

# Invitation to

## The Second Swedish Revitalization Conference, Stockholm 28-29 October

### *Introduction and a scientific frame for the conference*

Several of the Swedish national minority languages are at the verge of eventual disappearance, even Finnish, which by many is seen as a comparatively well supported language in the Swedish minority context. The long-term and deep processes that have led to the fact that the languages are no longer used in every-day communication in the homes, has contributed to a break in the transmission of the languages from the older, parent generation, to the younger, child generation.

This process is by far not only a national problem of Sweden, but is part of a global pattern, that has been going on for decades and which has some general characteristics in different parts of the world.

The process partly concerns attitudes about and among the speakers, and it is partly about whether the languages are understood as "modern" and useful, even among the speakers themselves. In addition, there seem to exist unique features connected to the evolution of different languages and the milieux in which they have been used. Some of these aspects were discussed by internationally established researchers during the First Swedish Revitalization Conference in Uppsala in 2010.

To reverse such a complex process of language shift is not an easy task, but there are good examples of the possibilities of postponing a final language shift or death, and even of reversing the process into a positive development. Both Welsh in Europe and Maori in New Zealand are well-known examples of this. In order to succeed, however, measures taken at several levels are needed. Measures are needed at societal level – legislation, political decisions, structured support, changes of attitudes, research knowledge – and measures at group level – focused work within the groups themselves and spread of knowledge, including research results – and last but not least, measures at the individual level – where decisions taken by the individual speakers are influenced to become supportive of the minority languages. These latter decisions are not restricted to the more or less conscious decisions by the individuals, but are also dependent on how the closest surrounding sees these issues and what the external framework for learning the languages looks like, to learn them, to use them and feel the need to transmit them into the next generation.

In this respect the educational field has a most crucial role to play, which also is the main topic of this Second conference. A main question, which will be targeted in the different presentations, is how school and education in and about different languages contribute to language maintenance, and in some cases, when this is no longer possible when the last competent speaker generation is lost, how can a language be effectively revitalized, when there is a generation gap between the elderly speakers and the grand-children of that generation.

The CoE has during the last ten years criticized Sweden for not providing such education in and about the NMLs, which would guarantee or at least strongly contribute to a continued language transmission of those languages that Sweden has included in its ratification of the ECRML and of the FRNM (both stepped into force in 2000): Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani chib, Sami and Yiddish.

Both language maintenance and revitalization can be seen as part of a retained plurilingualism for the individual and multilingualism for the society, not as representing attempts to achieve monolingualism in the NML.

The Swedish National Agency of Education has in its reports (for example 2008) described a lack of strategic and well-functioning solutions to the challenges of the Swedish school today, with regard to plurilingual children's development of their both or several languages.

There seems to prevail a genuine non-interest in such issues in political life, which is also reflected in a lack of research in the field today, and lack of efforts to maintain multilingualism in a long-term perspective in Swedish society through education. This is also reflected in the flaws of teacher education with regard to these issues. From the fall of 2011 there is no functioning teacher education at any higher education institution in any of the NMLs of Sweden, neither for mother tongue teachers, subject teachers nor for example for pre-school teachers.

This second conference is based on an attempt to broadly present revitalization efforts through educational measures and programs, which according to international research and understanding have functioned well. Despite the fact that it is not possible to pinpoint one single program or solution for various, different minority language contexts, there are basic common principles and insights at work in different models, which can be adapted to function well also in other contexts. Several of the presentations also include an understanding of what is actually going on in the every-day work in schools and class-rooms.

Language nests and other types of projects for young children made up a considerable part of the conference held in Uppsala 2010. These will to some extent be followed up this time, but they will also be complemented by research and experiences of other kinds of educational principles, for example immersion programs in Finland (Prof. Siv Björklund) and trilingual programs (the Basque country and Friesland). For the latter presentations we have managed to engage two internationally well-known researchers, Prof. Jasone Cenoz and Prof. Durk Gorter, both at the moment active in research projects in the Basque country. Prof. Cenoz is the probably best known interpreter of the characteristics and success of the Basque experiences of trilingual education, and Prof. Gorter has a long-standing cooperation with the Frisian Academy, and the educational strivings for Frisian in the Netherlands. During the second day youngsters with different minority backgrounds meet and have work shops where they can share their experiences about their minority language, how they can encourage each other, what kind of projects they have been involved, what is important for them etc....

Both immersion programs and trilingual education, that is, instruction in the languages from early age, are as principles and activities covering not only minority language background children, but also children of majority language background. In both cases the results, both considering attitudes and school results, have been over-all positive. In Sweden, however, such attempts to develop novel educational programs, have not been tried out, neither in bilingual nor in trilingual mode.

Underlying principles of the themes of the conference are both the idea that instruction in several languages are necessary, and that three general, holistic and long-term strategies are needed in order to succeed with a transmission of minority languages. There is a need to improve and increase knowledge in the MLs, through formal instruction in and about them, but also to improve the overall possibilities to use the languages in daily life. This is expected to increase the willingness of the speakers to use the languages, and to be concerned about the transmission of the languages into the next generation. These strategies may be summarized in the three concepts developed by the economic linguist Francois Grin: Capacity – Opportunity – Desire, that is the COD-principle. This has been achieved through studies mainly in the interconnectedness of language and economic factors in multilingual regions, but they have a much wider potential to make a difference in various types of language contexts.

The conference is free of charge, but in order to be able to prepare for coffee etc., a registration of your participation in the conference is necessary. Send your registration for the conference to:

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The program follows, but will be updated on [www.finska.su.se](http://www.finska.su.se)

### **Program for The Second Swedish Revitalization Conference, Stockholm 28-29 October**

Preliminary presentations, 45 min presentations, incl. 10 min discussion (titles preliminary):

#### Friday 28 October

*Stockholm University, Frescati campus, Lecture hall B3*

12.00 – 12.30 Registration and coffee/tea with sandwich outside lecture hall B3

12.30-13.15 Official Opening followed by Introduction, Professor Jarmo Lainio, Stockholm, *European and Swedish perspectives*

13.15-14.00 Professor Leena Huss, Uppsala, *Revitalization in a Nordic and Northern perspective*

14.00-14.45 Professor Siv Björklund, Vasa, Finland, *Immersion programmes in Finland*

14.45-15.15 Coffee

15.15-16.00 Professor Jasone Cenoz, The Basque Country, *Trilingual experiences from a bilingual context*

16.00-16.45 Professor Durk Gorter, The Basque Country/Fryske Akademy, NL, *Frisian trilingualism in schools*

16.45-17.30 Researcher Annika Pasanen, Inari/Helsinki, Finland, *Language nests in Inari and Karelia*

*Reception for registered participants*

#### Saturday 29 October

*Suomi-Instituutti/Finlandsinstitutet, Snickarbacken 4*

10.00-10.30 Principal Ina Sinisalo, From a practical point of view, implementation in Sweden and New Zealand of revitalization efforts

10.30-11.15 Comments and discussion led by Prof. Jeroen Darquennes, Namur, Belgium, and final words on the scientific presentations by Jarmo Lainio;

11.15 Coffee break

11.45- Workshops National Minority Youth representatives  
-16.00

16.00 Cultural program