

Decision

Vice-Chancellor

Language Policy

Reg. no.: 747/41/2011

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LANGUAGE POLICY FOR OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AT SÖDERTÖRN UNIVERSITY

1. Introduction

This document contains guidelines for the official language of the University for the presentation of official documents in all areas of operation. Language and language use within education and research are dealt with separately.

The Language Policy should be a tool for the daily activities of the university staff. It should support compliance with the legislation that regulates language use by public bodies, as well as providing staff with increased language awareness. It is a requirement of Södertörn University that everyone, both internally and externally, has the opportunity to access available information and the decisions that are made. The Policy establishes the principles for how the University should work to achieve this.

Because Södertörn University operates both in a region that is distinguished by social and ethnic diversity and in an international environment, accessibility in languages other than Swedish is an important element of all areas of the University.

2. Regulatory framework

As a public body, Södertörn University is subject to the *Language Act*¹ and the *Act on national minorities and National minority languages*². These acts regulate the responsibilities of public bodies, primarily as regards the use of Swedish and Sweden's minority languages. The *Administrative Procedure Act*³ regulates how public bodies shall strive to express themselves clearly and employ interpreters where necessary.

In accordance with the Language Act, the official language of Sweden is Swedish. Public bodies are responsible for the use and development of the language and for making information and decisions available in Swedish. This also includes using and developing Swedish terminology within their field.

Sweden has five national minorities, all of whom have languages that have the status of national minority languages: Finnish (Swedish Finns), Meänkieli (Tornedalers), Sámi (Sámi), Romani (Romani) and Yiddish (Jews). According to the Act on National

¹ *Språklag, SFS 2009:600*

² *Lag om nation ulla minoriteter och minoritetsspråk, SFS 2009:724*

³ *Förvaltningslag, SFS 1986:223*

Minorities and National Minority Languages, public bodies shall strive to communicate with people in the abovementioned languages, primarily in Finnish, Meänkieli and Sámi. The act also names specific municipalities as administrative areas (see the section below on "Accessibility").

3. Language use at Södertörn University

This section applies the general information stated above to the specific conditions of Södertörn University. The areas that are covered are Swedish as an official language, the use of Swedish and other languages based on the concept of accessibility, and a final section on the clear use of language, with guidelines that apply regardless of the language used in the document.

Swedish as the official language

All local decisions at Södertörn University shall be recorded in Swedish; decisions include items such as minutes, decisions made by the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Administrative Officer, decisions made by managers and chairmen, local regulations, policy documents, delegation documents and rules of procedure, third-cycle study plans, syllabi at all levels of education, contracts and requirement profiles. Local handbooks for internal use at the university shall also be in Swedish.

A list of the types of documents and decisions recorded at a public body such as Södertörn University can never be exhaustive. As far as possible, documents that are in addition to those named above should follow the guidelines established in this policy.

Accessibility

Meetings of decision-making and review organs should primarily be held in Swedish. It is desirable that everyone should understand spoken and written Swedish well enough to understand decisions and information, as well as to participate in internal activities. However, some of the University staff, doctoral students and students do not have Swedish as their first language. If a meeting is held in another language than Swedish (preferably English), this should be a thoroughly thought through and well-founded decision. The choice of language may not influence the understanding of discussion and the decisions that are taken. However, the University should strive to enable participation in these organs for staff and doctoral students who do not understand Swedish.

For meetings that are held in a language other than Swedish, the minutes should be written in Swedish and English. The Swedish version is legally binding, regardless of whether it is minutes or another type of document, while the English version is to be regarded as a translation. Translations must be done in such a way that none of the document's content is lost. In cases where documents that are used as a basis for decision-making are in a language other than Swedish, the decision should be formulated so that a person who cannot understand the documents used as a basis for the decision in their entirety should be able to understand the meaning of the decision.

The Vice-chancellor has previously decided that all syllabi for courses and programmes in English at first and second-cycle levels shall be translated into English. There is no requirement for the translation of course and programme syllabi in Swedish at first and second-cycle levels, but this is desirable. This is primarily to make it easier for higher education institutions outside of Sweden to assess the eligibility of students from Södertörn University when they apply to study abroad, but also so that students who apply for jobs abroad will be able to document their education. In addition to this, course syllabi, as well as third-cycle study plans shall have English translations, regardless of the language of instruction.

Standard procedure is that all strategic and legally binding documentation, as well as information that affects an international and/or non-Swedish speaking target group, shall be available as an English translation.

According to the Act on National Minorities and National Minority Languages, Huddinge Municipality is an administrative area for Finnish. Within an administrative area, there

are greater demands on language skills at public bodies than there are outside of that area. For Södertörn University, this entails an obligation to provide written translations to Finnish of decisions and motivations for decisions in cases where a party to the case has no legal representation. The Act also regulates how a party (or the representative of a party) in a case is entitled to use Finnish in contacts with the University.

As a public body, Södertörn University is also subject to requirements regarding accessibility for people with disabilities. However, this is not regulated in this Policy.

Clear language

All documents at Södertörn University shall be distinguished by a clear, unpretentious and understandable use of language. It must be adapted to its audience, have a suitable structure, clarity and a respectful tone. Concepts shall be used consistently and explained where necessary. Abbreviations should only be used in exceptional cases.

Where there are English translations of official documents, the same principles should apply to these texts. To try to achieve a uniform appearance, British English shall be used in all translations to English.

Supporting material for this work includes, *Myndigheternas skrivregler*, *Högskoleverkets svensk-engelska/engelsk-svenska ordbok*, *Internationella programkontorets svenskengelska ordbok for utbildningsområdet* and internal material produced by the University's English editors, all of which is available on the Internet. The books *Svenska skrivregler* and *Språkriktighetsboken*, as well as materials on Språkrådet's website may be useful.