



Plain Language Association International (PLAIN)

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AT THE HEART OF COMMUNICATION
across disciplines and around the world

**International Plenary Panel:
Plain Language Progress Around the World**



Bengt Baedcke

www.justitie.regeringen.se/klarsprak

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This is the Plain Swedish Group



The mission of the Plain Swedish Group

The Plain Swedish Group

- informs about plain language work in Sweden and other countries
- organizes conferences and seminars
- participates at international plain language conferences.

What is plain Swedish?

- Match your writing to the needs of the readers.
- Consider carefully the purpose and message.
- Structure the document clearly.
- Write informative headings.
- Write pithy summaries.
- Use “I”, “we” and “you” to make the writing more human.
- Avoid passive constructions.
- Take pride in everyday Swedish.
- Explain difficult but necessary words.
- Use concrete words.
- Read your colleagues’ documents and give them advice.

Why plain Swedish?

Plain language

- increases the trust between citizens and authorities
- leads to democratisation and better legal rights
- makes work more fun and effective
- saves time and money
- is stated in the law!

The web site Klarspråk

www.justitie.regeringen.se/klarsprak

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the Klarspråk website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.justitie.regeringen.se/klarsprak/index.htm>. The website's header includes the Swedish coat of arms and the text "REGERINGSKANSLIET", "DEPARTEMENT JUSTITIE-DEPARTEMENTET", and "KLARSPRÅK". A navigation menu on the left lists items such as "Löpsedel", "Översikt", "Vanliga språkfrågor", "Språkexperterna", "Klarspraksgruppen", "Länkar", "Termdatabaser", "Ordböcker", "Namn på EU-organ", and "Kristallen". The main content area features the title "Klarspråk" and "Klarspråkstestet" with an illustration of a hand. Below this are three book covers: "Myndigheternas skrivregler", "Svarta listan 1993", and "Lathund för webbskribenter". A section titled "Veckans klarspråkscitat" contains a quote: "Stort tack för igår! Alla var jättenöjda och tyckte att det var väldigt nyttiga tips du kom med. Dessutom tycker vi att du är väldigt pedagogisk i ditt upplägg och i din presentation."

The Black List



- Do not write: **subsequent to**
- Instead, write: **after, following**

Guidelines for the authorities



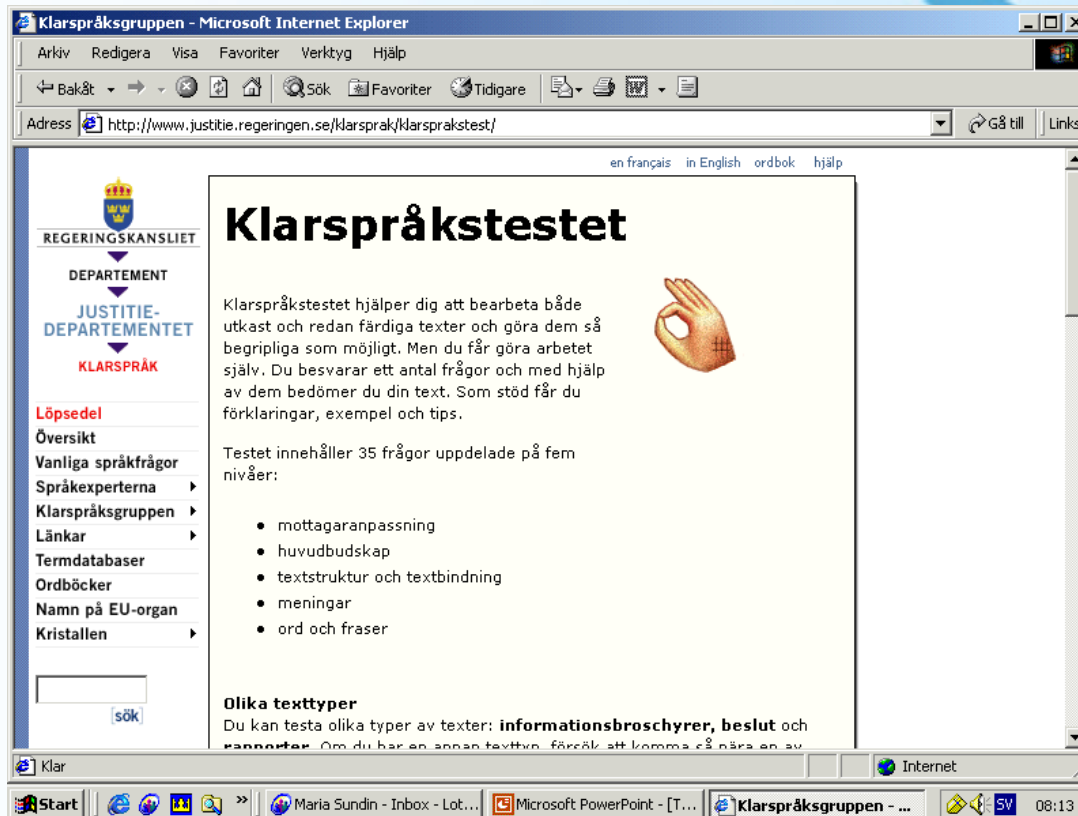
§ 8.1 Do not use unnecessary abbreviations

- Mostly, avoid abbreviations of words, expressions, names and terms.
- Explain abbreviations the first time they appear in the text in the following way:

Pensions will be paid by the National Government Employee Pensions Board (NGEPB).

The Plain Language Test

www.justitie.regeringen.se/klarsprak/klarsprakstest



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the Klarspråkstestet website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.justitie.regeringen.se/klarsprak/klarsprakstest/>. The website's header includes the Swedish coat of arms and the text "REGERINGSKANSLIET", "DEPARTEMENT", "JUSTITIE-DEPARTEMENTET", and "KLARSPRÅK". The main content area features the title "Klarspråkstestet" and a hand icon. The text describes the test's purpose: to help users process and make understandable texts. It states that the test contains 35 questions divided into five levels: mottagaranpassning, huvudbudskap, textstruktur och textbindning, meningar, and ord och fraser. A search bar is visible at the bottom left of the page content.

en français in English ordbok hjälp

Klarspråkstestet

Klarspråkstestet hjälper dig att bearbeta både utkast och redan färdiga texter och göra dem så begripliga som möjligt. Men du får göra arbetet själv. Du besvarar ett antal frågor och med hjälp av dem bedömer du din text. Som stöd får du förklaringar, exempel och tips.

Testet innehåller 35 frågor uppdelade på fem nivåer:

- mottagaranpassning
- huvudbudskap
- textstruktur och textbindning
- meningar
- ord och fraser

Olika texttyper
Du kan testa olika typer av texter: **informationsbroschyrer, beslut och rapporter**. Om du har en annan texttyp, försök att komma så nära en av

Start | Maria Sundin - Inbox - Lot... | Microsoft PowerPoint - [T... | Klarspråkgruppen - ... | 08:13

The Plain Swedish Crystal

- **The winner of 2002**
The report *Death concerns us all* by a
Government Committee



The Plain Swedish Bulletin

- Published 4 times a year
- 3 200 subscribers



The Plain Swedish Bulletin

from the Plain Swedish Group

Special edition in English 2002

Making it clear in the European Union

Effects to promote clarity must cross national borders. For a great many years, linguists in the Swedish Government Offices have had the assignment to simplify, improve and modernize the administrative language. A lot has changed for the better.

The Swedish legislation is now easier to grasp and the vocabulary more up-to-date. But this is now challenged by the influence from the European Union. Most of the legislation in the Union is written in a style that differs from the clarity principles we believe should be followed.

Simple style is possible

Among many officials, there is still resistance against plain language in EU legislation. This resistance is often based on the notion that it is impossible to maintain precision if you use a simple style. However, plain language consultant Martin Cahn has shown that it is possible. He has rewritten both a directive and a regulation and the resulting documents are easy to read and easy to overview. With these new models, there is hopefully a better chance that the EU institutions will consider more user-friendly writing patterns. Good news is

that the Commission recently proposed an action plan for better lawmaking, which includes a less complicated style.

Important step in Sweden

In Sweden, a small, but important, step was taken earlier this year. A new post was created in the Government Offices: a language expert dedicated to issues of EU language use. Important tasks are to help draft guidelines, revise documents and give advice in language matters. But even more important is the task of creating a network of contacts and to coordinate efforts.

New web site opens soon

Soon, a web site will open, providing as much useful information as possible about EU language use. On the web site, news will be published about the language work in Sweden and in the European institutions. There will be a Q and A section with the most common questions. Furthermore, we will collect relevant guidelines and books online, show examples of texts "before and after" and encourage reading of the latest research. Our aim is then use the web site as a platform for debate. Hopefully, the web site will aid both translators and officials working with EU issues.



Illustration: Tomas Lindahl

Plain language on the agenda

Apart from these concrete efforts to help make the documents clearer, we are constantly trying to influence the work in the European institutions. We often submit comments on action plans and write papers on governance. We also take active part in a group at the Ministry of Justice which prepares Swedish positions on the future of the Union. Working in this group enables us to put the language questions on the agenda. In order to succeed, it will be decisive for us to manage to convince those responsible that it is both possible and necessary to make EU documents clearer. It is reasonable to say that documents affecting the citizens should be possible for the citizen to understand. Don't it?

Bengt Ekebole
Language Expert
at the Ministry of Justice

- Plain Swedish is gaining ground
- The Plain Language Text is launched
- Plain language – a source of strength
- Comprehensibility in authority texts
- Certified language consultants
- Swedish language planning

- **The winner of 2001**
The local authority of Borås
- **The winner of 2000**
The report *Staten i omvandling*
- **The winner of 1999**
The National Housing Board
- **The winner of 1998**
The Regional Social Insurance Office of Västerås



Plain Swedish seminars

- Plain Swedish for everybody
- Plain Language opens Sweden
- Plain Language on the Internet
- Plain Language for people with reading disabilities
- Plain Language in the Nordic countries

Plain language projects at some authorities

- The Swedish Patent and Registration Office
- The National Board of Student Aid
- The Regional Social Insurance Office in Västerås
- Plain Language Network of Dalarna
- The Swedish Migration Board and the Aliens Appeals Board



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Bengt Baedecke

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Bengt Baedecke joined the Swedish Government Offices as a language expert in September 1999. Previously he worked as a communications specialist at McKinsey & Co. and before that as a language consultant at WM-data. He has a B.A. in English, German, and Philosophy and further academic qualifications in language consultancy.