

**Finlandssvensk samling r.f.
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*To the Finnish Parliamentary Commissioner for the Judiciary and Civil Administration
To the Ombudsman*

On the 7th of January 1999 the Ministry of Justice (MJ) set up a working group to investigate the possibility Swedish speakers have to use their mother tongue in the courts. The working group was to particularly inspect the relation between the linguistic rights and the statutes of the Constitution of Finland on the right to a fair trial.

The work party submitted its report the 31st of December 1999 and regarding the court system suggested a number of necessary measures to be taken.

The requirement of more oral language use in trials and the new language act places higher demands on the judge's languages knowledge then before.

To be able to simulate to higher language knowledge, which was regarded as highly needed, the working party that "the language supplement should be considerably increased". The courts assistants will get remarkably increased language supplements for their language knowledge with the new payment system that will start during the summer of 2005. On the other hand are the judge's language knowledge not considered to be worth anything. The connection between proper language supplements and the interest from lawyers with language knowledge to seek to be a judge by profession respectively already practicing judges to practice advanced studies in languages has been put forward, not only by MJ but also the last years in the press by very experienced judges such as the President of Vasa District Court (Johan Eklund), the President of the Vasa Court of Appeal (Björn Hagman), the Chief Justice of Vasa Court of Appeal (Ingvar Krook) and the Chief Justice of Helsingfors Court of Appeal (Lauri Melander). The connection between language knowledge and large language supplements is strong and self obvious.

That is why it is highly noteworthy that the small pay increase or "language supplement" that judges with language knowledge had was cut on the 1.2.2000 that is 2 months after JM got its final knowledge about the large emphasis the Ministry of Justice's working group put on a "noticeable language supplement". A very efficient way to slow down the language developments among the judges that already are in practise and for the recruitment of new people with language knowledge that could consider a future as a judge.

Based on this does Finlandssvensk samling r.f. want to maintain that MJ first of all sets up an investigation by experts on how the conditions should be to later work against it. This conduct leads to a lack of bilingual judges witch in return gets such consequences that it at certain courts is a question of discrimination of Swedish speakers by considerably longer handling-times than for Finnish speakers. This is why the organization insists that the Ombudsman truly investigates the matter.

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Finlandssvensk samling r.f.
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