

SULF:s kongress 2024

Breaking language barriers in higher education and research

Almost half of all PhD candidates and early career researchers in Sweden are international, drawn to this country by its reputation for high-quality education and research and the culture of openness and transparency. However, many of these colleagues face significant language barriers, as they are often not proficient in Swedish. This language gap creates challenges in their day-to-day communication, but also in their ability to fully participate in academic and departmental activities and collegiate decision-making structures. Language barriers can lead to feelings of exclusion, hinder professional integration, and affect overall work experience.

Recognizing these challenges, the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association proposes two measures to better support internationally recruited staff to be integrated into the academic community. First, universities should take active steps to create a more inclusive working environment, by ensuring that language inclusivity is promoted in collegiate settings. Second, universities should create real opportunities for language learning in the course of employment. Some universities are already offering this, in various forms; for example, Jönköping University offers in-house Swedish language classes that may be taken during work hours, with the time spent on this regarded as competence development.

The SULF Doctoral Candidate Association therefore submits that the Congress decide:

- that SULF shall encourage universities to make collegiate events and decision-making bodies accessible to both English-speaking and Swedish-speaking employees;
- that SULF shall push for real possibilities to learn Swedish in the course of employment at universities, meaning: courses that are adapted to the needs of university employees and that may be taken during working hours, with time allocated for this in the employee's work plan (*tjänstgöringsplan*).

We wrote this motion in English, which is the main working language of the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association. Below is our proposal for decision in Swedish.

SULF:s doktorandförening hemställer därför:

- att SULF ska uppmuntra lärosätena att göra kollegiala evenemang och beslutande organ tillgängliga för såväl engelsktalande som svensktalande anställda;
- att SULF ska driva på för verkliga möjligheter att lära sig svenska inom ramen för anställningen, vilket innebär: kurser som är anpassade till universitetsanställdas förutsättningar, och som kan genomföras under arbetstid som i den anställdes tjänstgöringsplan är avsatt för ändamålet.

Motionen undertecknas för SULF:s doktorandförenings styrelse av:
Mohamed Al-Sabri, Chairperson