

INAR Language Agreement

This language agreement is introduced to agree on common practices that will support learning and communication in Finnish in multilingual INAR, not to force anybody to learn or use Finnish language.

Why do we introduce the language agreement? A significant number of non-Finnish speakers are looking for opportunities to practice the language they have started to learn by, for example, taking courses. Some would like to improve their everyday communication skills, some would like to use Finnish in work related tasks, e.g. giving presentations, teaching or participating in meetings. In disciplines related to INAR, we are also facing the situation that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find teaching staff for those undergraduate courses that have to be taught in Finnish by law. We also want to improve fairness what it comes to participation in decision making at different levels and distribution of workload. Many Finnish speakers would like to learn to better support Finnish language learning, and do not want to come across as being forceful in the adoption of Finnish as the main work language.

In this agreement we would like to outline some principles that will support the use and learning of Finnish in INAR.

- Here in INAR, non-native Finnish-speakers are encouraged to learn at least some Finnish. This is important for widening the professional scope inside and outside INAR, personal wellbeing and integration into the Finnish society.
- INAR encourages multilingual communication, and even within a sentence, you can use words from different languages, depending on how you can best express your meaning. You can, for example, also speak in one language while showing slides in another language (or several languages).
- Guidance groups or other groups/communities should discuss the need for activities that provide opportunities to practice using Finnish language, such as e.g. everyone greets each other in Finnish, including 5 min of small talk in Finnish in or before/after group meetings, or summarizing meeting outcomes in Finnish, writing the greeting in emails in Finnish.
- Encourage, but do not force, others to speak in Finnish. For example, at the beginning of a meeting or coffee break, it is appropriate to ask if the conversation could be in Finnish. Even if it was agreed to use Finnish, anyone, who starts to feel they are excluded from the conversation or do not understand well enough, can ask

to switch to English at any time. This wish should be respected by the other participants.

- Be sensitive concerning commenting on others' language proficiency - keep in mind that not only negative comments but also praise can create pressure and frustration.
- We encourage non-native Finnish speakers to contribute - and to be asked to contribute - to e.g. teaching and science outreach activities conducted in Finnish if the topic is within their expertise. It is the responsibility of the non-native Finnish speaker to evaluate if they feel they can accept the requested task.
- INAR awards 'the Finnish language promotion act of the year' prize to a person or a group of people that have promoted learning of Finnish language. The prize can be awarded to non-native and native Finnish speakers. The prize will be awarded at the Christmas party.
- INAR will design and distribute stickers and pins for people willing to learn and help others to learn Finnish

If you want to explore the opportunities University of Helsinki offers for learning Finnish, here are a couple of starting points:

- Finnish language courses offered by the university:
<https://flamma.helsinki.fi/en/group/kirjasto-ja-kielipalvelut/henkiloston-kielikoulutus#menu2>
- On-call Finnish Language teacher to assist international staff with Finnish language issues: You can book a meeting time on the On-Call Finnish teacher's Moodle site. Appointment times are available on (almost) every working day (Mon-Fri). You don't need to register on the Moodle site. You can also post a Finnish language question in the discussion area on Moodle. Read more in Flamma <https://flamma.helsinki.fi/s/P12lk>
- Kielibuusti, a free of charge information platform and resource bank for learning Finnish and Swedish <https://www.kielibuusti.fi/en>

The first version of the agreement was prepared by Ditte Taipale, Hanna Vehkamäki and Katja Lauri. INAR management group commented the agreement before the whole INAR staff was invited to suggest revisions to the agreement.