

Council of Europe
Secretariat of the European Charter for
Regional or Minority Languages
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France

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Referring to the meeting 15 May 2003 in Copenhagen between the Committee of Experts on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and Danish state representatives, Denmark hereby submits the following additional information to the Committee of Experts:

Bilingual signs

The Danish Ministry of Transport has stated as follows:

Bilingual signs are not prohibited by law in Denmark.

However, if a county or a municipality wish to put up a bilingual sign, such a sign must be approved by the Danish Road Directorate.

According to the rules concerning road signs, there has to be congruity between the place names that are used on road signs and the place names that are found on the road user's map, e.g. the road map from KMS (Kort & Matrikelstyrelsen).

This principle is in accordance with the international UN Convention on Road Signs and Signals which states the following: "On signs G,1; G,4; G,5; G,6 and G,10 it is recommended to show place names in the language of the country, or the subdivision thereof, where the localities referred to are situated". The said types of signs are road signs.

The reason for these Danish and international recommendations is that road users must find congruity between the road information that is the basis for planning the trip and the road information that is found on the road signs. In Danish road maps, road information (including e.g. names of towns) is in Danish, which is why the road signs are also written in Danish.

The Danish Road Directorate is of the opinion that bilingual signs may cause insecurity and confusion with the road users. Furthermore, the additional information that bilingual

signs would imply might result in reduced readability and disorientation, which – apart from a reduced standard of service – may cause an increased risk of road accidents.

The Danish Road Directorate has stated that the directorate has not in recent years received any applications for approval of bilingual road signs. Thus, the Danish Road Directorate has not had the opportunity to take a stand in any concrete matters of this kind.

Supervision of teaching of regional or minority languages

In continuation of the talks during the meeting regarding Article 8, paragraph 1.i, of the Charter, the Ministry of Education has provided the following information:

The rules regarding supervision of private independent basic schools are found in section 9 of the Danish Act on Private Independent Schools. These rules apply equally to German private independent basic schools.

The supervision scheme concerning the education in private independent basic schools consists of three elements:

The first element of the supervision scheme is the parents group (the parents of all children in a private independent basic school). The parents group supervises the school's general activities, including whether or not the school offers education that meets the general requirements of the Folkeskole. The parents group decides in which way the supervision should be carried out.

The second element of the supervision scheme is an external and independent supervision. Thus, the parents group must choose one or more persons or the municipal council to look after

- 1) that the pupils' level of attainment in the subjects Danish, arithmetic/mathematics and English is equivalent to what is generally achieved in the Folkeskole,
- 2) that the overall offer of education in the school in question meets the general requirements of the Folkeskole, and
- 3) that the language of teaching is Danish (German in the German private independent basic schools).

Once a year the external, independent supervisor(s) must submit a written supervisory statement to the parents group and to the school board concerning the supervision carried out as mentioned above. The school must publish the supervisory statement on the school homepage if the school has one. Reference is made to section 9, paragraph 5, of the Danish Act on Private Independent Schools.

There is a clear procedure laid down if the external supervisor does not find the education to be satisfactory. In such cases, the supervisor must fix a deadline for the school within which the school must improve the education. If the criticism is upheld after a

hearing of the parents group and the school board, a report must be submitted to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education will then decide whether or not the school can continue or whether extended supervision should be established.

The third element of the supervision scheme consists in the possibility for the Minister of Education to establish extended supervision of a school under certain circumstances. This might for instance be the case, when doubt is raised about whether or not the school in question offers education that meets the general requirements of the Folkeskole.

When the extended supervision of the school in question has been carried out, the Minister of Education makes a decision. If the minister finds that there is insufficient certainty that the school's education meets the requirements laid down by law, the minister can decide that the school is no longer a private independent basic school and no longer eligible for state subsidy.

There has not been established extended supervision of the German private independent basic schools in Denmark.

In October 2001 the Ministry of Education asked the external supervisors to inform the ministry of how the supervision is in fact carried out. The Ministry of Education received the enclosed contribution from school consultant Franz Christiansen about his supervision of the German private independent basic schools.

By letter of 2 June 2003 the Committee of Experts has forwarded two comments concerning Denmark's first report on the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

As for the statement of the Bund deutscher Nordschleswiger, this was already known to the Danish authorities. The comment from the German minority concerns issues, such as for instance the media, that have already been commented on by the Danish authorities in the report, in the additional information submitted by Denmark to the Committee of Experts in letter of 6 May 2003 or in the meeting in Copenhagen on 15 May 2003.

As for the comment presented by Eric Støttrup Thomsen as chairman of "Romano", this does in the eyes of the Danish authorities not add noticeably to the question of whether the Romany people is a national minority in Denmark or whether the Romany language is an historical regional or minority language in Denmark. Thus, the Danish authorities do not have further comments in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Pernille Christensen

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2.-4. Not.: Hvilket herved meddeles til orientering. Der henvises til j.nr. [indsættes].

5. Not. + bilag: Hvilket herved meddeles til orientering. Kopi af Eric Støttrup Thomsens kommentar til Europarådets Ekspertkomité vedlægges.

6. Not.: Hvilket herved meddeles til orientering.

7. St.not. af hovedbrev