

### **Panel 3: Effective practices in teaching of and education in minority languages**

**May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019, 09:00-12:20**

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Minority groups all over Europe struggle with many same or very similar problems concerning the experienced or recognized pedagogical value, significance and psycho-social impacts of education in the minority language.

However, far too often these issues are discussed primarily or exclusively from the viewpoint of legally recognized language minorities.

#### **SLIDE 2:**

Even the general foci of our panel reflect the thinking that speakers of all minority languages have the choice for education in the ethnic language.

They don't. Countless parents all over Europe never needed to rack their brains to make the choice between majority and minority language education for their children. Or to consider whether education in the minority language is somehow harmful or puts children at risk of becoming isolated from their peers. Simply because **a vast number of Europeans' ethnic languages never have been a part of any formal educational scheme.**

Just a quick peek into some current challenges of and practices in teaching and learning Karelian in Finland today.

**Karelian** is closely related to Finnish, an **autochthonous** minority language which has been **spoken in Finland as long as the Finnish language itself**. Today there are appr. **11,000** who estimate speaking Karelian at least well, and another **20,000** who speak it a little or at least understand.

#### **SLIDE 3:**

**Covered by ECMRL but rudimentarily.** In 2009 Karelian was added to languages covered by the European Charter for regional or minority languages, but Finland obliged itself to much less implementation and monitoring in regard to Karelian than regarding the other languages included ->

- e.g. in the latest **Report by Finland on the implementation of the Charter (2017, Part II/ Article 7, 1f, p. 58–62)**, the provision of appropriate forms and means for the teaching and study of the languages covered by the Charter does not discuss the issue in regard to Karelian, which, however, encounters serious problems in this realm, too.

#### **SLIDE 4:**

**Ignored in Finnish national legislation.** Karelian is not mentioned by name in any Finnish national law, including laws concerning education ->

- nothing concrete to refer to if one wants to the child to learn Karelian at school or kindergarten
- widely varying and inconsequent interpretations of the education legislation by school directors and school district officials
- many school directors and district officials do not even know that Karelian can be offered as a foreign language in Finnish school
- no kindergarten or school curriculum for Karelian
- no teacher training -> lack of academically educated, qualified teachers, especially teachers who'd be able to teach courses IN Karelian to university students (University of Eastern Finland: Karelian as a subsidiary subject)
- lack of possibilities to teach Karelian at school is a severe hindrance for developing teacher training for Karelian
- no binding obligations for organizing instruction of Karelian in state-financed education system from early-childhood to university  
-> creating possibilities for learning Karelian is left exclusively on the shoulders of language activists working for revitalizing Karelian in Finland.
- for the past four years, state has awarded Karelian Language Society 100,000 to 200,000 euro per year to be used for a revitalization program designed and implemented by the NGO:
- Education projects country-wide: teacher training workshops for folk high school teachers; Pilots in Joensuu: early-education project in kindergartens (5 kindergartens, 95 kids aged 5-6 participating), Paint & play in Karelian, Sports and play in Karelian (for kids over 7), summer day care for kids over 7 in a farmhouse, remote language instruction for kids over 7

## **SLIDE 5:**

### **Urgent need of appropriate teaching and learning materials**

**Imbalance of learning and teaching materials between the three literary standards** in favour of one whose speakers have been more active and productive than others.

### **Enormous difficulties in recruiting children for language clubs and (mostly voluntary or extracurricular) Karelian classes**

- No geographical core area: the about 30,000 Karelians live scattered all over the country -> the minimum number of pupils required for a language class not reached, even if a school is ready to offer instruction of Karelian
- The non-involvement of the state supports the view that Karelian is "unimportant"
- Parents are passive: What's Karelian good for?
- Children are not interested: Karelian competes with languages such as French, Russian, German; the quality of available text books etc; not willing to do Karelian as "extra", etc.

**SLIDE 6:**

**The point I wish to make is that**

- Even the fundamental right of numerous European minorities to be recognized in forms that would, on paper, lend proper legislative, societal and practical support to the realization of their linguistic human rights is not duly respected yet.
- In the realm of education, respecting linguistic human rights starts with guaranteeing that the option for learning the minority language within the public education system really exists.
- The knowledge we seek to provide for promoting a “**deeper understanding of challenges and practices**” as well as our “**recommendations** on effective implementation of linguistic human rights in terms of effective teaching and other practices contributing to minority language learning” also **must take into account** the grass-root level realities of minorities whose **languages** are **ignored in publicly financed educational systems**.

**Because the linguistic human rights of speakers of such languages are violated most severely.**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION.