

## Some remarks on “Om bachelorstudieretningen Polsk, tsjekkisk, bosnisk/kroatisk/serbisk”

Diana Santos, vara, 25 November 2022

This “notat” makes me worried. As far as I can see/read, this is a decision that is based on economic considerations only.

There is no reference to academic quality, to the society’s needs, to political will, or even to other ways of solving the “problem”. As if this is a problem that only exists for these three languages at ILOS, when everyone knows that it is a general problem of foreign languages at UiO and in Norway at present.

Additionally, it is not difficult to see that the numbers were selected according to the well-known method of “cherry-picking”. For all of us know of other “emner” which have lower numbers than the ones presented here. I don’t want to name them by name, because I don’t want to harm other “studieretninger”, but I can say that in general it actually even is the case for the so-called “skolespråk”. If the styre accepts this sort of arguments, it won’t be long until ILOS will be the “English and general literature” institute. (You cannot educate area studies specialists without knowing the languages spoken in the areas studied, either.)

Does not the part European languages in ILOS’ name give us some responsibility? At a time where the US and UK are drifting further away from Europe, and many call for more independent European initiative? When there is an almost unanimous opinion in Norway in favour of helping Ukraine, is this the time to throw away studies of Polish, when Poland has a crucial role in helping Ukraine as the country nearer to the current crisis? Wouldn’t that instead call for more emphasis on studying Eastern Europe?

Also, there are two “arguments” I would like to contest:

- 1) that the use of resources should be the same no matter the foreign language. One could make the opposite case: the more resources (that is, teaching professionals) per student, the higher quality offered by that study, and possibly also the higher the competence required. It should also be obvious that Dutch is very close to Norwegian, and therefore much easier to learn. To try to compare languages as if they were equal is not scientifically sound or defensible.
- 2) Given that there are 6 different members of the teaching staff involved, and they deal with different languages and scientific directions, I cannot see how unanimity of views should be expected or even desired, and much less how this can be used as an argument for stopping the bachelor, or not describing the possible outcomes/suggestions that had been presented in the meeting alluded to. We are asked to approve a closing down of a BA, without any alternatives!

In my opinion, what should be the outcome of this discussion in the *styre* is: how can we maintain BA directions or at least not weaken the teaching of less-preferred languages, by making politicians aware that these kind of BAs are important and require more teaching than e.g. philosophy? And also work with other institutes which also teach languages, and teach linguistics, in order to cooperate. After all, in a BA at ILOS the students get (implicit and explicit) instruction in linguistics, and instruction in literature, that is not recognized by the linguistics and literature sections, which are “against us” and compete for resources. What about if the “general literature” section (litteraturvitenskap) also required or accepted that teachers of literature of some languages were their equals, and could e.g. share some courses, instead of only relying on the languages the students can read and/or translations? What about if linguistics (from ILN) also considered the language teachers at ILOS and other institutes as linguists, and e.g. required a 40-group in one foreign language?

To conclude, to start diminishing ILOS weight and breadth based on economic immediate considerations seems to me detrimental to ILOS, to HF and to the University of Oslo. I believe one should try to position foreign languages' education as an important complement to citizenship in the world, and not just look at Excel/Tableau tables. Or is money the only thing that matters for a university?

I don't think that this should be accepted, or even discussed, without several alternatives being put on the table.