

# The Significance of Folk- bildning to Swedish Society

2011



Folkbildningsrådet

The Significance of Folkbildning to Swedish Society

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# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Swedish folkbildning – a brief presentation</b>	<b>5</b>
Folkbildning as an idea	5
Folkbildning – a large part of the education system	5
Folkbildning in practice	6
Swedish National Council of Adult Education	7
<b>Folkbildning's effects on society</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>First objective of the State grant: Support activities that contribute to strengthening and developing democracy</i>	8
<i>Second objective of the State grant: Contribute to making it possible for people to influence their life situation and to creating participative involvement in societal development</i>	14
<i>Third objective of the State grant: Contribute to levelling educational gaps and raising the level of education and cultural awareness in society</i>	22
<i>Fourth objective of the State grant: Contribute to broadening the interest in and increasing participation in cultural life</i>	25
References	29



# Foreword

What does folkbildning mean to the democratisation of Swedish society? To what extent does folkbildning contribute to greater involvement in society and greater opportunity for the citizens to exercise influence? Does it reduce educational gaps and raise the level of education in society? How important are Swedish study associations and folk high schools in terms of giving people access to various cultural activities and the possibility of participating in them?

These questions are the focus of this collective assessment, submitted to the Swedish Government by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, regarding the social effects of Swedish folkbildning. This assessment is primarily based on results from the national evaluations that the Council oversees, as well as the various follow-up materials prepared by the Council. External materials are also included.

However, the issue of the significance to society of folkbildning and non-formal education is not only relevant in Sweden. It is coming to the fore in a growing number of countries and on national and international labour markets as demand for education and expertise grows. This issue is becoming even more pressing as the expectations regarding the citizens' knowledge, capacity and commitment become higher in today's heterogeneous and multicultural societies.

The results of the collective assessment of folkbildning's effects on society are being reported in English for the first time. The ambition of this is to contribute to cross-border dialogue on the social significance of adult learning.

Swedish National Council of Adult Education,  
10 May 2011

Britten Månsson-Wallin  
*Secretary-General*



# Swedish folkbildning – a brief presentation

## Folkbildning as an idea

Folkbildning is independent and voluntary. It should mainly satisfy the educational needs of adult citizens in a broad sense. So folkbildning should be something more than and something different from the education that is provided through the formal education system comprising compulsory school, upper-secondary school, university, vocational school and municipal adult education.

The Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) formulated four objectives that represent the idea of folkbildning. They are expressed in the folkbildning bill 2005/06:192: *Learn, grow, change*, which states that the aim of the State's grants to folkbildning should be to support activities that contribute to:

- strengthening and developing democracy
- making it possible for people to influence their life situation and creating participative involvement in societal development
- reducing educational gaps and raising the level of education and cultural awareness in society
- creating interest in and broadening participation in cultural life.

The bill also sets out seven prioritised areas of activity: the common set of fundamental values, the challenges of the multicultural society, the demographic challenge, life-long learning, cultural ac-

tivities, people with disabilities, and public health, sustainable development and global justice.

It is primarily in these areas that the four objectives of folkbildning shall be realised.

## Folkbildning – a large part of the education system

Swedish folkbildning mainly comprises the activities conducted by Sweden's 150 folk high schools and ten study associations. A large part of the folkbildning work, in both study associations and folk high schools, takes place in cooperation with the popular movements and other organisations that are members of the study associations or the operators of the folk high schools.

Folkbildning is a part of the Swedish education system. Moreover, it is a large part – it could be called the largest type of education of all. In 2010, the folk high schools had 28,000 participants in the long-term courses, 114,000 participants in short courses and around 230,000 participants in cultural programmes. That same year, the study associations had just over 2.5 million participants, corresponding to 970,000 unique individuals, in study circles and other folkbildning activities, and nearly 16.5 million participants in cultural programmes.

By comparison, statistics from Statistics Swe-

den<sup>1</sup> indicate that, in Sweden, there were approximately:

- 892,000 students in compulsory school in the 2009/2010 school year
- 395,000 students in upper-secondary school in the 2009/2010 school year
- 400,000 students in university in the 2008/2009 school year
- 187,100 students in municipal adult education during the 2009 calendar year.<sup>2</sup>

Folkbildning is largely financed by grants from the State, county councils/regions and municipalities. The total revenues for folkbildning activities amounted to nearly SEK 6.5 billion in 2009. The State contributed the most, approximately SEK 3.2 billion. Slightly more than 50 per cent of the State's grant was allocated to the study associations, and slightly less than 50 per cent to the folk high schools. The State grant is raised in pace with price and salary index adjustments. In 2006, the Swedish Parliament decided to increase the State appropriation to folkbildning.

## Folkbildning in practice

### Folkbildning of the study associations

The study associations offer folkbildning in the form of study circles, cultural programmes and "other folkbildning activities".

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1 Statistics Sweden is an administrative agency. Its main task is to supply customers with statistics for decision making, debate and research.

2 Municipal adult education comprises basic adult education, upper-secondary adult education and supplementary education. Any municipal resident that lacks skills normally acquired in compulsory school has the right to participate in basic adult education as of the second half of the calendar year that he or she turns 20 years of age. Upper-secondary adult education aims to provide adults with skills and knowledge corresponding to those young people receive in upper-secondary school. Supplementary education aims to provide adults such education that raises their skill level in their profession or in a new profession.

The study associations' activities are based on the study circle format. It consists of at least three people, including the circle leader, who seek knowledge together for at least three meetings and at least nine hours of study. Most study circles are arranged within the subject areas of art/music/media, the humanities and behavioural sciences. The aesthetic circles are dominant.

Other folkbildning activities are carried out in freer and more flexible formats than study circles. The meetings can be longer and carried out more frequently. The number of meetings may be fewer, there may be more participants and they may also be younger.

The study association's largest activity, counted in the number of participants, is the cultural programmes. These are activities or productions that are presented to an audience, such as theatre presentations, music performances or lectures.

### Folkbildning of the folk high schools

The folk high schools arrange long-term courses that can be from 15 days to four years long and entitle those attending the courses to student aid.<sup>3</sup> The long-term "general" courses can qualify the students for further study at upper-secondary school, university or other higher studies. The long-term special courses of folk high schools – profile courses – are focused on special subject areas. Some of the special courses constitute vocational training, such as those to become a journalist, youth recreation leader, treatment assistant, cantor, sign-language interpreter, etc.

The folk high schools also provide short courses that can be from half a day to three weeks long and arrange various cultural activities. Among the short courses are the summer courses offered by many folk high schools.

The pedagogy of the folk high school relies on small, cohesive study groups. Studies are often conducted in interdisciplinary project form

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3 Student aid comprises various government allowances and loans for those who study at upper-secondary school, municipal adult education, folk high school, university or other post-secondary education programmes.

in courses where theory and practice are mixed. Many folk high schools have boarding schools where the participants can live.

## Swedish National Council of Adult Education

The Swedish National Council of Adult Education is a non-profit association with certain authoritative tasks delegated by the government and the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament). The Council distributes government grants to study associa-

tions and folk high schools, submits budgetary documentation and annual reports to the Government and follows up and evaluates folkbildning activities. The Council also works with certain assignments from the members.

The National Council of Adult Education has three members: The Swedish National Federation of Study Associations, the Interest Organisation for Popular Movement Folk High Schools and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

The National Council of Adult Education's office is located in Stockholm, at which some 20 people are employed.



# Folkbildning's effects on society

## First objective of the State grant:

### Support activities that contribute to strengthening and developing democracy

One of the most important reasons why the State supports folkbildning is a desire to promote a basic democratic perspective and democratic development in society. In the folkbildning bill, the Government emphasizes that the work focused on people's equal worth is an important part of this democracy mission.

## Folkbildning's various participants

This objective sets requirements on the scope and form of folkbildning – requiring that folkbildning must reach out and meet people in the phase of life and situation they are in, regardless of their age, gender, ethnic identity or socioeconomic circumstances. It is a matter of managing the challenges that the multicultural society and demographic development entail, contributing to life-long learning and reaching people with disabilities. In many ways, folkbildning does this well:

Folkbildning's participants are a multifaceted group. In the National Council of Adult Education's study, *Study Circle Participants 2008*, for instance, there is an age difference of 82 years between the youngest and the oldest participants.

The participants ranged between 13 and 95 years of age.

Study associations and folk high schools attract slightly different age groups. The study associations' participants are generally older than those in folk high school. Statistics from Statistics Sweden show that, in 2010, 52 per cent of the participants in the folk high school long-term courses are age 25 or younger.<sup>4</sup> The corresponding share of the study associations' study circle participants and participants in other folkbildning activities was 23 per cent.<sup>5</sup> However, 33 per cent of the study circle participants were 65 years of age or older. In folk high schools, only 7 per cent of the participants had reached retirement age.

The National Council of Adult Education's circle participant surveys show that the proportion of older circle participants has increased over time, in pace with the ageing of the population. According to Statistics Sweden's information, however, the proportion of circle participants who are 65 years of age or older is significantly larger than this group's share of Sweden's population – 33 per cent compared with 18 per cent of the population.

The fact that older people are becoming increasingly active is also shown in the text *Living Habits – Status Report 2010* by the Swedish National

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4 40 per cent of the participants in the folk high school long-term courses were 20–24 years of age.

5 Of the study associations' participants in study circles and other folkbildning, 5 per cent were 20–24 years of age.

Institute of Public Health. It confirms that ever fewer 65 to 85 year-old men and women say that they have a low level of social participation. It is becoming increasingly common for them to live active, social lives, something which the Swedish National Institute of Public Health views as fundamental to good ageing. For many who previously came in contact with folkbildning, it is natural to seek out a study circle for a meaningful, social life as a pensioner. Of the participants in the National Council for Adult Education's report *Study Circle Participants 2008*, 80 per cent had participated in more than one circle.

There are more women than men in folkbildning, just like in other types of adult education.<sup>6</sup> In 2010, women accounted for 57 per cent of the study circle participants, 64 per cent of the participants in other folkbildning activities, 57 per cent of the study association's cultural programmes, 60 per cent of the folk high schools' general courses and 66 per cent of the special courses. This gender distribution has remained virtually unchanged in most of the activities of folkbildning for at least the past ten years. It is only in other folkbildning activities that the proportions have changed from male dominance to today's figures.

In 2010, approximately 16 per cent of the participants in Sweden's study circles had a foreign background. In the folk high schools, the corresponding proportions were 38 per cent in the general courses and 14 per cent of those in the special courses. Those born abroad accounted for

6 For the autumn term of 2009, 62 per cent women and 38 per cent men were accepted to university education at the basic level (*Universities and university colleges. National Agency for Higher Education Annual Report 2010, Report 2010:10 R*). In 2009, 64 per cent of the participants in municipal adult education were women. (National Agency for Education: *Municipal Adult Education – Students and course participants – National level. Table 3 A: Students calendar years 2004–2009*.)

7 Foreign background is a collective category for those born abroad or born in Sweden with two parents born abroad.

8 Unique participants reported by personal ID number matching the register of Sweden's total population.

**Figure 1: Swedish/foreign background among participants of the study associations' activity forms in 2010 and the folk high schools long-term courses during the autumn term 2010.<sup>7</sup>**

	Swedish background	Foreign background	Total	Unique participants <sup>8</sup>
<i>Study associations, activity form</i>				
Study circle	84%	16%	100%	701,044
Other folkbildning activity	86%	14%	100%	388,388
Study circle and other folkbildning activity	84%	16%	100%	1,089,432
<i>Folk high school, course type</i>				
General courses	61%	38%	100%	12,023
Special courses	83%	14%	100%	15,849
Supplemental education	90%	10%	100%	112

just over 80 per cent of the participants with a foreign background in the long-term folk high school courses.<sup>9</sup>

Of the participants in folk high school special courses in the autumn term of 2010, 14 per cent had some form of disability. In the general cours-

9 In 2010, folkbildning gathered around an equally large proportion of participants with a foreign background as universities, where these people accounted for 18 per cent of all students at the basic level in the 2008/2009 academic year. The proportion of beginners with a foreign background in the basic programme of the university increased from 1999/2000 to 2008/2009 from 12 per cent to 18 per cent. (*Universities. National Agency for Higher Education Annual Report 2010, Report 2010:10 R*). In municipal adult education, these shares were significantly larger. In 2009, nearly 40 per cent of the participants in municipal adult education were born abroad – 88 per cent in the basic level and 30 per cent at the upper-secondary level. (National Agency for Education: *Municipal Adult Education – Students and course participants – National level. Table 3 A: Students calendar years 2004–2009*.) Because different statistical categories are used in the various documents, and the different educational forms are directed at different participant groups and are conducted on different levels, they should, however, be interpreted with caution.

es, this figure was 30 per cent. Compared with 2001, the proportions increased significantly in both the general and special courses, from 6 and 14 per cent, respectively.<sup>10</sup> The proportion of circle participants with a disability accounted for an average of just over 8 per cent in 2010, meaning they were significantly fewer than in folk high schools. The proportion has been nearly constant for the entire 2000s.

Altogether, the statistics show that the general courses' participants changed in the 2000s. The participants became increasingly younger and more and more of them have a foreign background or some form of disability. The education statistics presented later, under the State grant's third objective, show that the proportion of participants with two year's of upper-secondary school or less also grew strongly, while the group of participants with more upper-secondary education decreased to a corresponding extent. Within the other types of folkbildning activities, the participant groups are roughly similar to those of ten years ago, although the activity area of other folkbildning activities acquired more women and more middle-aged participants, ages 25–65.

### Stronger efforts for certain groups

Within folkbildning, special resources are invested in certain participant groups. In 2010, the National Council of Adult Education allocated 12 per cent of the State budget to the efforts of the folk high schools and study associations for certain participants with disabilities or deficiencies in the Swedish language. This is an endeavour that is unique in its scope among authorities and organisations that provide State grants to non-profit organisations. The effort takes place in accordance

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10 Approximately two thirds of all folk high schools had roughly the same number of *applicants* with disabilities or an immigrant background in 2010 as previous years. The proportions of these applicants had increased for 26 per cent of the folk high schools. Only a few report a decrease.

with the prioritised activity areas decided on by the Swedish Parliament.

This *reinforcement grant* has an impact on the work of the folk high schools. Around 12 per cent of the participants of the long-term courses in autumn 2010 – 23 per cent in general courses – were born abroad and needed special pedagogical efforts as support for their deficiencies in the Swedish language. There were somewhat more participants with disabilities and needs for greater support.<sup>11</sup> In the long-term courses, they comprised 21 per cent of all participants and 30 per cent of the participants in the general courses.<sup>12</sup>

The study associations also received reinforcement grants in 2010, as support for the 52 per cent of the participants with disabilities and 49 per cent of the immigrated participants.

### Folkbildning as a meeting place

Folkbildning takes on the demographic and multicultural challenges by being a meeting place for participants of different genders, ethnic backgrounds and ages, those with and without disabilities and those who are in socially and economically different stages in life.

However, the fact that the participant population as a whole is mixed does not necessarily mean that those with different backgrounds meet in study circles or folk high school courses. The proportion of men, the participant group age composition, the proportion of participants who are immigrants and the proportion of participants with disabilities vary widely between different study associations and folk high schools:

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11 Including participants with dyslexia.

12 Some statistical information on folkbildning participants is based on *group data*, other information is based on *personal data*. This means that not all information is entirely comparable. The data concerning the strengthening grant are collected from the group reporting.

**Figure 2: Folk high schools and study associations with the largest and smallest proportion of specified participant groups in 2010. By activity format.<sup>13</sup>**

	Folk high school		Study associations	
	General course	Special course	Study circles	Other folkbildning activity
Largest share of male participants (%)	76%	66%	55%	51%
Smallest share of male participants (%)	0%	0%	33%	24%
Largest share of participants aged 65 or older (%)	80%	73%	48%	35%
Smallest share of participants aged 65 or older (%)	0% <sup>14</sup>	0% <sup>15</sup>	3%	0%
Largest share of participants aged 25 or younger (%)	94%	99%	63%	83%
Smallest share of participants aged 25 or younger (%)	0% <sup>16</sup>	0% <sup>17</sup>	9%	21%
Largest share of immigrant/foreign born participants (%)	99% <sup>18</sup>	59% <sup>19</sup>	82%	53%
Smallest share of immigrant/foreign born participants (%)	0% <sup>20</sup>	0% <sup>21</sup>	7%	6%
Largest share of participants with a disability (%)	100% <sup>22</sup>	74% <sup>23</sup>	18%	6%
Smallest share of participants with a disability (%)	0% <sup>24</sup>	0% <sup>25</sup>	0%	0%

Other analyses also indicate that different groups do not always mix in the actual activities. Men and women, for instance, do not always meet:

- In 26 per cent of all study circles in 2010, women accounted for 10 per cent or less of the participants, and in 22 per cent, the proportion of men was 10 per cent or less. This means that nearly half of the circles were essentially single-sex circles.

- The proportion of women in the folk high schools' long-term courses varied between different folk high schools, from 33 to 97 per cent (one folk high school). At a majority of the schools, the proportion of women in the long-term courses was larger than 60 per cent.

Participants with Swedish and other ethnic backgrounds also do not always meet:

- In 33 per cent of the study circles in 2010, there were both participants with Swedish and foreign backgrounds. In 51 per cent of all study circles, all participants had a Swedish background, i.e. were born in Sweden and had at least one parent born in Sweden. In the rest, 16 per cent, all of the participants had a foreign background.

13 See footnote 12. The information in the table is gathered from the study associations' and folk high schools' group reporting.

14 66 folk high schools have no participants who are 65 years of age or older in a general course.

15 32 folk high schools have no participants who are 65 years of age or older in a special course.

16 Two folk high schools have no participants who are 25 years of age or younger in a general course.

17 Two folk high schools have no participants who are 25 years of age or younger in a special course.

18 In 32 folk high schools, more than half of the participants in the general courses are immigrants.

19 In ten folk high schools, more than 30 per cent of the participants in the special courses are immigrants.

20 Ten folk high schools had no immigrant participants in the general courses during the autumn.

21 26 folk high schools had no immigrant participants in the special courses during the autumn.

22 In 16 folk high schools, more than half of the participants in the general courses have a disability.

23 In 19 folk high schools, more than 30 per cent of the participants in the special courses have a disability.

24 Ten folk high schools had no participants with a disability in the general courses.

25 27 folk high schools had no participants with a disability in the special courses.

- The proportion of immigrant participants, i.e. those who themselves immigrated to Sweden, in the folk high schools' long-term courses varied between different folk high schools, from 0 (eight folk high schools) to 99 per cent (one folk high school). At 75 of 150 folk high schools, the proportion amounted to 10 per cent or less.<sup>26 27</sup>

People with shared needs and interests used to form associations and seek out folkbildning to strengthen their own identity and seek out the like-minded. This is still happening. A challenge for study associations and folk high schools today is to combat segregation, i.e. an involuntary division of different groups. Good conditions need to be created for people to meet in shared meeting facilities and talk in courses and study circles.

A related issue concerns the conditions for equal meetings between people with different ethnic backgrounds. This has come to the fore in conjunction with the initiation of activities in recent years aimed at meeting the folkbildning and formative education needs of certain ethnic groups: the *Agnesberg Folk High School* with a Roma profile, the *Kista Folk High School* with a special emphasis on Muslims in Sweden, and the *Ibn Rushd* study association with the special task of strengthening Muslims in Sweden and to provide non-Muslims more knowledge about Islam.

The National Council of Adult Education financed a research project at Linköping University where the three folkbildning institutions above were studied together with the Sami formative education activities in Jokkmokk.<sup>28</sup> The researchers

26 Refers to general courses, special courses and short courses.

27 The year before, 2009, there were 96 folk high schools where the proportion of immigrant participants amounted to 10 per cent or less, and 14 folk high schools with no immigrant participants. Hence, the number of folk high schools with comparatively many immigrant participants is increasing.

28 The Sami previously had their own folk high school. Today, this has been reorganised into *education centres* and is no longer counted as folkbildning.

investigated why Muslims, Roma and Sami chose to establish their own folkbildning institutions, alongside of the already established activities.

A number of explanations are presented in the project. Marginalisation is one reason. It is a matter of exclusion, of not finding sympathy for their issues and of not being permitted to participate in decision making processes. Immigrants and immigrant groups are admittedly let in, but do not receive a real influence in study associations and folk high schools as a matter of course. A sense of security is another motive. There is a need to be permitted to be with one's own, in a place that one does not always need to defend and explain oneself, where one does not need to be "different". As an ethnic group, it is important to first build one's own identity and be able to feel a sense of pride. Only then can equal meetings take place.

The researchers' conclusion is that folkbildning's traditional "institutions" had not succeeded in adequately creating a sense of security for or adapting to the prerequisites and needs of the Roma, Muslim and Sami groups. However, folkbildning's common values and pedagogical method still held an attraction. Consequently, they chose to create their "own" Sami, Roma and Muslim study associations and folk high schools.

A report from the project will be published in May 2011.

### Folkbildning's teachers and leaders

Folkbildning's pedagogy is a democratic process in itself, which, in order to serve to foster democracy, requires teachers and leaders with extensive knowledge of folkbildning's methods in particular.

The expectations of a study circle leader's knowledge have increased in recent years. In the conditions stipulated for government grants in 2007, it was established that the study circle leader must be approved by the study association and must have undergone introductory training. Through the implementation of *step G*, there are now jointly accepted minimum requirements for

what should be included in this basic training.<sup>29</sup> In the 2010 national report on folkbildning's quality work, the National Council of Adult Education confirms that around 40,000 of the slightly more than 100,000 circle leaders in total took part in *step G*. The study circle leader's other training and experience are not presented by the report.

In contrast to the public school system, folkbildning is an independent, voluntary form of education and formative education. This means that the folk high schools decide themselves what pedagogical competencies the teachers should have. The requirements set are generally high. In 2010, the majority of the approximately 2,600 teachers who are registered in Statistics Sweden's register of folk high school personnel had a teaching certificate.<sup>30</sup> In the general courses, 75 per cent were educated teachers, of which 32 per cent had folk high school teaching certificates and 43 per cent had other teaching certificates. In the special courses, the share was somewhat lower, with 59 per cent of the teaching staff having a teaching certificate. Of them, 21 per cent had folk high school teaching certificates and 38 per cent had another teaching certificate. This means that the

proportion of teachers in folk high schools with a degree in education was roughly just as high as among teachers in comparable forms of education.<sup>31</sup>

The folk high school's teaching staff are also experienced folkbildning practitioners. On average, the teachers have been employed at the folk high school for 11 years, and at study associations for one year. In the special courses in particular, the teachers are often required to have professional vocational experience, such as being an artist.

For reasons of democracy, it is also important that the employees at folk high schools represent the folkbildning they espouse. In 2010, 55 per cent of the folk high school teaching staff were women. The student and vocational counsellors were primarily women and the headmasters were most often men. Of the teachers, just over half were women. Of the teaching staff, 12 per cent had immigrated or had two parents who were born abroad. While nearly 52 per cent of the headmasters were older than 55 years of age, 68 per cent of the teachers were younger than 56 years of age. Looking at the entire teaching staff, 66 per cent are younger than 56 years of age.

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29 Every study association formulates its own study circle leader training, but as a minimum it should include:

- The study association's own set of common values and the relationship to the State's objectives.
- Theories on the equal value of all people and how differences can be leveraged and contribute to the participants' own knowledge and democratic development.
- The pedagogy of the study circle, including participant influence and how experiences in the group can be utilised in the shared process.
- How to conduct planned studies without curricula.
- The leader role consisting both of guidance in a group of likeminded individuals and a teaching role with both necessary and desirable knowledge in a subject.

The extent shall be a minimum of nine hours of study. (*National report on folkbildning quality work 2009*, page 27.)

30 The total number of teachers in folk high schools is significantly higher than that reported to Statistics Sweden. In addition to the teachers registered in the database, headmasters, assistant headmasters and student and vocational counsellors are included in the folk high school pedagogical staff. In total, 2,879 people are included in the register in 2010.

## Democratic participation – Folkbildning before the election

Only having a good geographic scope, the ability to reach out to many different groups and democratic working methods is not enough to make the study associations and folk high schools successful promoters of democracy. The content of folkbildning must also contribute to the development of democratic society.

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31 For example, in the 2009/2010 academic year, 72 per cent of the teachers in municipal adult education and upper-secondary school had a pedagogic university degree. In the independent upper-secondary schools, this proportion was 58 per cent. (National Agency for Education. *Table: Pedagogic university degree, type of employment and full-time positions school years 1999/2000–2009/2010*.)

In 2010, the National Council of Adult Education conducted a survey of the study associations' and folk high schools' activities associated with the national, county council and municipal elections. This was a first attempt at focusing in on folkbildning's function in the election movement:

The study associations reported nearly 2,600 events associated with the election, with more than 158,200 participants – with around as many women as men.<sup>32</sup> Only 4 per cent of the participants, slightly more than 5,700, were immigrants. Around 70 per cent of all events were cultural programmes and they gathered 96 per cent of the participants. Most participated in seminars, listened to lectures or participated in music events. Of the roughly 560 study circles that were held, most concerned political ideologies. ABF<sup>33</sup> almost entirely dominates the reporting, with 85 per cent of all participants in the election activities. Ibn Rushd<sup>34</sup> reported 10 per cent while the other study associations only reported a small number.

In folk high schools, 134 special activities were reported with a connection to the election. These gathered nearly 4,500 participants – roughly as many women as men. The vast majority of the activities (114) were short courses attended by most of the participants (3,100). The short courses were primarily devoted to election issues with a labour union emphasis.

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32 Looking at the general picture, the election activities do not appear to have been especially extensive. In total, the study associations held just over 655,000 events, with 1.8 million group-reported participants. The reporting is probably not complete. The activities were probably somewhat more extensive in practice.

33 ABF is Sweden's largest adult liberal education association. The abbreviation stands for Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (the Workers' Educational Association).

34 Ibn Rushd Educational Association is the ninth (of ten) and one of the most recent educational associations to be approved in Sweden, in 2008. Ibn Rushd addresses national issues of diversity, integration and democracy.

### **Second objective of the State grant:**

## **Contribute to making it possible for people to influence their life situation and to creating participative involvement in societal development**

Folkbildning shall make it possible for people to influence their living situation locally, regionally and nationally. As a part of their mission, study associations and folk high schools are also active internationally.

The second objective means that folkbildning should reach out to many people. It demands the development of folkbildning's methods and approaches. New media and digital technology are challenges that study associations and folk high schools, as well as other organisations in society, need to address.

### **A large and idea-driven part of the education system**

Folkbildning practitioners need to be in place around the country in order to get people involved and offer possibilities of influence. Consequently, folkbildning must be of a sufficient scope – in terms of volume and geography – in order to achieve the social objectives set by the State.

In terms of the requirement of volume, the study associations and folk high schools fulfil several expectations: Folkbildning is a large part of the Swedish education system. In many ways, it is more successful than other types of education. In 2010, folk high schools had 28,000 participants in total in the long-term courses, 114,000 participants in short courses including “open folkbildning”<sup>35</sup> and around 230,000 participants

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35 Open folkbildning is the name of the parts of folk high school activities that are open to the public, not just folk high school participants.

in cultural programmes. That same year, study associations had just over 2.5 million participants, corresponding to 970,000 unique individuals, in study circles and other folkbildning activities. The cultural programmes attracted nearly 16.5 million participants.

**Figure 3: Participants in folkbildning 2008–2010.**

	2010	2009	2008
<i>Folk high school</i>			
General courses	12,000	12,900	12,300
Special courses	15,800	16,700	15,200
Supplemental education	110	90	90
Short courses, including open folkbildning	113,500	125,500	145,600
Cultural programmes	229,600	246,100	248,200
<i>Study associations</i>			
Study circle	1,809,300	1,890,300	1,909,400
Other folkbildning activity	731,900	743,200	688,800
Cultural programmes	16,466,200	17,079,600	16,277,900
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,378,500</b>	<b>20,114,300</b>	<b>19,297,600</b>

The number of participants decreased in all folkbildning activities from 2009 to 2010.<sup>36</sup> However, this trend is not distinct from a three-year perspective. Compared with 2008, the number of participants increased in the folk high schools' special courses and in the study associations' cultural programmes and in other folkbildning activities.

At the same time, data from the National Council of Adult Education shows that the number of applications to folk high school long-term courses have remained the same or increased in the past three years. Even though folkbildning is so extensive, and although the number of participants in

<sup>36</sup> Folk high school supplemental education programmes are the exception where participants increased from 90 to 110.

the special courses has grown since 2008, there are not enough study places. Needs and demand exceed the supply.

**Figure 4: Applicants per planned study place. Total folk high school long-term courses.**

	2010	2009	2008
General course	2,0	2,0	1,7
Special course	2,5	2,1	2,1

During the period 2008–2010, the number of applicants to the *general course* increased by 0.3 applicants per planned place. However, demand differs between various parts of the country. That same year, the number of applicants to the *special courses* increased by 0.4 applicants per place.

### Folkbildning throughout the country

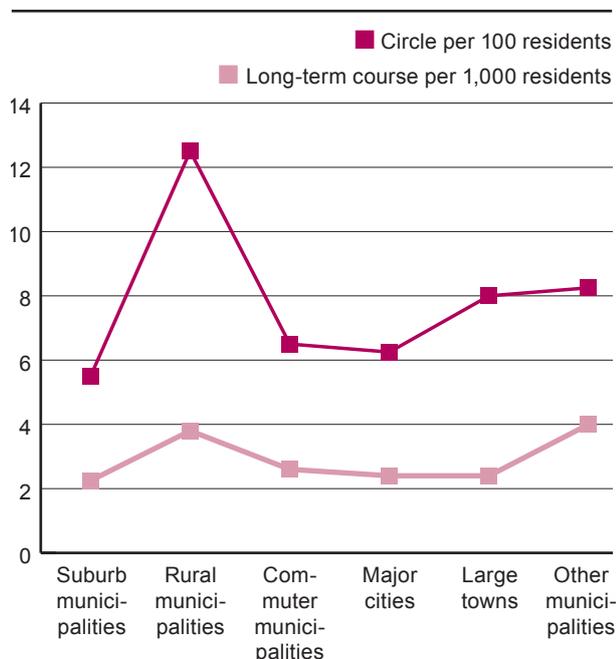
Today, folkbildning serves as a nationwide infrastructure for culture and formative education. The study associations offer activities in all of Sweden's 290 municipalities, and the 150 folk high schools conduct activities with government grants in 160 municipalities. Folk high school participants are recruited from the whole country.

Some changes have taken place in terms of the geographic distribution. Between 1997 and 2011, the number of local chapters of the study associations decreased from a total of 642 to 333. The fact that there are fewer local chapters means that the democratic organisation has decreased, in that there are fewer legal entities and elected representatives. However, it is not clear in the national statistics how this decrease was distributed across the country. Consequently, it is also not possible to say if or how these changes affected the study associations' local activities.

Among the folk high schools, an urbanising trend can be distinguished. During the period 1991–2010, 23 new folk high schools were established. Most of them (13), were established in one

of Sweden's large towns.<sup>37</sup> This development was strengthened by three of the existing folk high schools moving operations from the countryside to the city. At the same time, comparatively many folk high schools established new branches in cities or suburbs. In 2010, just over 51 per cent of the folk high schools' long-term courses were held in major cities, suburban municipalities or large towns.

**Figure 5: Number of participants in study circles 2010 and participants in long-term folk high school courses in autumn 2010, in relation to the municipalities' populations.**



However, folkbildning still appears to have the strongest establishment in the rural municipalities. Relative to the municipalities' populations, the number of participants in study circles and long-term folk high school courses is largest in the rural areas. The lowest proportions of participants are in the suburb municipalities and the commuting municipalities, i.e. the municipalities directly around the major cities.

<sup>37</sup> Prior to 1991, there was no folk high school in Malmö, for instance. In 2010, there are five.

## Folkbildning's significance to local development

In the document *Folkbildning of the future, its role and objectives*, the National Council of Adult Education confirms that "It is in the local community that folkbildning has its greatest strength". At the same time, folkbildning's local distribution is affected by both the folk high schools' and the study associations' own prioritisations and by the efforts conducted by State, municipality and county council.

Especially the local, economic conditions play a role. While the government folkbildning appropriation has been kept at a constant or a somewhat higher level in recent years, the municipalities' appropriations to study associations have been cut sharply. The State's share of the grants to the study associations increased from 61 per cent in 2000 to 73 per cent in 2010. During the same period, the municipalities' share decreased from 24 per cent to 15 per cent, and the county councils'/regions' share decreased from 15 per cent to 12 per cent. Growing numbers of municipalities, 19 in 2010, provide no grants to folkbildning at all.

During the period 2001–2010, the State's share of grants to folk high schools was around 70 per cent and the county councils'/regions' share around 30 per cent.

When general support decreases from municipalities, it is primarily the study associations' financial circumstances that worsen. This trend is partially due to many municipalities allocating less funding to independent, voluntary folkbildning than before strictly for budgetary reasons. However, it may also be related to the study associations' changed organisational structure as described previously. Fewer local chapters may mean fewer contact interfaces locally. The study associations are not visible everywhere and consequently do not become natural cooperative partners in all municipalities. In pace with cuts in the municipal grants, the relative share and significance of the government grant grow.

The role of folkbildning in local development is not easy to show empirically. This is clear from the National Council of Adult Education's report *Folkbildning and local development in rural areas*. This study describes how folkbildning and other local actors conducted local development work more alongside one another than together. In the report, the researchers emphasize how important it is for the folkbildning practitioners to be on site locally if they are to be able to contribute to the local development work in a systematic manner. Even though examples are provided of the opposite, the study associations and folk high schools also appear to be relatively anonymous in the local development work in a previous report from 2008, *Folkbildning and local development in the suburb*. The importance of folkbildning having a local presence is also emphasized in the study.

In order to learn more about the significance of the study associations and folk high schools in the local community, the National Council of Adult Education commissioned researchers in economics at the Jönköping International Business School at Jönköping University. Their assignment is to map the potential connection between folkbildning and the socioeconomic standard and development in all of the municipalities of the country during the spring of 2011.

### Folkbildning's transnational work

In *Folkbildning of the future, its role and objectives*, the National Council of Adult Education concluded that future political decisions will increasingly be made at the international and local/regional level. If this is the case, it would result in folkbildning's international and local activities gaining in significance.

In collaboration with *Mimer – the National programme for folkbildning research* at Linköping University, the National Council of Adult Education conducted a survey of folkbildning's transna-

tional work in 2010.<sup>38</sup> The objective was to obtain a collective illustration of the folk high schools' and study associations' transnational activities in 2009. The results will be published in June 2011 in the report *Cross-border folkbildning – about the transnational work of folkbildning*.

In the survey, the folk high schools reported 214 transnational activities in 2009, and the study associations reported 124.<sup>39</sup> In just over one third of the activities, primary financing came from the State folkbildning appropriation – 43 per cent of the folk high schools' activities and 24 per cent of the study associations' activities. Sida was the main financier in 26 per cent of all activities.<sup>40</sup> The folkbildning appropriation primarily went to long-term folkbildning work of a regular nature, meaning various courses. It was also used for field trips and participant exchanges. Appropriations from Sida were primarily used in various projects.

In its transnational work, folkbildning often focuses on different parts of the world than higher education does. Participants in the long-term courses at the folk high schools mainly chose to study in Africa (38 per cent), Europe outside the Nordic region and the Baltic States (26 per cent) and Latin America (13 per cent).<sup>41</sup> Information from the Swedish Central Student Grants Com-

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38 Transnational activities refer to those that entail some form of exchange between the Swedish folkbildning organisations and at least one party (organisation or person) in another country in the Nordic region, Europe or the rest of the world.

39 The dropout rate was relatively high among the study associations. The actual number of activities is probably significantly higher.

40 The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world. The overall goal of Swedish development cooperation is to contribute to making it possible for poor people to improve their living conditions. Sida is organised into nine departments. In 2009, Sida provided the main financing of 43 per cent of the study associations' transnational projects and in 18 per cent of the folk high schools' transnational projects.

41 The number of departing folk high school participants in 2009 is estimated in the report at slightly more than 1,640.

mittee (CSN)<sup>42</sup> shows that university students mostly studied at universities in Europe outside the Nordic region and the Baltic States (52 per cent) and in North America (18 per cent) in 2009.<sup>43</sup> Only occasional university students studied in Africa or Latin America, while hardly any folk high school participants chose North America.<sup>44</sup> These patterns partially reflect the folk high school's long tradition of solidarity work in countries in Africa and Latin America.

The National Council of Adult Education's report analyses the objectives set for the folkbildning organisations' transnational activities. They most commonly concern *giving*, i.e. that the folkbildning practitioners collaborate with other countries to spread knowledge and share their expertise. It is less common that this collaboration means that Swedish folkbildning *wants to receive* – experience and knowledge. This kind of exchange mostly means that the folkbildning practitioners want to know more about living conditions in other countries. In a third activity category, *exchange* is emphasized, meaning that the parties learn from each other and participants from different countries learn together.

In the National Council of Adult Education, FOLAC conducted a questionnaire survey in 2009 to obtain an illustration of the international and EU-related activities that the folk high schools conduct.<sup>45</sup> The results from the study also indicate that

international involvement is extensive, primarily the course activities and the international projects and projects and collaboration. The EU financed activities are more limited and mainly financed with funding from the European Social Fund.<sup>46</sup>

The stakeholder organisations of Swedish folkbildning are also involved in several international networks: For example, the global adult education organisation – the *International Council of Adult Education (ICAE)* – has decided to hold its 2011 general assembly in Sweden and to hold a world conference on adult education/folkbildning in conjunction with the assembly. The *European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)* has decided to hold its 2011 general assembly in conjunction with ICAE's general assembly. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education is the host organisation on behalf of the study associations' and folk high schools' interest associations – the Swedish National Federation of Adult Education Associations, the Interest Organisation for Popular Movement Folk High Schools (RIO) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).<sup>47</sup>

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Education has been given by the stakeholder organisations RIO and SALAR. The objective of FOLAC is to promote the international work of the folk high schools and endeavour to improve the long-term conditions for this work.

46 The European Social Fund supports projects that promote skills development and combat exclusion.

47 The name of the world assembly is *A World Worth Living In: Adult Learning and Education – the Key to Transformation*. Under this overall theme, a large number of joint and parallel activities are offered. Cooperation will be established with organisations and institutions on national, Nordic, European and global levels. This is a global meeting place for adult education and folkbildning. The folkbildning objectives of the conference are to create dynamic meeting places for folkbildning's and adult education's stakeholders in civil society and authorities on the global, regional, Nordic and national level during and after the world assembly; to clearly formulate the potential of folkbildning in writing in terms of individual development, active citizenship and the global challenges; to clarify the work of folkbildning in the seven areas of activity – public health, sustainable development and global justice; to ensure that the sustainability perspective permeates the event.

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42 CSN approves and disburses Swedish financial aid for studies, which includes both grants and loans to students in Sweden and Swedish students abroad.

43 In 2009, the number of departing university students, free movers and students in exchange programmes amounted to slightly more than 27,600.

44 Nor does folk high school mobility follow the aid map. Sida's support of non-governmental organisations in 2009 primarily went to countries in Africa, but also to Latin America and Asia. Most grants went to organisations active in Mozambique, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Kenya and Palestine/West Bank. That same year, the most common exchange countries in folk high schools were Tanzania, India, Germany, the UK and Finland.

45 FOLAC (Folkbildning – Learning for Active Citizenship) is a member assignment that the National Council of Adult

## Bridging the gap – distance training and flexible learning

For folk high schools, the possibility of offering the participants boarding school may be a way of increasing accessibility to the courses, in that the participants who live far from the folk high school can be offered housing on the school's premises. In 2010, 113 of 150 folk high schools offered boarding school. These were used by approximately 27 per cent of the participants in special courses and by 16 per cent of the participants in general courses. Compared with 2001, boarding school housing decreased somewhat in both participant groups.

It is mainly the new pedagogic solutions that can make the folk high schools' and study associations' activities more accessible to various participant groups. This does not always involve bridging geographic distances. In the report *Distance studies at folk high school 2007*, the participants' most common reason for choosing the distance form in particular was that they wanted to be able to study at any time during the day or be able to combine studies with work.<sup>48</sup> The study circle and folk high school participants had similar motives in the National Council of Adult Education's report *Participant voices on folkbildning from a distance – motives, significance and computer use*.<sup>49</sup> The distance courses' flexible structure matched the participants' work, family, health and/or living situation.

The National Council of Adult Education's statistics show that "distance studies" were offered at 98 folk high schools in the 2010 autumn term.

The share of students in distance studies was the highest in the supplemental education courses, nearly half of the slightly more than 100 participants. Around a fifth of the participants in the special courses studied from a distance and barely one tenth of the participants in the general courses.

48 Tore Mellberg 22 January 2010.

49 Eva Andersson & Ann-Marie Laginder (2007).

**Figure 6: Number and proportion of distance study students in folk high schools. Autumn term 2010.**

	Number of students in distance studies	Students in distance studies (%)	Total number of participants
General course	815	7%	12,022
Special courses	2,826	18%	15,833
Supplemental education	51	46%	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,692</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>27,967</b>

That same year, a total of 705 study circle participants studied from a distance. This means a decrease from around 5,800 participants in 2005.<sup>50</sup>

Trials with distance education have been under way in folkbildning since the mid-1980s. However, so far, the distance form of study has not achieved any major breakthrough. This may in part be related to the participants' attitudes. In the National Council of Adult Education's report *Study Circle Participants 2008*, in response to the question about their reasons for studying, nearly three fourths of the participants say that *the sense of community is nice*. The search for this sense of community was the most common reason to join a study circle. Slightly more than half of the participants mainly wanted to *meet new people*. Hence, many study circle participants want to meet and spend time with each other, not interact from a distance.

Another reason may be that many folkbildning practitioners have difficulty applying folkbildning pedagogy at a distance and with technical aids.<sup>51</sup>

50 National Council of Adult Education (2005). Distance studies in folkbildning activities.

51 With only around 10,000 participants in total, the distance form of study has not had as much of a breakthrough in folkbildning as at e.g. university. In the 2007/2008 academic year, around one out of four university students studied at a distance to some extent, i.e. slightly more than 100,000 students. This figure has nearly tripled since 1998/99. This strong increase is mainly attributed to an extra allowance being paid for distance courses that were registered in Sweden's online university during the period 2001/2002–2003/2004. No corresponding effort was applied in folkbildning.

In 2009 and 2010, the National Council of Adult Education announced project funding to develop forms for flexible learning in study associations and folk high schools on three occasions.<sup>52</sup> In total, 120 projects were granted funding.

Preliminary follow-up results from the first project round shows that the work on flexible learning is often poorly rooted with management and the regular activities. It is mostly individual enthusiasts that see to it that a folk high school or study association chapter begins working with flexible learning. In order for the work to live on and be able to be developed, knowledge, long-term planning and, above all, an explicit ambition on the part of the management are necessary. These conditions are not present at many places. For example, many study associations and folk high schools have neither an IT strategy nor sufficient technical and pedagogic support functions. The supply of technical aids varies widely. According to the project employees, another obstacle is that the folkbildning practitioners' experiences of flexible learning are not gathered and distributed in a systematic manner. Development work becomes sluggish when individual study association chapters and folk high schools have to start from scratch in their efforts.<sup>53</sup>

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52 In recent years, it has become less common to talk about distance in educational contexts – distance training, distance courses, distance studies. The concept of flexible learning is used more often. Flexible learning means that education and instruction is adjusted as much as possible to the individual's needs and level. This flexibility can consist of an adaptation of time, place, pace, learning style and a choice of whether one wants to learn individually or in a group. In order to support this flexibility, various technical aids are most often used.

53 In a report from 2007, *Folkbildning's IT patterns*, the National Council of Adult Education confirms that there is a difference between the study associations and folk high schools in terms of how new technology is used in the pedagogic work. The teachers and course participants of the folk high schools used the new technology more or less regularly. However, in the study associations, IT was used to a relatively limited extent. At the same time, it is noted that differences in activities and organisation make it difficult to easily and unambiguously compare and assess the folk high schools' and study associations' IT use.

## Folkbildning and the digital divide

Study associations and folk high schools do not only need to learn how to use digital aids as a part of instruction and teaching. In order for folkbildning's accessibility to increase, the participants must also be able to use the technology. Not all can do this.

This is a challenge that extends beyond folkbildning. New technology is increasingly a key to information and community service. Consequently, it affects people's possibilities of having control over their living situation. In the report *See the citizens – for better public service* (SOU 2009:92), the investigator describes how national and municipal service is increasingly adapted for those who can use the Internet and telephone. This leads to the approximately two million citizens who do not have sufficient knowledge of this technology, or who do not have access to technical aids and technical infrastructure, receiving less service. This may primarily be true of the elderly and those who have difficulty with the Swedish language.

Consequently, bridging the digital divide – the gap between those who have access to and can use new technology and others who neither have nor can use new technology – becomes a natural part of the folkbildning mission. This is one of our time's major democratic challenges.

In 2010, the study associations reported a total of 47,580 participants in activities that involved computer use and/or aimed to develop the participants' ability to use digital technology. This task pertains to all forms of activity. Within folk high schools, computer use is integrated into instruction and teaching primarily in general courses.<sup>54</sup>

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54 See footnote 12. The information on work associated with the *digital divide* is gathered from the study associations' group reporting. The reporting of activities associated with the digital divide is probably not complete. The activities are probably somewhat more extensive.

## Individual community involvement

Folkbildning should safeguard individual citizens' involvement, create channels for influence and serve as an arena for social influence. Most studies conducted among participants indicate that one of folkbildning's strengths is taking care of and encouraging social involvement by everyone:

In 2010, the National Council of Adult Education conducted an evaluation among folk high school participants. One of the study's objectives was to investigate how the participants perceive the significance of their studies several years after leaving the folk high school. Approximately 40 per cent of the participants felt that their time at folk high school made them more interested in cultural issues and an equal number had become more active in their leisure interests. Approximately one out of four felt that the folk high school studies had gotten them more involved in social issues. Of the respondents who were members of an association, network, organisation, action group or the like, approximately 30 per cent felt that folk high school had encouraged them to join.

Statistics Sweden's *Folk High School Follow-up 2006*, which was conducted among those who had completed long-term courses in folk high school, can be mentioned for comparison. Here, approximately 70 per cent of the women and a somewhat higher proportion of the men said that their folk high school studies had gotten them involved in social issues.

In the National Council of Adult Education's study, *Study Circle Participants 2008*, approximately 20 per cent of the participants had practical use of their knowledge from the study circle studies in an association or assembly. Approximately 10 per cent had used their knowledge "in social life in general".

## Community involvement through member organisations and operators

Folkbildning's work to influence societal development often takes place indirectly, in cooperation

with member organisations and folk high school operators. "The folkbildning activities initiated by associations are based on the popular movement's specific objectives and circumstances. Accordingly, the participant's will and responsibility is connected to the specific association's objectives and activities."<sup>55</sup> In a conceivable chain of social impact, the individual's commitment is channelled through an association or other organisation, which in turn cooperates with a study association or a folk high school to present its concept. However, this is a chain of events that is not always continuous in practice.

The National Council of Adult Education's evaluation report, *Popular movement links and market relations – study associations and their founder, member and collaboration organisations*, studied the relationships between the study associations and their member and collaboration organisations. The researchers confirm that the study associations had a total of 205 member organisations and 113 collaboration organisations affiliated with them at a national level at the beginning of 2008.<sup>56</sup> These figures are considerably larger if the regionally and locally affiliated organisations are also included.

According to the researchers, the ideological ties between the study associations and their members or collaboration organisations can no longer be taken for granted. The study associations' social motives can still be described as strong, but they are being challenged by more commercial relationships to other popular movements and organisations. One conclusion is that if the activities conducted together with the collaboration organisations and the "periphery" member organisations are not included, and if the study associations' open activities and the commercialised

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55 Bill 2005/06:192, p.20.

56 In contrast to the member organisations, the collaboration organisations are not entitled to vote at association meetings and are not formally represented on the boards of the study associations. Collaboration with the study associations is instead formalised in agreements that are based on mutual obligations.

components are excluded, not particularly much of the activities are left. Consequently, the space for the idea-driven activities that take place together with the member organisations is limited. The idea that the study associations' activities are characterised by the member organisations is at risk of being undermined. The study associations' conceptual basis has been weakened, or at least altered.

In 2011, the National Council of Adult Education will conduct a corresponding evaluation of the relationship between folk high schools and their operators.

**Third objective of the State grant:**

### Contribute to levelling educational gaps and raising the level of education and cultural awareness in society

Folkbildning can be described as a partially idea-driven part of the Swedish education system, with objectives and functions that do not always agree with those of the formal forms of education. For many participants, folkbildning serves as an alternative to formal education, an extra option. It also functions as compensation and a second chance for the people who did not complete their formal studies at compulsory or upper-secondary school for various reasons. However, folkbildning should not only be valued in relation to society's other forms of education. Above all, it has an inherent value as a complement to the formal education system.

### Folkbildning as an alternative and option

In the future, the labour market will demand more training by growing numbers of citizens. This means that the society and formal education sys-

tem are facing major challenges since the pressure to acquire an education is increasing on the groups that want to study, but who do not enjoy, cannot manage or are not interested in the training that compulsory and upper-secondary school offers. In this context, the folk high school becomes more important: "The advantage of folk high school is not that one does the same things in the same way, but rather that one does the same things, but in different ways."<sup>57</sup>

### Folkbildning as compensation and a second chance

When folkbildning functions as compensation and a second chance, it is mainly directed at the groups in society who need it most, i.e. those who have short or incomplete previous education and a weak foundation on the labour market. The National Council of Adult Education's report *Folk High School Participants – What happens afterward?* shows that there are many who apply to the folk high school to later be able to continue their studies or get a job. Approximately one fifth of the participants turned to a folk high school because they wanted to obtain qualification for further studies. This proportion was somewhat higher among the youngest participants. Among the older participants, it was more common to try to improve their chances on the labour market. One third of the participants born outside the Nordic region studied at folk high school to obtain qualification for further studies.

The participants that apply to folk high school for such reasons often have little education. In the autumn of 2010, 75 per cent of the participants in the general courses and 17 per cent of those in special courses only had pre-upper-secondary ed-

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57 Minister for Education and Science Jan Björklund in his introductory speech at the National Council for Adult Education's national conference on 21 October 2009. The theme of the conference was *Everyone's equal worth – folkbildning and the common set of fundamental values*.

education. The corresponding figure for the population as a whole was 22 per cent. Approximately 11 per cent of the folk high school's participants had post-upper-secondary education, compared with 29 per cent of the population.

Since the folk high school's long-term courses qualify participants for further studies, while the study associations' circles do not, the folk high school's participants in the long-term courses generally have less formal education than the participants in the study associations. The study circle participants are somewhat well-educated, even compared with the population. A *somewhat smaller* proportion of study circle group than the population average has only completed compulsory school or the equivalent, while somewhat more have continued studies after upper-secondary school. Of the study circle participants, 22 per cent have pre-upper-secondary education, another 37 per cent have upper-secondary education and 33 per cent have post-upper-secondary education.<sup>58</sup> The proportions of study circle participants with the shortest and longest formal education, respectively, have increased since the beginning of the 1990s.

In the National Council of Adult Education's report *Study Circle Participants 2008*, the researchers draw the conclusion that the changes in the level of education are related to the participants' age and consequently also to the structure of the education system.

The education level of the participants varies between different folkbildning operators, primarily between the folk high schools (see figure 7). There are folk high schools where all participants in the general courses have no more than two years of upper-secondary school, and others where this only applies to one third of the participants. There are also schools where no participants in the *special courses* have attended up to two years of upper-secondary school, while all participants in the special courses at other schools have at least

58 No information is available on 8 per cent of the study circle participants.

**Figure 7: Folk high schools and study associations with the largest and smallest proportion (%) of participants with the lowest and highest levels of education, respectively, in 2010. By activity format.<sup>59</sup>**

	Folk high school		Study associations	
	General course	Special course	Study circles	Other folkbildning activities
Largest share of participants with post-upper-secondary education (%)	29%	57%	59%	61%
Smallest share of participants with post-upper-secondary education (%)	0%	0% <sup>60</sup>	22%	24%
Largest share with no more than two years of upper-secondary school (%)	100%	100%	61%	56%
Smallest share with no more than two years of upper-secondary school (%)	33%	0%	24%	21%

three years of upper-secondary school behind them. There are also several folk high schools where more than half of the participants in special courses have continued studying after upper-secondary school.

Folkbildning may also be important to the groups that have a weak position on the labour market. In Statistics Sweden's *Folk High School Follow-up 2006*, the proportion of unemployed varied between 5 and 15 per cent. In the National Council of Adult Education's report *Study Circle Participants 2008*, the proportion of unemployed among the study circle participants was 3 per cent, which is a distinctly lower proportion than among the folk high school's participants. The difference between the study associations and folk high

59 See footnote 12. The information in the table is gathered from the study associations' and folk high schools' group reporting.

60 18 schools have no participants with post-upper-secondary education.

schools is partially due to the participants' finances. Joining a study circle sometimes costs a bit, while it is free-of-charge to study at a folk high school. Anyone studying at a folk high school can also receive student aid. Another partial explanation is that both of the studies above were conducted at different points in time.

Many unemployed people are also in the study associations and folk high schools' assignment activities.<sup>61</sup> For instance, the Government allocated funding to the Swedish Public Employment Service<sup>62</sup> corresponding to approximately 4,000 places at the folk high schools in 2010 and equally many in 2011.<sup>63</sup> These education places are intended for unemployed young people who lack leaving certificates from compulsory or upper-secondary school. The objective is to motivate them to begin or return to regular education. The Swedish Public Employment Service commissioned the National Council of Adult Education to distribute grants to the folk high schools for the implementation of the activities. A follow-up of the first year's work in this "Educational effort for young people in the Job Guarantee" (UGA) shows that the lesson that most participants learned is that "education is a way to a job".

Among other things, the results from UGA remind that folkbildning not only offers the participants opportunities to study here and now – which in itself makes them more knowledgeable and competent. It also provides conditions for further education and for future employment and thereby becomes a part of their life-long learning.

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61 The National Council of Adult Education does not have data on participants in assignment activities.

62 The Swedish Public Employment Service is the largest employment agency in Sweden and its main task is to get employers together with people who are looking for work, in the most efficient manner possible. In this assignment, given by Sweden's Parliament and Government, extra attention is given to people who are at some distance from the labour market. All services are free of charge.

63 The objective is to offer 4,000 participants 60 days of training each during three consecutive months.

Approximately two thirds of the participants in folk high schools will soon go on to jobs or other studies. In the report *Folk High School Participants – What happens afterward?*, approximately 40 per cent of the participants had a job, their own company or were on parental leave from a job one to four years after leaving folk high school. This is a lower proportion than in Statistics Sweden's *Folk High School Follow-up 2006*, in which half of the participants were gainfully employed after three years. At the same time in the National Council of Adult Education's study, nearly 30 per cent of the participants had chosen to continue studying, most at university. In Statistics Sweden's study, approximately 25 per cent of the folk high school participants were at university after three years.

What the participants do after their time at folk high school varies. For instance, participants with disabilities that participated in the National Council of Adult Education's 2010 study more often than others attended a general course, had more difficulty than others in finding a job after completed folk high school studies and did not go on to university as often as other groups – 20 per cent compared with 40 per cent of the participants without a disability. They were more often unemployed and registered in labour market policy measures, and were retired or sick-listed to a greater extent.

In other words, the statistics provide a reminder that, although the folk high school offers these participants an opportunity to study – often the only opportunity – the conditions in the surrounding society remain the same.

The number of folk high school participants that go on to university or other forms of education could be higher. Prior to admission to university in the autumn term of 2010, there were nearly 5,000 qualified applicants from folk high schools. Of them, approximately 68 per cent were accepted. This is a relatively high proportion. In June 2010, the National Council of Adult Education conducted a follow-up of the folk high schools' study assessments in the 2009/2010 academic

year.<sup>64</sup> In total, 5,900 assessments were made, of which 5,764 pertained to participants in general courses. This means that approximately 45 per cent of the participants in the general courses, who often began there to obtain qualifications for further studies, received a study assessment. The National Council of Adult Education's statistics also show that the number of issued study assessments decreased from around 8,300 since 2001. At the same time, the average of the assessments decreased from 2.73 to 2.63.

### Folkbildning as a complement to formal education routes

Folkbildning supplements the formal education system. In folkbildning, many professionally oriented education programmes are offered that are not available in other forms of education. Some are provided at the upper-secondary level, such as training to become a personal assistant or tourist guide. Most are post-upper-secondary, however. They attract an average of just over 2,600 participants per academic year. A number of study associations and folk high schools also offer qualified vocational training (KY) in 2010.

Folkbildning also functions as a complement in a more education philosophy sense. All the discussions and meetings between people that form the essence of folkbildning constitute central forms of expression in a humanistic society.

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64 The study assessment pertains to the student's ability to pursue studies and aims to assess the student's capacity to assimilate continued education. To fulfil the purpose of the study assessment, the following factors shall be taken into account:

*Knowledge and skills, and the development of them*  
*Capacity for analysis, processing and overview*  
*Ambition, stamina and ability to organise studies*  
*Social competence*

Only one summary study assessment is provided to the student. Here, one of the following designations shall be used:

- Excellent study ability (4)
- Very good study ability (3)
- Good study ability (2)
- Less good study ability (1)

### Fourth objective of the State grant:

## Contribute to broadening the interest in and increasing participation in cultural life

In Folkbildning of the future, its role and objectives, the National Council of Adult Education describes folkbildning as "Sweden's largest cultural arena, with regards to both arranging cultural events and offering people opportunities to explore their own creativity."<sup>65</sup> The fact that the cultural activities that folkbildning arranges are present throughout the country and have an emphasis on amateur culture and amateur culture and participation make it easy to reach.

### Sweden's largest cultural arena

Folkbildning involves millions of participants in study circles, courses and cultural programmes every year.

In 2010, the aesthetic subject area of art, music, media accounted for slightly more than 60 per cent of the study association's study circle activities, counted in hours of study. Nearly 893,000 study circle participants were registered. The music circles had the most participants, of which a large group comprised young people – primarily young men – who play pop and rock music.

At the same time, the study associations offered 314,600 cultural programmes that reached 16,466,200 participants.<sup>66</sup> This means that around 48 per cent of all of the study associations' events were cultural programmes.<sup>67</sup> Slightly more than one third of the cultural programmes were devo-

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65 Page 32

66 See footnote 12. All information on the study associations' cultural programmes is gathered from the study associations' group reporting.

67 The study circles accounted for 43 per cent of the events and other folkbildning activities for 9 per cent.

ted to lectures, and about equally many to singing and music.

**Figure 8: Study associations' cultural programmes per emphasis in 2010 and 2002. Percentage of all cultural programmes.**

Form	2010	2002
Lectures	36 %	34 %
Song/music	35 %	34 %
Cross-cultural	8 %	7 %
Drama performance	5 %	9 %
Film/photo/illustration	5 %	5 %
Exhibitions	4 %	5 %
Dance	2 %	2 %
Art/handicrafts	2 %	2 %
Literature	2 %	2 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 %</b>	<b>100 %</b>

The emphasis of the cultural programmes has been virtually the same since 2002. The proportion of lectures and song/music has increased somewhat, while the proportion of drama performances/theatre has decreased.

In 2010, folk high schools arranged 2,800 cultural programmes for the public, which gathered around 230,000 participants, and slightly more than 800 short courses with around 15,000 participants in the aesthetic area. Folk high schools also have many courses in the area of culture, most aesthetically focused vocational training programmes on a post-upper-secondary level that involves more than 480 participants every year, special courses in music, illustration, design and painting, scenic art, handicrafts and arts and crafts and other aesthetic subjects with around 5,600 participants during the 2010 autumn term, and short courses for study circle leaders in the field of culture.

Culture and cultural practice are integrated parts of folkbildning's pedagogy. Most of the long-term folk high school courses have elements of aesthetic subjects. This means that a majority of the folk high schools participants will participate in cultural activities as a part of their edu-

cation, regardless of what emphasis they have in their studies.

### Many more cultural programmes – with somewhat fewer participants

The cultural programmes are the form of activity that gathers the most participants through its flexibility and openness and which thereby provide very good conditions for different groups to meet.

**Figure 9. Study associations' cultural programmes in 2010 and 2000.**

	2010	2000
Number of cultural programmes	314,622	210,676
Proportion of cultural programmes of all events	48 %	36 %
Number of participants	16,466,153	16,785,385
Number of participants per cultural programme	52	80

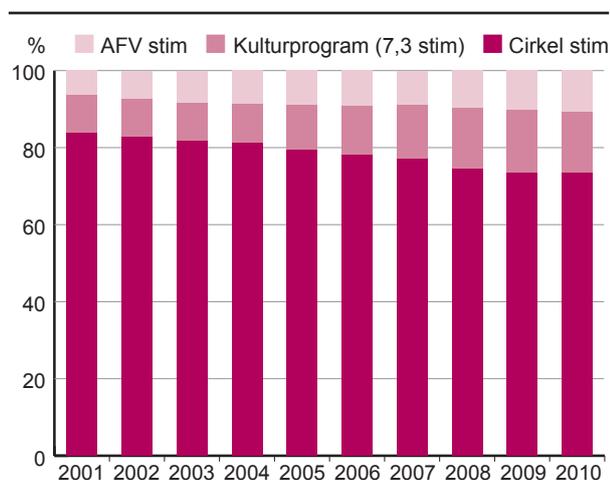
In the past 20 years, both the number and proportion of cultural programmes have increased sharply in the activities of the study associations. From an average of around 154,000 programmes in the 1990s, around 248,000 programmes per year were reported in the first seven to eight years of the 2000s. Since 2009, the study associations have offered more than 300,000 programmes every year. At the same time, the number of participants decreased somewhat, which led to the average number of participants per programme decreasing from 80 at the beginning of the 2000s to 52 in 2010.

One reason for the increase in the number of events in recent years is that the principles for the distribution of the government grant changed as of 2007. This was when greater space was created for the study associations to meet the public's demand for cultural programmes. Since then, 10 per cent of the State grant to study associations has been earmarked for these activities. The grant is based on the number of events.

Since 2007, the proportion of cultural programmes has increased from 43 per cent to 48 per cent of the study associations' activities, counted in the number of events. At the same time, the study associations' traditional activities – the study circles – decreased, from 48 per cent of all events in 2007 to 43 per cent three years later. In 2001, the study circles accounted for more than half of the events in five of the eleven study associations that existed at the time. In 2010, the study circles constituted more than 50 per cent of the events in only one of ten study associations.

In a comparison between different activity forms based on hours of study as a measure, which constituted a basis for allocations during most of the ten-year period, it comes forth that the study circle hours' share decreased from 85 to 73 per cent of the study associations' total activities.<sup>68</sup>

**Figure 10: Proportion of hours of study in the study associations' activities by activity type.**



The number of hours of study in cultural programmes increased from 10 per cent of the activities in 2001 to 16 per cent in 2010. Other folk-bildning activities increased their share from 6 to 11 per cent.

68 The Folkbildning Ordinance stipulates that study circle activities with joint, scheduled studies are the basis of the government grants to the study associations.

Counted in the number of hours of study, the cultural programmes constitute between 10 and 31 per cent of the study associations' total activities. In the past ten-year period, the percentage shares have increased in all study associations.

### More music circles – many more rock groups

**Figure 11: The study associations' music circles 2010 and 2004.<sup>69</sup>**

	2010	2004
Number of hours of study, music circles	4,090,265	3,826,013
<i>of which hours of study, improvisational music</i>	2,399,965	1,817,982
Proportion hours of study, music circles <sup>70</sup>	39 %	30 %
<i>of which proportion of hours of study, improvisational music<sup>71</sup></i>	57 %	48 %
Number of participants, music circles	441,578	470,584
<i>of which participants, improvisational music</i>	183,469	111,536
Proportion participants, music circles <sup>72</sup>	24 %	19 %
<i>of which proportion of participants, improvisational music<sup>73</sup></i>	42 %	24 %

Another trend is that the study associations' music circles increased by nine percentage points in the past seven years, counted in the number of hours of study. In 2010, nearly 40 per cent of the study circles had a music emphasis. Of these, nearly 60 per cent were devoted to improvisational music – mainly pop and rock circles. This was also a sub-

69 See footnote 12. The information in the table is gathered from the study associations' group reporting.

70 Proportion of study associations' total number of hours of study/circle activities.

71 Proportion of the total number of hours of study/music circles.

72 Proportion of all of the study associations' study circle participants.

73 Proportion of all participants in the music circles.

stantial increase compared with 2004 when the proportion was less than 50 per cent.

The study associations' percentage of participants in music circles has also increased by a few percentage points. In 2010, they constituted nearly one fourth of all participants. The number of participants in music circles has, however, decreased somewhat during the period, which consequently means that music circles have fewer participants than before. However, this trend does not apply to improvisational music. Here, the number of participants has grown strongly and now constitute slightly more than 40 per cent of all music participants.

### Labour market for cultural workers

Because the culturally focused activities are so large, folkbildning also becomes a significant labour market for cultural workers. In total, 1,160,562 performers were involved in the study associations' cultural programmes in 2010. Of these, around 550,000 were professionally practicing cultural workers, mainly musicians and singers. Around 610,000 were semi-professional or amateurs.

In folk high schools, teachers, leaders and professional practitioners participate in the cultural programmes.

### Cultural activities' economic significance

Cultural activities have a varying emphasis and significance to local development and local cultural life in different parts of the country. In the rural areas, every citizen participates nearly four times a year in one of the study associations' cultural programmes on average. The corresponding figure for major cities and suburban municipalities is just over once per year. Many folk high schools offer meeting facilities, cultural activities, association collaboration, etc. and thereby contribute to local cultural life.

In the survey of the connection between folkbildning and the municipalities' socioeconomic standard and development initiated by the National Council of Adult Education, the researchers will devote particular attention to the study associations' cultural programmes. Do these programmes have any measureable effects? In 2011, three national evaluations will subsequently begin with a focus on the cultural programmes.<sup>74</sup>

### Cultural formative education activities

Cultural formative education activities, abbreviated in Swedish as *Kulturens*, were formed into a study association eligible for State grants in July 2010. Folkbildning's cultural components were thereby awarded additional importance. The objective of the new study association is to promote culture – including new and future forms of culture – based on broad aesthetic activities. *Kulturens* wants to improve the conditions for cultural practitioners and for the non-profit cultural sector, and be an active force in cultural debate. In February 2011, the new study association had 12 member organisations.

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74 The three evaluations are intended to discuss the significance of the cultural programmes to the participants, to the performers and to the rest of society.

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## Folkbildningsrådet

Box 380 74, 100 64 Stockholm

Visting address: Rosenlundsgatan 50

Tel: +46-8-412 48 00, fax: +46-8-21 88 26

[fbr@folkbildning.se](mailto:fbr@folkbildning.se)

[www.folkbildning.se](http://www.folkbildning.se)