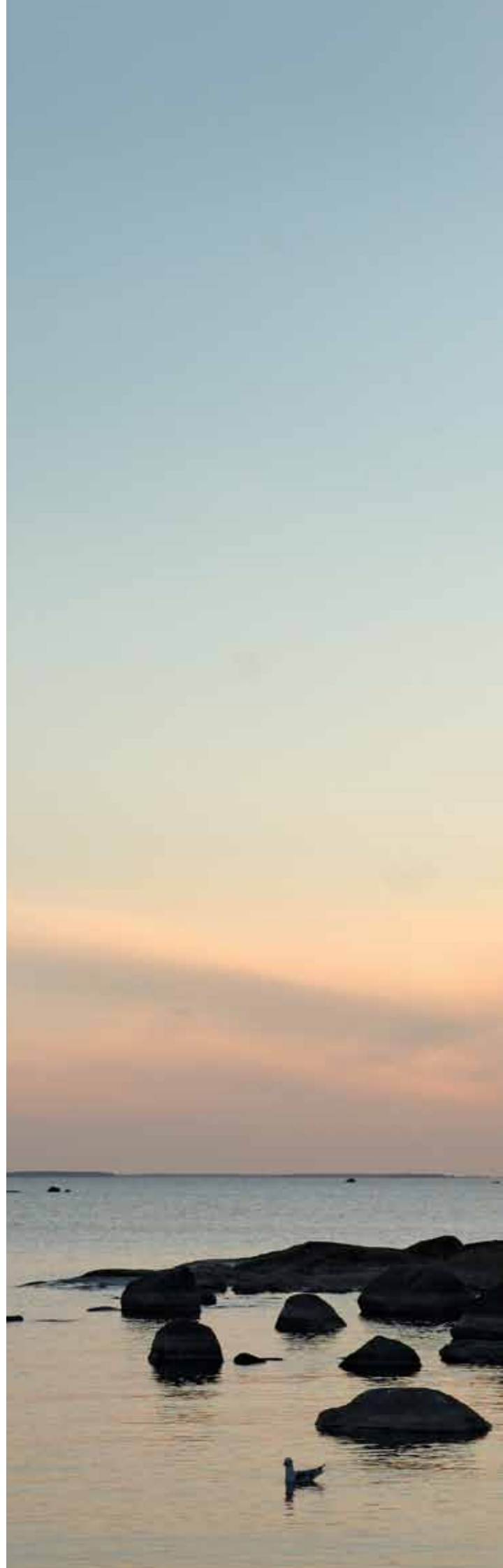
The Swedish language is present throughout Ostrobothnia. Over half of the population of Ostrobothnia (some 90,000 people) and more than 6,000 people in Kokkola are Swedish speakers. It's a region in which it is still possible to live both a private and professional life exclusively in Swedish – something that would be unheard of in the rest of the country. Despite the spread of bilingualism, many of the inhabitants of Ostrobothnia still only speak Swedish.

Although many of Ostrobothnia's municipalities are now bilingual, Swedish is the dominant language, used in everyday working life as well as for correspondence between the state and the local government. The municipality of Korsholm contains one of the largest Swedish-speaking populations in the entire country, while places such as Larsmo, Korsnäs and Närpes are still unilingual Swedish. In fact, there is a particularly high concentration of Swedish speakers in Larsmo, some 92.6 percent of the population.

Ostrobothnia is a coastal region and it's proximity to the sea and neighboring Sweden is very apparent. Swedish influences are commonplace and many people choose to follow Swedish current affairs and culture. Swedish television and radio is very popular, and for many it is their principal source of information.

Numbers of Swedish-speakers have not varied much during recent decades. Post-war industrialization brought many Finnish speakers to the traditional Swedish areas. Unlike in other areas of the country, the Swedish language has remained a strong and important presence in society.

However, as today's society evolves, the survival of the Swedish language in Ostrobothnia faces a number of challenges. State-run administrative reforms aiming at enlarging administrative areas and municipal structures are undermining the provision of good quality Swedish services in local administrations. Strong bilingual administrative structures such as the one found in Ostrobothnia are vital for all Swedish-speaking areas and must be protected in the future.





VARSINAIS-SUOMI (SOUTHWESTERN FINLAND)

In the city of Turku there are around 9,200 Swedish speakers, which make up about 5 percent of the total population. The number has grown since 1980 when it was at its lowest, but Swedish influences on the city are still barely noticeable. Nevertheless, it is home to some important Swedish cultural institutions, the most important of which is the Swedish university of Finland, Åbo Akademi, which boasts around 5,000 students and 1,000 employees.

Svenska gården and Gillesgården are meeting points for the Swedish non-profit associations, organizations and businesses. This is also the place where Finland's oldest newspaper, Åbo Underrättelser, is published. The versatile network of associations and third sector service organizations play a vital role in keeping the Swedish language alive in Turku.

The Åboland region is comprised of the bilingual municipalities of Väståboland (15,500 inhabitants) and Kimitoön (7,400 inhabitants). These two towns are the result of the joining of eight smaller municipalities with Swedish-speaking majorities: Pargas, Nagu, Korpo, Houtskär, Iniö, Kimito, Dragsfjärd and Västänfjärd.

From a linguistic perspective the municipal reform has been successful by creating two strong units instead of several fragmented ones. Even though both municipalities have a Swedish majority (Väståboland 58 percent, Kimitioön 72 percent) the reality is becoming more and more bilingual. More and more Finnish-speakers are gradually moving into the area, particularly to Pargas. Receiving services in both languages is not a prob-

lem when dealing with the local authorities, but the level of service can vary for local businesses. While most stores operate both languages, an increasing number of businesses only use Finnish in advertising and marketing campaigns. The archipelago has become an increasingly popular tourist destination over the past fifteen years, and is marked by the growing influence of Finnish, but on the whole the bilingual services provided for tourists are functioning well.

Although Swedish is the minority language in the municipality of Kaarina, numbers of speakers have been on the rise during recent years. This is due to the fact that a great many of the Swedish speakers that work in Turku prefer to live Kaarina, which now has its own Swedish primary school thanks to the hard work and dedication of many parents.

ÅLAND PROVINCE

The province of Åland lay at the heart of the Swedish empire from the Middle Ages until 1809. The province formed part of the diocese of Åbo and was united with the counties of Åbo and Björneborg during the 17th century. The Åland Islands were part of the Stockholm inner trading circle and played an important role in bringing trade to the capital. During the Greater Wrath (the name given to Russian invasion and subsequent occupation of Finland between 1710 and 1721) most of the population fled to the outskirts of Stockholm and to Roslagen. When the Finnish mainland was conquered by Russian troops 1808,



Åland was temporarily transferred to the county of Stockholm, but Sweden lost the islands after the peace treaty of 1809.

French and English troops destroyed the Russian fortifications at Bomarsund during the Crimean War, and the Åland Islands became a demilitarized zone once the war ended. This demilitarization has since been maintained by several international treaties, the most recent of which was with Russia in 1992, following the break-up of the Soviet Union.

In August of 1917, during the disturbances caused by the Russian revolution, leaders in the Åland Islands proposed that the province be affiliated to Sweden once more. When Finland declared independence in December of the same year, conflict broke out over which country should rule Åland. Finland offered extensive autonomy if Åland remained a part of it, but their proposals were rejected. Eventually, the League of Nations ruled that the province would belong to Finland but that autonomy should guarantee Swedish language and culture. This autonomy and the islands' unilingual status were anchored in the constitution, which could only be amended with the majority of both the Finnish and Åland parliaments.

After the Second World War the Åland Islands gave up on their attempts to become part of Sweden, choosing instead to devote their efforts to strengthening their own autonomy. Finland, with Åland still very much a part of it, became a Member State of the European Union in 1995. The islands' autonomous status meant that the province had the option not to join, regardless of Finland's decision, but membership was eventually approved after two referendums in the province.

The Åland Islands are divided into 16 Swedish-speaking municipalities, with Swedish as the official language. By virtue of their autonomy, contact between the Åland and Finnish authorities should be conducted in Swedish. However, this situation is unpopular with those in Finland and is considered one of the biggest problems in relations between the two.

Large numbers of people have moved to the islands, whose population is over 27,000. This immigration counteracts the population loss caused by those who choose to leave the islands, who also total a significant number each year. A new inhabitant of Åland is entitled to full residents' rights after they have lived there for five years. Such rights include the right to vote in provincial elections and to own property there.

Naturally, shipping plays a central role in trade and industry on the Åland Islands. The shipping industry's movement towards labor-intensive passenger transport during the second half of the 20th century is one of the main reasons for the low rate of unemployment. Another reason is the islands' proximity to the labor markets of Sweden and southern Finland. The heavy ferry traffic is essential to both the tourist industry and to the transportation of goods in and out the province. Åland decided to remain outside the European Customs Union because tax free sales on cruising ships were regarded as a crucial part of local business. The shipping industry accounts for 30 percent of Åland's GDP, while industries such as agriculture, food, plastics, banking and insurance are also very important.

LANGUAGE ISLANDS

Even though most Swedish speaking Finns live in the coastal areas of Pohjanmaa, Turunmaa and Uusimaa, there are some that reside in cities where the dominant language is Finnish. These cities, Pori, Kotka, Tampere and Oulu, are called language islands.

Language islands are located in all-Finnish areas in which the Swedish minority is not large enough for the town to be defined as bilingual.

Throughout history, Swedish-speaking populations have moved away from coastal regions on a number of occasions. The first time was during the 17th and 18th centuries and there was a second wave during the industrial revolution a hundred years later. The result of this relocating is that Swedish-speaking Finns have strong ties to many Finnish towns.

The largest language island is Tampere, in which Swedish-speaking Finns have a well-functioning social network with a Swedish school, parish, and newspaper not to mention a significant number of cultural and social associations. The provision and availability of Swedish schools, community centers and associations in the other language islands is more varied, but their efforts have made it possible for Swedish speakers to preserve their identity.

Relocation to Finnish cities is often related to work or family. Places such as Lahtis and Jyväskylä are examples of towns in which groups of Swedish speakers may grow to such an extent that they can become new language islands. In these areas the Swedish language is maintained through newly started daycare centers and Swedish groups in Finnish schools.

THE SWEDISH POPULATION IN FINLAND - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

When the Swedish language first appeared in Finland remains a topic of debate to this day. One theory is that a Swedish-speaking population settled in Finland as a result of three crusades in 1157, 1249 and 1293. If this version of events is correct, it can more reasonably be viewed as part of the establishment of Christianity in the West than as the conscious expansion of Sweden.

During the crusades, Sweden's presence on the world stage was merely a fraction of the strong state that Finland would later become a part of. This, coupled with the fact that there was no Finnish State to speak of, meant that the emigration cannot be seen as an occupation. The first representatives of State and Church comprised a loosely knit and geographically scattered group of families. In the sparsely populated landscape it was easy to find a place to settle down without creating any tensions.

The result of all this was that the Catholic Church and the Swedish State, through mutual dependency, were able to establish themselves in the territory that six centuries later would be called Finland. The part of the Swedish Empire to the

east of the Gulf of Bothnia was called 'the Eastern Land' (Österlandet) during the Middle Ages. The term "Finland" was commonly used for the southwestern part of Finland.

Through the construction of castles in Åbo, Tavastehus and Viborg, the new Church administration and the growing State structures slowly established Swedish as the language of politics and power. However, research tells us that there were Swedish influences even earlier in history, at least during the Viking Age. One such example is the Swedish loanwords in the Finnish language that are known to date back to pre-Christian times.

During the Kalmar Union (1397-1521) Finland became even more integrated in the Swedish empire.



a historical

An example of this integration can be seen in the fact that, from 1362, Finnish cities participated in electing new kings. After Gustav Vasa managed to break with the Danes and implement the Reformation, Swedish rule gained approval among the Finnish population. This was possible because the Lutheran church ruled that both sermons and public announcements should be held in Finnish.

The period following Gustav Vasa was characterized by the increasing centralization of power, although it should be noted that the Swedish State saw the language question as an issue of minor importance.

The Swedish Empire became more and more multilingual – during the Middle Ages German had become the dominant language of trade – and it wasn't until the 19th century that language became a political issue. Swedish was still the main administrative language but civil servants in Finland took pains to master at least a basic knowledge of Finnish.

After Åbo Akademi was founded in 1640 it became possible to recruit local civil servants that worked in Swedish but spoke Finnish. This led to a growing number of Finns that spoke Swedish with no detriment to the Finnish language. During the 18th century around 20 percent of the country spoke Swedish as their mother tongue.

Russian Czar Alexander I's decision to maintain Swedish as an official language in the Grand Principality after 1809 was crucial for the existence of the language. The growing nationalism in Europe made it harder and harder to justify why

the minority language should administrate the majority. The Finnish nationalist movement, the Fennomans, demanded that Finnish be declared the only official language while their counterparts, the Svekomans, advocated a bilingual solution in which the Swedish language would guarantee an orientation towards western democracy. This nationalist awareness was behind the political structure that was partly based on language. Finlands svenska arbetarförbund, the Swedish Working Party was founded in 1899 and Svenska Folkpartiet, the Swedish People's Party, in 1906. It should be emphasized that it was not until in the late 19th century and the emergence on this national political stage that the Swedish population started to call themselves Swedish-speaking Finns in order to mark their affinity to Finland.

At this time there was also a conscious effort on the part of Swedish speakers to improve the position of the Finnish language in society. A great number of Finnish schools were founded and many Swedish families changed their home and school language to Finnish.

From the 20th Century to Present Day

The Swedish language domination of politics ended in 1907 following the first general election with universal suffrage. From 1880 to 1940 the share of Swedish speakers dropped from 14 to a little under 10 percent. Well into the 1900s many Finnish nationalists were upset about the strong representation of Swedish speakers in scientific disciplines and culture. The Finnish declaration of independence in December 1917, followed by

Overview

the civil war and the escalating Åland/Sweden debate created a climate in which many Swedish activists wanted linguistic autonomy. A reconciliatory tone was still very much present when work on the Republic's first constitution started; published in 1919, it stated that Finland had two official languages. In 1929 parliament approved legislation, based on the new constitution, under which the State's obligations towards both language groups were set on an equal footing.

The new constitution recognized the achievements of both language groups when the new nation was created. Initially, hard-nosed Finnish nationalists struggled to accept reconciliation between the language groups. The most important issue for Finnish nationalists was that only Finnish should be used at the University of Helsinki. In 1937, when the university legislation was changed and the role of the Finnish language was promoted, the language conflict was finally settled. During the Second World War all resentment was forgotten as Swedish and Finnish speakers fought side by side to save the country's independence.

The rapid changes in society during the post-war years together with an increasing industrialization and urbanization in the southern and western coastal areas traditionally inhabited by Swedish-speakers resulted in significant strengthening of the Finnish language.

Between 1940 and 1980, the proportion of Swedish speakers decreased from 10 to 6 percent [360,000 to 300,000 people]. This reduction was not entirely due to the switch to Finnish, but was also the result of emigration to Sweden, especially from Ostrobothnia. In absolute figures the number has now all but stopped decreasing, partly due to the fact that bilingual families are enrolling their children in Swedish schools.

Although the amount of Swedish speakers has decreased, both in actual number and as a percentage of the overall population, Swedish remains a living language with a strong cultural impact on Finnish society. A strong Swedish political influence at national level combined with support from the Finnish side has made it possible to uphold bilingualism in Finland.

When the constitution was reformed in 2000 there was a clear will to maintain both of Finland's national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Legislation on language from 2004 outlines specific linguistic rights, and it was passed in parliament with a majority of 179 to 3.

Throughout the history of Finland, Swedish has been a strong part of society and is a crucial part of the country's identity.

SWEDISH-SPEAKING FINNS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY

Finland's bilingualism is guaranteed by the constitution, which states that public authorities shall cater to the social and cultural needs of both language groups equally. Just how these 'social and cultural needs' are met with equality depends entirely on how the Swedish language and its speakers are viewed when daily political decisions are taken.

There are no guarantees that Swedish-speakers - nor any other section of the population - are present where important decisions are made. However, it is possible to gain influence through political representation on national, municipal and organizational levels, and by creating awareness for one's needs among other decision-makers.

The Swedish Assembly of Finland

The Swedish Assembly of Finland (Foktinget) was founded in 1919 and is a cross-political organization of cooperation for Swedish-speaking Finns. All parties in Parliament with Swedish activity are represented in the organization. The Assembly's activities are governed by legislation and its main task is to guard and promote the rights and interests of the Swedish-speaking population. The Assembly also supports and promotes the status of Swedish language and culture in Finland.

One of the Assembly's central tasks is informing the public about linguistic rights and making these rights work. The public can contact the Assembly with complaints or questions concerning linguistic rights and the authorities' obligations to meet them.

Some sectors of society need a more in-depth coverage of linguistic rights. The Assembly plays an active role in safeguarding the rights and interests of Swedish speakers in the public sector. Among the most important areas are central government, municipal administration, education, social affairs and healthcare.

The Assembly is a recognized referral body for numerous public authorities, which has made it possible for the Assembly to influence the

drafting of legislation and reforms that are relevant to the Swedish-speaking population. Parliamentary committees consult the Assembly as an expert body for different issues regarding the Swedish-speaking population. A good example of this is the regional administrative reform that concerned the linguistic orientation of the city of Kokkola.

Political Activity

The strongest political force is the Swedish People's Party (SFP), founded during the reform of the assembly of the Grand Principality of Finland (landtdag) in 1906; a unifying movement for the Swedish population.

The SFP has a large local network in Swedish-speaking areas, and the question of how high the Swedish profile should be compared to the general political profile is often discussed in the party. Differences can also be found in ideological and regional questions. However, this is not the only political group that promotes the language, as Swedish activities and sympathizers can also be found in other parties.

For a long time the political landscape of the Swedish-speaking areas consisted of the SFP, with its right wing and center factions complemented by the political left. Of the other parties, the Social Democrats have the strongest elements of Swedish. The Swedish Party District (Finlands Svenska Socialdemokrater FSD) was founded in 1899 and is the oldest party organization in the country. The FSD consists of local party organizations, and Swedish-speakers have often had leading positions in the party.

The Left Alliance (Vänsterförbundet) also has a Swedish element to its organization. Although its activity is somewhat modest today compared to years gone by, quite a few Swedish speakers have had visible positions in the party.

Hard-line Finnish nationalists were present in the large non-Socialist parties before the war. For a long time the cross-political cooperation con-

sisted only of the SFP, the SDP, the precursor of the Left Alliance, the DFFF and the province of Åland. Today the National Coalition Party (Saml), the Centre Party (C), the Christian Democrats (KD) and the Green League (Gröna) are all bilingual. All four parties target Swedish voters and participate actively in the work of the Swedish Assembly of Finland.

The Center Party and the Christian Democrats have Swedish party organizations with local districts. KD has had several Swedish speakers in leading positions. The Swedish party district in the Center Party unites Swedish member associations in the national party organization.

The National Coalition Party has a Swedish delegation, called Svedel, which operates as a link between the Swedish and bilingual members of the party. Svedel has kept a relatively high profile on Swedish matters and Swedish speakers occupy important positions in the party.

The national Swedish member association within the Green League is called Grifi, and it is another party in which Swedish speakers have held high-ranking positions.

The True Finns (Sannfinländarna) is the only party in the parliament that does not have a Swedish section. Although some of its members are critical of the place of Swedish in society, the party has not officially questioned the status of the language. The True Finns do not participate in the work of the Assembly.

Political Leaning

Due to the secrecy of elections, it has not been possible to map out the political leanings of Swedish speakers and their behavior in elections. It is however an educated guess that the majority give their support to the SFP. A research project at Åbo Akademi into Swedish-speaking voters concludes that around 70 percent supported the party in the early 2000s. SFP's main competitors were for a long time found on the left. In the past, more than ten percent have supported the Social Democrats.

However, according to research their support is now less than ten percent, while support for the Left Alliance is approximately 2-3 percent.

Instead, the SFP is losing voters to the bilingual non-Socialist parties. Between 4 and 7 percent of Swedish-speakers support the National Coalition Party, especially in the larger cities to the south. The Christian Democrats, in particular in Östergötland, have had around 4-5 percent of Swedish support. In the south of Finland between 3 and 5 percent of Swedish-speakers support the Green League. The Centre Party is supported by around 2-3 percent. However, the True Finns have hardly any support at all among the Swedish-speaking population even though the party has had a Swedish-speaking member of parliament.

Swedish Influence at State and Municipal Level

The Swedish parliamentary group had ten members elected for the political term 2007 to 2011. This includes the Members of Parliament from the SFP and the Member of Parliament from the Åland Islands. In the other parties in the Parliament there are Swedish and bilingual members.

Even though the SFP's share of Swedish votes has remained high, the total share has decreased. This has diminished the capacity of the SFP to monitor Swedish issues. On a national level this has been compensated by the fact that the party has been a part of every government since 1979. Leading Finnish-speaking politicians have consistently maintained their support for bilingual Finland, but it is still not guaranteed in the long-term.

At regional and municipal level, Swedish domain losses have been greater than in national politics. Swedish interests have been overlooked in numerous regional reforms and the SFP has lost ground at local level in several larger cities in southern Finland. Furthermore, the party has lost its representation in several important bodies, something which this has not been compensated by the Swedish representation in other parties.

DAY-CARE AND EDUCATION

Day-care centers and schools make up an important part of the Swedish network and it is often these institutions that bring Swedish-speaking Finns together. For the Swedish-speaking population in Finland, the right to day-care and education in their own language is a prerequisite for keeping the language and culture alive. This is ensured by a separate Swedish education authority, which is equal to the corresponding Finnish-language authority.

Day-care and education in Swedish is the obvious choice for Swedish-speaking families and also for many bilingual families. In Finland, each child has the right to day-care, pre-school teaching and school in their own language, Finnish or Swedish. This does not only apply in the Swedish and bilingual municipalities; the unilingual Finnish municipalities are also obliged to provide these services in Swedish, when there is a demand for it.

In 1968, Swedish became a compulsory subject for every student in Finland. Today all students are educated in the second national language. Most Swedish-speaking pupils start learning Finnish in the third grade, while Finnish-speaking pupils tend to start their studies in Swedish in the seventh grade.

Immersion is an optional teaching program that exists for all those who speak Finnish as their first language and who will not otherwise come in contact with Swedish naturally. Immersion in Finland is arranged in 11 bilingual municipalities. Post-comprehensive education is also available in Swedish at upper secondary schools, vocational colleges and high schools. Higher education is provided by universities, of which there are both unilingual Swedish and bilingual ones available. The two Swedish-language universities are the Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration and Åbo Akademi. The largest university in Finland, the University of Helsinki, is bilingual.

There is also the opportunity for people to study Swedish at numerous municipal adult classes and open colleges, or to take summer courses at universities.

56,770 first-graders started their education in Finland in 2009. Of these first-graders, 3,477 (6.1%) were enrolled in a Swedish-language school.

Cirka 280 skolor
ger grundläggande
utbildning på svenska
i Finland





MEDIA

Swedish-speaking regions of Finland have an unusually high number of daily newspapers in proportion to the number of inhabitants. Ten daily newspapers are published, of which Hufvudstadsbladet is the largest with a circulation of about 52,000. The second biggest, Vasabladet, is published in Ostrobothnia and has a circulation of about 24,000.

In addition to daily newspapers, political papers such as Arbetarbladet and Ny tid are also published. Furthermore, a great amount of periodicals are published in Swedish. On the Internet, www.tidskrift.fi, around 150 different periodicals and journals are gathered together. The nature of the magazines listed varies, ranging from different kinds of bulletins to regularly published periodicals.

Within the Finnish Broadcasting Company, YLE, there is a separate Swedish unit. According to the legislation that governs the Finnish Broadcasting Company, Finnish- and Swedish-speaking inhabitants shall be treated equally in the programming. Radio programs in Swedish are broadcast on two channels, Radio Vega and Radio Extrem. The latter is aimed at a young audience and also maintains the largest web community of Swedish-speaking youth in Finland, with well over 30,000 registered members.

FST 5 is the TV-channel for the Swedish-speaking population of Finland and it is also an important source of information for anyone who is interested in Swedish, or who wants issues related to society or culture covered from a Swedish point of view. FST5 started in August 2001 and offers a broad spectrum of programs seven days a week.

MINORITY LANGUAGE POLITICS IN EUROPE

In addition to the 23 official languages of the European Union, there are also close to 60 minority languages spoken by around 40 million citizens. Six of these minority languages have a unique position; the Spanish and British governments have forced through legislation whereby members of the EU can contact the European Commission and the Council of the European Union in Catalan/Valencian, Basque, Galician, Welsh, and Scottish Gaelic and expect to receive an answer in the same language. This semi-official position has improved the status of these languages and shows the significance of minority languages.

Beyond this, the EU's minority language policy consists mostly of financial support. In practice this means that the Union can grant project money, and all EU programs support projects that promote regional and minority languages.

Three networks whose task it is to defend and support minority languages are supported through the lifelong learning program. The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) is the leading network for language planning. The network has strengthened the position of regional and minority languages by promoting linguistic diversity in a positive atmosphere. The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN) has become known for its unwavering work for smaller ethnic languages. FUEN is the leading organization in Central Europe and especially among the German speaking minority languages. The Swedish Assembly of Finland is one of the driving forces in the NPLD network and an observer in FUEN. Mercator is the third network financed by the EU. The network operates three centers: in Barcelona the focus is on minority legislation, in Ljouwert in the Frisian part of the Netherlands the work is concentrated on educational issues, and in Aberystwyth in Wales minority media research is the priority.

The European Union has a limited political and legal capacity to influence Member States in language and minority issues since they are under

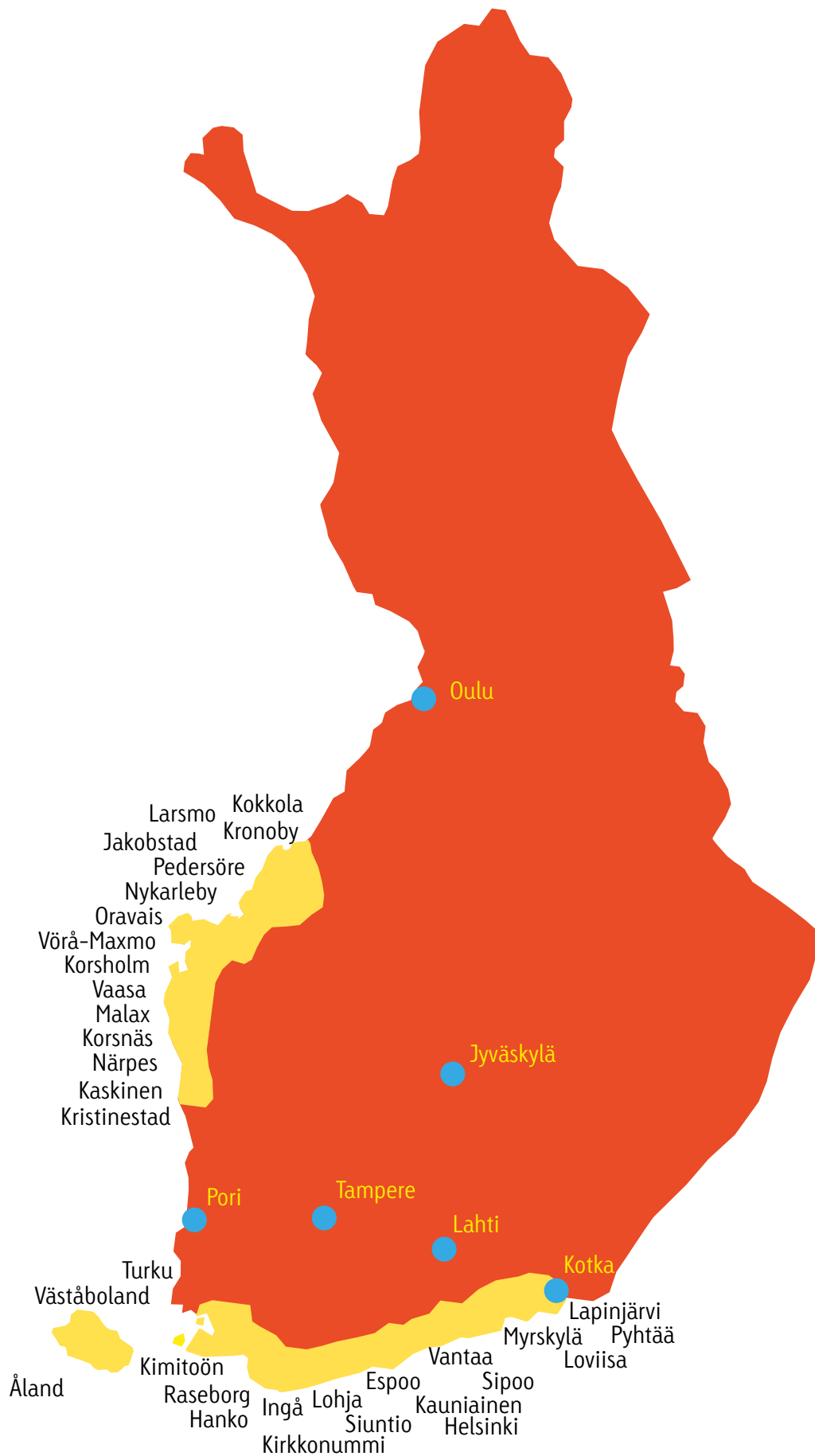
the jurisdiction of the States themselves. The principle of subsidiarity is often used by the EU to argue that circumstances are best known on national, regional and local level. The bans on discrimination in the different EU treaties apply only to a limited extent.

The European Union can make suggestions and recommendations, but since there is no legislation at EU level when it comes to minority languages the Member States are free to form their own policies. Article 6 of the Maastricht Treaty states that Member States must use all available means to guarantee the rights of national minorities, in accordance with the constitution of the Member State and the international treaties it has signed. The European Council's by-law on regional or minority languages is one such international obligation. Another is the framework agreement to protect national minorities. Even though the European Council regularly reports on how Member States adheres to the by-law, there are no sanctions for breaking it.

The Treaty of Lisbon will not lead to any significant changes for Europe's minorities. The treaty stresses that the European Union is built on values that respect human rights and include people that belongs to ethnic minorities. With the treaty the by-law on fundamental rights will also take effect. This means that all discrimination due to ethnicity and language is prohibited and that the Union must respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. The Treaty of Lisbon will only apply to EU law, not national law.

The European Union can support and promote minority languages financially but not legally. When it comes to criticizing Member States and condemning discrimination of minorities the EU is always very careful. Work within the EU is always built on compromises. All three institutions; the Commission, the Parliament and the Council of Ministers must always find a common denominator. Since all decisions in the Commission are made collectively, every decision must be a compromise that all 27 commissioners can accept.





THE POPULATION ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE

Population 31.12.2009

	Number	Finnish- speakers	Swedish- speakers	Other language	% Swedish- speakers	Language of the municipality
THE WHOLE COUNTRY	5351427	4852209	290392	207037		
Brändö	498	62	419	17	84,1	U
Eckerö	924	50	834	40	90,3	U
Espoo	244330	202766	20314	21240	8,3	F
Finström	2486	85	2330	71	93,7	U
Föglö	561	18	503	40	89,7	U
Geta	457	21	422	14	92,3	U
Hammarland	1463	42	1392	29	95,1	U
Hanko	9597	5136	4168	292	43,4	F
Helsinki	583350	488527	35198	59573	6,0	F
Ingå	5609	2328	3132	149	55,8	S
Jakobstad	19627	7820	11074	730	56,4	S
Jomala	4022	195	3697	130	91,9	U
Kaskinen	1442	966	407	69	28,2	F
Kauniainen	8617	5042	3248	326	37,7	F
Kimtoön	7298	2023	5174	101	70,9	S
Kirkkonummi	36509	28446	6629	1429	18,2	F
Kokkola	45896	38696	6312	888	13,8	F
Korsholm	18338	5328	12795	214	69,8	S
Korsnäs	2239	80	2010	149	89,8	U
Kristinestad	7254	3053	4085	116	56,3	S
Kronoby	6720	1042	5594	84	83,2	S
Kumlinge	372	30	327	15	87,9	U
Kökar	261	19	241	1	92,3	U
Lapinjärvi	2926	1898	955	73	32,6	F
Larsmo	4719	299	4368	52	92,6	U
Lemland	1782	78	1662	42	93,3	U
Lohja	39334	36735	1568	1030	4,0	F
Loviisa	15549	8480	668	388	43,0	F
Lumparland	391	23	359	9	91,8	U
Malax	5614	514	4915	185	87,5	S
Mariehamn	11123	626	9687	810	87,1	U
Nykarleby	7452	600	6625	227	88,9	S
Myrskylä	2021	1769	212	40	10,5	F
Närpes	9464	542	8292	630	87,6	U
Oravais	2207	231	1746	230	79,1	S
Pedersöre	10821	970	9734	117	90,0	S
Porvoo	48599	31567	15211	1820	31,3	F
Pyhtää	5316	4716	481	119	9,0	F
Raseborg	28944	8989	19071	884	65,9	S
Saltvik	1792	73	1672	47	93,3	U
Sipoo	18036	10804	6848	384	38,0	F
Siuntio	6024	3965	1886	173	31,3	F
Sottunga	125	10	112	3	89,6	U
Sund	1032	35	971	26	94,1	U
Turku	176087	154350	9249	12485	5,3	F
Vaasa	59175	41134	14602	3436	24,7	F
Vantaa	197636	173859	5797	17969	2,9	F
Västaboland	15490	6376	8890	224	57,4	S
Vårdö	445	21	400	24	89,9	U
Vörå-Maxmo	4479	611	3781	87	84,4	S

S= Bilingual municipality with Swedish majority
 F= Bilingual municipality with Finnish majority
 U= Unilingual Swedish municipality

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