



Case Finland

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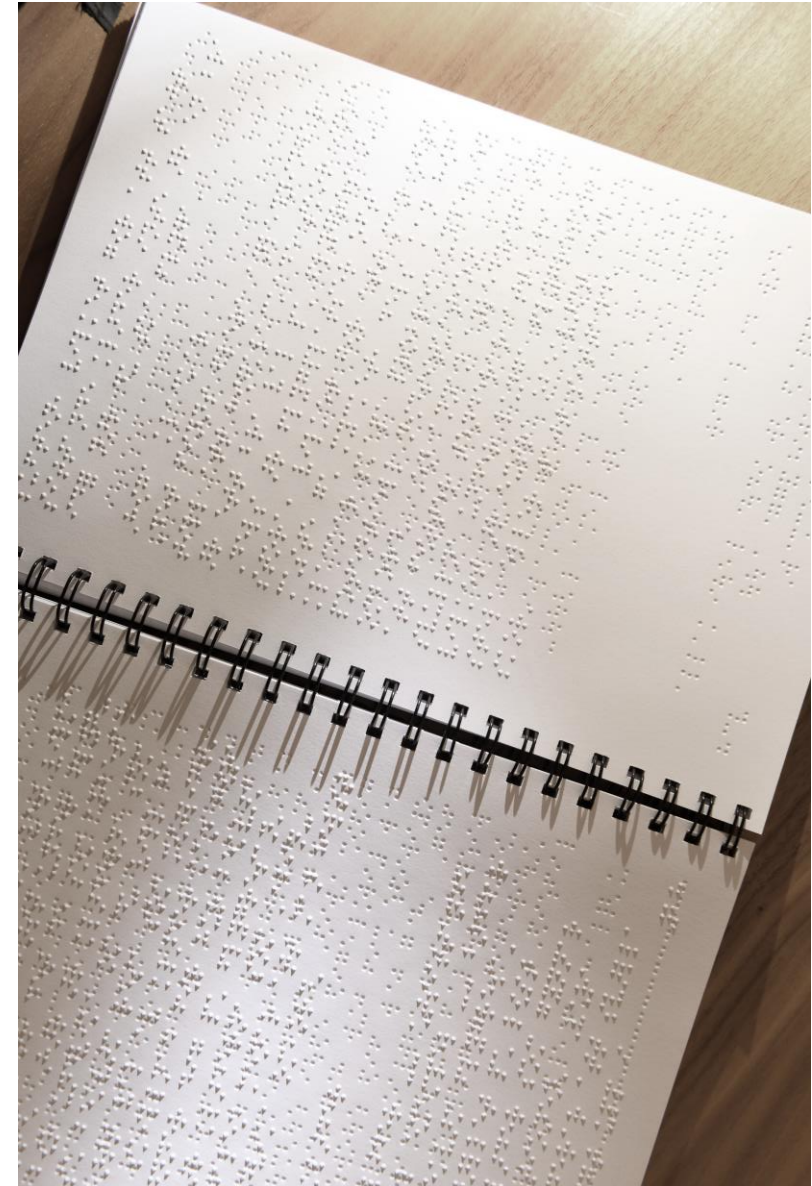
Languages in Finland

National languages

- Finnish 85,9%
- Swedish 5,2%

Other languages

- Finnish law does not define which languages are minority languages, but the status of the Sámi and sign languages is guaranteed by law.
- The Sámi languages (Inari Sámi, North Sámi and Skolt Sámi) are indigenous languages.
- Romani, Finland-Swedish, Finnish Sign Language and Karelian are autochthonous languages, i.e. languages that have been spoken in the country for a long time.
- The main immigrant languages are Russian, Estonian, Arabic, Somali and English.



The Charter - Swedish

- One of the **two national languages**, not just a minority language.
- Receives the **strongest protection** in law and practice.
- Full rights in administration, courts, education, media, and cultural life.
- Implementation of ECRML is **considered exemplary**.
- Main issue: inconsistent access to services in Finnish-dominated areas.

The Charter - The Sámi languages

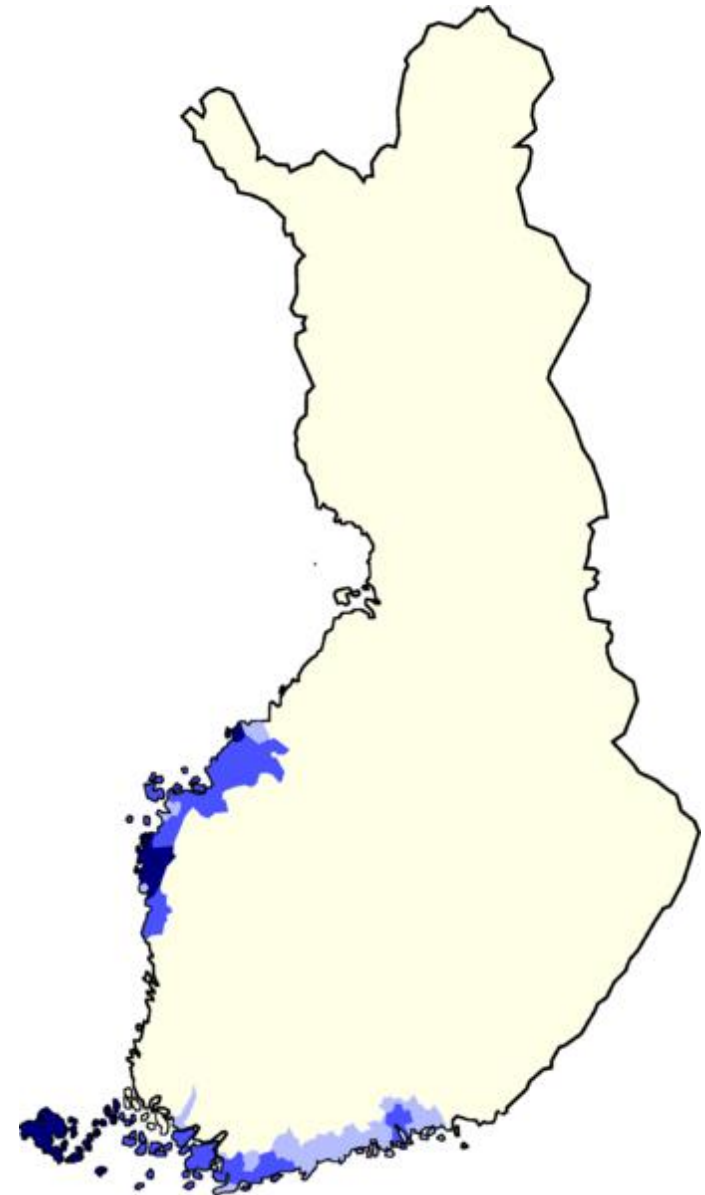
- There are **three Sámi languages** spoken in Finland: **North Sámi**, **Inari Sámi**, and **Skolt Sámi**.
- Protected under **ECRML Part III** with detailed obligations.
- The **Sámi Homeland** in northern Finland (Sápmi) is the main region for public service and education rights.
- The **Sámi Parliament (Sámediggi)** represents Sámi speakers and plays a key role in policy.
- Challenges:
 - **Shortage of Sámi-speaking teachers and staff.**
 - Sámi children outside the Sámi Homeland have **limited access to education or services** in their language.

The Charter - Russian

- The largest immigrant language group in Finland, but considered a **non-territorial language** under ECRML.
- Protected under **Part II**, which only requires states to promote awareness, tolerance, and support cultural expression — not legal use in public life.
- No rights to education, court use, or public services in Russian.
- Russian-language media and culture exist, but **mostly community-driven**, with **minimal state support**.
- Russian speakers often **face barriers to inclusion**, though municipalities with large Russian-speaking populations (e.g., Helsinki) may offer informal support.

Swedish in Finland

- Two national languages in Finland: Finnish and Swedish. The total population is 5.5 million and Swedish is the mother tongue of 5,2 % of the population.
- Most of the approximately 280,000 Swedish-speakers live in the coastal areas of Uusimaa, Åboland and Ostrobothnia. Only 12,000 (4%) of the Swedish-speakers live in monolingual Finnish municipalities in the rest of Finland. Åland is a monolingual Swedish autonomous province with a population of around 25 000.
- Registration of language



Basic linguistic rights

- According to the Constitution, **Finnish and Swedish are the national languages** and society is committed to provide equal social and cultural services to both the Swedish- and the Finnish-speaking population
- The basic linguistic rights are described in greater detail in the **Language Act**. The basis of the Act is in the right of the individual to use his or her own language
- The authorities are liable to arrange education, healthcare and social services, information in both languages
- The Act applies to courts of Law, other state authorities and the municipal authorities of bilingual municipalities
- The Language Act does not apply to private companies
- Neither does the Act apply to universities or the Church, as they are governed by their own Acts
- The Language Act is not applied in the unilingually Swedish-speaking region of Åland, which is an autonomous region of Finland



Uni- or bilingual municipalities



- A municipality is regarded as bilingual if the minority is made up of at least 8 percent of the inhabitants, or 3,000 people.
- 1,85 million Finns live in a bilingual municipality. 38 500 Finnish-speakers live in a municipality with Swedish as the majority language, 140 000 Swedish-speakers live in a municipality with Finnish as the majority language.
- There are 33 bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) municipalities, in 15 Swedish is the majority language. In the Åland Islands all 16 municipalities are Swedish unilingual.

Examples of challenges for Swedish in Finland

- access to health care and social welfare services in Swedish
- lack of Swedish-speaking civil servants within state, regional and local authorities.
- Insufficient digital services in Swedish
- Attitudes to Swedish



The future for Swedish in Finland?



- Administrative reforms easily weaken Swedish administrative structures, which in turn jeopardises services provided by authorities in Swedish
- The number of new Finns is increasing, the percentage of native Finns, including Swedish-speaking Finns, is decreasing
- Emigration decimates the young cohorts (especially women)
- Overall, fewer children are born
- English

But at the same time:

- Interest in Swedish in bilingual families has increased. A clear majority, or around two thirds of children with parents belonging to different language groups, are currently registered as Swedish-speaking.
- The Finnish-Swedish demographic situation is favourable in terms of high life expectancy, low risk of disability retirement, low unemployment, and stable marriages and cohabitation.
- Co-operation with Sweden and the other Nordic countries (NATO) contributes to interest in Swedish society
- Goal in the governmental program to integrate 5-10% of immigrants in Swedish
- Language climate quite calm at the moment

Thank you, tack!

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