

# GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRANSLATING MINISTRIES' TEXTS INTO ENGLISH

Government Language Specialists  
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## I. Style

## II. Terminology

### I. Style

The ministries use **UK English**.

In general, please follow the English Style Guide published by the European Commission, DG Translation: [http://ec.europa.eu/translation/writing/style\\_guides/english/style\\_guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/writing/style_guides/english/style_guide_en.pdf)  
This includes useful guidance on spelling, hyphenation and punctuation.

Also, make sure that you have consulted the given Ministry's internet pages for their preferred translation of departments, unit names, titles and the like. All ministries' pages can be accessed via <http://www.government.fi/ministeriot/en.jsp>

**Please note especially the following:**

### 1. Spelling and punctuation

All verbs ending -ize/-ise should be spelled **-ise**. The same applies to gerunds, participles and nouns deriving from such verbs:

- harmonise, harmonising
- organise, organisation.

Write cooperation, coordination, etc. **without a hyphen**.

Write **e-mail** with a hyphen.

A pair of **em dashes** (alt + ctrl + - on the numeric keypad) may be used instead of commas to emphasise a parenthetic remark in a sentence, or a single one may be used at the end of a sentence before an emphatic phrase or statement. A single space should be inserted before and after the em dash.

Use **double quotation marks** for direct speech and verbatim quotes and **single quotation marks** for quotations within these.

Use single quotation marks to mark words and expressions used outside their normal contexts (coinages, ironic references, etc.) and terms to which you want to draw attention as lexical items. Also use single quotation marks instead of 'so-called' when translating *niin kutsuttu*.

Note that Mr, Ms and Dr are written **without a point**

## 2. Numbers

For groupings of thousands, use a comma (e.g. 1,000, 10,000,000). Million and billion can be abbreviated m and bn when referring to money (EUR 250m).

For ranges of numbers use an **en dash** (ctrl+ - on the number pad): 25–30 participants, SEK 20–25 million, 12–15%

**Per cent** is preceded by the number in figures rather than in writing. Use the % sign in headlines, and spell out *per cent* in text:

- According to a US government study, almost 25 per cent of spying is related to commercial secrets.

Note that in English the % sign is always closed up to the figure:

- An increase from 5% to 7%.

**Percentage points:** If the mortgage rate rises from 8 per cent to 10 per cent, it does not rise by 2 per cent, but by two percentage points. Similarly if a political party's support drops from 50 per cent to 40 per cent in an opinion poll, it has lost ten percentage points or 20 per cent of its support.

**For dates,** use the form **23 October 2011**. For decades, write 'the 1990s' (*not* 'the nineties' or 'the '90s'). Use an en-dash in ranges: 1939–45, 7–9 March.

**For time,** use the 24-hour system.

When writing times, use a point between hours and minutes:

- The meeting is scheduled to begin at 11.30.
- The flight will leave Helsinki on Sunday morning at 07.45 and arrive in Montreal at 19.05.

For midnight either write the word midnight or use 24.00 (for periods ending then) or 00.00 (for periods starting then).

For duration use h:

- The time allowed for the debate is 2½ h.

**For telephone numbers,** use the form +358 9 405 1000

## 3. References to Finnish institutions

Capitalise parliament always when referring to the Parliament of Finland and when the word forms part of the institution.

- Last year, Parliament celebrated its centennial.
- The seat of the European Parliament is in Strasbourg.
- The Canadian Parliament is bicameral.

However, use lower case in contexts such as:

- The conference was attended by representatives of the Finnish parliament (Eduskunta), the Swedish parliament (Riksdagen), the Sámi parliament (Samediggi) and the Russian parliament (Duma).

*Valtioneuvosto* is translated as **the Government**, i.e. with a capital G. When the reference is general, use lower case. In attributive uses, use lower case: **government agency**, **a government minister**. Note that this also applies to **a government bill** (although for specific bills use capitals).

Write **the State** when the word can be replaced by the name of a country, e.g. Finland,

- The State intends to continue its participation in international development cooperation.

but use lower case for

- state aid, state majority-owned companies

For government agencies and bodies, use the English name if the organisation has one. Many can be found in the list on the Government Terminology Service pages [http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/pdf/Valtion\\_virastot\\_ja\\_laitokset.pdf](http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/pdf/Valtion_virastot_ja_laitokset.pdf)

If the name is not translated, use the Finnish name with a translation in parentheses.

#### 4. Finnish legislation

Always consult the Ministry of Justice guidelines for translating Finnish legislation into foreign languages at <http://www.om.fi/1163178945135>

In general, use the English titles of acts given in FINLEX at <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/>

If you cannot find in FINLEX the title or the full translation of the act you are looking for, consult your contact at the Ministry. It is possible that the act may still have been translated. You can also get in touch with the designated law translation contact person. Their contact details can be found at

[http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/pdf/Saadaskaannosten\\_yhdyshenkilot\\_ministerioissa.pdf](http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/pdf/Saadaskaannosten_yhdyshenkilot_ministerioissa.pdf)

If no established English title of the act exists you can give your own translation in lower case with the Finnish title in parentheses. Use italics for Finnish titles of bills, acts, etc.

- ...communicable diseases act (*Tartuntatautilaki* 583/1986)

For legal terms you should always consult the Legal Terminology Glossary at <http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/pdf/Lainsaadantosanasto.pdf>

Note that a piece of legislation designated a *laki* is an **act**, an *asetus* is a **decree** (but note that when the reference is to an EU legal instrument, an *asetus* is a **regulation**).

## **II. Terminology**

The given Ministry can always be consulted for terminology specific to the area concerned. Do not hesitate to ask your contact at the Ministry. You can also get in touch with the Ministry's translator(s) whose contact details can be found at [http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/pdf/Ministerioiden\\_englannin\\_kielen\\_asiantuntijat.pdf](http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/pdf/Ministerioiden_englannin_kielen_asiantuntijat.pdf)

Glossaries compiled at the Government Terminology Service in cooperation with government ministries are published online in the Finnish Government Termbank *Valter* (<http://www.valter.fi>).

Many other glossaries compiled by the Government Terminology Service are available at <http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/fi158016.jsp>  
Note also the list of online glossaries made available by government agencies and bodies at <http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/sanastot-verkossa/fi.jsp>

The Government Terminology Service also issues instructions to help solve language problems, in particular, in English-written texts concerning the Finnish state administration. The instructions are available at <http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/sanastot/fi158016.jsp>

The Government Terminology Service offers daily terminology service free of charge. The service specialises in concepts related to the Finnish state administration and helps in finding recommended term equivalents in various languages.

Contact information (Mon.–Fri., 08.00–12.00)

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<http://www.vnk.fi/toiminta/kielipalvelut/termineuvonta/en.jsp>