



**SFS 1999:1176**

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## **Act concerning the right to use Finnish and Meänkieli in dealings with public authorities and courts**

promulgated on 9 December 1999.

In accordance with a decision by the Riksdag, the following is enacted.

### **Scope of the Act**

**Section 1** This Act governs dealings with local government and state regional and local public authorities operating in a geographical area that wholly or partly coincides with the administrative area for Finnish and Meänkieli.

The administrative area for Finnish and Meänkieli (the administrative area) refers to Gällivare, Haparanda, Kiruna, Pajala and Övertorneå municipalities.

The Act also applies to dealings with county administrative courts, district courts, lands tribunals, environmental courts or maritime courts with ambits that wholly or partly coincide with the administrative area.

### **The right to use Finnish and Meänkieli in dealings with public authorities**

**Section 2** A private individual is entitled to use Finnish or Meänkieli in his/her oral and written dealings with a public authority in matters concerning the exercise of public authority in relation to him/her, provided the matter is connected with the administrative area.

If the private individual uses Finnish or Meänkieli in such a matter, the authority is obliged to give an oral answer in Finnish or Meänkieli respectively. A decision in writing in a matter of this nature shall contain information in Finnish or Meänkieli that the decision may be orally translated into Finnish or Meänkieli respectively by the authority at the request of the individual.

The authority shall strive in other respects, too, to use Finnish or Meänkieli respectively with Finnish or Meänkieli speakers.

**Section 3** The public authorities may prescribe special times and a special place for visits and telephone calls from Finnish or Meänkieli speakers respectively.

### **The right to use Finnish and Meänkieli in dealings with courts of law**

**Section 4** Any person who is a party to or a representative of a party to a case or a matter at a court of law is entitled to use Finnish or Meänkieli during the hearing of the case or matter, provided the said case or matter is connected with the administrative area.

The right to use Finnish or Meänkieli also extends to the courts where a judgment or an order is appealed in a case or matter referred to in the first paragraph.

**Section 5** The right to use Finnish or Meänkieli in court cases or matters, includes the right to submit documents and written evidence in Finnish or Meänkieli, the right to have documents pertaining to the case or matter orally translated into Finnish and Meänkieli respectively and the right to speak Finnish or Meänkieli in oral hearings before the court. The court shall translate documents and written evidence into Swedish unless this is clearly unnecessary.

In its other dealings, too, the court shall strive to use Finnish or Meänkieli respectively for Finnish or Meänkieli-speaking parties or representatives of parties.

**Section 6** Persons wishing to use Finnish or Meänkieli during the court hearing of a case or matter as provided in Section 4, must so request at the opening of the case or matter or when the party is to make his/her first statement in the case or matter. If a request to use Finnish or Meänkieli is presented later, it may be rejected.

A request to use Finnish or Meänkieli may also be rejected if it is clearly for improper purposes.

**Section 7** If a party or a representative of a party is permitted to use Finnish or Meänkieli in court proceedings, an interpreter shall be called in under the provisions of Chapter 5 Sections 6-8 and Chapter 33 Section 9 of the Code of Judicial Procedure and Sections 50-52 of the Administrative Court Procedure Act (1971:291).

### **Finnish or Meänkieli in pre-school activities and care of the elderly**

**Section 8** When a municipality in the administrative area offers pre-school places in accordance with Chapter 2 a Sections 1 and 7 of the Education Act (1985:1100), the municipality shall offer children whose guardian so requests the option of a pre-school place in activities which are wholly or partly carried on in Finnish or Meänkieli respectively.

**Section 9** A municipality in the administrative area shall offer those who so request the option of having all or parts of the services and care provided by the elder care system carried out by personnel who have a command of Finnish or Meänkieli respectively.

## Exceptions

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**Section 10** If there are special reasons for doing so the Government may prescribe that a specific authority accountable to the Government shall be exempted from applying Section 2. Correspondingly, by authority of the Government, county council assemblies and municipal councils may exempt local government authorities accountable to them.

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This Act enters into force on 1 April 2000. It applies to cases and matters at courts of law instituted after entry into force of the Act.

On behalf of the Government

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