



## About Sweden's ten study associations

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There are ten different study associations in Sweden and they have 374 member and affiliated organisations nationwide. They are Sweden's largest meeting place for learning and culture. People of all ages come here to learn and develop together.

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The ten study associations have different profiles and ideologies. They have strong ties to popular movements and organisations, and often arrange study circles and cultural events in partnership with them.

The activities of study associations are based on the central ideas of adult learning: human curiosity, creativity and the desire to learn. Taking part in a study circle is always voluntary.

All over Sweden – from major cities to very remote areas – the study associations give support and advice to organisations and other less formal networks and groups. It is not possible for individuals to become members of study associations.

Study associations are not run for profit. Activities are funded by state and local government subsidies, attendance fees, project funds and contract teaching.

You will find links to the websites of the ten study associations here:

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

[www.bilda.nu](http://www.bilda.nu)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## About study circles

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A study circle is a small group of people who learn something together. They can study almost any subject they like. The people in the study circle share the same interest and want to learn more about it.

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The sense of fellowship and the desire to learn together help to create a friendly atmosphere in the study circle. All study circles share the following characteristics:

- Taking part is always voluntary.
- Participants are actively involved and search for knowledge together.
- Everyone in the circle helps to achieve the goals.
- Participants have a great influence in the circle – there are no central course plans.

All study circles have a leader, a plan for what they want to achieve and in most cases reading material. The study circle has at least three meetings, but will often continue for longer than that. There are usually between three and ten people taking part. The study associations' circle activities can be arranged in different ways:

- A large number of circles are advertised in course catalogues and on the study associations' websites. Exciting topics and knowledgeable leaders make this a very popular activity.
- The study associations collaborate with thousands of organisations and work closely with them to arrange circles.
- Many people start a study circle on their own initiative. A group of people who know each other may decide to learn something together. The study associations give educational and practical support to these groups.

Topics may include languages, culture, arts and crafts, health, food, social issues, ideology, computer training, music, nature and climate issues.



## About cultural programmes and lectures

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People can create and experience culture in various forms with the study associations. A cultural programme includes lectures, performances, concerts, exhibitions and other cultural events.

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The study associations put the many amateur culture practitioners in Sweden in touch with an audience. Much of the culture on display will have been created in the study associations' circles and in partnership with cultural organisations. Many cultural programmes also welcome professional culture practitioners and lecturers.

The study associations' cultural programmes attract more visitors every year than Swedish cinemas. In many small towns and villages, the study associations' cultural programme is a lifeline for local culture. The study associations are not always the ones on stage. They are usually behind the scenes giving educational, practical and administrative support.



## About adult learning

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The study associations are an important part of adult learning in Sweden. Adult learning organisations also include Sweden's folk high schools.

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What are the main characteristics of adult learning? In spite of the wide range and diversity of activities, they share some common features:

- Voluntary participation

Adult learning is based on people's desire to search for knowledge and insight. The decision to take part in the study associations' circles and cultural programmes is always freely made by each individual.

- The opportunity to learn for its own sake

You do not need to learn for some specific purpose in adult learning. Many people get involved simply because of their desire to learn and personal interests. These are all the reasons you need in adult learning.

- Learning in fellowship

Adult learning is learning in fellowship. The study circle is the cornerstone of adult learning. A small group of people who study, discuss and cooperate in order to learn – and achieve the goals they have set themselves.

- Freedom

In adult learning, people have the freedom to decide what, how and when they will learn. The study associations have freedom too – they are independent organisations with different profiles and orientation.

- Strong ties to popular movements

Adult learning and popular movements are closely linked. Most study associations have popular movements as members. A large part of all circles and cultural programmes are carried out in partnership with organisations. This allows the study associations to play an important role in developing and renewing civil society.