

## NORWAY

### Sami (Lapps)

Activity: 1973-2020

#### **General notes**

- Sami is also written as Sámi. We use Sami in this document.

#### **Movement start and end dates**

- Sami activists formed the Nordic Saami Institute in 1973 to press for political and land rights. Since 1973, Sami have elected a representative body, a Sami Parliament. Its 20 representatives are elected every four years and the purpose of the Sami Parliament is to attend to the rights and interests of the Sami by presenting initiatives and proposals and by preparing opinions to the authorities. We therefore peg the start date of the movement at 1973.
- In 1986 the Chernobyl disaster spread radiation across Lapland and made necessary the destruction of reindeer herds, the Sami's livelihood. Two years later Sami leaders demanded the creation of a Sami parliament that would have influence over planning and development of the region. In response to this demand, the Norwegian government inaugurated in October 1989 the Sami Assembly, which consists of 39 representatives that are directly elected from 13 constituencies covering the whole country. Over the next decade, the Assembly was the main vehicle of Sami separatism and there has been ongoing debate in the Norwegian parliament with respect to how much power the Sami Assembly should have in regard to land claims, self-government and resource management.
- In 2000, the Sami Parliamentary Council was formed to represent the Sami parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland and to overlook issues include cultural and language autonomy as well as the freedom to cross borders between the countries.
- A 2011 UN document indicates that the Sami movement remained ongoing in all three countries.
- The Sami Parliamentary Council remained active as of 2020 and continued to advocate for increased influence in national and regional policies pertaining to climate change, herding, infrastructure, and natural resource extraction (Anaya 2011; Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Energy Monitor Worldwide 2020; Minahan 1996, 2002; MAR; Roth 2015: 24; Synak 1995; Varsi 2011 Irish Times 2018; Sami Parliamentary Council 2022. Indonesia Tribune 2022). [start date: 1973; end date: ongoing]

#### **Dominant claim**

- The movement onset is coded in 1973 with the formation of the Nordic Saami Institute. According to Minahan (2002), the organization pressed for political and land rights. Despite the crosscutting Sami territory, there is hardly any evidence for a claim for reunification of the Sami territory as most of their goals are related to the protection of their traditional way of life, their culture and language. We thus code autonomy as the dominant claim of the Sami. This is confirmed by statements of the Sami Parliamentary Council, which was formed in 2000 to represent the Sami parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland. The council demands cultural and linguistic autonomy and the freedom to cross borders between the countries. Its representatives have always made clear that "their goal of securing relations among their people across borders [...] is not based on a desire to form a separate Sami State" (United Nations Report 2011: 10). They stressed that their claims are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which wants self-determination for indigenous peoples to be exercised "within the framework of the unity and territorial integrity of the State"

(United Nations Report 2011: 10). The movement's focus has been on land rights and increased control over natural resources (Roth 2015: 24; United Nations Report 2011; Minahan 2016; Sami Parliamentary Council 2022; Newstex 2017; Life in Norway 2018). [1973-2020: autonomy claim]

### **Independence claims**

NA

### **Irredentist claims**

NA

### **Claimed territory**

- Sami claims concern their traditional territory, which is called Sápmi. The vast territory stretches over northern parts of Finland, Sweden, and Norway, but also includes some areas in Russia (Roth 2015: 24). However, we code only the territories within the borders of Finland, Sweden, and Norway since the self-determination movement has made specific demands within these countries. We code this claim within Norway's borders based on the map by Roth (2015: 22).

### **Sovereignty declarations**

- According to Minahan (2002: 1640) the Sami leaders from the Nordic countries "declared the collective sovereignty of the divided Sami nation" in 1983. However, we found no corroborating evidence and do not code this declaration.

### **Separatist armed conflict**

- We found no reports of violence, hence a NviolSD classification. [NviolSD]

### **Historical context**

- A semi-nomadic tribe of early Mongol origin, the Sami gradually came under the control of the Nordic kingdoms in the in early Middle Ages. Their traditional lifestyle built around reindeer herding was, however, only little affected, as they were granted the right to travel freely across international frontiers (Hewitt & Cheetham 2000; Minahan 2002).
- The Sami territory was subjected to constantly changing geopolitical situations for centuries and was occupied by Denmark, Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. Today's state borders were established between the middle of the eighteenth century, when the frontier between Sweden and Norway was agreed, to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the frontier between Norway and Russia was delimited (1826). These demarcations crosscut the Sami territory and divided the various Sami tribes between Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden (Minahan 2002; Somby 2011; United Nations Report 2011).
- From the nineteenth century until around the time of the Second World War, the respective governments primarily followed policies of assimilation. Norwegian settlement in the Sami territory was encouraged with incentives of land and water rights. The restrictive stance towards Sami was further substantiated at the end of the nineteenth century, when the government engaged in Norwegianization policies: The use of the Sami language in education was restricted and it was forbidden to sell land to non-Norwegian speakers. The cultural identity of the Sami

was further eroded as many Sami children were sent to Norwegian boarding schools. However, the restrictive language policy was abandoned in 1947 and in 1959, the right to use the Sami language in education was recognized by a royal commission (Hewitt & Cheetham, 2000; Minahan 2002; United Nations Report 2011).

### **Concessions and restrictions**

- In 1980, the Sami Rights Commission was established to deal with political and economic issues of the Sami. The institution, however, “has failed to address key legal questions of landownership and resource rights” (Minority Rights Group International). The most important function of the Sami Rights Commission was that it formed the basis for the establishment of the Norwegian Sami Assembly, which was inaugurated in 1989. Thus we code a concession in 1989 (see below).
- At the end of the 1980s, there were several acts of Sami accommodation. At the root of all these concessions was the Norwegian Sami Act of 12 June 1987. The purpose of the act was to enable the Sami people in Norway to protect and develop their language, culture and traditional way of life (government.no). Hence, Sami rights were added to the constitution in 1988, establishing constitutional guarantees for Sami language, culture and society (Somby 2011). The most far-reaching element of the act was the establishment of the Norway Sami Parliament (Sámediggi), which was inaugurated in 1989. The parliament is a publicly elected body that comprises 39 members from seven Sami constituencies. It both serves as an elected political body for the Sami and carries out administrative duties delegated from national authorities. The parliament can issue statements on all questions within its mandate and also has the authority “to make decisions when this follows from legislative or administrative provisions” (Somby 2011). Formally, however, the parliament remains an advisory body with limited decision-making power, including the management of the Sami Development Fund and allocation of funds to Sami language municipalities regarding teaching or the protection of heritage sites. Since the establishment of the Sámediggi is a result of the Norwegian Sami Act of 1987, we code an autonomy concession in 1987. [1987: cultural rights & autonomy concession]
- In 1990, Norway ratified the ILO Convention 169 on the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. In 1992, and as a consequence of the ratification, the government submitted new legislation that declared the Sami language and Norwegian as equal languages with equal status (Corson 1997; Minahan 2002). [1992: cultural rights concession]
- In 1997, King Harald V, on behalf of the Norwegian Government and State, made an official apology to the Sámi and Kven people for the forced ‘Norwegization’ policy enacted until the mid-20th century (Norway Today 2021). We do not code a concession due to the symbolic character.
- In 2000, the Sami Parliamentary Council was established in order to represent the Sami parliaments in Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Sombay 2011; United Nations Report 2011). This transnational body is not a concession by the government but unilaterally established and furthermore does not increase the Sami level of self-determination. This event is hence not coded.
- In 2005, the Norwegian government passed the Finnmark Act. The Act gave the Sami parliament and the Finnmark Provincial council rights to land and natural resources in Finnmark. With the Act, 95 per cent of the provincial area, which has primarily been used by the Sami, was transferred from the state to local ownership. The area now officially belongs to the people of the province (which also include Norwegians). The Finnmark Act was also endorsed by the Sami parliament. The United Nations Report (2011: 13) calls this “an important step towards advancing Sami self-determination and control over lands and resources” although the Finnmark Act remains in some respects controversial among some Sami representatives. Nevertheless, we code this as an autonomy concession. [2005: autonomy concession]
- The Education Act of 2005 guarantees Sami pupils the right to be taught their native language as part of their compulsory schooling. Sami students outside the Sami district have the right to receive Sami instruction. The lack of Sami teachers, one of the main obstacles to safeguard the implementation of the act, is also tackled by the Norwegian government through the “dream job” project, which provides scholarships to students in order to become teachers in Sami languages (United Nations Report 2011). [2005: cultural rights concession]

- n response to concerns over the Sami languages expressed in White Papers the
- Norwegian Government proposed an Action Plan for the Sami Languages in 2009.
- The main goal of the plan of action is to provide all necessary conditions to increase
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- In 2009 the Norwegian government implemented the Action Plan for the Sami Languages. The plan's main goal was to increase the number of active users of the Sami languages (Action Plan for Sami Languages 2009: 8). [2009: cultural rights concession]
- In 2015, the Norwegian government established the International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry (ICR) in Kautokeino with a mission to contribute to developing sustainable reindeer husbandry within and between Sami communities and to attempt to counter concerns about shrinking pasture lands (Life in Norway: 2018). This does not seem related to ethnic rights as defined, so we do not code a concession.

### **Regional autonomy**

- Norway is a centralized, unitary state. The Sami Parliament only has very limited decision-making power and resources, thus a regional autonomy coding is not justified.

### **De facto independence**

NA

### **Major territorial changes**

NA

### **EPR2SDM**

<i>Movement</i>	Sami (Lapps)
<i>Scenario</i>	No match

<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

### Power access

- According to EPR, ethnicity is politically irrelevant in Norway (EPR group of Norwegians make up 100 percent of the population), which is why the country is not coded. According to Josefsen (2010: 14), there have been Saami lists for municipal, county and parliamentary elections in three counties (Finnmark, Troms, Nordland). Some Saami representatives have been elected to the Storting (Norwegian Parliament) via Norwegian party lists and with Sámeálbmot (Sami People Party) being approved as a nationwide party in 1999, they also had their own list for national elections. However, we found no evidence of a Sami representation in the national executive. [1973-2020: powerless]

### Group size

- Since there is no overall registration of the Sami population in Norway, population numbers are just approximations. According to Statistics Norway, there are 55,700 people living in the area of the Sami Parliament subsidy schemes for business development (STN) in 2013. This number is more or less in line with other sources such as the Minority Rights Group International, which estimates approximately 40,000 Sami in Norway, Josefsen (2010: 5), who estimates between 40,000 and 45,000 and a report by the United Nations Human Rights Council on the rights of indigenous peoples (2011), which estimates between 40,000-60,000. Minahan (2002: 1636), in contrast, reports a significantly higher number of 70,000. We follow Statistics Norway and assume 55,700 Sami in Norway. With Norway's population totaling 5.063 million in 2013 (Statistics Norway), this yields a population share of 0.01100138257. [0.011]

### Regional concentration

- Information on the Sami settlement is scarce. They predominantly live in the Finnmark region. Given the Sami population in Norway (we code 55,700, other sources such as Minahan (2002: 1636) report significantly higher numbers) and the population of Finnmark (75,000 in 2014), it is likely that the Sami are a majority in Finnmark. This is confirmed by the United Nations Regional Information Center for Western Europe, which states that the Sami are a "majority in the innermost parts of Finnmark" (UNRIC). [concentrated]

### Kin

- According to Minahan (2002: 1636), there are Sami communities in Sweden (22,000), Finland (8,000) and Russia (3,000). Minahan's estimates of the number of Samis are likely inflated (see above), but this does not matter since even according to Minahan the numeric threshold is not met. [no kin]
  - o Note: According to Minahan (2002: 1637) the Samis in Norway are commonly called Finns, which raises the question whether the Finns should be coded as ethnic kin. The main reason why the Samis are sometimes seen as related to the Finns is that the Finnish and the Sami language have a common ancestor (Proto-Finno-Saamic). However, the two languages split 3000 years ago, and we could not find additional evidence of strong ethnic ties between the two groups. Thus we do not code the Finns as ethnic kin of the Sami.

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