

**The Swedish Language Council**  
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# **Draft Action Programme for the Promotion of the Swedish Language**

## **Summary**

At the request of the Swedish Government, the Swedish Language Council has drawn up an action programme for the promotion of the Swedish language. The programme begins with an account of existing organizational arrangements and activities to promote the cultivation of Swedish<sup>1</sup>, goes on to analyse key aspects of the present-day language situation and, finally, proposes a range of measures. The proposals vary in character. They are summarized here and explained and described in more detail in later sections of the programme.

The position of the Swedish language in Sweden should be established by law. The overarching objective is that Swedish should be preserved as a complete language serving the needs of society.

Public decisions should be subjected to linguistic impact assessments, to ensure that they are compatible with this overarching objective.

Specific measures proposed include the following:

- a) There should be guarantees that Swedish will remain an official language of the European Union. Sweden should promote partly new rules and guidelines for translations within the EU. Larger numbers of translators and interpreters should be trained. Greater resources should be devoted to multilingual terminology work.
- b) Thought should be given to the possibility of including in legislation on occupational

health and safety, consumer protection etc. a requirement that safety instructions, patent specifications, operating instructions, product information and standards must be available in Swedish.

c) The language used in teaching and examinations on undergraduate higher education courses should normally be Swedish. Teaching staff should have a sufficient command of Swedish to enable this requirement to be met. A knowledge of Swedish corresponding to the optional 'C course' in that language offered at upper secondary schools should normally be a requirement for admission to academic post-secondary studies. Doctoral theses in foreign languages should include a summary in Swedish.

d) The language used in compulsory and upper secondary school education should normally be Swedish, and a final pass grade in Swedish should mean that the student has a good command of both the spoken and the written language. Adequate proficiency in Swedish should also be a requirement for appointment to a permanent teaching post. If a school introduces so-called bilingual education, it must be able to guarantee that the ability of its students to speak and write in Swedish about the subjects covered does not suffer.

The necessary resources must be made available for the teaching of Swedish as a second language, and there should be guarantees that such instruction is provided by teachers who are fully qualified in the subject.

e) As terms of their licences, television and radio companies should be required to ensure that a sufficient proportion of the programmes broadcast are in Swedish and that subtitles are of an acceptable quality. Training in Swedish for journalists should be enhanced. Language cultivation bodies should be given greater resources to enable them to reach influential language users as quickly as possible. It is important to set up joint groups with the aim of inspiring greater attention to Swedish usage in individual companies or groups of companies.

f) Language support software (writing tools) should be reviewed continuously by language cultivation bodies. The latter should also be involved in the development of such software and of international standards regarding character sets and alphabetization. Multimedia programs for school use should normally be translated into Swedish.

g) The existing language cultivation bodies should be used for many of the tasks described here. In many cases, increased resources will be needed to implement the proposals. In other areas, further applied research and other studies will need to be carried out before it can be decided what action is necessary.

Areas in which there is an urgent need for applied linguistic research are translation; information technology, including computer writing tools, translation support software and standardization; and competition and interaction between English and Swedish in education, research and knowledge-intensive employment sectors.

In parallel with a range of targeted projects, language cultivation activities aimed at the general public must be strengthened. It is important to stimulate Swedish speakers' feeling for and interest in their own language.

## 1 Terms of reference

The Swedish Language Council was commissioned by the Government to draw up proposals for an action programme for the promotion of the Swedish language. Its terms of reference thus related to Swedish and its basic terms of existence, and not to other aspects of language policy, such as the position of minority languages or the foreign language skills of Swedes. However, such issues must also be touched on in so far as they have a bearing on the position of Swedish.

In the framework of its assignment, the Swedish Language Council arranged five seminars to discuss the problems involved, each of them attended by twelve to fifteen experts in different fields. The five fields concerned were: Language in schools, Language in higher education and research, Language in the media and book publishing, Language in employment and industry, and Language in the IT context. In all, some sixty individuals took part in the discussions.

## 2 Background

### 2.1 The current position of Swedish

Swedish is a well-established and well-standardized language, with a strong, linguistically mediated culture in Sweden. The country also has a public education system in which Swedish as a first language is a key subject and teaching normally takes place in Swedish. Of the world total of perhaps 5,000 languages, Swedish is among the top 50 – 60 in terms of the strength of its position, in that it is fully standardized, used for a wide range of purposes,

and spoken and written as a mother tongue by a large number of people. What is more, by international standards Swedish is a very homogeneous language. Social and geographical differences in its spoken use are relatively small, and speech and writing are considerably closer than is the case in English, German or French, for example. The view that public use of the language should be simple and comprehensible to all sections of the community is appreciably more widespread in Sweden than in many other countries. Across large sections of Swedish society, there is a clear awareness of the importance of everyone being willing and able, in public, to communicate effectively and correctly in Swedish in Sweden.

## 2.2 Existing activities to promote the cultivation of Swedish

Language cultivation<sup>1</sup> in Sweden comprises a number of different activities.

A fundamental element is the maintenance and development of standard Swedish, i.e. the form of Swedish that is common to all users of the language: written Swedish and supraregional spoken Swedish. Key concerns include conventions regarding spelling, pronunciation of place-names, inflection of words, sentence structure, vocabulary and text structure. Language cultivation is a matter of attempting to influence the language, in order either to promote its development in a given direction or to preserve its stability. As used in Sweden, 'language cultivation' primarily refers to the actual defining of linguistic norms or express advice to language users. Such norms and advice should be designed to enable users to communicate as easily and confidently as possible.

In addition, language cultivation is concerned with safeguarding the use of spoken and written Swedish in as many areas of society as possible.

Finally – and not least important – language cultivation experts have the task of supporting users of Swedish in the art of using the language in public communication and increasing their awareness of its value and characteristic properties.

It is also possible, however, to talk of an indirect form of language cultivation, consisting in the way in which influential users speak and write.

Traditionally, language cultivation efforts in Sweden have avoided legislation, regulations and central directives. There are admittedly exceptions, in the form of general rules in clearly defined areas, such as the requirement in the Administrative Procedure Act that 'an authority shall endeavour to express itself in a manner that can be readily understood'. The main instruments of language cultivation, though, have been advice, general education and documentation. The basic premise is that the everyday linguistic usage of Swedish people is

fundamental to the life and development of the Swedish language and to the establishment of linguistic norms. At the same time, though, central bodies exist specifically to promote the cultivation of the language. Language cultivation in Sweden has thus steered a middle course between centralized language planning and completely free competition between different modes of expression and linguistic varieties. In a small autonomous country with a democratic view of the national language, this is a reasonable balance to strike. However, conditions can change. This document sets out proposals which will provide greater safeguards for Swedish as a national language for all-round use.

### *2.2.1 The norms and domains of Swedish*

There are three main bodies with a fundamental responsibility for the cultivation of Swedish.

The Swedish Language Council (Svenska språknämnden), a voluntary organization receiving state support, monitors the ongoing development of the Swedish language, provides a platform for the discussion of good usage, sets guidelines concerning standard usage in various respects, and produces handbooks to assist language users. This body is also responsible for the applied research and other studies needed as a basis for its own and other organizations' external language cultivation efforts.

The Swedish Centre for Technical Terminology (*Tekniska nomenklaturcentralen, TNC*), which is also a non-governmental organization supported by the state, has been entrusted by the Government with the task of developing and standardizing terminology for different specialist fields, suitable for use in Sweden. It also makes recommendations on the writing of specialized texts.

The Swedish Academy (*Svenska Akademien*), whose principal concern is to promote the 'purity, strength and nobility' of the Swedish language, has a long tradition in language cultivation: above all, it has regularly published new editions of Svenska Akademiens ordlista, which lays down rules on Swedish spelling and inflection. The Academy is also responsible for Svenska Akademiens ordbok, the authoritative historical dictionary of Swedish, and for a planned major grammar, *Svenska Akademiens grammatik*.

### *2.2.2 Information, advice and training relating to Swedish*

The bodies referred to above also provide direct advice to language users.

The Swedish Language Council plays a very significant advisory role. It deals with 10,000–14,000 enquiries a year, by telephone and mail, as well as providing lectures and courses for different groups of language users, reviewing texts etc. The quarterly journal *Språkvård*, which has just over 6,000 subscribers, plays an important

opinion-forming and educational role with regard to language issues. In addition, the Council publishes usage guides such as *Svenska skrivregler* (rules on spelling, punctuation etc.) and *Svensk handordbok* (a dictionary of constructions and phrases), together with other more discursive publications on the life and use of Swedish.

TNC also gives advice to a wide range of language users, concerning Swedish for special purposes. Its newsletter *TNC-aktuellt*, of which about 1,000 copies are produced, appears three to four times a year. TNC publishes its own usage guide, *TNC:s skrivregler*, and produces terminological glossaries in close collaboration with representatives of different specialized fields.

The staff of the Swedish Academy are another source of advice on language matters, and the Academy also influences attitudes among linguistically interested members of the public, above all through statements and public appearances by its permanent secretary and other individual members.

In addition, institutionalized arrangements for guidance on the use of Swedish have existed within the Government Offices for twenty years. Language experts scrutinize acts and ordinances that are to be passed or amended, and lay down guidelines and models regarding the language and text structure of legislation, reports, official decisions etc. They provide advice on language issues and publish guidelines and manuals that are widely used in the government sector, including *Myndigheternas skrivregler* (a usage guide for public authorities) and *Att svara på remiss* (guidance on the writing of consultation responses). The experts are also involved in training new staff and give lectures and hold seminars in the framework of the Plain Swedish Group (*Klarspråksgruppen*). The latter, appointed by the Government, has taken over some of the functions of the now disbanded National Institute for Civil Service Training and Development (*SIPU*) and seeks to promote better Swedish usage in central, regional and local government.

A significant professional contribution is also made by university-trained Swedish language consultants, who are either employed in-house by public authorities, organizations or media enterprises or undertake specific training and language review assignments on a consultancy basis. Approximately 120 such consultants are currently active, perhaps a quarter of them working mainly in the public sector. Writers of columns on Swedish usage, which appear in many newspapers and the specialist press, are another group of competent language experts.

It must be strongly emphasized, however, that the most important role in terms of conscious instruction and training in the Swedish language is played by schoolteachers and lecturers at colleges of education.

A factor of fundamental importance to language cultivation efforts is the research in modern Swedish carried on at many universities and university colleges. The Swedish Language Council collaborates on a regular basis with linguistic researchers. Many university lecturers and researchers also interact directly with the general public on questions of Swedish usage. There is a wide network of cooperation between the language cultivation institutions and

other promoters of good usage working on an individual basis.

Several areas of collaboration link the Swedish Academy and the Swedish Language Council. The Language Council and its management committee include representatives of the Academy; and the Council comments on drafts of new editions of Svenska Akademiens ordlista. The Swedish Academy also gives financial support to the Language Council and TNC.

The Swedish Language Council and TNC cooperate in a number of areas, including terminology and usage rules. As far as terminology is concerned, the Swedish Standards Institution (*SIS*) also plays a crucial role.

The Swedish Usage Group (*Språkvårdsgruppen*) is an informal forum for cooperation between the above-mentioned organizations, language experts within the Government Offices, and language advisers employed by the Swedish Broadcasting Corporation and the press.

A newly created body is the Swedish Computer Terminology Group (*Svenska datatermgruppen*), which includes language advisers and terminologists, but also representatives of the press, broadcasters and the computer industry. Recommendations on computer terms are published on a continuous basis on the group's Web site.

The Plain Swedish Group referred to above includes representatives of the Swedish Language Council.

The Language Council is also involved in extensive collaboration with its counterparts in the other Nordic countries. Understandably, its closest links are with the Swedish Language Bureau (*Svenska språkbyrån*) in Finland. In addition, it goes without saying that the Council participates in the activities of the Nordic Language Council (*Nordiska språkrådet*), a body recently set up to promote cooperation between the language councils of the Nordic countries, and which also provides expert advice on language issues to the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Council.

Similarly, TNC collaborates with Nordic terminology organizations through a joint body known as Nordterm. Nordterm is actively involved in international standardization efforts. With co-funding from the EU's MLIS (*Multilingual Information Society*) programme, it has also recently launched Nordterm-Net, the aims of which include combining Nordic term banks and making them accessible via the Internet. TNC has been entrusted with coordinating this project, and partners include the Nordic Language Council.

Questions of language cultivation and good usage are considered and discussed by many other voluntary organizations, committees and groups, such as the Association of Teachers of Swedish (*Svenskläraryöreningen*), the Swedish Society of Medicine's Committee for Medical Language Use (*Svenska Läkaresällskapetets kommitté för medicinsk språkvård*), and the TT news agency's working group on language matters, the Media Language Group

(Mediaspråksgruppen).

### *2.2.3 Models*

The most important influence on usage is probably the imitation of linguistic patterns employed by well-known users of the language. Prominent models often determine what the general public – with little reflection on the matter – perceive to be good, correct Swedish. Certain groups of people in key positions should be mentioned in this context.

Most important of all perhaps are the people working in the press and broadcasting. Many media texts are regarded as models of normal written and spoken Swedish. What is more, it is through the media that ideas about the types of usage appropriate in given contexts spread. For example, the way the language used by authorities and politicians is reproduced in the media may shape perceptions of how public issues are to be handled in purely linguistic terms.

School textbooks are another significant source of language patterns. Literary authors, on the other hand, are nowadays perhaps invoked less frequently as linguistic models.

Book publishers have an important part to play in transmitting and redefining norms of the written language. Often, in a sense, they function as gatekeepers. The current restructuring of the publishing business could therefore also have consequences as regards the cultivation of the language.

Translators, especially those working in the non-literary sector, are an increasingly crucial group, with more and more texts now being translated into Swedish. Training of translators and research on translation were previously neglected in Sweden, but have developed and expanded since the country's accession to the European Union.

It is important for language cultivation institutions and professionals to maintain a dialogue with the people who constitute the linguistic models of Swedish society.

## 3 Aspects of the current language situation affecting the state and development of Swedish

## 3.1 The linguistic climate

Since the Second World War, many national cultures have been marked by a varying degree of scepticism about traditional norms, linguistic and otherwise. Increasingly often, the conventions and rules of language are being regarded as changeable and negotiable.

One factor that may have altered attitudes regarding the value of stable linguistic norms is the democratic aim that, in principle, all citizens should have the right to express themselves in public, in speech and in writing. And certainly it is better for an individual's opinions to be heard, in contexts where it is important that they are heard, than for absolute respect for linguistic conventions to be upheld. Nevertheless, a public exchange of views on equal terms, in speech or writing, will by and large be most effective if everyone speaks or writes a shared language, a language built on relatively stable conventions. And, on the whole, written Swedish is indeed very stable.

The domains of spoken and written Swedish have changed in several respects. Spoken language is now more widely used in the public sphere, and oral presentation skills are expected of many more people than before. At the same time, there is a far greater demand for reading and writing ability in employment. People write much more nowadays, and above all the proportion of people who write has increased. The dividing lines between private speech, public speech and writing are no longer as clear-cut: everyday speech is merging with public political debate.

Visual images are assuming growing importance in communication in today's society: a very large proportion of newspaper and magazine column space is now devoted to pictures, and in broadcasting the visual medium of television predominates. Reading is declining in favour of television viewing and computer use, although this does not mean that Sweden cannot hold its own in international comparisons of reading ability and reading habits. Many people these days do their reading via the computer screen, and typically the texts read in this way are short.

## 3.2 Swedish and the world

Internationalization is altering the basic terms of existence of Swedish, as it is those of many other languages. The most obvious phenomenon is an openness in many areas of language

use to English words borrowed in their original forms (and often subsequently assimilated into Swedish). However, foreign words are hardly a very serious problem from the point of view of language cultivation. Words that are adopted into Swedish as loans can often be assimilated in terms of inflection, pronunciation and also spelling. Admittedly, such borrowings are usually content words, but their numbers are not overwhelming. In an ordinary newspaper, perhaps half a per cent of all words are assimilated or unassimilated loans from American or British English. It should also be remembered that Swedish has always borrowed from other languages – Latin, German, French etc. – and nevertheless retained its distinctive character.

Foreign influences are not confined to the borrowing of words, however. In certain areas, Swedish may be altered in less desirable ways as a result of texts being translated from other languages. The clearest examples of this at present can be seen in the language of legislation. More and more legally binding texts are now drafted within the EU and are originally written in French, English or German. For legal reasons, a translation into Swedish should ideally be as close as possible to the original. One rule that is often applied, for example, is that each sentence in the original should correspond to one sentence in the translation. This can result in legislative texts which stylistically are alien to modern Swedish ideals and closer, for example, to an impenetrable French or English officialese.

Internationalization may also pose a threat to key elements of the existing standard. Swedish speakers who use non-Swedish word processing programs or keyboards have problems with å, ä and ö, for example. These letters are avoided in personal names, product names etc. owing to an overzealous desire to adapt to the English alphabet.

The most far-reaching influence, however, consists in English taking over domains in which Swedish once predominated. In some fields, English now prevails in both spoken and written communication; in others, the shift has so far mainly affected reading and perhaps listening, while Swedish is still the main language spoken and written. This trend can be observed in many areas.

### 3.2.1 Politics and administration

In the political and administrative sphere, particular note should be taken of the shift in responsibility from the Swedish Parliament to the organs of the European Union. In the long term, this could undermine the role of Swedish as a political language, which would have a serious impact on the democratic discourse in Sweden. Similarly, privatization and commercialization of what were once public-sector services could have linguistic consequences.

### 3.2.2 Employment and markets

Internationalization of the economy, too, has in certain respects put pressure on the Swedish language.

The use of Swedish in safety instructions, product information, operating instructions and patent specifications appears to be seen increasingly as restricting the free movement of goods within the EU. Here, important occupational health and safety and consumer protection issues are at stake.

In many industrial and commercial settings, the use of English is very widespread. It is inevitable that many large enterprises should choose English as their company language. However, it is well known from linguistic research that people using a language other than their mother tongue as a tool at work are rarely able to make full use of their potential. In other words, there is a risk of Swedish employees unnecessarily performing less well when the introduction of English as a company language, necessary in itself, also results in that language being used in contexts where it would make just as much sense to continue using Swedish.

### 3.2.3 Higher education and research

English textbooks and handouts and the use of English in teaching and examinations are becoming increasingly common on undergraduate courses at Swedish universities and colleges. Clearly, there is a risk that this will lead to less effective learning and poorer course results. At the postgraduate level, English predominates in almost every field. Obviously, Swedish research needs to be international in its outlook, but this unbalanced focus on English could result in highly qualified individuals in Sweden no longer being able to talk and write about complex subjects in Swedish. In the long term, this trend could leave academics less well equipped to participate in public debate about serious social issues – such as environmental policy, health care or the economy – in Swedish in Sweden.

### 3.2.4 Schools

So-called bilingual education – i.e. the teaching of some or all subjects in a foreign language, nearly always English – has become increasingly prevalent in Swedish schools. At present, it is still most frequently found at the upper secondary level, but it is also practised in some lower secondary schools. Decisions about what language is to be used in schools are taken by municipal authorities, and it is unclear just how widespread bilingual education is at present. As yet, no impartial, comprehensive evaluation of such programmes has been carried out. No one knows, for example, what impact the more or less imperfect English of Swedish-speaking teachers could have on what students learn in the subjects concerned or in English or Swedish. There is a risk of students failing to acquire either the established

English or the established Swedish terminology in fields such as social studies or mathematics. Above all, we do not know to what extent students are able to talk about, say, physics in Swedish, when their physics lessons and textbooks have been exclusively in another language.

There is a widespread naivety about what having full access to a language entails. Normally, individuals learn foreign languages better if they know their own language well. Short cuts may not lead to the intended destination. In the longer term, large-scale use of 'bilingual education' may undermine confidence in the Swedish language as a serviceable instrument of inquiry and discussion about society and the world at large.

### 3.2.5 Media and popular culture

The majority of foreign-produced television programmes broadcast in Sweden are in English, exaggerating the position of that language outside Sweden. Many programmes, especially from the commercial channels, carry very poor-quality subtitles – in many cases, clearly the work of underpaid, untrained translators. The principal language of radio broadcasting and newspapers and magazines, on the other hand, remains Swedish. In popular culture, at least in song lyrics and the like, English clearly reigns virtually supreme.

## 3.3 A multilingual Sweden

Another facet of the internationalization process is the multilingual character of present-day Sweden. Having once been a linguistically uniform country – albeit with certain traditional minorities with languages of their own, such as Finns, Sami and Roma – Sweden now has a population with over a hundred mother tongues.

Many Swedes believe that the different linguistic usages of immigrant groups are having an adverse impact on Swedish. And certainly, various forms of interlanguage do exist. But there is no evidence for the view that immigrant Swedish is impairing 'mainstream' Swedish; in so far as it has an influence, it is probably an enriching one, rather than the reverse. What is more, the very fact that there are so many people in Sweden with a wide variety of first languages could prove beneficial to the position of Swedish: these people have to learn Swedish to be able to function here and to communicate, not only with Swedes, but also with other immigrants with different linguistic backgrounds. It has been said that the Swedish

language is the cement that binds together the Stockholm suburb of Rinkeby, for example. Such an attitude to Swedish presupposes, though, that Swedes who are native speakers of other languages are given every opportunity both to learn Swedish and to develop their mother tongue. Otherwise, Swedish could be perceived as a language of authority, and linguistic minorities will choose English as their lingua franca. Such tendencies have been observed among speakers of minority languages in various parts of Europe.

### **3.4 Information technology and its tools: help or hindrance?**

'Information technology' (*IT*) nowadays refers primarily to the use of computers and the Internet communication system. This technology is of significance for language development and language cultivation in three ways: it is opening up new modes and channels of communication; it is changing the conditions under which texts are produced; and it is providing new tools for the development of linguistic standards and norms.

New communication routes make information technology a significant instrument of internationalization. Especially in fields where the pace of change is high, there is neither the time nor the money to have texts, materials and programs translated, and they are regularly encountered by the IT user in their English form. Even private users of information technology are able to communicate on a day-to-day basis with almost anybody in the world, a possibility which naturally favours the use of English. However, the speed and geographical range of such communication may also facilitate the use of other languages: thanks to e-mail and the Internet, Swedes living abroad can now far more easily keep up their everyday Swedish and gain access to texts in their own language.

In addition, the new modes of communication are creating new varieties of language. In the context of 'chatting' and e-mail, a written language is developing which, in its informality, situation dependence and spontaneity, is often reminiscent of speech. Text on Web sites is in the form of 'hypertext', which is intended to be read and written hierarchically. In its own particular spheres, this way of using language is effective, and up to now there has been nothing to suggest that its distinctive features are spreading to more traditional types of texts where they would be less appropriate.

Information technology has also become a significant factor in the production of texts, not least because it has shortened the distance between the author and the final product. The linguistic scrutiny that often occurred as an intermediate step, performed by secretaries in most places of work and by professional compositors in the case of newspapers and book publishers, has now fallen by the wayside. Many newspapers and even book publishers have cut back on or entirely eliminated proof-reading. Instead, a variety of computerized

language support tools are available, capable up to a point of checking word division, spelling etc. Certain word and syntax checks can also be performed. Furthermore, it has become easy to produce templates for standardized text types. However, a good many of these writing aids are only available for (and in) English. Sweden is considered 'too small a market' to justify having them translated and adapted.

The problem is that all of these computer writing tools are rough-and-ready instruments, but that they nevertheless tend to undermine the writer's own skills and to mislead him or her into relying on them. The fact is that, now as in the past, human review is crucial to most aspects of text production. For neither computer technology nor linguistic research is sufficiently advanced to enable programs to be devised to correct more than a selection of the mistakes which even experienced writers often make. What is more, the use of computers has created a greater need for proficiency in the use of written language: a good grasp of spelling (sound word recognition) is an indispensable resource for anyone wishing to use the majority of services offered via computers. And if all the support functions of word processing software are to be utilized – text format templates, style checkers to avoid bureaucratic language, spell checkers etc. – users will for the foreseeable future need to have very sound linguistic skills in order to decide 'whether the computer is right'.

A major advantage of computer-based writing, on the other hand, is that it has made it far simpler to rework texts. Pupils who have difficulty forming letters can more easily make progress, without becoming bogged down in the laborious business of producing letters with a pen or pencil, and they can easily make improvements to their essays and other work.

Information technology also creates new openings for standardization, at the same time as it requires standardization, for example to permit access to and exchange of information in the first place. Term banks of varying sizes can be combined, inter alia using common software and a standardized term record structure. Word processing programs incorporate standards for text formatting and organization, typography and character handling. Not least important is the range of characters to which particular keyboard and program designs give access. Checking tools can easily eliminate non-standard variants, especially at the character and word levels.

As an overall assessment, it may be said that IT has led to something of a shift in the exercise of control over language, and especially the written language. Individual language users have gained far greater access to writing than before: they can easily write to almost anyone with access to a computer, they can produce smart-looking printed documents of their own, and what they write does not have to be measured against the norms of teachers, secretaries, editors or proof-readers. At the same time, powerful instruments of standardization have been put in the hands of hardware and software designers. Both these trends have left traditional definers of linguistic norms – schools, newspapers, high-status literature and language cultivation bodies – somewhat in the shade.

## 4 Overarching language policy objectives

### 4.1 Swedish – a complete language serving the needs of Swedish society

The key objective is to preserve Swedish as a complete, all-encompassing language serving the needs of Swedish society.

At present, little mention is made of the Swedish language in Swedish law. This is not surprising, given that, for so long, the position of Swedish in Sweden was self-evident. Now, however, the world has changed, and the status of the former national languages can less easily be taken for granted. It is therefore appropriate to establish by law the position of Swedish as the main language of Sweden. More specifically, its status as the main language should be defined as follows:

- Swedish must continue to be the language which, without restriction, serves the needs of Swedish society, and it must remain an official language of the European Union.
- Swedish must be a complete language in Sweden.

The stipulation that Swedish is to be the language which, without restriction, serves the needs of Swedish society should be defined for each individual situation, with regard to both speech and writing: in education, in the work of the Government and Parliament, within authorities and in dealings between them and the general public, and in the judicial system. Particularly in relation to the EU, it is important to have a clear language policy. This objective is important in preserving a democratic society in which every citizen is able to have a say in matters of common concern. It also helps to strengthen the role of Swedish as a symbolic asset and a bearer of national identity.

An insistence on Swedish being the language that serves the needs of society has to be combined with opportunities for every member of society to learn this language, especially those who have another mother tongue. Generous educational opportunities must also be combined with the provision of interpreting and translation services in various contexts. This follows from the democratic imperative that all citizens should be able to participate in debate and decision-making about matters of common concern. Another aspect of the requirement mentioned is that everyone must learn to accept greater variation in the use of

Swedish in public discourse. Above all, native speakers of Swedish have to accept variations that are due to people having other mother tongues.

The stipulation that Swedish must be a complete, all-encompassing language, whatever happens, means that it should be capable of being used in all areas of public life. It should, for example, remain a language that is fully equipped for use in talking about science. Swedish-speaking specialists in natural sciences, technology and medicine should be able to talk and write about their fields in Swedish, without trivializing their subject-matter. Language, in other words, should not be an obstacle preventing people with less education from obtaining information in different areas. Equally, it should not be an obstacle preventing experts from participating in national debate, in which context their knowledge is crucial.

## 4.2 Linguistic impact assessment

The future of the Swedish language hinges to varying degrees on decisions which relate primarily to other fields. This can be compared with the way the environment, or equality between men and women, is affected by decisions to introduce changes in areas such as taxation, education or physical planning. In most cases, detailed regulation of linguistic phenomena is impracticable. A more workable approach, similar to that now in place with regard to the environment or equal opportunities, is to require 'linguistic impact assessments' to be carried out before decisions are taken which could affect Swedish and its use. The guiding principle in that context should be the overarching requirement that Swedish must remain a complete language serving the needs of society. Supplementing the individual decisions falling within the jurisdiction of different government departments, there should be provisions guaranteeing the overall language objectives mentioned. At the same time, it is obviously necessary to review existing laws and regulations that were drafted without consideration of their linguistic consequences. A provision requiring public authorities to carry out linguistic impact assessments where relevant should be incorporated in a suitable statute.

## 5 Preventive and remedial action

To provide more tangible examples of the need for attention to language policy issues, this section will highlight a number of circumstances which may necessitate preventive or remedial action. In certain cases it is possible and appropriate to tackle the problems by regulatory means; in others, it is primarily a matter of seeking to influence attitudes, sometimes among a narrow group of language users, sometimes among the interested general public as a whole. If legislation to protect the Swedish language is considered, thought should be given to the possibility of making common cause with the other Nordic countries and the other member states of the EU. In general, they have the same interest as Sweden in preserving and strengthening their national languages.

The Anglo-American influence is powerful, and it is neither sensible nor realistic for efforts to cultivate the use of Swedish to focus on ousting English – or other languages – from particular fields. On the contrary, we must reckon on increased use of English – and hence a need for a better knowledge of English – in several areas; on a growing number of loanwords; and on more and more Swedish texts consisting of translations. Swedish and English will co-exist in many areas of society. English is likely to make inroads into new spheres, such as newspaper publishing, reference works, the humanities and so on. Important challenges for Swedish language policy and language cultivation efforts will therefore be to ensure that Swedish remains capable of being used, even if it is not always used in practice; that translations conform to Swedish norms and ideals; and that Swedish is not deprived of a full range of modes of expression.

## 5.1 Politics and administration

A self-evident point of departure is that Swedish must be an official language of the European Union, meaning that all EU documents with legal consequences in Sweden must be available in Swedish, and that interpretation into and from Swedish must be available at meetings of all bodies which include non-officials, i.e. the Parliament, the Council, the Court of Justice and the Economic and Social Committee. The principle that it should also be possible to use Swedish as a working language in the majority of EU contexts must continue to be upheld if and when the Union is enlarged.

Ambitious aims for Swedish within the EU mean that considerable resources must continue to be invested in interpreters and translators. In this connection, it is important to watch over Sweden's linguistic interests in the context of negotiations, which presupposes access to good interpreters. What needs to be safeguarded is the possibility of speaking Swedish in

debates and discussions. It is unrealistic to believe that every single one of the many Swedish officials will be capable of conducting complex negotiations in a language that is not their own.

The capabilities and working conditions of translators should be such that the translations produced from other EU languages are written in good Swedish and meet the standards of correctness and clarity that apply to official texts in Sweden.

Sweden should lend its support to efforts to make EU texts easier to understand. The question has already been raised by the British Presidency, and Sweden should be able to pursue it further in collaboration with Finland, which will hold the Presidency before Sweden takes over in 2001. Within the Commission, a 'Fight the Fog' campaign with the same aims is currently under way.

Sweden should seek to promote certain changes to the EU's translation guidelines. For example, the rule about sentence-to-sentence correspondence should be relaxed far more than at present. As far as possible, translators should work in their own countries, rather than in Brussels or Luxembourg. The age limit of 35 for newly appointed translators should be abolished. In addition, there should be a campaign among Swedish officials involved in EU drafting and policy work to raise levels of awareness about what translation actually entails. These officials must tackle language, and especially terminology, problems at an earlier stage in the protracted negotiating process. This presupposes that they have a body to which they can turn. Advice of this type must be provided by the Swedish state, and should be organized within the Government Offices. Translators, for their part, should be able to obtain support on language questions from the Swedish Language Council and TNC.

Translators often have to work to very tight deadlines, and language aids such as glossaries and term banks are therefore of great importance. The EU's terminological database, Eurodicautom, which now includes Swedish terms, is one such tool. More resources also need to be devoted to various automated translation support tools.

The political and administrative sphere includes other areas besides those directly linked to the EU. Tasks relating to IT are of particular importance. Language experts should continuously scrutinize the word processing, e-mail and other software in use at public agencies and ensure that default settings comply with Swedish norms, in terms of capitalization, character sets (á, ä, ö) etc. In addition, they should review central and local government Web sites from a linguistic and textual point of view, and where appropriate make recommendations. Procedures for recurrent language scrutiny would be useful.

In addition, some form of proof-reading of texts produced within the Government Offices (committee reports etc.) should be reintroduced. Space must be found for this in tight production schedules. At present, draft legislative texts in government commission reports, for example, sometimes contain serious typographical errors.

## 5.2 Employment and markets

Safety instructions, product information, operating instructions and patent specifications, and also Swedish standards (which are now brought into force in an English version), should be available in Swedish. This language requirement can be seen as a factor promoting occupational health and safety and consumer protection, and it may be appropriate to introduce it on a statutory basis. If legislation is regarded as restricting the free movement of goods within the EU, then perhaps this objective can be achieved by agreements in the sectors concerned.

This requirement further underlines the need for competent translators.

Research and other inquiries may be necessary to study more closely the role of the Swedish language as a competitive device in the context of product information, operating instructions etc. In addition, not enough is known about the use of English in Swedish places of work, and further studies should be carried out on this subject.

How such research should be organized and funded – by government departments, research councils or sectoral organizations – is an open question. However, it would be appropriate to include experts on language cultivation in the structures established, at least in an advisory capacity.

## 5.3 Higher education and research

The language used for teaching and examinations in undergraduate education should normally be Swedish. Students must be able to speak and write about their subject in Swedish, even if English textbooks are used. A student on a higher education course in Sweden should always have the right to be examined in Swedish (naturally with the exception of foreign language courses).

When it comes to professional qualifications, steps should be taken to ensure that those who attain them have sound spoken and written language skills of the kinds needed to function effectively in the professions concerned.

Research and postgraduate training are increasingly being conducted in English. Despite this, or rather because of this, a person taking a doctorate should be required to provide evidence of an ability to talk and write about his or her research in Swedish as well as English. That evidence may take the form of an extended written summary in Swedish or a trial lecture in Swedish on the subject of the thesis. Provisions to this effect should be included in the Higher Education Ordinance.

It may prove necessary to take action to ensure that teaching staff have a sufficient knowledge of Swedish. New lecturers with a first language other than Swedish should be employed on a probationary basis and be required to pass a language test within two years in order to be eligible for a permanent post. In addition, encouragement should be given to educational development work aimed at enhancing students' ability to use Swedish and English in parallel in their subjects. It is unfortunate if separate domains develop, with foundation courses predominantly in Swedish and more advanced courses only in English.

Completion of the 'C course' in Swedish at upper secondary school – an optional course going beyond the compulsory courses in this subject – should be an entrance requirement for most academically oriented higher education programmes. The course was originally designed precisely as a basis for academic study, and provides a good platform from which students can develop their ability to express themselves in an academic context.

The proficiency in English of students (and lecturers) is often overestimated. It is important to encourage research examining how student learning is influenced by lectures and required reading in English.

## 5.4 Schools

The basic principle should be that all teaching in Swedish schools in Sweden is carried out in Swedish. If a school wishes to arrange instruction through the medium of a foreign language, it should be required to obtain a special, fixed-period exemption from the National Agency for Education, which should also continuously monitor the teaching provided. The teaching of different subjects in a foreign language, in particular English, should be studied with regard to what is learnt in the subject concerned and in English, and the impact on the student's ability to talk and write about the subject in Swedish. The aim must be to ensure that students are fully equipped to talk about such subjects in Swedish as well as the foreign language in question.

Courses in Swedish in compulsory and upper secondary schools should have more precisely

defined objectives, to make clear what standards of achievement in spoken and written use of the language are required and to ensure that a final pass grade in the subject guarantees those standards.

Education authorities, parents and the general public should be informed about the importance of students having a sound knowledge of their first language and continuing to develop it, if efforts to teach foreign languages are to be successful.

Standards should be set as regards the levels of proficiency in Swedish required of teachers to qualify for different types of post at different levels, in particular to teach Swedish in the early years of compulsory schooling. The qualifications in Swedish required of pre-school teachers should also be discussed. (These requirements may conflict with the EU principle of free movement of labour, and any decision should probably be taken at the EU level and apply to all the member states.)

For pupils with first languages other than Swedish, instruction in Swedish should be adapted to their existing knowledge of the language, and it should be compulsory in all school years, including at the upper secondary level. All teachers of Swedish as a second language must be adequately trained for the difficult task of teaching Swedish to pupils with another mother tongue.

## **5.5 Media, the book market and popular culture**

The quality of translations, especially those used in the broadcasting media, needs to be assured. Television and radio companies should only be granted extensions of their licences on condition that they have an adequate translating capability. Translation standards should be monitored continuously by means of recurrent spot checks. (Dubbing should of course continue to be avoided, other than in programmes for young children.) Serious shortcomings could result in licences being reconsidered. An authorization system for companies supplying translations for television and radio may be appropriate. An option worth considering would be to set aside a portion of the licence fees paid by commercial broadcasters for a fund to promote in-service linguistic training for employees of such companies. Licensing authorities should also look at the possibility of making greater use of a system of quotas for Swedish/Nordic, British/American and other foreign programmes.

Journalism courses should include advanced training in Swedish. Journalists should also be offered in-service courses in Swedish.

A study should be made – preferably in collaboration with newspaper trade organizations –

of standards of proof-reading in newspapers. This could inspire a discussion within newspaper managements about the value of proof-reading departments and the extent to which they can or cannot be replaced by language support software. If there are found to be significant shortcomings, language cultivation bodies and professionals should be given sufficient resources to increase awareness of the value of correct usage and to encourage more ambitious efforts to promote better use of Swedish in the companies concerned.

Steps should be taken to ensure that producers of texts and television and radio programmes are more rapidly made aware of new Swedish words for new concepts (which are often introduced under their English designations), or of old, well-known Swedish words to replace vogue words of foreign origin. In this regard, Sweden can learn from the Norwegian Language Council, which has organized a 'Campaign for the protection of the linguistic environment'. Language cultivation experts should also be put in a position to maintain contact with importers and advertising agencies, which play a significant role in the introduction of new words.

Efforts should be made to encourage children and young people to read more, as recommended in the inquiry report *Boken i tiden* ('Books for our time', SOU 1997:141). The responsibility of non-commercial radio and television for the promotion of Swedish should also be mentioned in this context. There is a need for programmes not only in, but also about Swedish. More such programmes should be produced than at present, and this could well be done in collaboration with language experts and researchers. Public campaigns should be mounted to demonstrate the potential of the Swedish language – even in the lyrics of popular music, advertising copy etc. Such efforts should be undertaken jointly by broadcasters and language experts.

## 5.6 Public space

All signs displayed in public institutions must be in Swedish, although they can of course, in addition, be in English and other languages. This principle should apply, for example, to airports, museum exhibit labels, boards providing tourist information etc., and it should be written into the standing instructions of the bodies concerned.

## 5.7 Information technology

Special action should be taken to monitor the linguistic usage associated with the culture of computers. Standardized Swedish terms, or terms adapted to Swedish, should rapidly be assigned to key computer concepts as the need arises. It is important that the Swedish Computer Terminology Group is given the resources to continue its work in this area.

A large number of writing tools, of varying quality, are already available for use with word processing software. It is important to review and assess the strengths and weaknesses of such tools. This is a new and extensive area of work for language cultivation bodies and professionals.

Word processing, e-mail, database and other programs should be scrutinized with regard to how their default settings comply with Swedish standards: character sets (e.g. á, ä, ö), alphabetical order, use of capitals, paragraph formatting etc. This is another new task for language bodies and experts, and it is important to ensure that Nordterm remains able to participate in international standardization work relating to character sets and alphabetization.

Multimedia programs for use in schools should normally be translated into Swedish. Otherwise, there is a danger of students failing to develop a Swedish vocabulary for the subject-matter which such programs cover, or of their simply not understanding them.

## 5.8 A multilingual Sweden

The most important task is to improve instruction in Swedish for non-Swedish speakers, but education in foreign languages other than English will also be needed to a greater extent in Sweden in the years to come. A possible objective would be for all Swedish speakers to be able to express themselves in and understand two foreign languages tolerably well, in addition to their mother tongue. To achieve this aim, more resources will primarily have to be devoted to the teaching of second and third foreign languages, perhaps at the expense of instruction in English. The objective suggested is in line with the EU's language policy goal, that every EU citizen should have a command of two Community languages apart from his or her native language. This would probably strengthen Swedish in relation to English, but above all it would result in Swedes being better equipped to function in a multilingual Europe.

## 6 Organizational arrangements and resources for language cultivation

A range of different tasks for Sweden's language cultivation bodies have been mentioned in the paragraphs above. Internationalization and information technology call for new efforts to cultivate and develop Swedish, efforts which will require additional resources: IT-related language cultivation, quality assurance of translations, and terminology work. At the same time, the need for the more traditional forms of language cultivation has if anything increased, as developments in our society make it necessary for more and more citizens to be able to use the language of the public sphere, orally and in writing.

In tackling these issues, use should be made of the professional expertise already available in the existing state-supported language cultivation institutions, i.e. the Swedish Language Council, the Swedish Centre for Technical Terminology and the language experts serving the Government Offices, and also in the completely private Swedish Academy. We do not wish to propose the establishment of a new, joint structure on the basis of the existing ones. The bodies concerned have partly different spheres of activity, and it is important to be able to keep them apart. For example, if an entirely integrated structure were to be established, the cultivation of Swedish for general purposes, which is the prime responsibility of the Language Council, might be more or less completely swallowed up by the growing challenges of securing the sound development of official Swedish. It is especially important that, among the state-supported language cultivation bodies, there is a relatively strong organization with the care of the general language as its fundamental responsibility. Work in this area is a particularly crucial prerequisite for the language-cultivating and developing role of schools. Other important target groups for advice on Swedish for general purposes are key categories of employees in the media and in industry and commerce.

The organizations mentioned above should continue to collaborate, and it would perhaps be appropriate for the arrangements and the division of responsibilities governing this cooperation to be defined more precisely in their respective terms of reference. Certain other coordination needs are quite clear: language experts within the Government Offices need to be given a stronger and more central position, so that much of the language cultivation activity currently scattered across different ministries can be brought together within a single unit, and also so that more support can be given to language cultivation in the EU context; such a reorganization should presumably be accompanied by an increase in resources.

The core organizations in the field of language cultivation should be able to provide

inspiration and support for internal language improvement efforts in different spheres of activity. This could be achieved by targeted campaigns to influence attitudes, and it may well be appropriate to establish bodies of a more or less permanent character for consultation on language issues in different areas, similar to those in existence for computer terminology and to some extent in the media sector. Such bodies must of course be based on voluntary agreements. Similarly, language cultivation bodies should be involved in the planning and implementation of applied research and development in the areas mentioned above (IT as a medium of language use, translation, and the relationship between Swedish and English in certain areas).

The Swedish language and its maintenance and development are a national, societal concern, and it seems not unreasonable for the main burden of the cost to be met from the public purse. The organizational arrangements chosen, on the other hand, are not decisive. What is important is that the tasks presented in this draft language policy programme can be carried out and that the necessary funds are made available.

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## Notes to the reader

1. The original Swedish text of this programme uses the word *språkvård*, a loan translation of the German *Sprachpflege*. Literally, *språkvård* means 'language care'. In this translation, it is generally rendered as *language cultivation*; another translation sometimes encountered is *language planning*. However, neither of these expressions quite covers the meanings of the Swedish word in every context. A formal definition of *språkvård* is 'any action designed to improve the language or to prevent its deterioration'. Such activities may relate to the use of the language or to the linguistic system as such. At a practical level, *språkvård* involves answering enquiries about correct and appropriate usage, producing handbooks, giving lectures and reviewing texts, but it also entails longer-term efforts to influence the language situation in the country, to raise people's linguistic awareness and to promote greater linguistic tolerance.

In Sweden, one of the bodies entrusted with the task of language cultivation is the Swedish Language Council, which receives state support but is not a public authority. The Council itself is made up of representatives of other organizations working with or interested in the Swedish language. On a day-to-day basis, its functions are discharged by a staff of language experts. Similar language cultivation bodies exist in the other Nordic countries, some of them with the status of central government agencies.

2. i.e. å, ä, ö

