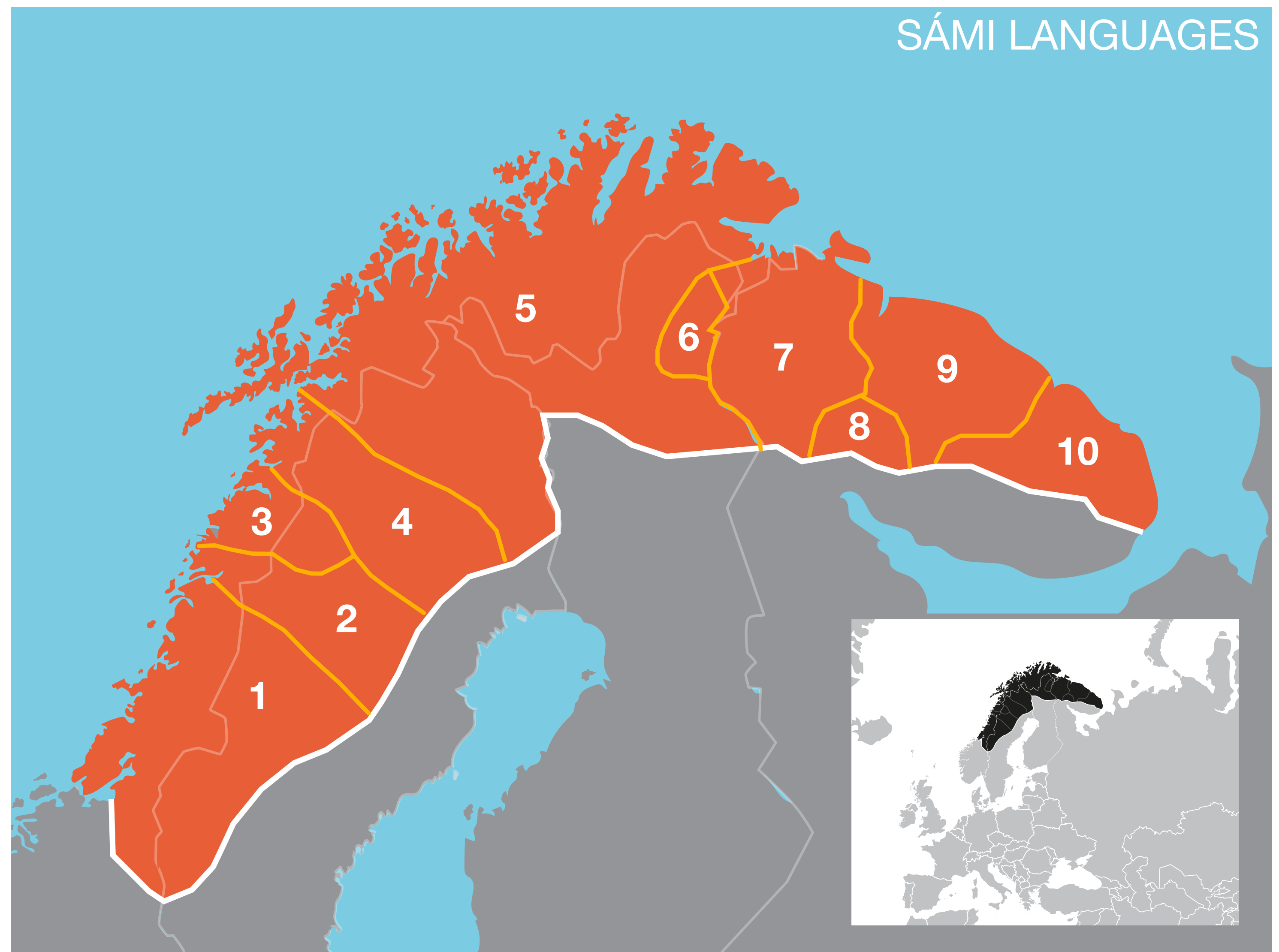


1. South Sámi
2. Ume Sámi
3. Pite Sámi
4. Lule Sámi
5. North Sámi
6. Inari Sámi
7. Skolt Sámi
8. Akkala Sámi
9. Kildin Sámi
10. Ter Sámi



Map 1: Map and list of Sámi languages

Sámi languages

The Sámi people are a group of indigenous peoples in Northern Europe. The Sámi people have their own history, culture, language and traditional territories known as Sápmi.

The Sámi languages are defined as a branch of the Uralic language family, and are spoken in an area stretching from central Norway and Sweden, through northern Norway, Sweden and Finland, to the Kola Peninsula in Russia.

Today there are altogether 10 Sámi languages, which are more or less mutually unintelligible; especially languages that are geographically distant. The languages differ from one another at least to the same degree as i.e. Germanic languages. Neighboring dialects on each side of language boundaries are normally close to each other, and the languages form a chain in which speakers of adjacent dialects understand each other. (Sammallahti, 1998)¹

The state borders do not follow the traditional boundaries between the Sámi languages. The language and dialectal boundaries go from east to west, while the state borders cross the language borders and go from north to south. For example, North Sámi is spoken in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The number of language users varies from one language to another. The largest language is Northern Sámi (est. 20.000–40.000 users). All Sámi languages are minority languages in the respective countries.

¹ Sammallahti, P. (1998). The Saami Languages. An Introduction. Davvi Girji OS, Kárášjohka.