



The Sámi Parliament of Norway



The Sámi Parliament Building

The Sámi Parliament Building in Karasjok was officially opened November 2nd, year 2000 by H.R.H King Harald V.

Surrounding the Sámi Parliament building is a landscape comprised of pinetrees and natural vegetation. Elements such as the concrete and grey colour of the larch wood panelling allow the building to blend in with the surrounding nature. The architects Stein Halvorsen and Christian Sundby won the international architectural contest for the Sámi Parliament in 1996. A parliament in general has political importance, but also has nation building and identity significance. These were some of the intentions of the contest, where the programme stated that the architect should contribute so that "The Sámi Parliament appears in a dignified way" and "reflects Sámi architecture." It was requested that architectural tradition should be the basis for this monumental building.

The Sámi Parliament is formed as a semicircle on two floors with the Sámi Parliament's library, common reception, meeting rooms and offices. The plenary hall is located at the end of the semicircle, tied to the main building by an enclosed bridge. It has no windows, but clerestory glazing let in the characteristic light. The built-in furniture and fittings in the plenary hall have been done by Beate Ellingsen in collaboration with the architect.

An additional office- and administrative building at the Sámi Parliament in Karasjok opened in November 2015. The building measures approx. 1500 sq.m.

The Sámi Parliament has employed about 150 people, and the main administration is in Kárášjohka, altogether nine office locations from North to South.

The Sámi Parliament in Norway




The Sámi are an indigenous people with traditional territories within the national borders of Finland, Norway, Sweden and Russia. The Sámi people have lived in their settlements long before the national borders were established. The Sámi Parliament in Norway is an expression of recognition that the Sámi are one of two peoples in Norway.

The Sámi Parliament is democratically elected by and among the Sámi; it is an indigenous parliament and deals with all matters concerning the Sámi people. The Sámi Parliament shall improve the Sámi's political position and promote Sámi interests, and is primarily a political body for the Sámi

people. The Sámi Parliament's role as an independent actor working together with others applies on the national and international arenas alike. No one has the authority to issue instructions to the Sámi Parliament. The Sámi Parliament identifies its own priorities and develops its own policies, based on its mandate from the Sámi People and dialogue with our communities.

The Sámi Parliament is the prime dialogue partner for the Norwegian government in its Sámi policy. The Sámi Parliament has also taken over administrative responsibility and policy instruments in certain areas, in example in matters concerning language, culture, and education.

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Historical background

The Sámi Parliament was first opened October 9th 1989 in Karasjok by H.R.H King Olav V.

The Alta conflict, that is, the opposition to damming the Alta and Kautokeino watercourses in the 1970s and 1980s, precipitated the process that led to the establishment of the Sámi Parliament. The demonstrations in Alta and Oslo turned the spotlight on the oppression of the Sámi and of Sámi culture. Even though the resistance to the dam failed, in 1980, the Alta conflict led the Norwegian authorities to commission a public report on the Sami's cultural and political rights. In 1984, the Sami Rights Council published the first of many specialised studies: "Norwegian Public Report (NOU) 1984:18 Regarding the Sami's legal status".

This report paved the way for the Sami Act in 1978 and the creation of the Sámi Parliament in 1989. It also led to the adoption of a new provision in the Constitution of Norway in 1988, §108:

"It is the responsibility of the authorities of the State to create conditions enabling the Sami people to preserve and develop its language, culture and way of life."

Political organization

The Sámi Parliament is a representative elected assembly with 39 representatives elected by seven constituencies every fourth year. The Plenary Assembly is the supreme governing body of the Sámi Parliament and its activities are regulated within the framework provided by the Sámi Act. The plenary meetings are usually held four times a year in the Sámi Parliament Building in Karasjok and all meetings are open to the public. The Plenary Assembly can address all issues considered to impact the Sámi People.

The leadership of the plenary implements the Sámi Parliament's procedures and administers parliamentary meetings. It also deals with the parliament's representational responsibilities. The president of the plenary is formally the highest ranking Member of Parliament (MP) and leads the work done by the plenary assembly.

The representatives are members of the expert committees that handle the preparations for

the plenary sessions. The committees prepare all items that the Executive Council has proposed for political treatment in plenary and make recommendations based on the Sámi Parliament's Executive Council's studies and proposals.

The Executive Council consists of five members, chaired by the president of the Sámi Parliament. The president is elected by the Plenary Assembly, whilst the four other members of the Council are appointed by the president.

The Sámi Parliament's Executive Council is responsible for the day-to-day executive policies and political activities of the Sámi Parliament. It serves as the parliament's cabinet that both initiates items for discussion and implements political decisions. The Executive Council governs as long as it has the confidence of the Sámi Parliament's plenary.

The Sámi Parliament's library

The library is arranged in terraces and connected to the exterior space by large south-facing glass panels. With its 30,000 volumes, the library houses Norway's largest collection of books and documents concerning the Sámi languages and Sámi subjects. The library contains books in multiple Sámi languages. It also includes extensive specialist literature on Sámi topics in the Scandinavian languages, English, Latin, German and various other languages. The library is open to everyone.

Inside the library hangs a hide with King Olav's signature from the opening of the very first Sámi Parliament in 1989.

The Sámi parliamentary elections

Sámi parliamentary elections are held every fourth year at the same time as elections to the Storting, the Norwegian national assembly. Anyone registered in the Sámi Parliament's electoral roll can vote or run for office. All those who are entitled to vote in municipal council elections and who are registered in the electoral roll can vote in The Sámi parliamentary elections.

Anyone who perceives themselves as Sámi and who either has Sámi as their home language, or who has a parent, grandparent or great-grandparent with Sámi as their home language, can register in the Sámi Parliament's electoral roll. Children of individuals who are or have been registered in the electoral roll can also register. One must actively choose to do so.

The representatives are distributed relative to the number of votes for the individual lists or the parties in each constituency. The number of representatives eligible for election from each constituency is determined by the number of registered voters in the constituency in the most recent municipal and county elections.

The Sámi Parliamentary Council

The Sámi Parliaments in Norway, Sweden and Finland cooperate through the Sámi Parliamentary Council (SPC), that was established in year 2000. The Sámi people should be able to preserve and develop their language, culture and community life, both within and across national states. The SPC helps coordinate the political treatment of matters that involve the Sámi, and helps facilitate the development of practical forms of cooperation between the Sámi Parliaments.

