



Michael Jeltsch <markku.michael@gmail.com>

Question conc. internationalization

3 messages

Michael Jeltsch <michael@jeltsch.org>

27 February 2017 at 18:09

To: Jukka Kola <president@helsinki.fi>, Keijo.Hamalainen@helsinki.fi

Dear Rector, dear Vice Rector,

I am wondering why the information about your visit to the medical faculty (31.3.) is only distributed in Finnish language here at the Meilahti campus. Given that increased internationalization is one of the priorities of the university, it seems counterproductive to me to exclude non-Finnish speaking employees in this way.

I am still receiving too many Finnish-only messages about common events at the university. The answer that I received from the responsible person at our faculty was that messages that are not considered relevant for Non-Finnish speakers are by default not translated into English (even though they are distributed to lists that include foreigners without knowledge of Finnish).

Does this mean that your visit to the Medical Faculty is irrelevant for me? I do not think so since I am involved in research, teaching and administration and I am very much interested e.g. in the changes that are going on concerning the reorganization of the study programs. It is true, however, that the number of foreign group leaders has been decreasing and I seem to be the only one in the Research Programs Unit.

I would really appreciate an answer to these questions because otherwise my suspicion will grow stronger, that there is little genuine interest to increase internationalization at the university. In case you decide to answer, please indicate if you have anything against posting our e-mail conversation to my blog (<https://jeltsch.org>).

Thank you & Regards
Michael

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President <president@helsinki.fi>

3 March 2017 at 18:01

To: "michael@jeltsch.org" <michael@jeltsch.org>

Dear Michael,

I would first like to thank you for your message and raising an important issue, the use of languages in the university and the effect it has on internationalisation. I would also like to express my apologies for the wrong information regarding the use of languages in the discussion during my visit to the Faculty of Medicine at the end of the month.

The University of Helsinki is striving to operate in three languages, i.e., the two official languages of the University, Finnish and Swedish, and English. This principle is outlined also in the Language Policy of the University and is a prerequisite for maintaining and strengthening the internationalization of the University. We must make every effort to adhere to these aims.

This spring I have embarked on a faculty tour together with vice-rectors and the Director of Development of Teaching and Learning Services. The purpose of the faculty visits is to discuss the state of the degree program reform - Iso Pyörä/the Big Wheel - in the faculties. The discussions are open to all those who are interested in sharing their views on and concerns about the reform. All members of the university community are welcome, irrespective of the language they prefer to use, be it Finnish, Swedish or English. In the discussion, all three languages can be used. I am sorry if this message has not been communicated clearly.

The relevant decisions and guidelines regarding the Big Wheel reform have been produced in all three languages. Some of the background and other materials have also been translated into English and Swedish. In the near future all curricula, which are now being drafted in the degree programs, will be translated into English and Swedish. For the most critical stages of the reform, essential documentation has been provided also in English. This has been the case particularly when the university community has been asked for their opinions and comments on the proposals at hand. The regrettable fact remains that translation takes time for which we are very pressed due to the heavy and acute work load.

As the Rector of the University of Helsinki I can assure you that internationalisation is one of the top priorities of the University. I want to make sure that we make every effort possible to reach that goal, including the use of languages in such a way that every member of the university community can contribute to the development of our key activities and functions.

I hope that you will still consider participating in the visit to the Faculty of Medicine on March 31. I look forward to discussing the reform with you and the rest of the attendees then. You can also send your observations by email to the key people of the Big Wheel should you have other engagements.

Sincerely,

Jukka Kola

Jukka Kola

Rector, Professor

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From: <markku.michael@gmail.com> on behalf of Michael Jeltsch <michael@jeltsch.org>
Date: Monday 27 February 2017 at 18:09
To: President <president@helsinki.fi>, "keijo.hamalainen@helsinki.fi"
<keijo.hamalainen@helsinki.fi>
Subject: Question conc. internationalization

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Michael Jeltsch <michael@jeltsch.org>
To: President <president@helsinki.fi>

7 March 2017 at 13:43

Dear Jukka,

thanks for your reassuring words! From the 2013/2014 Leadership Program for Academic Staff I clearly remember your dedication to the internationalization of our university and I am happy to see that your attitude has not changed.

As a newly elected member of the board of the Master's Programme in Translational Medicine, I have started to get a few insights (and hard numbers) into internationalization at the student level and am I worried that the excellent progress that we have made during the last two decades is at risk. Not all study programmes are affected, but it is worrying that some fields will have difficulties to fill in the allocated seats with sufficiently qualified applicants despite Helsinki University featuring a strong tradition and cutting-edge research in these fields (e.g. Life Science). How can we balance the study fees and our internationalization goals? I am already "looking forward" to our student selection committee meeting this Thursday, where one of the questions will be how many of the 30 international slots not to fill...

At the higher career levels, there seems to be a separation according to campuses. While the Viikki campus can boast of a sizable number of foreign PIs, I am the only remaining foreign group leader in the Research Programs Unit, which accounts for much of the basic medical research at the Meilahti campus. However, I can with confidence say that the lack of foreign PIs is not due to discrimination by my colleagues. Because I cannot wrap my head around the possible reasons for this lack of internationalization, I might be a bit sensitive to everything "Finnish only". Do you have any insight?

I definitely are going to come to the discussion about the Big Wheel reform at the Faculty of Medicine at the end of the month!

Thanks once again,
Michael

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