



Office International de l'Enseignement Catholique (OIEC)
Catholic International Education Office
(Special consultative status to the United Nations ECOSOC)

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

21st session

(January – February 2015)

SWEDEN

Key issue:

Right to education

1. **Catholic International Education Office (OIEC)** is an NGO with special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of United Nations (ECOSOC). Founded in 1952, OIEC represents world-wide Catholic education and its aim is to promote educational catholic projects in relation with the principles of the United Nations. OIEC is present in 103 countries and represents about 50 millions pupils and students in more than 210.000 schools around the world. OIEC' priorities issues are: Education for all (and its application in the field of human rights education, peace, justice, solidarity and sustainable development); Freedom of education; Freedom of religion; and Dialogue of cultures.

2. On UPR' process, OIEC is focused on two issues: Education for all and freedom of education. The information contained on this document had been provided by Sweden catholic Schools.

Introduction

3. OIEC welcomes the progress achieved by Sweden, to promote right to education, education for all and to fight discrimination in the field of education. A numbers of examples of specific measures are cited on the Sweden Mid-term Implementation Assessment of UPR: the news Education Act, and the role of the Equality Ombudsman and the Swedish National Agency for Education in fighting discrimination in the field of education. However, there are some points that need to be improved: Equal access to education for minorities and migrants, freedom of education and discrimination against children with specific needs.

Equal Access to education for minorities and migrants

(This concerns Samy and Roma communities, and migrant children who do not have a residency permit in the Sweden)

4. With respect to the guarantee of the right to education for all migrant children, especially those who do not have a residency permit in the Sweden, a new law was applied in May 2013 which gave the right to education for all children living in Sweden, whether they are documented or not. Schools have to offer these children placements if they apply.

5. Concerning the issue of Samy and Roma access to education, Sweden made positive effort to eliminate discrimination. Like several minority groups in Sweden, Samy and Roma have a special status. They are allowed to have special language classes if they attend an ordinary state school. Unfortunately, not all local governments apply this right stating that it is either too expensive or they cannot provide a teacher with the right competence. Beside this there is also a lack of teachers for both the Samy and Roma.

6. Some Samy groups have a teacher who follows the group on the reindeer trail, but only in some areas in the north of Sweden.

7. Some local authorities have built up societies to help Roma people. They have held literacy courses for adults and even children. Many Roma children still do not attend school regularly. Social services have placed Roma children in foster homes to ensure their school attendance. Roma people have an instinctive fear of authorities because of their history in Sweden and the way they have been treated. Officially there is a duty of school attendance for all children in Sweden but OIEC noted that if the school reports lack of attendance of a Roma child very little is

done to guarantee that right. They are the “forgotten children”. They are not expected to follow the same laws as everybody else neither are their parents held accountable. Bullying in school because of Roma background is still a problem, especially for Roma children who come from Eastern Europe. They have a very low status even among other Roma families. Sweden has made stronger laws about discrimination and schools can be fined if they have not done enough to prevent bullying or discrimination of any children.

Recommendations:

8. Continue to ensure the implementation of measures to eliminate discrimination at School against Samy, Roma and Migrant children, in particular:

- against the Bullying in school of Roma children who come from Eastern Europe.
- for migrant children who do not have a residency permit in the Sweden.
- by giving more financial to local governments in order to fill the lack of specialize teachers for Sami and Roma people with language classes

Freedom of education

9. The international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by Sweden in 1971, in its article 13 (3, 4) provides that : *“The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.*

No part of this article shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principles set forth in paragraph 1 of this article and to the requirement that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.”

10. The Swedish government generally respects the freedom of education. The Sweden education law (chap. 10 § 35) states that every independent school must be opened for all pupils who have the right to receive compulsory education. From 1983, the government has also made progress by giving grants to independent schools, especially to Catholic Schools; therefore, they were given the financial resources which allow them to hire lay teachers.

11. Despites these progresses, we noted the difficulties for some parents to choose the kind of education they needed for their children, particularly those who are interested in faith based school.

12. Example 1: families who want their children to be home-tutored. Some families have contacted the Catholic schools to ask if the school could enroll the child and provide the parents with material so that they could teach them at home. They lived in another city where no Catholic school existed. Their wish was to give their children confessional

education in the ethos of the school that they don't have in a completely secular state school. The answer was a absolute "no" from the local council.

13. Example 2: the social teaching of the church on solidarity, subsidiarity and preference for the poor are areas which are missing in the curriculum. But if parents look for a school that has a certain profile, such as music, sports, dance, maths or languages, the children who apply can be tested to see if they have an skill on that subject as long as there is no queue to register with the school. This applies from year seven or in some cases year four. Faith-based schools do not have that right.

Recommendations:

14. In respect to the freedom of education issue, the Sweden government must take into account the needs of the parents related to the specificity of faith based schools like Catholic School in accordance with their own beliefs.

Questions:

15. All children must attend school. But the demands of some families who want their children to be home-tutored were turned down. We would kindly ask Sweden for clarification on this matter.

16. According to the curriculum, Catholic Schools suggested to Sweden to include the social teaching of the church on solidarity, subsidiarity and preference for the poor are areas. We would be grateful to know what makes that possibility difficult to be opened up?

Discrimination in education against children with specific needs

17. The Sweden education law states (chap. 10 § 35) that *every independent school must be open for all pupils who have the right to receive compulsory education. The education may be limited to apply to a) certain age groups, b) pupils in need of special help, c) certain pupils for whom the education offered is specially adapted. The government or that authority which the government decides can regulate which specially adapted education which may be given.*

18. In fact, he state demands that all schools as well as Catholic schools have certain principles for taking in pupils. Siblings come first, then the application date. Now, we must accept all children on the basis of first come. Earlier it was possible to save places for children in a difficult situation, who were being bullied in other schools, or children with special needs. That possibility has been withdrawn. Even children with the most acute problems must take their place in the queue.

19. Children who attend the Catholic schools are most of the time from immigrant families. Their parents come from Poland, Latin America, Spain... Most of the children are born in Sweden but live with a double cultural identity. The Catholic schools provide a sense of belonging and a means of "Inculturation" in Swedish society both for the

parents and for the children. Although Sweden is very generous in its refugee hospitality it is a very segregated country. It is harder for immigrants or people with an immigrant sounding name to get a permanent job. The Catholic schools work with the children to give them a pride in their culture and a sense of their own worth.

Recommendation:

20. The Sweden state must continue to take measures to give more priority to children with special needs and those who are being bullied in other schools, when they apply for enrollment in a school.

Question:

21. What are the measures taking by Sweden State to give more priority to children with special needs and those who are being bullied in other schools, when they apply for enrollment in a school?