

LOCAL STUDY ASSOCIATIONS AND STUDY CIRCLES IN A NORDIC PERSPECTIVE

Mapping the field of study associations in Norway, Sweden,
Finland and Denmark

Report / September 2024



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Title

Local study associations and study circles in a Nordic perspective

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Preface

In our prior work on local study associations in Denmark, the differences and commonalities in the field across the Nordic countries have been a source of curiosity. However, at the same time, it was difficult to catch the full picture because of a lack of knowledge of the different organisational, legislative, and financial contexts. This curiosity formed the idea of a comparative mapping project in the field.

Firstly, thanks to Nordplus Adult for making the mapping project possible through financial support. Secondly, thanks to all our Nordic partners for supporting the idea of a common overview and for contributing with deep knowledge and insights on the characteristics of the field in the respective countries and for writing the country reports. Our partners include Maria Arriaza Hult, Henrik Nordvall and Staffan Larsson from Linköping University, Johan Söderman from Göteborg University, Ivar Eimhjellen from Norwegian Research Centre (NORCE), Kukka-Maaria Vuorikoski from the Finnish Study Centres and Annika Pastuhov and Satu Heimo from Åbo Akademi University. Finally, thanks to David Hermansson, The Kivik's Museum & Archives Research Foundation for valuable comments on the draft version of the comparative report.

We hope that this mapping project can be a first step towards more mutual inspiration and collaboration in the field of study associations across the Nordic countries – and for future research projects in the field.

Danish Institute for Non-formal Education, August 2024

Introduction: Common grounds – different roads

The rise of study circles and study associations in the Nordic countries share several common characteristics. In Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, the roots go back to the various popular movements in the second half of the 19th century: Through rural movements, workers' movements, folk high school movements, and other civic movements, citizens were engaged in the development of society with a focus on empowerment and folk enlightenment. The study associations and related organisations grew out of this period of enlightenment - with roots in civil society and popular movements (Korsgaard 1998; Henriksen et al. 2018; Bjerkeraker 2020; Larsson 2023; Thøgersen 2024).

Different types of movements had different weight in the respective countries. In Sweden and Finland, the temperance movement in particular played a central role in the development of study circles and study clubs. Moreover, the development in Finland was strongly affected by the Finnish independence from Russia in 1917 and the following civil war, meaning that the development of liberal adult education happened alongside the development of Finland as a nation-state. The parallel development of folk enlightenment and the nation-states is a common trait across the four countries.

From the 1920s and onwards – with different paces in each of the countries – the field became institutionalised. Both through the development of national study associations – in all four countries starting with the workers' study associations – and later through the enactment of laws and regulations as well as the establishment of financial structures for the support of study associations' activities.

The hierarchical structure with both local and national associations within the same organisation became widespread both within the field of study associations and in many other fields of civil society (Enroljas & Strømsnes 2018). And in all countries, the field of study associations has developed alongside the development of the voluntary sector and the focus on associations as the democratic organisational form. This close connection is particularly evident in Denmark and Norway, but independence from the state is central to the field in all countries. However, in Finland, the field has developed in two different paths – with municipal adult education centres on the one hand and civic study centres on the other hand.

Another common feature is that both the voluntary sector as well as the specific field of study associations have developed alongside the development of the welfare state (e.g. Henriksen, Strømsnes & Svedberg 2018). Hence, the development of the welfare state and the public education system has strongly affected the role played by study associations over time (Thøgersen 2024).

However, despite the similarities in the historical development – as the comparative analysis will show – study associations in the four countries have also followed different historical paths when it comes to the institutionalisation of the field. This is evident in the differences in organisation, legal frameworks, and financial structures across the countries.

According to historical institutionalism such different paths and different critical junctures will also shape the present – both when it comes to concrete organisational structures and cultural systems in a field (e.g. Thelén 1999; Pierson & Skocpol 2002).

Despite these historical similarities and institutional differences, there has not been a thorough comparative overview of the field across the countries. A couple of reports have addressed the issue prior to legal amendments in Denmark and Sweden (DFS 2010, Sweco 2023), but there is still room for further reflections on the comparative aspects.

The aim of the report is to create a knowledge base for reflection on the different structures and practices in the field. Although it can be difficult to change tracks because existing structures are deeply embedded in existing practices, the argument is that deeper knowledge of different possible ways of organising the field will create room for reflection and learning across the four countries.

Reading guide

After a short description of the methods and data used in the mapping project – and a short description of the four countries in focus – the report begins with a comparative analysis of the field. The analysis is divided into eight different themes.

- Definition and description of the field
- Aims and values
- Rules and regulation
- Organisation
- Financial structures
- Activities
- Educators, leaders, and facilitators
- Participants

The comparative analysis is based on country reports from each of the participating countries, and after the comparative chapters, the country reports can be read in their full length to take a deeper and more detailed look into the characteristics of the field in each of the four countries. When reading the Finnish contributions to the comparative study it is important to note that there are two different organisational types included in the country report (study centres and adult education centres). However, the statistics available on the two differ, and the main focus in this comparative analysis will therefore be on the study centres.

Data and methods

To make the mapping project as comparable as possible, the first step was the development of a common framework. A draft version of the common framework was developed by Vifo, after which it was discussed and adjusted based on comments and inputs from the other project partners at a meeting in Karlstad. Each of the partner countries then filled out the framework and made their own country reports. The draft country reports were discussed at a meeting in Helsinki with the possibility of clarifying questions across the countries and ensuring a common

understanding of the field. After the finalisation of the country reports, Vifo had the primary responsibility of writing the comparative analysis. However, all the participating partners have contributed with valuable comments and inputs to the final analysis.

The mapping project has been conducted solely on the basis of existing literature, research, and statistics in the field. The process of collecting this information revealed some profound differences across the countries when it comes to the level and characteristics of existing knowledge. In particular, the tradition for collecting statistics varies. Hence, the comparative analysis is not without its weaknesses and not everything is fully comparable – both due to the variation in the organisation of the field as well as the variation in the knowledge base. However, the aim has been to make the analysis as comparative as possible within the limits of the existing data. The challenges in the comparative approach will be addressed explicitly during the analysis.

The four countries in focus – a short characteristic

The mapping project is focused on Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. This section gives a short overview of the demographic characteristics of the countries – as well as the administrative structures.

As table 1.1 shows, the number of inhabitants varies between 5.4 million (Norway) and 10.5 million (Sweden) but even more importantly the population density varies considerably across the countries. Hence, Denmark is far more densely populated than the rest of the countries. Norway and Finland on the other hand are some of the least densely populated countries in Europe with only 18 inhabitants per km². These demographic and geographic characteristics are important to keep in mind later in the analysis – for instance when looking at the geographical spread of study association activities.

The geographic differences are also reflected in the administrative structures, with Denmark having the largest municipalities when it comes to the average number of inhabitants – and the smallest when it comes to km² (table 1.2).

The educational level in all four countries is high and ranges between 35 and 42 per cent of the adult population having a tertiary education. The level is particularly high in Norway and Sweden, but all four countries lie far beyond the EU average (31 per cent).

Table 1.1: Population and demographics in the four countries (2023)

	Number of inhabitants (2022)	Population density (2022)	Educational level (2021) (percentage 15-64 years with tertiary education)
Norway	5.4 million	17.7 inhabitants per km ²	41.9 per cent
Sweden	10.5 million	25.7 inhabitants per km ²	41.9 per cent
Finland	5.5 million	18.3 inhabitants per km ²	35.7 per cent
Denmark	5.9 million	140.6 inhabitants per km ²	35.5 per cent

Source: Eurostat <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>



Table 1.2: Administrative structure in the four countries (2023)

	Number of municipalities	Counties/regions	Average size of municipalities (number of inhabitants)	Average size of municipalities (km ²)
Norway	356	15	15,418	1082 km ²
Sweden	290	21	36,207	1553 km ²
Finland	309	19	17,700	1095 km ²
Denmark	98	5	60,537	438 km ²

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Chapter 1: Definition and description of the field

Setting out to define a field across four countries will often be a challenge. The common Nordic tradition for non-formal adult education in many ways seems to be inspired by the same movements and international and societal changes in the 19th century. At the same time, the field in each of the four countries is shaped by historical variations, different leading figures, and different organisational choices, laws and regulations that have formed the field in slightly different ways.

Hence the definition of the field in this study is a 'bottom-up' definition. With the local non-formal adult education activities as a starting point, the study includes both the national study associations in the four countries and – in the case of Finland and Denmark – associations with activities that are directly comparable with the activities within the national study associations.

Framework definition of the field:

The common definition of the field is the form of popular education characterised in each country as a study circle/evening school/local study association.

The study has a particular focus on the local activities and organisations organised under national study associations that work with non-formal education/non-formal learning. In countries where this is relevant, activities and organisations that are directly comparable to the local activities of the study associations and receive funding according to the same legislation/guidelines are also included.

This definition leaves us with a field with extensive similarities on the one hand and constant exceptions on the other.

For example, a common trait for the study associations across the four countries is that they are democratic, non-profit voluntary organisations with adult education as their main purpose. They are value based and many of them have a political profile. Then the exception occurs. While the Finnish study centres have the same profile as study associations in the three other countries, the adult education centres in Finland are often driven by a municipality or a self-governing institution. They are not allowed to have a political profile. At the same time the adult education centres are organised in an umbrella organisation that is an NGO and in that way are connected to the civil society.

Thus, the different models and roads taken in the four countries complicate the definition and delimitation of the field. This also means that organisations that are well known in all four countries can be excluded from this study in one country while included in others.

The organisations under the scout movement are a good example of the phenomenon. The scout movement notoriously emphasises education and training of their leaders and volunteers. In all four countries, this is still the case. In Finland, Norway and Sweden, the scouts are members of the national study associations. Through the national study associations, the local and regional groups can apply for financial support for leadership training for approved courses and activities. In some cases, the national study association can also offer counsel and support to plan and arrange camps and other relevant activities.

In Denmark, the scouts have extensive leader training and leader education programmes that have nothing to do with the study associations. The national scout organisations receive state support through the Danish Youth Council. The support is membership-based, and the scouts can use the funding as they choose and organise their training and education independently.

Table 1.3: Education and leader training within the scout’s movement across the four countries

Finland	Sweden	Norway	Denmark
A study center called Opintokeskus Sivis acts as the official organiser of the training and scouts implement the training.	In Sweden, the five scout organisations are members of different study associations. As an example ‘Scouterna’ are members of the national study association Sensus. Sensus supports the scouts nationally and collaborates locally and regionally on leader training and education but also assists in planning regional camps and arrangements ¹ .	In Norway, one of the scout organisations (KFUM og KFUK-speiderne) is a member of the national Christian study association (Kristelig Studieforbund) while the other (Norges Speiderforbund) is organised under the national study association on nature and environment (Studieforbundet natur og miljø). In both cases, the scout organisations can apply to the study association for leader training.	There are eight different scout organisations in Denmark as well as FDF, which is a Christian organisation originally inspired by the Boys Brigade. All of them are organised under the Danish Youth Council (DUF). Education of their leaders and volunteers is organised and carried out in the different organisations respectively ² .

The sports sector is another case where the limitation of the field differs across the four countries. The sporting associations and clubs often focus on training of leaders and volunteers and in each country, there is an extensive course activity within the field. Only in Norway, however, will this activity be included in the statistics for the study associations.

In Norway, The Study Association for Sports is one of the 14 study associations. It has the 55 national sporting unions as members, and the sector's leadership training and education is part of the study association activities.

In Sweden, The Sports Trainers (SISU) was a study association until 2006 when they left the Swedish Adult Education Association and began receiving government subsidies directly from the state. SISU now has the responsibility of distributing state support to sport associations.

In Finland, there are five liberal education institutions, two of which are included in this analysis, namely the study centres and the adult education centres. The other three are folk high schools, summer universities and sports training centres. The 14 sports training centres organise training and education in the sports sector.

¹ [Sensus och Scouterna | Sensus](#)

² For an analysis of leader education in two Danish uniformed corps see: [Lederuddannelse i frivillige foreninger \(vifo.dk\)](#)

In Denmark, the local sporting associations are organised under two national umbrella organisations (The National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark and DGI) which both receive finances directly from the government. Especially DGI has traditionally had an emphasis on education and training and offers courses for both trainers, volunteers, and board members.

All in all, the content and scope of the field will differ from country to country in spite the common framework. Likewise, it is important to note that even though the civil society in some countries are linked to the study associations, both in Norway and Finland there will be plenty of training and mentoring taking place in civil society organisations that are not under the study associations. In Denmark however, there will be no training activity for other types of civil society organisations within the study associations.

The overall outline of the field

The definition has left us to include the associations and organisations listed in table 1.4. Two kinds of organisations are included. Namely the national study associations across the four countries and their local activities. These organisations all represent a vast variety of different activities, topics, user groups, and ideologies. On the other hand, the other types of organisations included are the local study associations and adult learning institutions in Finland and Denmark which are not organised in the national study association structure.

Table 1.4: Associations and organisations included in the study

Associations and organisations included in the study			
Finland	Sweden	Norway	Denmark
National study centres (12)	National study associations (10)	National study associations (14)	National study associations (5)
Member organisations in total: 372	Member organisations in total: 235	Member organisations in total: 509	The 1080 local evening schools in Denmark
Local adult education centres (174)			47 per cent of the evening schools are members of one of the five national study associations while the rest are not.

The organisational similarities and differences within the field will be described in chapter 4. But to sum up, the overall picture outlines some differences across the four countries.

In Finland and Norway, the study associations are intertwined with the general voluntary sector and associations, and their members are other national organisations. The study associations provide courses and education in the membership organisations and all their activities are included in the study. The subjects vary from organisational and administrative courses and courses on communication or fundraising on the one hand to courses in singing, handicrafts, health, and physical activity etc. on the other hand.

In Sweden, the study associations have similar activities for and in their member organisations, but at the same time they offer different kinds of courses, education and activities directly to the public: study circles, cultural programmes, and other popular education.

In Denmark, evening schools have developed into civil society organisations in their own right. The local evening schools are organised as associations and offer courses directly to the public like the Swedish study circles. The five national study associations included in the study are umbrella organisations for the local schools. In general, the study associations are not connected with other parts of the civil society organisations in Denmark. Hence, the evening schools constitute only a small part of the non-formal adult education in the country since training and education of leaders and volunteers will most often take place inside the other types of civic organisations themselves.

In both Finland and Denmark, there are adult learning providers that are not included in the national study associations/study centres, but who provide activities similar to the organisations in question. In Denmark, these evening schools are completely equal to the evening schools organised in the national organisations with regard to financial subsidies and organisational possibilities. In Finland, the adult education centres have very different conditions from the national study centres and are not necessarily seen as part of civil society but as a public service. As mentioned above, the adult education centres are apolitical and cannot base their activity on ideology.

Chapter 2: Aims and values

The legal framework in the field states the main purposes for public support for study circles and study association activities. A deeper look into the description of these purposes shows many similarities between the four countries. Table 1.5 shows how the purpose of supporting the field is described. It is evident that the descriptions use many of the same words.

In all four countries, the promotion of democracy and active citizenship are central aspects which are explicitly addressed. Another common theme is learning or lifelong learning, and empowerment or ‘responsibility for own life’ which is also stressed in different ways in all four countries. Only in the Norwegian case, however, is the aim of meeting societal and working life needs explicitly addressed.

In three of the countries, inclusion or promotion of equality is mentioned (Sweden, Norway, Finland), community is stressed in two of the countries (Danmark, Finland), while culture has a place in both Norway (maintain cultural life and cultural legacy) and Sweden (increase participation in cultural life). Finland is the only country where the well-being of the citizens is explicitly mentioned.

Inclusion and reduction of inequalities is another theme which is either explicitly or implicitly mentioned as an aim in all the legal frameworks. This also relates to a notion of pluralism and ‘respect for different opinions’ which is most explicitly mentioned in the Finnish and Danish cases but is strongly connected to the historical relations between the study associations and different types of value-based popular movements. Hence, in the Finnish case, the division between national study associations and adult education centres is connected to the discussion of value-based teaching, which is possible in the former but not in the latter.

Table 1.5: Aims and values in the legal framework

Country	Aims in the legal framework	Central concepts
Norway	<p>The purpose of the act is to promote lifelong learning by facilitating organised course activities as a supplement to the formal educational system.</p> <p>By regulating the study associations, the act aims to contribute to the motivation of and access to knowledge and competence for all, and by this promote individual growth and the ability to meet societal and working life needs, to maintain training and participation in voluntary organisations, to fight exclusion and promote inclusion, to maintain and strengthen democracy, to provide a basis for sustainable development by engaging and developing active citizens, to contribute to the maintenance of a diverse cultural life, and to take care of the cultural legacy through learning (§1 and §4).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy • Active citizenship • Lifelong learning • Knowledge and competence for all • Individual growth • Meet societal and working life needs • Inclusion • Cultural legacy through learning
Sweden	<p>The current regulation states that popular adult education should contribute to (1) promoting democracy, (2) empowering individuals to influence their life situation and engage in society, (3) reducing educational inequalities and raising the level of education in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy • Empowerment • Engagement in society • Raise educational level

	society, and (4) broadening and increasing participation in cultural life (SFS 1991:977).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce inequalities • Participation in cultural life
Finland	<p>The purpose of liberal adult educational work is to organise education that supports the integrity of society, equality, and active citizenship on the basis of the principle of lifelong learning. The aim of education organised as liberal adult education is to promote the diverse development and well-being of people and the realisation of democracy, pluralism, sustainable development, multiculturalism, and internationality. Liberal adult education emphasises voluntary learning, communality, and inclusion.</p> <p>Apart from this overall aim, the law also explicitly states about study centres " <i>The study centres operate as nationwide educational institutions by organizing studies themselves and together with civic and cultural organizations to promote lifelong learning, well-being, and active citizenship, as well as democracy and civil society.</i>"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracy • Active citizenship • Lifelong learning • Equality • Well-being • Pluralism • Communality
Denmark	<p>The overall aim of the law is – in respect of different opinions – to ensure public grants etc. for non-formal education and democratic voluntary activities that are based on community and the ideological basis of each initiator (The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity, section 1).</p> <p>Apart from this overall aim, the law also explicitly states that the aim of the support for local study associations is:</p> <p>"to advance democratic understanding and active citizenship, and, with a point of departure in the teaching, to increase the participants' general and subject-related insight and skills. The aim is to strengthen the individuals' ability and desire to take responsibility for their own lives and to play an active and engaged part in society."</p> <p>(The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Activity, section 7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values of the initiator • Democracy • Active citizenship • Increase insight and skills • Responsibility for own lives

Altogether it is evident that the arguments for public support for national and local study associations in the four countries are based on many of the same ideals and values. As possible explanation for this might be the common roots in the popular movements and their values and ideas. It is also a common feature that the aim of the field is described through very broad concepts which can be hard to measure in practice. But there are also differences when it comes to more specific values, like the well-being of citizens and cultural life.

Chapter 3: Rules and regulations in the field

The following section gives an overview of the rules and regulations in the field of study associations across the four countries. Apart from stating the aims of public support for study association activities, the regulatory framework also describes the conditions for receiving public support. Table 1.6 gives an overview of the regulatory framework across the four countries. In some cases, the regulatory framework also determines or has guidelines for the level of public support. However, these specific regulations on the level of public support will be described in the later chapter on financial structures in the field.

Table 1.6: Rules and regulations across the four countries

	Name of regulatory framework	Criteria for receiving public support	Ministry responsible for the field
Norway	The Act on Adult Education	<p>Study associations must be organised as democratic, non-profit voluntary associations. Moreover, they must³:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have an ideal/non-profit purpose or learning as a main goal • have 'study association' as a part of their name • have activities all over the country and a regional anchoring • have at least 30,000 course hours per year • have at least two member organisations. <p>Moreover, there are specific requirements for the courses – e.g. the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need to be open for all, have a duration of at least eight hours, and have at least four participants. • The study plan must be approved by the study association or member organisation. • Participants must be at least 14 years old. • Apart from the act itself, each of the responsible ministries have supplementing legal regulations. 	Ministry of Education and Research and Ministry of Culture and Equality (depending on the focus of the study association)
Sweden	The Ordinance on state subsidies to popular adult education (SFS 2015:218)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State subsidies may not be used for activities with a commercial purpose or for costs that do not have a direct connection with activities aimed at fulfilling the purposes stated in the Ordinance. • Study associations must have a responsible board. • Common, systematic studies should form the basis of the activities of the study circles. • Each study circle or cultural activity must have a leader approved by a local study association division. • Three forms of activities are supported: (1) study circles, (2) 'other popular adult education', and (3) cultural programmes. 	Ministry of Education

³ Some criteria are different for study associations connected to political parties and for the Sami study association (read more in the Norwegian country report)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Council of Adult Education decides the terms for and distributes the state support. It also evaluates and controls if the activities fulfil the purposes stated in the Ordinance. The study associations document and report all activities to the National Council of Adult Education. • Age limits: Study circles and cultural activities: At least 13 years old. Other popular education: At least 6 years old. 	
Finland	Law on liberal adult education	<p>The existing study centres have an official maintenance permit for liberal adult education. New permits are rarely given.</p> <p>Through the law, organizations of liberal adult education are entitled to a state grant, but the size of the grant can vary from year to year.</p>	Ministry of Education and Culture
Denmark	The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratically organised voluntary associations with a board • No grants for formally qualifying learning activities • A participation fee is required • Activities must be open to all • The activities are mainly for adults or for adults together with children 	Ministry of Culture

In all countries – except Sweden – a proper law regulates the field. In Sweden, the field is regulated by a so-called ‘ordinance’, which is also a binding regulatory framework stating the overall political goals and guidelines for the financial support of the field.

As is evident in the table, some of the requirements are similar across the countries. Both in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, a democratic organisation with a board is an overall criterion – either at the national level or at both the national and local levels. Another common criterion in Norway, Finland, and Denmark is that the activities must be open to all. This is not explicitly stated in the Swedish ordinance but is normally the case. Denmark is the only country where a requirement of participation fees is explicitly stated in the legal framework. However, the use of participation fees is common in all countries.

Regarding age groups, it is evident that the main target group for study association activities is adults. However, the age limits vary. In Norway, participants have to be at least 14 years old, in Sweden 13 years old for study circles and 6 years old for other popular education. In Finland, the age limit is 15 years old for study circles, while there are no limits for other types of activities. In Denmark, the framework states that the activities are for adults – meaning 18 years and older – and for adults together with children.

Requirements related to the approval and documentation of courses vary across the countries. In Norway, the courses must be approved by the study association or member organisation. In Sweden, the content and form of all activities must be documented and reported to the National Council for Adult Education, and in Finland, study centres are obliged to collect certain

information about courses and participants and deliver the information to the Ministry of Education and Culture via Statistics Finland.

It also varies between the countries who are responsible for the fulfilment of the legal requirements. In Sweden, The National Council of Adult Education has the responsibility to evaluate and control that the study associations fulfil all demands – e.g. through ongoing evaluations. The National Council of Adult Education is, however, not a governmental agency, but an umbrella organisation consisting of member organisations representing the country's folk high schools and study associations. In Denmark, municipalities have the supervisory authority. In Norway, The Department of Knowledge (Kunnskapsdepartementet) is responsible for supervision and control in the field⁴, while the Ministry of Education is responsible in Finland. Finally, the ministry responsible of the field varies across the countries. In Sweden, it is the Ministry of Education, and in Denmark, the Ministry of Culture. In Norway, it is both, while Finland has a combined Ministry for Education and Culture. Hence, in all countries, it is evident that study associations operate in between the fields of education, culture, and civil society.

Altogether, a common feature in the legal framework is that the providers of the activities have a relatively high degree of freedom when it comes to the specific content of the teaching – as long as they fulfil the overall requirements for organising the activities. This is evident in the broad scope of different types of activities and subjects which will be described further later in the report.

⁴ <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2009-06-19-95>

Chapter 4: Organisation

In all four countries, national study associations are important players in the field. However, there are some interesting differences when it comes to the relationship between the national and the local level. In this section, the organisation of the field will be described with a focus on the following themes:

- The number and characteristics of the national study associations
- The relationship between the national and the local level

Table 1.7 gives an overview of the organisation of the field in the four countries, which is elaborated below.

Table 1.7: Organisational characteristics of the field in the four countries

	National level	Local level
Norway	<p>The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL) organises the 14 approved national study associations.</p> <p>These national study associations have 509 member organisations – mainly at the national level.</p> <p>Some of the national study associations are rooted in political parties, others in specific fields (e.g. sport or culture) and others again in religious values.</p>	<p>The national organisations (mainly member organisations) are the providers of the activities.</p> <p>The organisational structure of the national study associations varies: Some only have a central level, while others also have regional and local organisational levels.</p> <p>The concrete activities take place in local voluntary associations. The study associations are responsible for distributing grants to the parts of the organisations and the member organisations providing the courses.</p> <p>A cautious estimate suggests that more than 18,000 local voluntary associations had educational activities supported or supplied by a study association in 2009.</p>
Sweden	<p>‘Studieforbunden i samverkan’ represents the national study associations in the Swedish National Council of Adult Education.</p> <p>Ten national study associations (nine from 2024).</p> <p>Nine out of ten have federative structures with member organisations.</p> <p>Altogether the national study associations have 235 member organisations (2024).</p> <p>The national study associations have different ideological roots. Some have roots in political parties, others in religious values or other types of values and activities.</p>	<p>The organisational structure of the national study associations varies.</p> <p>Some have regional units covering multiple counties, while others have districts and smaller local branches.</p> <p>The study associations have activities spanning all 290 municipalities, and in 250 municipalities there are at least five study associations represented.</p>

Finland	<p>The Finnish Study Centres is the umbrella organisation for the study centres.</p> <p>12 study centres (11 after 30.6.2024).</p> <p>The study centres have 372 member organisations (2023).</p> <p>The study centres and their member organisations operate nationwide.</p> <p>The study centres are rooted in different political ideologies, religious values or in specific types of activities or target groups.</p> <p>The Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres acts as an umbrella advocacy organization for the adult education centres in Finland.</p>	<p>Educational cooperation is carried out with different partners.</p> <p>In 2022, educational cooperation was carried out with 1366 different organisational partners.</p> <p>Apart from the activities provided by the study centres, there are 175 adult education centres, run by municipalities, providing different types of courses.</p>
Denmark	<p>'Oplysningsforbundenenes Fællesråd (OF)' is the joint committee for the national study associations.</p> <p>Five national study associations are approved to be nationwide.</p> <p>The national study associations have local member associations providing the activities.</p> <p>Four of the five national study associations are rooted in political parties while the last one is apolitical.</p>	<p>1080 local study associations in 2017.</p> <p>Half of the local study associations (47 per cent) are members of one of the five national study associations.</p> <p>The rest of the local study associations are not members, but are approved by the municipalities.</p>

The number and characteristics of the national study associations

The number of national study associations varies between the four countries. With 14 national study associations, Norway has the largest number, while Denmark lies at the other end of the scale with five national study associations. Finland and Sweden lie in between with 12 and 10⁵ national study associations, respectively. Hence, the degree of pluralism in the profiles of the national study associations varies between the countries and this is also connected to the definition and delimitation of the field, which was described earlier in the report.

In all four countries, some of the national study associations are rooted in political parties and/or ideologies – e.g. the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Party or the socialist ideology. Moreover, three of the countries have study associations based on religious values. Finland and Norway both have study associations with roots in Christian values, while Sweden also has a Muslim study association and a study association based on the free church movement.

⁵ From early 2024 there were 9 study associations in Sweden.

Another common feature among these three countries is that they have study associations focused on specific fields of activities. In Sweden, there is a study association focusing on nature and environment and another that is focused on culture (Kulturens bildningsverksamhet ceased to exist in 2024). Finland has a study association for arts and culture, another for associations within social, health and environmental issues and one for Swedish-speaking associations. Finally, Norway has the most pluralistic field of study associations covering both sports, culture, music, nature and environment – as well as study associations for specific target groups – e.g. the Funkis study associations targeted people with disabilities and chronic illness. Denmark is the only country without study associations defined by specific fields or target groups.

The relationship between the national and local level

When it comes to the relationship between the national and local levels, the organisation also differs between the countries. In Denmark, the national study associations have local study associations as their members, and it is the local study associations providing the activities at the local level. In the other countries, the members of the national study associations are mostly national organisations – and it is these member organisations as well as the national study associations themselves who are the main providers of the activities – sometimes in collaboration with partner institutions. The concrete activities take place locally – and depending on the internal organisational structure – in study circles, in local associations, or in local branches of the study associations.

Chapter 5: Financial structures

Participation fees and public subsidies are the main sources of income for study associations in all four countries. However, the financial structures as well as the level of the subsidies vary. In this chapter, the focus will be on the level and characteristics of public subsidies, but examples of the sizes of the participation fees will also be included.

Sources of public funding and financial flows

As table 1.8 shows, Denmark is the only country where public subsidies for study association activities only come from the local level, and where municipalities have the main responsibility for supporting the field. In the other countries, the public subsidies primarily come from the national level. These differences also affect the financial flow which in Denmark goes directly from the municipalities to the local study associations. In Norway and Finland, the state subsidies are first allocated to the national study associations, and then these organisations allocate the subsidies to the member organisations or local units providing the activities. The model in Sweden is similar but with the National Council of Adult Education as an extra link between the state and the national study associations. As is also evident in the table, the activity level of the study associations is the main basis for the calculation of the level of public subsidies, although it is calculated in different ways across the countries.

Table 1.8: Sources of public subsidies and financial flows

	Sources of public subsidies	Basis for public subsidies	Financial flow
Norway	National level	Activity-based subsidies: Based on the average course activities of the respective national study associations in the previous two to three years	From the state to the national study associations to the parts of the organisation and the member organisations providing the courses.
Sweden	Primarily national level and some from the regional and local level	Organisational and activity-based subsidies ⁶	From the state to the National Council of Adult Education to study associations to local units.
Finland	National level	Activity-based subsidies: Each study centre has a certain amount of teaching hours allocated and receives a unit price (calculated each year) for each of these teaching hours. The average level of support was 27 per cent of the operating costs in 2021.	From the state to the national study centres to the member associations providing the activities.
Denmark	Local level The five national study associations receive subsidies from the national level for their operating costs.	Activity-based subsidies based on the expenses for (fixed) teacher and leader salaries. Municipalities decide the level of subsidy, but most municipalities subsidise 1/3 of the expenses, which is the maximum level according to the law ⁷ .	From the municipalities to the local study associations providing the activities.

⁶ A new system with other criteria for public subsidies is being implemented in 2024.

⁷ The maximum level is higher for some types of courses: Courses with few participants (e.g. music courses) and courses for people with disabilities in relation to the subject (see Danish country report).

Level of public funding

The following part focuses on the level of public funding across the four countries. To improve the comparability, the funding level will be described both in absolute measures (total level of funding) and relative measures (funding per capita and per study hour). In this case, one study hour is defined as 45 minutes of teaching – regardless of the number of participants.

However, despite this, the numbers should still be compared with caution – both due to the different organisational structures at the national and local levels – and the different regulations and subsidies for premises and facilities.

Table 1.9 gives an overview of the total amount of public subsidies for study association activities (including subsidies for the national associations' own operating costs). The total level of public support varies from EUR 17 million in Finland to more than EUR 200 million in Sweden (numbers from 2022). When it comes to the relative level of public support measured per capita, Finland represents the lowest level with EUR 3.13 per capita and Sweden the highest level with EUR 15.3 per capita. Regarding Finland, it is important to note that the amount does not include adult education centres.

Moreover, the amounts do not include direct or indirect support for premises and facilities. Both in Denmark and Norway, study associations have a right to free use of public facilities when available. In Denmark, municipalities are obliged to support expenses for facilities when no public facilities are available, though the procedures vary between the municipalities. In Finland and Sweden, the municipalities do not have this obligation, but some Swedish municipalities chose to provide facilities.

However, the level of funding should also be seen in relation to the activity level in the respective countries. When looking at the level of public funding per study hour it is a different picture with Norway having the lowest level and Finland the highest level. It is also interesting that Sweden has the second lowest level, while the level per capita was much higher than in the other countries. This reflects that Sweden has a much higher level of activity than the other countries.

As mentioned in some of the country reports, the challenge with looking at the level of public funding per study/course hour is that there are large variations across different types of financial support. E.g. the level of financial support in some countries is higher when it comes to activities for people with special needs. Moreover, some types of activities cannot be measured in study hours. This holds for instance for lectures in the Danish case and cultural programmes in the Swedish case. Some of the state subsidies are allocated for these types of activities but cannot be included in the calculation. Hence, the average amount of funding per study hour covers a large variation and should be used with caution.

Table 1.9: Overview of the absolute and relative levels of public funding for study associations

	Total amount of public funding	Public funding per capita	Public funding per study hour
Norway	Ministry of Culture and Equality: NOK 166,000,000 (2022) Ministry of Education: NOK 70,000,000 (2022) Support for NAAL: NOK 10,400,000 (2024) Total: NOK 246,400,000 (2022) ⁸ Total: EUR 21,059,829 (2022)	NOK 45.4 per capita EUR 3.9 per capita	Study hours in 2022: 1,030,457 hours NOK 239 per study hour EUR 20.4 per study hour
Sweden	State subsidies: SEK 1,795,000,000 (2021) Municipal subsidies: SEK 301,200,000 (2021) Regional subsidies: SEK 305,100,000 (2021) Total: SEK 2,401,300,000 (2021) Total: EUR 205,590,753 (2021)	SEK 229 per capita EUR 19.7 per capita	Study hours in 2021: 4,246,500 (Both study circles and other popular education) SEK 565 per study hour EUR 48.4 per study hour
Finland	State subsidies for the 12 study centres: EUR 17,408,000 (2022)	EUR 3.1 per capita	Study hours in 2022: 218,764 EUR 80 per study hour
Denmark	From municipalities to local study associations: DKK 312,449,000 (2022) From state to national study associations: DKK 57,200,000 (2022) Total: DKK 369,649,000 Total: EUR 49,550,804	DKK 63 per capita EUR 8.4 per capita	Study hours in 2022: 1,230,000 (within national study associations) DKK 301 per study hour EUR 40 per study hour

The numbers are calculated on the basis of information in the country reports and the number of inhabitants in each country.

Looking at the development of the level of financial support during the last ten years, there is a tendency towards a slightly descending level of funding in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, while this is not the case in Norway.

Participation fees

Participation fees play an important role in the economy of the study associations in all four countries. However, only in Denmark is there a legal requirement for participation fees but no regulations on the level of it. In the three other countries, it is up to the individual providers to decide whether the course is free of charge or charge a fee.

Examples from the four countries show that fees for participating in study association activities vary a lot *within* the respective countries – for relatively similar courses. Table 1.10 shows there is also variation across the countries, but it is difficult to get a clear picture of the different levels due to differences in the duration and characteristics of the courses.

⁸ The funding for NAAL is 2024-numbers while the rest is 2022-numbers.

Table 1.10: Price examples in different types of courses across countries

	Courses in rural areas	Courses in urban areas
Norway	<p>Norges Idrettsforbund: Course for children’s trainers in sports (14 hours) Finnmarks Idrettskrets: NOK 800</p>	<p>Norges Idrettsforbund: Course for children’s trainers in sports (14 hours) Agder Idrettskrets: NOK 750</p>
Sweden	<p>ABF (WEA) Sundsvall: Watercolour painting for beginners (six sessions from 18.00-19.30) Price: SEK 900 (EUR 80)</p>	<p>Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan Göteborg: Watercolor painting basic (seven sessions from 18.00-21.00) Price: SEK 2180 (EUR 195)</p>
Finland	<p>KSL Civic Association for Adult Learning: As a supervisor in multicultural voluntary work The training consists of independent study of online learning material. Price: Free Participants get a certificate for the training.</p>	<p>Five study centres (collaboratively): The organization's board expert training One day (Helsinki) + 3 x 2 hours (Teams). In addition, tasks and discussions in an online environment. Participation fee: EUR 250</p>
Denmark	<p>Horne Tistrup Aftenskole (Horne Tistrup evening school) Upholstering (eight sessions from 18.30-21.15) Price: DKK 750 (EUR 100)</p>	<p>FOF Aarhus Upholstering (ten sessions from 18.30-21.30) Price: DKK 1685 (EUR 226)</p>

Chapter 6: Premises and facilities

As mentioned above the regulatory framework for the subsidies for facilities varies across the countries. The table below gives an overview. In all four countries, the activities take place in different types of facilities. In Norway and Denmark, this includes both public facilities and the study associations' own and rented facilities, and according to the law, available public facilities should be provided free of charge. In Sweden and Finland, own and rented facilities are the most common and there are no regulatory guidelines for public subsidies for facilities. Hence, these differences are important when comparing the public subsidies across the countries.

Table 1.11: Use of premises and facilities – and regulatory frameworks

Norway	<p>Study association activities take place within both free public facilities, own facilities, and rented facilities.</p> <p>According to the law, government-paid teaching facilities within the educational sector must be at the free disposal of the study associations or their member organisations for their course activities (after application, when public owners' needs are covered) on weekdays before 9 pm. However, the knowledge of this right to free use of facilities varies among local governments.</p>
Sweden	<p>Some study associations own their facilities, others lease spaces or rent classrooms. 14 per cent of the study associations' overall expenses in 2021 were allocated to covering the costs associated with premises.</p> <p>There are no specific guidelines regarding the general standard for how study associations should manage facilities, and the public authorities have no obligations in this regard.</p>
Finland	<p>Most of the activities take place in the associations' own or rented facilities. Some study circles gather at the homes of participants.</p> <p>There is no obligation for public authorities to provide facilities for the study association activities.</p>
Denmark	<p>Activities of local study associations take place in both public facilities, own facilities, and rented facilities.</p> <p>When available, public facilities are provided free of charge by the municipalities. If no public facilities are available, municipalities are obliged to provide financial support for the study associations' expenses for own or rented facilities.</p>

Chapter 7: Activities

This chapter looks into the extent of the activities, types of activities, and other characteristics across the four countries. The chapter ends with a short description of different pedagogical traditions.

Again, the activities are prone to show both similarities and differences across the four countries. A common trait is that the subjects have changed over time following the general societal developments. The local study associations have proven to be very agile in adapting the subjects to new societal challenges and changes as well as new trends.

The repetitional and collective nature of the activities also seems to have been of importance across at least three of the four countries. Hence, the traditional core activity is expected to be activities where people gather as a group more than once. In Sweden, it is required that a study circle meets at least three times with a minimum of nine study hours. In Denmark, the law just underlines the repetitiveness of the activity (§ 4, subsection 2, article 7). In Finland, the tradition is that a study centre course is more than a day and more than six study hours. In Norway, a course in a study association must have a minimum of eight study hours but can take place in one day.

The more event-based activities have, however, found their way to both the Danish evening schools in the form of lectures and one-day courses and to the Swedish study associations in the form of their cultural programmes. In Norway and Denmark, the activities must be open to all and publicly announced.

Extent of the activities

When measuring the activity level in each of the countries, the number of study hours is used as the central indicator. As mentioned earlier, one study hour is defined as 45 minutes of teaching – regardless of the number of participants.

However, comparing the extent of the activities across the four countries is still not straightforward. In Denmark, the number of study hours is only available for local study associations within the five national study associations, and there is no certain number of participants. In Finland, the most recent number of study hours in the local adult education centres is from 2019, which is before the COVID-19 pandemic. This can twist the picture a great deal since the development under the pandemic was exceptional. Especially Sweden experienced a big fall in the number of activities. For example, the number of study hours in the study circles fell from 7,213,900 in 2020 to 4,318,900 in 2022. Keeping these reservations in mind, table 1.12 gives an overview of the total amount of study hours across the four countries.

When looking at the number of study hours in relation to the number of inhabitants, the table shows large differences across the four countries. The activity levels in Norway and Denmark are quite similar with around five inhabitants per study hour, while the level is higher in both Sweden and Finland. However, in Finland, most of the study hours take place in adult education centres, while the activity level in civil society organisations is low compared to the other countries. In Sweden, most of the study hours take place in study circles.

However, when looking at the activity level it is also important to keep the definition of the field in mind. For instance, when comparing the activity level in Norway and Denmark, where the Norwegian case includes courses in for instance sports and scout organisations, while these activities take place outside the field of study associations in the Danish case.

Table 1.12: Number of study hours across the four countries

	Overview of study hours	Number of inhabitants per study hour
Norway	National study associations (14) Courses: 43,312 (2022) Study hours: 1,030,457 (2022)	National study associations: 5.3
Sweden	National study associations (10) (2022) Study circles: 4,318,900 study hours (2022) 'Other popular education activity': 938,700 study hours (2022) Cultural programme activity: 176,000 events (2022)	Study circles: 2.4 Other popular education activities: 11.1
Finland	National study centres (12) Study hours: 218,764 (2022) Local adult education centres: 2,716,770 study hours (2019)	National study centres: 25.4 Adult education centres: 2
Denmark	National study associations (5) Study hours in study associations within the five national study associations: 1,230,000 (2022) ⁹	Local study associations within the five national study associations: 4.8

The numbers are calculated on the basis of information in the country reports and the number of inhabitants in each country (2022).

Looking at the geographic spread of the local study associations, there seem to be interesting differences across the countries. Especially Sweden and Denmark represent two different trends. In Sweden, the study association activities are by far the most extensive and widespread in the countryside. In Denmark on the other hand, the level of activities is much higher in the cities than in rural areas. In Finland, the picture is most similar to the Swedish situation whereas the statistics at hand are inconclusive regarding the situation in Norway.

⁹ No numbers are available for the local study associations outside the five national study associations. However, prior estimations suggest that these associations are typically small and together they constitute a quite limited part of the total number of study hours (Thøgersen 2021).

Subjects and topics

This section takes a closer look at the similarities and differences in the contents of the activities. Which topics and subjects are central throughout the four countries, and which differences are to be found in mutual inspiration? It is important to note that the activity statistics in the Finnish case only describes the study centre activities. The statistics from the adult education centres have not been available.

Again, the different ways to register the activities can muddy the comparison. Table 1.13 shows the most prevalent topics categorised in the country report. They are however not necessarily directly comparable.

Table 1.13: The three subject types with the most study hours/courses in each country

Norway	Sweden	Finland	Denmark
1) Health care	1) Music, dance, and drama	1) Personal Growth ¹⁰	1) Health and physical education
2) Song, vocal music, and choir	2) Arts and crafts	2) Citizenship and associations	2) Crafts
3) Christianity	3) Foreign languages	3) Social and community support	3) Foreign languages and basic skills

Arts and crafts a common denominator

A significant common denominator for the four countries is that arts and crafts are central activities in the study associations.

Music, singing, and dancing are core activities and are overall among the topics with most study hours/courses in three of four countries. In Sweden, the category ‘music, dance, and drama’ stands out as the most dominant study circle activity with more than twice as many courses as any of the other topic categories. It is not as dominant in the three other countries where health and physical education (which is not included in Sweden) are also widespread (see further below on sports and physical education).

Also, crafts in various forms like knitting, painting, ceramics, and woodwork are in all four countries among the most widespread topics. Likewise, the offering of other creative and artistic subjects is a trademark of the activities.

Hence, the mapping indicates that the local study associations are central to the adult citizens’ possibilities to unfold their creative skills and to further the quality of music, arts and crafts in the four countries. In relation to the aims of the sector (see table 5), both Norway and Sweden emphasise the ability to participate in cultural life and to learn about the cultural heritage. But also, the formative aspect of liberal adult education is relevant here. In Finland, the arts and crafts topics are categorised under ‘personal growth’¹¹. This categorisation might reveal the associated value of these topics across the four countries.

¹⁰ The three course types with most teaching hours in this category are 1) handicraft, 2) singing and 3) dancing.

¹¹ Categorisation made by Manninen & Vuorikoski (Manninen, J. & Vuorikoski, K. 2024).

Smaller topics in common across the four countries

Other topics like languages, philosophy, and history are common subjects offered in all four countries. Also, basic skills like mathematics and literacy skills are offered. These topics are consistent, but the number of study hours is limited. In Denmark, the study associations historically focused on basic skills and learning very much oriented towards improving the students' career possibilities. And similar trends can be seen in both Sweden and Finland. As the formal education system developed and the general educational standard in Denmark rose, the basic skills had less pre-eminence in the evening schools. Still, the focus on equal possibilities and lifelong learning keeps the topics relevant although on a smaller scale.

Significant differences across the countries

In spite of the many similarities, there are interesting differences across the four countries. Many of the differences will be rooted in the different historical developments and the organisation of civil society in general (see also 'definition of the field' and 'organisation'). Table 1.14 marks some of the interesting differences in subjects and shows their prevalence across the four countries.

Table 1.14: Differences in topics across the four countries

	Norway	Sweden	Finland	Denmark
Religion				
Instructor, trainer and leader education				
Language courses for immigrants				
Sports and physical activity				
Training and education of elected politicians and trade union members				
Livestock care				

The coloured matrixes indicate that the country in question has the specific type of subject. Light green indicates that the subject exists but is not very common.

As table 14 shows Finland, Sweden, and Norway seem to have developed a different pattern than the Danish study associations on the subjects and courses related to religion, instructor and leader training as well as in offering language courses for immigrants. All three subjects are totally absent from the courses offered in Danish evening schools.

The explanation for the two first subjects might be found in the close ties to the rest of civil society. Whereas the activities eligible for subsidies under the Danish Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity can teach about religion as a cultural phenomenon they are not allowed to teach religious practices. In the three other countries, on the other hand, there are strong Christian national study associations which support bible groups and Christian study circles.

As mentioned earlier, the focus on the training of leaders, instructors, and volunteers in the membership organisations is also a natural part of the close link to the civil society in the three countries.

The lack of language courses for immigrants in the Danish study associations might, however, have a slightly different explanation. As the need for courses for immigrants has arisen the study associations in Finland, Sweden, and Norway have seemed to be the natural partnership organisations with a flexible capability to solve the challenge.

In Denmark, this type of activity is seen to be ‘outside the law’. Danish for immigrants and other foreigners is conducted by approx. 50 language centres¹². A single evening school in Copenhagen is also registered as a language centre and AOF (the national workers study association) have nine language schools across the country¹³. The courses and statistics will, however, not be registered in this study because the activities are financed through a different law, not as part of the general liberal adult education.

‘Sports and physical education’ has already been touched upon earlier in the report. In the Swedish case, almost all physical education and sports left the Swedish Adult Education Association when SISU exited in 2006.

Even though there is extensive activity within this category in Norway, Finland, and Denmark, it seems to be on slightly different levels. In Norway, the courses that are included in this study are primarily aimed at educating leaders, instructors, and trainers. In Finland and Denmark, the activities included are more directly aimed at the citizens as individuals. Hence, in Denmark, evening schools offer physical activities alongside sports associations, private fitness centres, and other initiatives. In spite of the strong competition, physical activity is by far the subject category with most study hours. Often, the activities in evening schools have an including perspective on physical activity. It could, for example, be hot water activities for people with special needs or gymnastics for people with heart diseases. The activities will never have a focus on sport and competition since it is not allowed under the law. Also, in Finland study association activities within sports and physical activities are to some extent targeted groups with special needs.

As the table above illustrates, the study associations in Sweden and Finland still have close ties to the political parties and systems as well as the trade unions, and internal courses for members of political parties are counted as an integral part of the non-formal adult education field. This is not the case in Norway and Denmark. As can be seen in the Norwegian country report, in 2022, only one course was registered under the category ‘course for elected representatives. In Denmark, this type of course is not organised in the evening schools. Norway and Denmark seem to have followed a juxtaposed line of development where the significance of the political affiliations is increasingly losing significance. In Denmark the political differences still exist by name, but in Norway only two political parties have maintained their own study associations. And in both countries political party training is now conducted inside the party structure not in study associations.

¹² [De Danske Sprogcentre - er dit sprogcenter godkendt til undervisning?](#)

¹³ [Lær det danske sprog | AOF Job & Dansk \(aofjobogdansk.dk\)](#)

The last significant difference that we will emphasise here is the Norwegian course 'livestock care'. With 1601 courses in this category in 2022 it was the 8th most held course in Norway. It is interesting because it seems to represent a type of course that seems to have a much larger reach in Norway than in the other three countries. Thus, Norway seems to have a wider range of courses within the natural science realm. Together, the course subject categories 'nature, ecology, environment protection and outdoor activity', 'science, industry and technique', and 'economics and ICT' make up 13 per cent of the total number of participants.

In Sweden, 7 per cent of the events in 2022 belonged to the category 'agriculture, horticulture, forestry and fishing' and 1 per cent to 'engineering and technical industry'. In Finland, the three categories 'nature', 'animals', and 'science' constitute less than 2 per cent of the overall activity. In Denmark, there is not even a category for natural science courses, and only recently there seems to be a growing interest in nature and environmental courses.

As will be shown in chapter 9, this pattern can be interesting in relation to the differences in the profiles of the participants across the four countries.

Pedagogical differences

As mentioned above the Swedish study circles as an idea developed as a part of the temperance movement. The members of the movement were encouraged to gather in self-directed groups to read and discuss books. The book circle members decided what to read and discuss and the activities were meant to be fun and inventive. The leadership was informal and the subsidy for the study circles was from 1912 to 1947 solely to support the acquisition of books. Through this beginning, the study groups developed a peer-to-peer pedagogy that is still widely used in Sweden.

Both in Norway and Finland, this structure is known and used, but not dominating at all, whereas in Denmark, the pedagogy is as a rule much more similar to classic classroom teaching. In Denmark, the subsidy has from the beginning been allocated to the teachers' salaries and the first national study association was created by the labour movement. Hence, the focus on learning basic skills in spite of the non-formal structure was dominating in the beginning. Later, the more creative and recreational subjects found their way to the Danish evening schools, but the teacher-centred pedagogy is still by far the most widespread.

The more formal study groups with a teacher or a paid leader are spreading in both Finland, Sweden, and Norway, and the structure of the activities recently seems to become more similar across the four countries.

Chapter 8: Educators, leaders, and facilitators

Despite the different pedagogical approaches and traditions, conditions for educators seem surprisingly uniform across the four countries. In all four countries, there seems to be a kaleidoscopic picture of many different profiles and working terms for educators.

As a general rule, there are no formal qualification requirements for educators and local leaders within the field. With the Swedish ideal of democratic engagement and equality, it is emphasised how everyone should be able and entitled to take up the study circle leadership¹⁴. Even in Denmark where the pedagogical tradition has been more teacher-centred, the non-formal ideals have dominated the field, and the teachers will often be recruited based on their engagement, (non-formal) competencies, and experiences.

In Norway, some courses – which for example give authorisation – will have formal requirements for the teachers or trainers leading the course. It is, however, the most common in all four countries, that non-formal qualifications and engagement are more important than formal qualifications.

In all four countries, there is a continuum that ranges from volunteers to full-time employees among educators.

- The volunteers – are dominant in Sweden where 86 per cent of the study circle leaders were non-remunerated in 2021. The spread of volunteer educators does not seem to be that big in any of the other countries, but even in Denmark, volunteer educators are found – especially within the smaller schools that work with arts and crafts.
- Hour-based employees – are the most common in Finland, Norway, and Denmark. Their roles as educators are often a side job to another job or a supplement to retirement.
- Full-time employees – are to be found among the educators in the study associations in all four countries, but it is only a very small fraction of the overall number of educators.

Profiles of the educators

The knowledge of the profiles and educational backgrounds of the educators, leaders, and facilitators varies greatly between the countries. In Sweden, The Swedish National Council of Adult Education published a research report on study circle leaders in 2014, and in Norway, a study from 2019 gives preliminary insights into the different types of study leaders. In Finland and Denmark, the knowledge of the profiles of the educators is rudimentary. In Denmark, Vifo has conducted a few questionnaires, but on too small demographics to be statistically generalised. Hence, this area of the field will need further data collection if a comparative analysis is to make sense.

¹⁴ After becoming a circle leader the study associations in Sweden in general offers leadership training but as an entrancepoint there will be no formal qualification requirements.

Chapter 9: Participants

In this section, the focus will be on the participants in the activities of study associations. Both the number of participants as well as the characteristics of the participants will be in focus. However, the available statistics on participants vary across the countries. Particularly in Denmark, statistics on participants are poor, which limits the possibilities for systematic comparisons across all four countries.

The number of participants

Table 1.15 shows the available numbers on participants in the most comparable type of activities across the four countries. As the table shows, the unique numbers of participants are only available for Sweden. Hence, the most comparable is the number of non-unique participants. To make the numbers more comparable, the number of participants is put into relation with the number of inhabitants. However, the comparisons should be read with caution, - especially in the cases where participants in two different types of activities are put together, as this will increase the number of non-unique participants.

Due to the statistical limitations, it is hard to conclude which of the countries has the highest level of participation. However, if we compare the percentage of the population participating in courses in Norway (9,2 per cent), in study circles and other popular adult education in Sweden (12,5 per cent) and in study centres in Finland (8,8 per cent), the highest share is found in Sweden while the level in Finland and Norway is almost similar. In Denmark the best available numbers are from recent population studies. But as the table shows the percentage of the population participating varies between 3 and 8 per cent of the population according to the timespan in the specific question.

Table 1.15: Number of participants across countries

Country	Number of participants (2022)	Percentage of population (non-unique)	Percentage of population (unique)	Percentage of population (survey)
Norway	Course participants: 501,596 (non-unique)	9.2 per cent		
Sweden	Study circle participants: 694,600 (non-unique), 345,900 (unique) Other popular adult education: 612,300 (non-unique), 345,300 (unique)	6.6 per cent (study circles) 5.9 (other popular education) 12.5 (total)	5.8 per cent (participates in either study circles or other popular education)	
Finland	Participants in education and study circles in study centres: 487,894 (non-unique) Participants in adult education centres (2021): 753,590 (non-unique)	8.8 (study centres) 13.6 (adult education centres) 22.4 (total)		

Denmark	-	-	-	<p>3 per cent <i>“Have participated in evening school activities within the previous three months”</i> (Statistics Denmark 2022)</p> <p>8 per cent <i>“Have participated [...] in evening school activities within the previous 12 months”</i> (Vifo 2020)</p>
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Characteristics of the participants

The aim of this section is to describe the main profiles of the participants across the four countries. The focus will be on gender, age, and level of education. Again, the statistical material varies across the countries.

When it comes to gender, table 1.16 shows the gender distribution of participants in each country. It is evident that there is a majority of women in all four countries¹⁵. However, the proportion varies between the countries with Norway being the country with the lowest share of women and Denmark the highest. These differences might to some extent be explained by the differences in subjects. The Norwegian statistics show that the gender distribution varies across different types of subjects – e.g. the proportion of men is particularly high when it comes to ‘nature and environment’, ‘science’ and ‘transport and communication’ – but also within ‘organisation and leadership’ which is one of the most popular subjects in the Norwegian context, and where the gender distribution is almost even.

Regarding age, the numbers indicate a relatively high average age among the participants, but there are not directly comparable numbers across the countries. However, the numbers show variation in age groups among the countries with Denmark having the eldest participants and Norway and Finland the youngest.

When it comes to the level of education it is difficult to compare the specific numbers from the country reports, but the clear picture is that the educational level among the typical participants is above average across the countries.

¹⁵ In Finland, the numbers are only available for Liberal Adult Education in total and not specifically for study centres.

Table 1.16: Characteristics of participants across countries

Country	Proportion of women	Age	Education
Norway	58 per cent	45 per cent are 50 years or older Average age: -	Above average
Sweden	64 per cent (study circles)	25 per cent are 45-64 years old 40 per cent are 65 years or older Average age: 54	Above average
Finland	72 per cent* (liberal adult education in total)	42 per cent are 50 years or older (study centres) Average age: -	Above average
Denmark	79 per cent (survey 2015)	80 per cent are 50 years or older Average age: 59	Above average

Note: *nationwide survey 2019, ** nationwide survey 2015

Vulnerable groups seem to some extent to be in focus in the activities of study associations across the countries – particularly when it comes to people with disabilities. In Norway, one of the study associations has this group as its main focus. In Sweden, 4 per cent of the participants are people with disabilities. In Denmark, 33 per cent of all municipal-supported activity hours are targeted specifically towards persons with disabilities – however here the definition of disabilities is quite broad and also includes people with special needs in relation to the specific subject – e.g. physical training for different types of patient groups.

Chapter 10: Discussion and perspectives

This project has with its mapping of local study associations across four countries created an initial overview of the state of the study associations in a cross-national perspective. The new insights spur new perspectives and questions. This chapter highlights some of the points and themes that have been raised from the mapping, the comparative analyses, and the dialogue between the authors throughout the project.

Different structures further different methods?

One of the outsets for this research was to examine further how the landscapes of the local study associations across the four countries – despite common roots – have developed rife with both similarities and differences. The country reports confirm that the history of the field of local study associations and study circles started and thrived in the ambience of enlightenment and the democratisation of the four countries. Still, even from the beginning, there were different roads to meet the needs of non-formal adult education. With the study circles the first initiative came from the citizens' movements while the first documented initiative in Denmark came from the state. It created different structures and traditions and there seems to have been two different trends across the four countries. One that rooted the local study associations firmly in affiliation with other civil society organisations with close links to the different movements, and one – in Denmark – where local study associations evolved into a civil society institution in its own right. The activities in the study associations are a means in itself, and educational initiatives to support other civil society organisations are very rare. The same phenomenon can be seen in the adult education centres in Finland.

These different approaches seem to have resulted in different pedagogical philosophies as the ideal 'bildung' / formative pedagogy. Not being essentially opposite they do however seem to differ in the level of self-direction and responsibility for the individual's learning. The classic study circle with shared responsibility and peer-to-peer education emphasises the active participation and common responsibility. The classroom teaching in the local study associations has focused on involving the participants, their interest, and their experiences as the folk enlightenment pedagogy. The teacher has, however, a crucial role in the classes and meetings.

From grassroots to the classroom?

The comparative analyses show a movement towards a spread of the classroom pedagogy with leaders and actual teachers in charge of the activities. The question is whether this development will continue, and why we can see this tendency.

One speculation is that the different pedagogical approaches can be more fit for certain subjects and topics than others. In value-based activities like discussing politics, studying the bible, and reading and discussing books, the shift of initiatives among the participants and equal access to set the agenda makes good sense. Even in subjects like crafts where there is a tradition of having many skilled participants, peer-to-peer education can be appealing.

There are however subjects that are more focused on the activities and learning. With a general societal trend to increasing specialisation, participants will often seek to acquire new

competences and skills through a good teacher. Here, the classroom pedagogic can seem more appealing. Also, the widespread focus on health and physical education in three of the four countries can have induced a demand for formally specialised teachers or trainers. This tendency can also raise the expectations of the more informal circle leadership, and in Sweden, several study associations offer circle leader training.

This development can maybe be seen as a spill-over effect from the formal educational system. In combination with a tendency of increased individualisation (see e.g. Enroljas & Eimhjellen 2018), and a greater demand for self-fulfilment through interest/activity-based learning in the population, this might be a part of the explanation for the developments in this field.

It will be interesting to follow whether this shift will continue to evolve over the coming years. Is there a trend to move away from value-based, formative activities to subjects with more learning-specific outputs? And will this development be reinforced by an increased public focus (for example in the EU) on continuous learning and employability instead of lifelong learning? And what will that mean for the study associations and their legitimacy? Becoming increasingly streamlined, the activities may have a broader appeal. But the risk is that the study associations will lose their characteristics and will end without a 'raison d'être'.

This slip has partly been seen in the study associations with political affiliations. Both in Sweden and Denmark, the political direction of the organisations is less and less significant, and the difference between them seems to blur for the participants. These challenges can be further emphasised if the local study associations at the same time are in competition with other providers of similar activities. It can be private entrepreneurs, other association types or even the municipalities' own activities. A response to this can be that the new terms for receiving state support, introduced in Sweden in 2024, encourage study associations to promote their specific ideological profiles and distinctiveness.

Also, in a time where many complex problems call for activism and empowering changes, it will be interesting to see if the study associations will be able to maintain/recapture a central place and significance in the peoples' enlightenment landscape.

Aims, values and everyday practices

As the comparative analyses show, a common trait in all four countries is that the aims and objectives of the study associations are fraught with high expectations of their societal impact. The study associations are expected to enhance democracy, active citizenship and empowerment as well as individual growth for the participants.

Looking at the activities on the other hand it can be hard to link the aims directly to the popular subjects and topics. How does yoga, singing in a choir, or learning a new language connect to the higher objectives? This link can be specifically hard to see if the value-based and democratic pedagogical methods are not obvious to outsiders. At the same time, we see a tendency to create event-based activities in both Sweden and Denmark. This development echoes a more general trend for citizens to take part in short-term social engagement and seems like a successful recruitment strategy that meets the participants' preferences. If this trend spreads and continues it can, however, challenge the link even further. The dilemma is further complicated in a political

environment where measured outputs are often expected. The objectives can be hard to document and measure in everyday practice.

Especially in Denmark, the objectives in the law are on a high level of abstraction. Maybe it is worthwhile to be inspired by the other countries where the legal framework in both Norway and Sweden also emphasises participation in the cultural life and legacy as an important objective. In Finland, both well-being and communality are underlined as aiming marks for the study associations.

Norway on the other hand has a more utilitarian objective in the aim to meet the work-life needs of the participants. It would be interesting to examine if this part of the study associations' aims eases the common understanding of the purpose of the activities. And to what degree the participants use the courses and training in their jobs.

It can also be discussed if the aims and objectives are supposed to be fulfilled at an individual level or if the study association activity must be seen as a whole on a more societal basis. In any case, the comparative study indicates that it will be a common concern over the coming years for the study associations in the four countries to keep elaborating on a meaningful and relevant narrative on and about themselves. It will be important at a time when the importance of funding the field seems less self-evident among politicians and policymakers. While conducting this mapping, budget cuts were on the horizon in both Sweden and Finland and in Denmark, there has been a continuous decline in overall subsidies over the last few years. Hence, it will be crucial for the study associations to find a balance where their societal role as providers of lifelong learning is clear and evident for all. To find a balance between instrumentalisation of the activities and securing the free and non-formal learning environment.

Mutual inspiration and further investigations

We hope this mapping and the comparative analysis across Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark offer many 'take aways' for the study associations in the four countries. We hope that the overview of the field will nourish the Nordic dialogue and provide mutual inspiration. We see several mutual focus points that could be further elaborated. This section will briefly introduce potential themes for further comparative investigations.

The local anchoring?

The comparative study shows that the Danish structure and the Finnish Adult Education centres with the municipals as the key reference points anchor the study associations locally. At the same time, the field in Denmark has seen a centralisation of the activities whereas the opposite is the case in Sweden. Here, most study circle activity is in rural areas. But what is the local significance of the study associations across the countries? How do they affect the community and the local civil society?

Local study associations and the local community

The question of the local anchoring leads to a more general curiosity on the landscapes and trends wherein the study associations navigate in the four countries. In a time of attention economy, the question is how the study associations interact or compete with other providers. How

do they cooperate or stand out as valuable providers? And what challenges do they meet in relation to developing their activities and reach? What is the social significance at a local level?

The facilities?

Where does 'folk enlightenment' live? What premises and facilities set the scenes for the local study associations' activities? The country reports illustrate that in Denmark and Norway, it is an integral part of the public support to the field to secure access to facilities that are suitable for the activities. It means that there is a close relationship between the public sphere and the associations. But what does this structure mean in terms of both economy and cooperation? And how does it differ from the other two countries? Do the study associations to a higher degree have their own facilities? And does this result in a higher degree of local visibility, better special facilities, or a more vulnerable economy?

Study associations as a key facilitator within arts and crafts?

Arts and crafts seems to be a common denominator across the four countries. In a time of increasing focus on crafts activities and the connection between these types of activities and mental health¹⁶, it is interesting to see whether this is a field where study associations can expand their activities further, or whether they will be challenged by new types of private and digital providers in the field.

The interaction and dialectics between the topics and courses on the one hand and societal challenges and trends on the other is still an underlit field from a cross-national perspective. In future research projects it would be interesting to dig deeper and more systematically into the specific characteristics and level of the different activities in each of the countries and the development over time - seen in relation to societal demands and needs.

The pedagogical methods

The two general trends in methods across the four countries raise an interesting question in relation to the implications of the methods. Are there methods and pedagogical practices that further the overall aims and goals of the study associations more than others? Will there be a difference between the participants' output in relation to democratic self-reliance, general engagement, or learning and empowerment? And what do the teachers, leaders, and facilitators mean for the activities and the participants across the four countries? How do they 'do' and teach folk enlightenment?

Set for the future?

Looking at the field across the four countries, a vibrant and diverse landscape emerges. At the same time, there seems to be an underlying narrative of being a societal institution in decline.

In Sweden, Finland, and Denmark, there seems to be an urge to be able to inspire young participants to join the activities. Also, immigrants and people with no or short tertiary education are hard to find amongst the participants, and in two of the countries, women are the absolute most

¹⁶ See for example: Clavier, Linda / Hermansson, Dafvid (red) 2024 or Kirketerp 2011.

dominant participant group. How do the study associations change these pictures and stay relevant and important to these different groups?

Is the Norwegian success with agricultural and technology courses a reminiscence from a more rural society or maybe a path to the future? As the Finnish country report shows, distance and online learning was all of a sudden an essential part of the study association activity after the pandemic. The potential and significance of distance learning is still to be examined. Is it a threat to the value of community that is central in both objectives and most everyday activities within the study associations, or does it offer new forms of learning and communality?

An important future research question could therefore be to investigate the relationship between digitalisation and other societal trends and new forms of social engagement.

Likewise, research into the study associations and the global development is a field that calls for further research. Is globalisation seen as a threat or as a necessary way to meet climate change? And how will the study associations contribute to a green transition? Will the focus be on local action, 'planetary building'¹⁷ or both?

¹⁷ See for example Salonen A. O., Laininen E., Hämäläinen J. & Sterling S. 2023.

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Appendix

Theme
<p>Definition and description of the field:</p> <p>The common definition of the field is the movement/form of popular education characterised in each country as a study circle/evening school/local study association.</p> <p>The study has a particular focus on the local activities and organisations organised under national study associations that work with non-formal education/non-formal learning. In countries where this is relevant, activities are included that are directly comparable to the local activities of the study associations that receive funding according to the same legislation/guidelines.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the field is briefly described in relation to other non-formal adult education actors/categories that are not included in the study.</p>
<p>History:</p> <p>Briefly describe the most important turning points in the history of study associations and study circles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• When were the central national organisations in the field established?• Which movements are the central national organisations rooted in?• When were they first mentioned in the law?• What key legislative changes have been made since then?
<p>Rules and regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describe the national laws/legal frameworks regulating the economy and activities of study circles/evening schools.• What is the name of the law/legislative framework regulating the activities and/or the financial support for the local study associations/study circles?• How is the aim of the local study associations/study circles described in the law/legal framework?• How is the field delimited in the law/legal framework? <p>Public authority oversight:</p> <p>Describe the mechanisms that ensure local compliance with regulations in the field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is this performed by local or national authorities?• And how does it work in practice?
<p>Funding:</p> <p>Describe briefly the sources of funding for the activities of study circles/evening schools (for instance government budgets, grants, subsidies, donations, and participant fees.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the size of the fees for participants? How do these compare to participant costs of other leisure activities (e.g. sports clubs)?• Does the public support come from the local level, national level or both?

- How has the local and/or national financial support developed in 2012-2022 in both absolute (level of support) and relative (support per capita) measures?

Premises and facilities:

Describe in which type of premises and facilities the activities take place.

Describe who is responsible for finding the premises/facilities.

Organisation (national/local):

Describe the organisational structure of the study circles/evening schools.

- Are they organised as voluntary associations or as other types of organisations?
- How many organisations exist? At the national level (national study organisations), and at the local level (local study associations/study circles)?
- Give concrete examples of the different types of organisations at the local level.

Activities:

Describe the *format* of the activities and the *content/subject* of the activities.

Describe the *scope* of the activities.

- How many activity hours are included in the overall scope of activities of the study circles/evening schools (2012-2022)?
- How are the activity hours distributed across subjects?

Educators and facilitators:

Describe whether there are any qualification requirements for educators/facilitators in study circles/evening schools.

- Are the educators/facilitators volunteers or paid?

Participants:

Profile the participants in study circles/evening schools including their age, gender and educational backgrounds.

- Who and how many participate in the activities?
- What is the proportion of the adult population participating in study circles/evening school activities?
- Describe, if possible, to what extent marginalised groups (e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, people living in remote areas), participate in study circles/evening school activities.

COUNTRY REPORT

NORWAY

Introduction

The study associations in Norway grew out of the popular grassroots movements in the 1800s, closely connected to the ideas of people's enlightenment. The study associations of today are the result of the active role that the Norwegian voluntary sector took in the democratisation of enlightenment, education, and knowledge, and of the authorities' strategic subsidising of education in the voluntary sector and their need for a rational and clear organisational structure for this purpose. As of today, the role of the study associations is primarily to be national providers of competence, teaching, courses, and assistance to other national and local voluntary associations that are members of the national study associations. The study associations are formally and hierarchically organised and regulated by the government. The grassroots activities of learning, teaching, and studying are performed across the organised civil society, in organisations, for their members and/or others who want to acquire new competence and knowledge.

Data and methods

To describe the situation concerning the Norwegian study associations, we have analysed previous literature (books and reports) on the history and economic situation of the study associations, public information from government agencies, the national umbrella organisation for study associations, and other actors' websites, as well as national statistics on the activities in the study associations. The national statistics are based on reported activity at the local level, which is defined as a criterion to get funding. This data source is managed and delivered by Statistics Norway.

In this country report, emphasis has been made on describing empirically the local activity of *study associations* in Norway, rather than local *study circles*. The reasons for this emphasis are pragmatic and related to the economic frames of the project and the complexity of the field when including both the concept of *study associations* and *study circles*. As described above there is a lot of data on the organisation and activities related to the formal study associations in Norway. Also, the definitions and regulation of study associations make the empirical phenomenon of study associations in Norway more defined and formalised than that of study circles, which is a less formal and defined concept in Norway. Consequently, there is little systematic knowledge of the existence and activities of study circles, and it would demand a lot more resources to define and map this phenomenon. To clarify the definition and existence of study circles and their relations to study associations in Norway should be prioritised in future research.

Description and definition of the field

In Norway, a study association is a democratic, non-profit voluntary organisation with adult education as its primary purpose. Additionally, to be formally approved as a study association, one must have at least two member organisations (Talberg 2019). In Norway, the study associations are regulated by the Act on Adult Education. The field of study associations is formal and hierarchically organised and comprises 14 approved national study associations (more on this in the section on the organisational structure below) all organised under the national umbrella organisation The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning – NAAL (Voksenopplæringsforbundet - VOFO) (Talberg 2019). The 14 national study associations have a total of 509 voluntary member

organisations. In table 1 later in the section on organisational structure, the study associations and their number of member organisations are listed.

The study associations vary in size and function. In a *minimum variant*, they consist of a single central administration that approves study plans, provides advice and support to the organisers of courses and course participants, and distributes the funds to the organisational units/levels and member organisations that are responsible for organising the courses. In a *maximum variant*, the study associations consist of a regional and a local organisational level with employees, in addition to the national central administration (Talberg 2019; NOU 2007:11). The basic educational activities, learning and teaching, are mainly conducted by the individual member organisations of the study associations for their members or non-members, either on the national, regional or the local level in the member organisations. In 2022, 389 member organisations in 349 out of 356 municipalities in Norway provided a total of 43,312 courses to 501,596 participants.

History

In Norway, the concept of study associations is closely linked to the concept of ‘people’s enlightenment’ (folkeopplysning) and adult education¹⁸. Study circles and study associations grew out of the popular grassroots movements in the 1800s, related to people’s enlightenment and the development of modern democracy. Hence, the development and history of the study associations is closely related to the development and history of the organised civil society in Norway itself. A fundamental principle behind the study associations movement in Norway was that enlightenment, education and knowledge are to be spread from below (not from the elite) to the less fortunate, among equals. Enlightenment and study circles were detrimental to rural citizens’ and urban worker-class citizens’ access to knowledge around the turn of the century.

Many associations with the aim of distributing knowledge were established in Norway during the 1800s, for example, students’ movements, rural movements, language movements, workers’ movements, folk academies, folk high schools, and political parties¹⁹. As such, the history and development of the study associations and adult education in Norway is very much synonymous with the history and development of the organised civil society and the voluntary sector itself. As part of the activities related to enlightenment, learning, and distribution of knowledge to all the concrete phenomenon of study circles was also important. However, as explained above, in Norway, this concept has not been as well-defined, formalised, or operationalised as the study associations.

Related to, but conceptually separated from study associations and study circles in this report, the folk high schools in Norway also grew out of this period of enlightenment. Their development was directly inspired by the Danish priest N. F. S. Grundvig and the Norwegian teacher and author Ole Vig, based on the ideas of “a school for life” and of enlightenment to the people,

¹⁸ In Norway, the concept ‘adult education’ was adopted in the 1950s. This concept encapsulates all education/training for adults, both the formal and the non-formal one. This differs from Sweden, which separate between ‘adult education’ and ‘people’s education’.

¹⁹ For example Selskabet for Norges Vel (1809), Selskapet for folkeopplysningens fremme (1851), Oslo Studentersamfundets Fri Undervisning/Studieforbundet Folkeuniversitetet (1864), Oslo Arbeidersamfunn (1864), Sagatun Folkehøgskole (First of its kind in 1864), Folkeakademier (1880à), Venstre (1884), Arbeiderpartiet (1887), Noregs Ungdomslag (1896), Arbeidernes Opplysningsforbund (1931)

in particular the rural youth (NOU 2022). Most of these folk high schools, based on their organisational form, can also be defined as belonging to the organised civil society and the voluntary or third sector in Norway ²⁰.

In 1932, a precursor of today's national umbrella organisation for the study associations was established to educate study leaders in organisations and work for public grants for the movement. During the 1800s, the public authorities had little involvement with the enlightenment movement, but after years of strategic work in the movements, in 1935, a first state subsidy was allocated for books in study circles (Nettum et al. 1958). Later, in 1949, the state grant became much more generous, also subsidising study leaders and study material. A steady growing public support reached a peak in 1976, with a law that assured a reimbursement of 80 per cent of the costs of a course (Bjerkaker 2020).

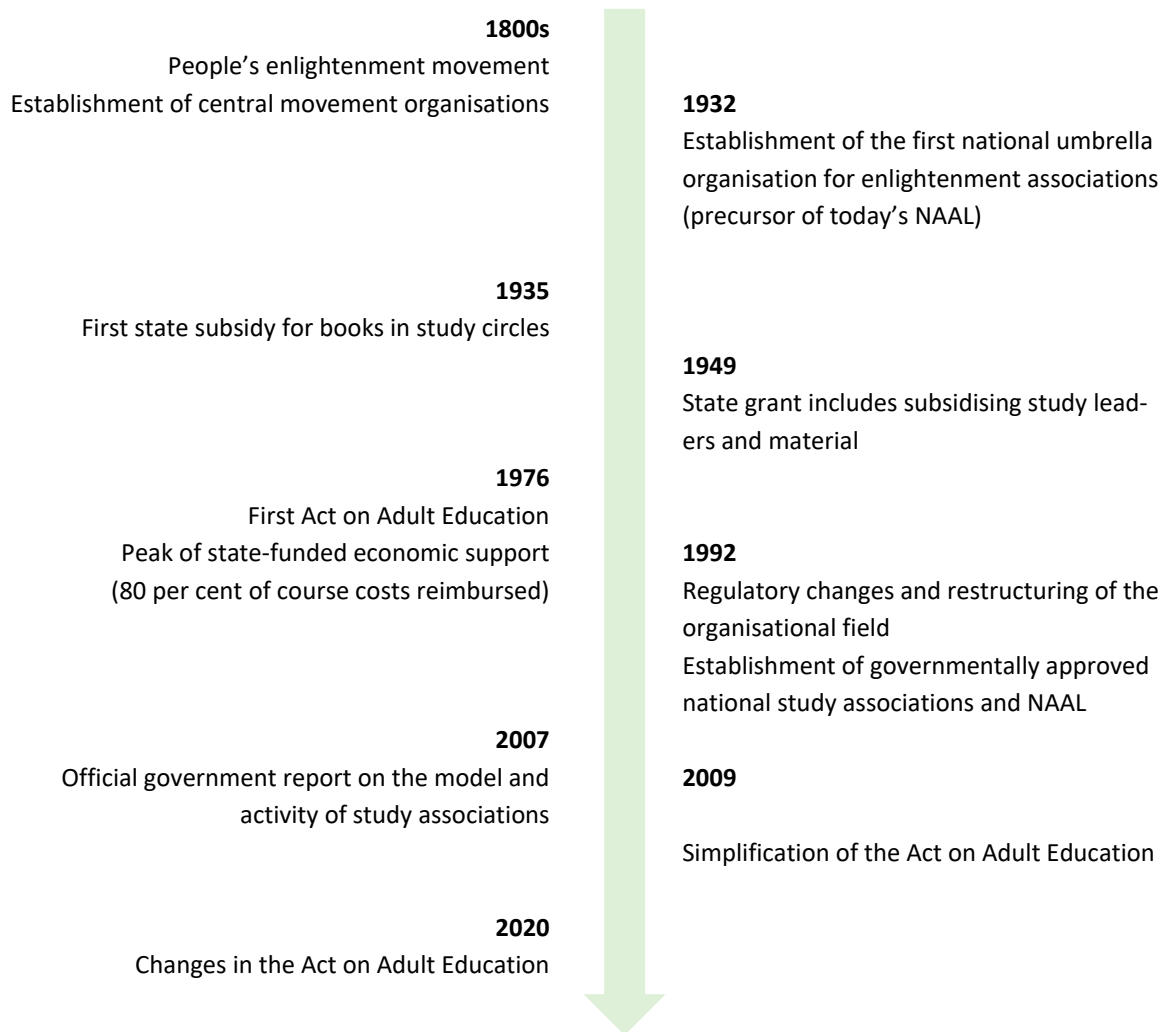
Following the Act on Adult Education from 1976, the approval for subsidies to organisations was regulated under new rules. Approximately 40 organisations were now approved for state grants, while a similar number of organisations applied to be approved for such state grants. However, already in 1979, the system of reimbursement was abandoned, and the grants became more unpredictable, dependent on the yearly state budget negotiations.

In 1992, an addendum to the Act on Adult Education stated that organisations approved for state grants for study activities were required to be members of an approved study association and that the approved study associations had to have at least two member organisations. Because of these regulatory changes, several organisations were shut down or merged, and new organisations were formed. By 1997, 20 national study associations were approved and today's system of national study associations was established to secure the organisation and structure of the field (Bjerkaker 2020). By 2024, the number is reduced to 14 formally approved study associations, with a total of 503 member organisations.

The ideology and arguments for public support to study associations have changed over time. From the early fight for the right for all to learn, regardless of place, class, age, gender, or status, and from an initial focus on the personal value of learning, to the 1950s and onwards where there has been an increasing focus on the instrumental value of learning for the employability of people. With an increasingly changing job market and demands for competence, the provision of competence to increase workers' transitional abilities in the job market has become a more important argument for the support of adult education and the study associations.

²⁰ In Norway, there are 85 folk high schools. 69 per cent of them being non-profit organisations, 11 per cent governmental, 13 per cent commercial, and a few with other organisational forms.

Figure 2.1: Timeline with central events in the history and development of the study associations in Norway



A note on the concept of adult education in Norway

From the 1960s and onwards, the term for education and learning outside of the formal educational system was changed from 'people's enlightenment' to 'adult education' (Talberg 2019; Tøsse 2007). The term 'people's enlightenment' was increasingly seen as a demeaning term, insinuating someone's need for enlightenment. This change in terminology also separated between work-related learning and education-related learning, with the work-related understanding of learning breaking with the ideology of 'people's enlightenment' and focusing on strengthening the transition ability of workers in the job market. The work and business sector wanted adult education to be understood as 'training', while the educational sector wanted it to be understood as education. Accordingly, in the first half of the 1960s, increased government regulation was followed by increased government funding of adult education, although with large variations depending on the type of education (Talberg 2019; Tøsse 2007).

As mentioned, regarding the name of the Act on Adult Education, the term 'adult education' in Norway reflects all forms of education and training for adults, both the formal and the non-

formal. It does not separate between the exam-based education through the formal education system ('vuxenutbildning' in Sweden and 'voksenundervisning' in Denmark) and the non-formal, free and voluntary education through civil society organisations and study associations ('folkbildning' in Sweden and 'folkeoplysning' in Denmark).

Rules and regulations

In Norway, a study association is a legally protected title with the criteria of being a democratic, non-profit and voluntary organisation with adult education as its primary purpose. Additionally, to be formally approved as a study association (by either the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Culture and Equality), a study association must have: 1) learning as a main goal and otherwise have an ideal purpose, 2) have the term 'study association' in its name, 3) have a democratic organisational structure, 4) have activity all over the country and a regional anchoring, 5) have as a minimum 30,000 course hours per year in average for the past two and three years, and 6) have at least two organisations associated to the study association as members.

The courses provided need to be publicly announced and in principle be open for all but can be aimed at specific target groups, for instance, members of an association or people interested in a certain subject or activity. The courses need to have at least four participants (minimum 14 years old), a duration of at least four hours, an approved study plan (by NAAL), a course leader, and be organised by an approved study association or a member organisation of a study association. Study associations for political parties and the Sami study association have their own specific regulations regarding activities. Study associations for political parties have member organisations from or connected to political parties and are exempted from the demand of 30,000 course hours, but must have a minimum of 2000 course hours per year on average. The Sami study association is an association by and for the Sami, allowing for the training and learning of Sami language, societal life, and cultural heritage within their own organisations. The Sami study association is also exempted from the demand of 30,000 course hours and must perform at least 2000 course hours per year on average and have at least one member organisation (NAAL 2024; Talberg 2019).

The first legal act on adult education in Norway was implemented in 1976 (the Act on Adult Education). With this act, the approval for subsidies to organisations was regulated under new rules, with specific criteria to be fulfilled for organisations to get funding. In 1992, these criteria were tightened, and an organisation now had to be a member of an approved study association to get public funding for study activities. In 2009, a new and more simplified Act on Adult Education was passed, with direct inspiration from an Official Norwegian Report on the model for the activity and purpose of Norwegian study associations (NOU 2007:11) and from the Act on Adult Education from 1976. This was an act primarily concerned with the study associations, despite the somewhat deceptive name 'adult education' which is often associated with public and formal adult education.

The current act was significantly changed in 2020 when parts of the act were transferred to other Acts or removed. The Act on Adult Education consists of the formal Act itself and two legal regulations: The regulation of study associations approved by the Ministry of Education and Research, and the regulation of study associations approved by the Ministry of Culture and Equality. The preparatory works for the act are grounded in the Official Norwegian Report on Study

Associations – Learning for Life (NOU 2007:11), and a draft for hearing on changes in the Act on Adult Education and Act on Free Schools (Hearing 2009).

The purpose of the act is to promote lifelong learning by facilitating organised course activities as a supplement to the formal educational system in Norway. By regulating the study associations, the act aims to contribute to the motivation of and access to knowledge and competence for all, and by this promote individual growth and the ability to meet the needs of society and working life; to maintain training and participation in voluntary organisations; to fight exclusion and promote inclusion; to maintain and strengthen democracy and to provide a basis for sustainable development by engaging and developing active citizens; to contribute to the maintenance of a diverse cultural life; and to take care of the cultural legacy through learning (§1 and § 4, the Act on Adult Education) (see also NAAL [2024] for more information).

Economy and funding

The 14 approved study associations in Norway are funded based on their yearly reported course activity (www.vofo.no). The basis for the size of the state grants is the average course activity in the previous two and three years. This provides some predictability for the associations and limits the effects of sudden changes in course activity. It also creates a two- or three-year lag in the relationship between course activity and state grants.

In order to count as a course, it has to fulfil the following demands:

- 1) Courses need to be of a duration of at least four course hours (1 hour equals 60 minutes of organised teaching, with 15-minute breaks allowed).
- 2) Courses must have at least four participants (with exemptions).
- 3) Courses in study associations under the Ministry of Education need to have a course leader with professional responsibility, equal to a teacher or instructor.
- 4) The study plan (content, learning goals, target groups, teaching resources, course leader, methods, and duration) for the course must be approved by the study association or member organisations before the start of the course.
- 5) The study association or a member organisation of a study association need to be the organiser of the course.
- 6) The course needs to be publicly announced and open to all but is allowed to be targeted at certain groups. Additionally, the participants in courses need to be at least 14 years of age within the same year as the course takes place and need to participate in at least 3/4 of the course hours.

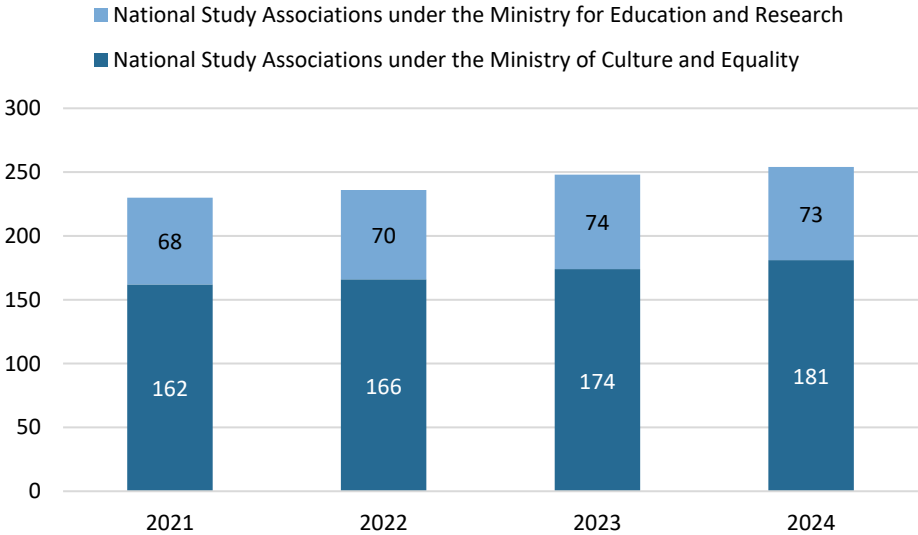
The cost each participant pay for a course varies on several dimensions, for example with the type of course, the organisation and/or study association organising the course, and the geographical location. The organisers of a course may provide a course for free, but to cover the costs, most courses have a fee for the individual participants (Oxford Research 2014).

The state funding for the study associations comes from the budgets of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Equality, but one study association can only receive funding from one ministry. The rate of state grants varies to some degree between the two ministries. The study associations on their part are responsible for the distribution of the state grant to the parts of the organisation and the member organisations providing the courses.

As of 2021, the financial arrangement for the study associations is split between the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Culture and Equality. Study associations that are primarily concerned with activities and political goals related to education and competence receive funding from the Ministry of Education. These include the study association for life-long learning, the AOF study association, the study association for business and society, and the Academic study association. Study associations that are primarily concerned with activities and political goals related to volunteering and culture are financed by the Ministry of Culture and Equality. These include the study association for culture and tradition, the study association for nature and environment, the Funkis study association, the Solidarity study association, the study association for sports, the Christian study association, the study association for music, the Sami study association, the study association for the Liberal party, and the study association for the Centre party.

The state grant to the study associations is meant to contribute to the supply of organised learning for adults by the study associations and their member organisations and to reduce the costs of learning for the participants. The state grant consists of three components: a *base grant* providing an economic basis for operating the study associations; a *training grant* aimed at reducing the costs of training for the participants to include as many as possible (not for administrative costs); and a *facilitation grant* to reduce the costs of course participation and to facilitate participation among disabled persons or other participants with special needs. In 2024, the total financial support for study associations under the Ministry of Culture and Equality was 180,600,000 NOK, and 73,312,000 NOK for study associations under the Ministry of Education and Research. As figure 2.2 shows, the level of state support has been slightly rising through the last few years (however, the numbers are not adjusted for inflation rates).

Figure 2.2: State grants for National Study Associations 2021-2024 (NOK)



<https://tilskudd.dfo.no/ordning/DT-0623>, <https://tilskudd.dfo.no/ordning/DT-0625/2022>. Current prices.

In 2024, the financial support for the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning was 10,400,000 NOK ²¹. The premise of the state grant for the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning is to contribute to the running of the organisation and to support the study associations in offering adults flexible and adapted learning of high quality.

Due to the diversification of the types of state financial support to NAAL and the individual study associations, and to the courses provided by their member organisations, an estimation of state financial support per course hour is not easily available. In 2014, Oxford Research investigated the economy in Norwegian study associations and provided clues with regard to the shares of state financial support in the total economy of the course activity (Oxford Research 2018). This report concluded that 21 per cent of the training grant and facilitation grant were used for financing the running and administration of the study associations, while 79 per cent of these grants were allocated to the organisers of the courses. Furthermore, there is a clear relationship between the size of the state grants and the course fee, meaning that the more of the course income that is made up by state grants, the lower the course fee is (Oxford Research 2018, 18).

The Act on Adult Education states that governmentally paid teaching facilities within the educational sector must be at the free disposal of the study associations or their member organisations for their course activity (after application, when public owners' needs are covered) on weekdays before 9 pm. Oxford Research (2014) found that 36 per cent of the investigated courses by study associations had used facilities for free. 29 per cent had their own facilities, while 32 rented facilities (Oxford Research 2014).

Organisational structure

The contemporary field of study associations in Norway is formally organised and hierarchical. Starting from the top of the organisational hierarchy, the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL /Voksenopplæringsforbundet – VOFO), first established in 1932 as 'Samnemnda for studiearbeid' and renamed in 1992, organises 14 national study associations as members ²². These 14 associations are approved as part of the Study Association System (Studieforbundsordningen), regulated by the Act on Adult Education. Together, these 14 associations have 509 member organisations of all sorts, mostly national but some local.

As seen in table 1 below, the FUNKIS study association for the disabled, chronically ill, and their next of kin is the biggest study association in terms of member organisations (93 member organisations). In second place is the Christian study association (85 member organisations), and in third place is the study association for sports (55 member organisations). A detailed overview of the member organisations in all national study associations can be found in the appendix (table 2.9).

²¹ They also provide support to FuN, an interesorganisation with members from all over the field of (formal) education, from the largest universities to the smallest online-schools. They work for the promotion of knowledge and development of the field of flexible education. <https://fleksibelutdanning.no/>

²² Idrettens studieforbund, Kristelig studieforbund, Musikkens studieforbund, Samisk studieforbund, Senterpartiets Studieforbund, Studieforbundet AOF Norge, Studieforbundet Funkis, Studieforbundet kultur og tradisjon, Studieforbundet Livslang Læring, Studieforbundet natur og miljø, Studieforbundet Solidaritet, Venstres studieforbund, Studieforbundet næring og samfunn, Akademisk Studieforbund

Table 2.1: The umbrella organisation, the national study associations, and their member organisations

The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning	Study association	Number of member organisations
	The Funkis study association	93
	The Christian study association	85
	The study association for sports	55
	The study association for culture and tradition	42
	The study association for business and society	45
	The Solidarity study association	43
	The AOF study association	34
	The study association for music	33
	The Academic study association	27
	The study association for Nature and environment	23
	The study association for life-long learning	21
	The study association for the Liberal party	4
	The study association for the Centre party	3
	The Sami study association	1
	Total	509

When adding also the local associational level of all these 509 member organisations, the number of organisations that are involved in an activity related to the study associations is vast. One intake to estimate such a number is to use survey-data from voluntary organisations in Norway in 2019 to see how many associations include the activity of studying in the organisation. From a survey of 828 local voluntary associations of all sorts (ICNPO), 45 per cent of them included some form of course, training or teaching activity. 19 per cent of the organisations used one of the study associations in relation to this activity. Based on an estimation of the actual number of associations in Norway in 2019 – 95,311 (Arnesen & Sivesind 2020) – and provided the sample is representative, a cautious estimation of the number of organisations with study activities in Norway is 42,890, and 18,109 with the aid of the study associations. So, if we take these estimations into account, there were more than 18,000 local voluntary associations in Norway with study or educational activities supported or supplied by a study association in 2019.

Activities

In Norway, the main role of the study associations is to approve plans for studies and to assist, help, and counsel their member organisations and their local chapters, who provide the courses in most cases. The study associations' activities include assistance with both formal and non-formal training – meaning courses with or without a closing examination.

In Norway, educational activities, learning, and teaching are mainly conducted in the member organisations of the study associations, and on these organisations' initiatives. These may be internal and external educational services and courses, for members or non-members, as an integral part of the organisational activity, or as a supplement. The main task of the study associations is to offer various forms of adult education services. Most often, the education or training is performed in the form of study circles or courses in the member organisation, limited in time and

place, and not bound by specific curricula or formal examination. However, the study associations are obliged to provide the participants with documentation of course participation and the content of the course, for instance in relation to assessments of competencies achieved. The courses may be performed, in total or in parts, using electronic communication platforms, allowing for live teaching and communication between participants and between participants and the course leader.

The 14 national study associations in Norway differ in profile, size, form of organisation, and type of activities. While some study associations perform most of the educational activities themselves, in other associations the educational activities are performed solely by their member organisations.

In Norway, there is a quite detailed official registration (by Statistics Norway) of the educational activities related to the national study associations, due to their funding being dependent on their documented activity. Annually, every course performed by one of the study associations or their member organisations is registered, with the course as the main unit. Additional information registered per course is the study association responsible for the course, the topic, the duration, and the age and gender of the course participants. The statistics reported below are based on both the raw data shared by NAAL/Statistics Norway and the basic statistics on NAAL's website.

In 2022, the 14 study associations provided a total of 43,312 courses to 501,596 participants with a total of 1.030.457 hours of courses, spread out in 389 voluntary organisations. The number of course participants equals almost 10 per cent of the Norwegian population.

The educational activities took place in 349 out of 356 municipalities in Norway. In table 2.2, the 14 study associations are ranked by the number of courses provided by themselves or by their respective member organisations. Here we find the Funkis study association for the disabled, chronically ill and their next of kin on top (7131 courses), the study association for culture and tradition in second place (6434 courses), and the study association for music in third (5474 courses). However, when looking at the number of course hours, the study association for music ranks on top (274,816 hours), while the study association for culture and tradition ranks in second place (190,902 hours), and the Funkis study association for the disabled, chronically ill and their next of kin is third (141,241 hours).

Table 2.2: Activity in the 14 study associations in 2022

Study association	Courses	Course hours
The Funkis study association	7131	141,241
The study association for culture and tradition	6434	190,902
The study association for music	5474	274,816
The Christian study association	5180	123,672
The study association for life-long learning	4859	17,475
The study association for nature and environment	3863	75,540
The study association for sports	3533	40,193
The academic study association	2389	32,337
The study association for business and society	1352	24,812
The AOF study association	1279	32,291
The study association for the Liberal party	725	7675
The study association for the Centre party	664	11,046
The Solidarity study association	371	54,274
The Sami study association	58	4183
Total	43,312	1,030,457

Regarding the subjects of the courses supported or provided by the study associations arts and crafts is the most popular subject in terms of individual participants, followed by courses in organisation and leadership, and courses within health, social services, and sports.

Table 2.3: Course subject (main categories) by number of participants

Course subject	Number of participants
Arts and crafts	171,211
Organisation and leadership	129,316
Health, social services, and sports	63,811
Humanistic, religion, and philosophy of life	43,681
Nature, ecology, environment protection, and outdoor activities	39,736
Science, industry, and technical	23,347
Social sciences	19,184
Languages	6333
Economics and ICT	3383
Transport and communications	1150
Service	444
Total	501,596

Source: www.vofo.no

Broken down into more detailed course categories, table 2.4 below shows that the ten most common courses provided are 1) healthcare, 2) song, vocal music and choir, 3) Christianity, 4) instructor, coaching, and leader education, 5) collaboration, 6) music, 7) union representation, 8) live-stock care, 9) other organisational and leadership subjects, and 10) political schooling.

Table 2.4: Number of courses by subject in 2022

Healthcare	4501
Song, vocal music, and choir	3748
Christianity	2989
Instructor, trainer and leader education	2842
Collaboration	2317
Music	2033
Union representation	1693
Livestock care	1601
Other organisational/leadership training	1531
Political schooling	1395
Other humanities subjects	974
Hunting	942
Folk dance	940
Sociopolitical subjects and rights	847
Theatre and drama	845
Other healthcare and sports subjects	814
First aid	802
Organisational science	783
Instrumental teaching	696
Other handcraft subjects	646
Building and construction	592
Forestry	506
History	505
Norwegian as a second language	493
NGO representative/trust/position	492
Sports subjects	447
Outdoors subjects	436
Wood, log building, interior, carpentry	409
Other nature, ecology, environmental protection	380
Other aesthetics	328
Psychology	275
Other industry and technical subjects	275
Health and nutrition	233
Textile	219
Dance	187
Work environment/health and safety	177
Form and aesthetics	170
ICT and other electronics	157
Other ICT-subjects	151
Law	131
Agriculture	114
Metal	91
Genealogy	90
Drawing, painting, graphics	86
Other social science subjects	83
Gardening, plant and crop protection	73
Music theory	72
Pedagogy and teaching	69
French	65
Literature and writing workshop	63
Spanish	60
Other languages	59

English	45
Norwegian as a first language	44
Community/local society	43
Other sciences	43
Film, video, TV, sound and light technique	41
Fisheries and mariculture	41
Photography	40
Ethics	40
Information and media	35
Other communications and transport	35
Sign language	32
Accounting	30
Ball sports (football, handball, etc.)	30
Nutrition	28
Other service	28
Ceramics	26
Costumes, design	25
Biology	23
Machine technique	23
Environmental protection	22
Arts and culture	21
Electro technique	20
Household and cleaning	19
Arts and crafts	14
Marine traffic, coast, and navigation	14
Philosophy	13
Russian	12
Other economic subjects	11
Italian	10
Winter sports (ski, snow, etc..)	10
Chemistry	10
Hotel, restaurant, and commercial kitchen	10
German	9
Mathematics	9
Other faiths and philosophies of life	8
Water sports (swimming, sea sports, rescuing)	8
Cashier, accounting	7
Sami	6
Pre-school and daycare	6
Speech and debate technique	4
Mechanics, cars/mc/motor	4
Text, spreadsheets, graphics	3
Braille	2
Journalism	2
Trade	2
Secretary, administration and staffing	2
Cours for elected representatives	1
Aerial traffic	1
Physics	1
Janitor training	1
Total	43.312

With regards to geography, there seems to be some variation regarding courses and participants with the Innlandet region as the most active with 11.4 courses provided per 1000 inhabitants, while the most newly founded (and dissolved by 2024) region Viken has 6.9 courses per 1000 inhabitants. This indicates a certain urban-rural distinction in activity levels. With a more accurate measurement of municipal centrality (and other municipal traits) appended to the existing data, we could have analysed in more detail to what degree the urban/rural dimension provides significant differences in the activity levels of study associations in Norway. As we can see in table 2.5 below, Oslo, the capital and most populated region in Norway, has the largest course activity, but relative to its population it ranks six out of ten. So, the urban/rural dimension is not clarified by these numbers.

Figure 2.3: Courses provided per 1000 inhabitants across the regions of Norway

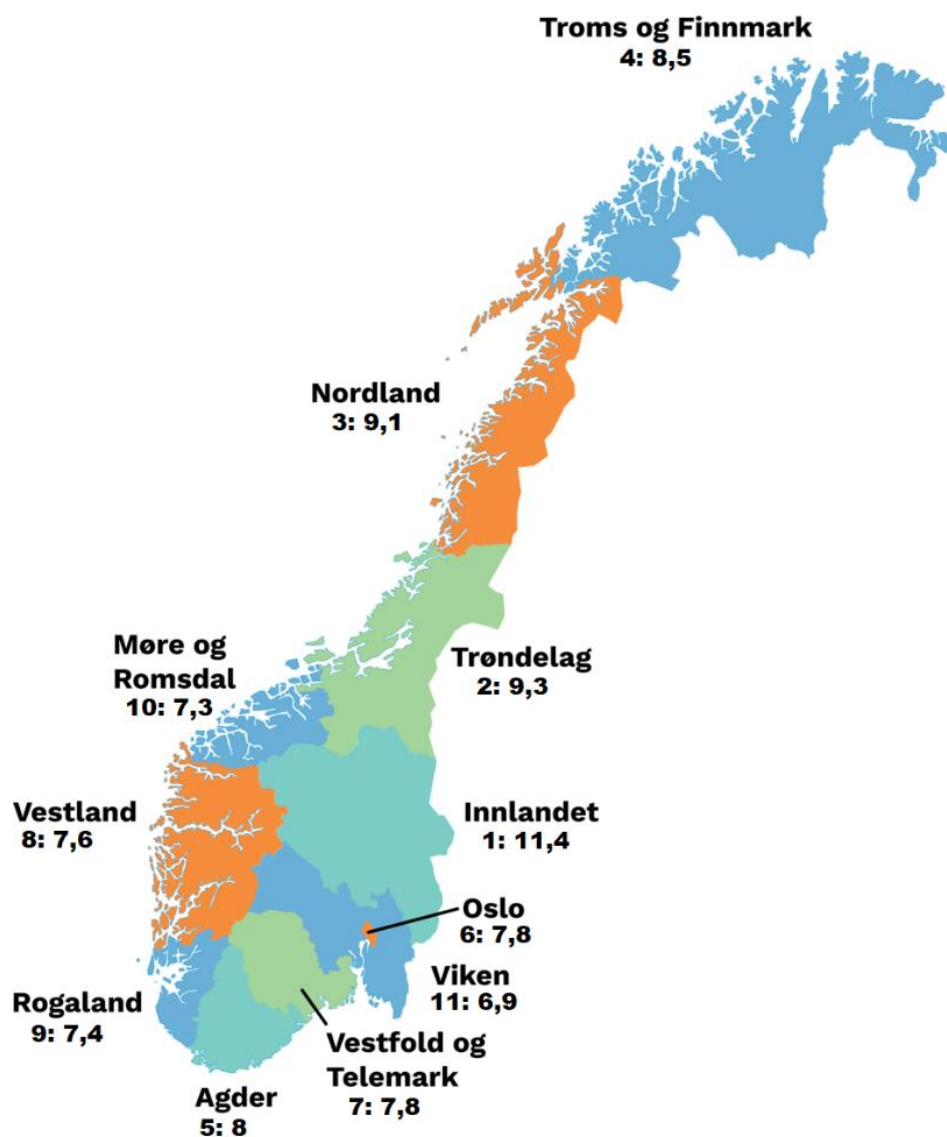


Table 2.5: Course statistics by region in 2022

Region	Courses	Course hours	Participants	Courses per 1000 inhabitants
Innlandet	4229	110,781	40,606	11.4
Trøndelag	4392	142,743	48,428	9.3
Nordland	2197	57,362	21,009	9.1
Troms og Finnmark	2058	55,099	22,490	8.5
Agder	2482	58,353	25,921	8
Oslo	5468	159,662	90,923	7.8
Vestfold og Telemark	3294	95,509	36,086	7.8
Vestland	4895	127,321	56,532	7.6
Rogaland	3619	89,240	36,518	7.4
Møre og Romsdal	1945	44,866	22,228	7.3
Viken	8733	246,321	100,855	6.9
Total	43,312	1,187,257	501,596	-

Source: www.vofo.no

Participants

When looking at the number of participants in the courses provided by the study associations and their member organisations in 2022 (table 2.6), the academic study association ranks on top (80,869 participants), the study association for music is in second place (74,769 participants), and the study association for lifelong learning in third (66,604 participants). The Sami study association and the study associations for the political parties have the lowest number of participants.

Overall, there are more women than men participating in courses. Still, there are some variations in the different study associations. For example, the study association for business and society, the study association for sports, the AOF study association, and the study association for the Liberal party and the Centre party have more men than women among the participants. Such gender distribution resembles the distribution of volunteers and active participants in the regular voluntary associations in the respective fields (i.e. more men volunteering within sports, see for instance Eimhjellen 2018).

Table 2.6: Course participants in the 14 study associations by gender in 2022

Study association	Men		Women		Total N
	N	Per cent	N	Per cent	
The academic study association	30,267	37	50,602	63	80,869
The study association for music	31,613	42	43,156	58	74,769
The study association for life-long learning	30,575	46	36,029	54	66,604
The Funkis study association	16,640	28	41,770	72	58,410
The study association for culture and tradition	13,937	25	41,299	75	55,236
The study association for sports	28,327	60	19,108	40	47,435
The Christian study association	17,234	43	23,217	57	40,451
The study association for nature and environment	15,439	45	18,606	55	34,045
The AOF study association	11,095	54	9529	46	20,624
The study association for business and society	8788	74	3041	26	11,829
The study association for the Liberal party	2491	56	1966	44	4457
The study association for the Centre party	2410	56	1862	44	4272
The Solidarity study association	677	31	1525	69	2202
The Sami study association	104	26	289	74	393
Total	209,597	42	291,999	58	501,596

N is the absolute number of participants and per cent is the share of participants.

There are also gender variances with regard to participation in different types of courses (table 2.7). Women are clearly overrepresented in courses within Health-, social- and sports, social sciences, language training, service, and aesthetics and handcraft, while men are overrepresented in courses within transport and communication, science, industry, and technology, and nature, ecology, environmental protection, and outdoors activity.

Table 2.7: Course participants by course subject and gender in 2022

Course subject	Men		Women		Total N
	N	Per cent	N	Per cent	
Aesthetics and handcraft	61,424	36	109,787	64	171,211
Organisation and leadership	60,524	47	68,792	53	129,316
Health, social, and sports	20,195	32	43,616	68	63,811
Humanistic, religion, and philosophy of life	19,147	44	24,534	56	43,681
Nature, ecology, environment protection, and outdoor activities	20,959	53	18,777	47	39,736
Science, industry, and technical	16,408	60	6939	30	23,347
Social science	6476	44	12,708	66	19,184
Language	2176	44	4157	66	6333
Economics, and ICT	1347	40	2036	60	3383
Transport and communication	791	69	359	31	1150
Service	150	44	294	66	444
Total	209,597	42	291,999	58	501,596

N is the absolute number of participants and per cent is the share of participants.

A majority of course participants (45 per cent) are over 50 years old, while less than a third are between 30 and 49 years old (28 per cent) and between 14 and 39 years old (27 per cent). The study associations for the disabled (Funkis) and the study association for music are more dominated by the oldest age groups, while the Christian study association and the study association for sports have the youngest participants.

Table 2.8: Course participants in the 14 study associations in 2022, by age groups

Study association	14-29 years		30-49 years		50+ years		Total N
	N	Per cent	N	Per cent	N	Per cent	
The academic study association	12,933	16	42,689	53	25,247	31	80,869
The study association for music	8937	12	13,727	18	52,105	70	74,769
The study association for lifelong learning	25,207	38	16,028	24	25,369	38	66,604
The Funkis study association	2791	5	8772	15	46,847	80	58,410
The study association for culture and tradition	18,875	34	5066	9	31,295	57	55,236
The study association for sports	21,687	46	18,438	39	7310	15	47,435
The Christian study association	23,730	58	7113	18	9608	24	40,451
The study association for nature and environment	12,858	38	11,468	34	9719	28	34,045
The AOF study association	5040	25	8928	43	6656	32	20,624
The study association for business and society	3444	29	4915	42	3470	29	11,829
The study association for the Liberal party	780	18	1596	36	2081	46	4457
The study association for the Centre party	270	6	1414	33	2588	61	4272
The Solidarity study association	601	27	686	31	915	42	2202
The Sami study association	117	30	89	23	187	47	393
Total	137,270	27	140,929	28	223,397	45	501,596

N is the absolute number of participants and per cent is the share of participants.

Educators and facilitators

Given the number of courses provided with the aid of the study associations in Norway, there are also a lot of instructors, teachers, and facilitators involved in the courses. Unfortunately, we do not have the same official statistics on the instructors or teachers. However, based on a survey among approximately 1500 teachers/instructors in courses with support from a study association (Talberg 2019) we may get a hint of the demography of the course teachers or instructors. Almost all of the 14 study associations were represented in the survey, but the results are not statistically generalisable for the whole population of teachers/instructors. Still, it will give us a certain impression of the demography.

In her study, Talberg (2019) finds that the gender balance is almost even, with 51 per cent of the respondents being women. Age-wise, 38 per cent of the teachers/instructors are between 45 and 59 years old, 35 per cent are between 60 and 74 years old, 16 per cent are between 30 and 44 years old, 6 per cent are 75 years old or more, and 5 per cent are under 30

years old. Over half of the teachers/instructors (54 per cent) are full-time employed outside being a course instructor, 25 per cent are retired, 10 per cent are part-time employed, some are unable to work (6 per cent), and a few are students (2 per cent), homemakers (0.5 per cent) or unemployed (0.5 per cent). Most of the teachers/instructors have a higher education from a university or university college, either a three-year bachelor's degree (34 per cent) or a five-year master's degree or higher (30 per cent). 20 per cent have a vocational education. 13 per cent have a high school degree, and 2 per cent have primary school or less as their highest education. So, the typical teacher/instructor in courses associated with a study association is between 40-59 years old, full-time employed with a bachelor's degree.

For some courses, there are formal requirements for the qualification of educators, teachers, or instructors, for instance, a certificate of apprenticeship or authorisation. In other instances, the member organisations may themselves describe the competencies they require the course instructor/teacher to have. Educators, teachers, or instructors can either be volunteers (with some economic compensation) or they can be paid as self-employed.

Schematic overview - Norway

Theme	Description
<p>Definition and description of the field: The common definition of the field is the movement/form of popular education characterised in each country as a study circle/evening school/local study association.</p> <p>The study has a particular focus on the local activities and organisations organised under national study associations that work with non-formal education/non-formal learning. In countries where this is relevant, activities are included that are directly comparable to the local activities of the study associations that receive funding according to the same legislation/guidelines.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the field is briefly described in relation to other non-formal adult education actors/categories that are not included in the study.</p>	<p>In Norway, a study association is a democratic, non-profit voluntary organisation with adult education as its primary purpose. Additionally, to be formally approved as a study association, one must have at least two organisations associated with the study association as members. The study associations are regulated by the Act on Adult Education.</p> <p>The field of study associations is formal and hierarchically organised, composed of 14 approved national study associations all organised under the national umbrella organisation The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning – NAAL (Voksenopplæringsforbundet - VOFO) The 14 national study associations have a total of 509 voluntary organisations associated to them as members.</p> <p>In a <i>minimum variant</i>, a study association consist of a single central administration that approves study plans, provides advice and support to the organisers of courses and course participants, and distributes the funds to the organisational units/levels and member organisations that are responsible for organising the courses. In a <i>maximum variant</i>, the study associations consist of a regional and a local organisational level with employees, in addition to the national central administration.</p> <p>The basic educational activities, learning and teaching, are mainly conducted in the individual member organisations of the study associations, for their members or non-members, either on the national, regional or local level in the member organisations.</p> <p>Folk high schools are related to, but conceptually separated from study associations and study circles in this report.</p>
<p>History: Briefly describe the most important turning points in the history of study associations and study circles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When were the central national organisations in the field established? • Which movements are the central national organisations rooted in? • When were they first mentioned in the law? • What key legislative changes have been made since then? 	<p>The concept of study associations grew out from the popular grassroots movements and the period of enlightenment in the 1800s.</p> <p>In 1932, 'Samnemnda for studiearbeid', later renamed to 'Voksenopplæringsforbunde' (the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL)) was established.</p> <p>In 1935, a state subsidy was allocated in Norway for books in study circles</p> <p>In 1949, the state grant became much more generous, subsidising also study leaders and material.</p> <p>Following the Act on Adult Education from 1976 the approval for subsidies to organisations was regulated under new rules. Approximately 40 organisations were now approved for state grants, while a similar number of organisations applied for approval for such state grants.</p>

	<p>In 1979, the system of reimbursement was abandoned, and the grants became more unpredictable, dependent on the yearly state budget negotiations.</p> <p>In 1992, an addendum to the Act on Adult Education stated that organisations approved for state grants for study activities were required to be members of an approved study association and that the approved study associations had to have at least two member organisations. Henceforth, the system with national study associations as of today was established to secure the organisation and structure of the field.</p>
<p>Rules and regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the national laws/legal frameworks regulating the economy and activities of study circles/evening schools. • What is the name of the law/legislative framework regulating the activities and/or the financial support for the local study associations/study circles? • How is the aim of the local study associations/study circles described in the law/legal framework? • How is the field delimited in the law/legal framework? <p>Public authority oversight: Describe the mechanisms that ensure local compliance with regulations in the field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this performed by local or national authorities? • And how does it work in practice? 	<p>The Act on Adult Education (2020) consists of the formal Act itself and two legal regulations: The regulation of study associations approved by the Ministry of Education and research, and The regulation of study associations approved by the Ministry of Culture and Equality. The preparatory works for the act are grounded in the Official Norwegian Report Study Associations – Learning for Life (NOU, 2007:11), and draft for hearing on changes in the Act on Adult Education and Act on Free Schools (Hearing, 2009).</p> <p>The purpose of the act is to promote lifelong learning by facilitating organised course activities as a supplement to the formal educational system in Norway. By regulating the study associations, the act aims to contribute to the motivation of and access to knowledge and competence to all, and by this promote individual growth and an ability to meet societal and working life needs; to maintain training and participation in voluntary organisations; to fight exclusion and promote inclusion; to maintain and strengthen democracy and to provide a basis for sustainable development by engaging and developing active citizens; to contribute to the maintenance of a diverse cultural life; and to take care of the cultural legacy through learning.</p> <p>In Norway, a study association is a legally protected title with the criteria of being a democratic, non-profit and voluntary organisation with adult education as its primary purpose. Additionally, to be formally approved as a study association it must have: 1) learning as a main goal and otherwise have a nonprofit purpose, 2) have the term ‘study association’ in its name, 3) have a democratic organisational structure, 4) have activities all over the country and a regional anchoring, 5) have as a minimum performed 30,000 course hours per year in average for the past two and three years, and 6) have at least two organisations associated to the study association as members. The courses provided need to be open for all and have a duration of at least eight hours. Study associations for political parties and the Sami study association have their own specific regulations regarding activity.</p>
<p>Funding: Describe briefly the sources of funding for the activities of study circles/evening</p>	<p>The state funding for the study associations comes from the budgets of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Equality. The study associations are responsible for the distribution of the</p>

<p>schools (for instance government budgets, grants, subsidies, donations, and participant fees.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the size of the fees for participants? How do these compare to participant costs of other leisure activities (e.g. sports clubs)? • Does the public support come from the local level, national level or both? • How has the local and/or national financial support developed in 2012-2022 in both absolute (level of support) and relative (support per capita) measures? 	<p>state grant to the parts of the organisation and the member organisations providing the courses. The basis for the size of the state grants is the average course activity in the previous two and three years.</p> <p>In 2024, the total financial support to study associations under the Ministry of Culture and Equality was NOK 180,600,000, and NOK 73,312,000 to study associations under the Ministry of Education. In 2024, the financial support to the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning was NOK 10,400,000.</p> <p>Since the early 2000s, the state support for the study associations has been less stable, and reductions have regularly been proposed. Yet after heavy mobilisation, lobbying and negotiations, the cuts have been reduced. Overall, the state financial support has decreased since the early 2000s, especially considering adjustment for inflation.</p>
<p>Premises and facilities: Describe in which type of premises and facilities the activities take place.</p> <p>Describe who is responsible for finding the premises/facilities.</p>	<p>The Act on Adult Education states that governmentally paid teaching facilities within the educational sector must be at the free disposal of the study associations or their member organisations for their course activities (after application, when public owners' needs are covered) on weekdays before 9 pm. The knowledge of this right to free use of facilities varies among local governments.</p>
<p>Organisation (national/local): Describe the organisational structure of the study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they organised as voluntary associations or as other types of organisations? • How many organisations exist? At the national level (national study organisations), and at the local level (local study associations/study circles)? • Give concrete examples of the different types of organisations at the local level. 	<p>In Norway, a study association is a democratic, non-profit voluntary organisation with adult education as its primary purpose.</p> <p>The contemporary field of study associations in Norway is a formally organised and hierarchical field. Starting from the top of the organisational hierarchy, the Norwegian Association for Adult Learning (NAAL /Voksenopplæringsforbundet – VOFO) organises 14 national study associations as members. Together, these 14 associations have 509 member organisations of all sorts, mostly national but some local.</p> <p>A cautious estimation based on statistics from 2009, counts over 15,600 local voluntary associations in Norway that organised study or educational activities supported by or supplied by a study association. These include local sports clubs, chapters of the Red Cross, labour unions, gardening clubs, marching bands etc.</p>
<p>Activities: Describe the <i>format</i> of the activities and the <i>content/subject</i> of the activities.</p> <p>Describe the <i>scope</i> of the activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many activity hours are included in the overall scope of activities of the study circles/evening schools (2012-2022)? 	<p>In Norway, the main role of the study associations is to approve plans for studies, and to assist, help and counsel their member organisations and their local chapters.</p> <p>The educational activities, learning and teaching, are mainly conducted in the member organisations of the study associations, and on these organisations' initiatives. These may be internal and external educational services and courses, for members or non-members, as an integral part of the organisational activity, or as a supplement.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the activity hours distributed across subjects? 	<p>Most often, the education or training is performed in the form of study circles or courses in the member organisation, limited in time and place, and not bound by specific curricula or formal examination.</p> <p>In 2022, the 14 study associations provided a total of 43,312 courses to 501,596 participants with a total of 1,030,457 hours of courses, spread out in 389 voluntary organisations. The educational activities took place in 349 out of 356 municipalities in Norway. The number of course participants equals almost 10 per cent of the Norwegian population.</p> <p>The courses provided by the study associations cover a wide range of topics, levels, geographical locations and goals. The ten most common course subjects, in terms of individual participants, in 2022 were 1) Healthcare, 2) Song, vocal music and choir, 3) Christianity, 4) Instructor, coaching, and leader education, 5) Collaboration, 6) Music, 7) Union representation, 8) Livestock care, 9) Other organisational and leadership subjects, and 10) Political schooling.</p>
<p>Educators and facilitators: Describe whether there are any qualification requirements for educators/facilitators in study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the educators/facilitators volunteers or paid? 	<p>The average teacher/instructor in courses associated with a study association is between 40-59 years old, full-time employed, with a bachelor's degree.</p> <p>For some courses, there are formal requirements for the qualification of educators, teachers or instructors, for instance, a certificate of apprenticeship or authorisation. In other instances, the member organisations may themselves describe the competence they require the course instructor/teacher to have.</p> <p>Educators, teachers or instructors can either be volunteers (with some economic compensation) or they can be paid as self-employed.</p>
<p>Participants: Profile the participants in study circles/evening schools including their age, gender and educational backgrounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who and how many participate in the activities? • What is the proportion of the adult population participating in study circles/evening school activities? • Describe, if possible, to what extent marginalised groups (e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, people living in remote areas), 	<p>In 2022, there were 501,596 participants in courses through the study associations. This equals almost 10 per cent of the Norwegian population.</p> <p>The Academic Study Association had the most participants (80,869), the Study Association for Music was in second place (74,769 participants), and the Study Association for Lifelong Learning in third (66,604 participants). The Sami study association and the study associations for the political parties have the lowest number of participants.</p> <p>Overall, there are more women than men participating in courses through the study associations. Still, there are some variations in the different study associations, resembling the distribution of</p>

participate in study circles/evening school activities.	<p>volunteers and active in other voluntary associations on the respective fields, for instance, more men in associations related to sports.</p> <p>A majority of course participants (45 per cent) are over 50 years old, while under a third are between 30 and 49 years old (28 per cent) and between 14 and 39 years old (27 per cent). The study associations for the disabled (Funkis), and the study association for music are more dominated by the oldest, while the Christian study association and the study association for sports are more dominated by the youngest participants.</p> <p>The Innlandet region is the most active region with 11.4 courses provided per 1000 inhabitants, while the most newly founded (and dissolved by 2024) region Viken had 6.9 courses per 1000 inhabitants.</p>
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Appendix

Table 2.9: The national study associations under the umbrella organisation NAAL and their 509 member organisations

Studieforbundet AOF Norge	Arbeiderbevegelsens Presseforbund, AEF–Arbeiderbevegelsens rus- og sosialpolitiske Forbund, Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking ,Arbeiderpartiet, Creo – forbundet for kunst og kultur (tidl musikernes), EL & IT Forbundet, Fagforbundet, Fellesforbundet, Fellesorganisasjonen, Forbundet for Ledelse og Teknikk, Foreningen Norges Døvblinde, Framfylkingen, Handel og Kontor i Norge, Industri Energi, Kristne Arbeidere, Landsorganisasjonen i Norge, LO Stat, Norges Handikapforbund, Norges Offisersforbund, Norsk Arbeidsmandsforbund, Norsk Fængsels- og Friomsorgsforbund, Norsk Flygerforbund, Norsk Folkehjelp ,Norsk Jernbaneforbund, Norsk Kabinforening, Norsk Lokomotivmannsforbund, Norsk Manuellterapeutforening ,Norsk Nærings- og Nytelsesmiddelarbeiderforbund, Norsk Sjømannsforbund, Norsk Sjøoffisersforbund, Norsk Tjenestemannslag, Norske Idrettsutøveres Sentralorganisasjon – NISO, Pensjonistforbundet, Skolenes landsforbund
Studieforbundet FUNKIS	Achilles of Norway, ADHD Norge, Afasiforbundet i Norge, AFN, Anridi Norge, Autismeforeningen i Norge, AIN, Barnekreftforeningen (tidligere SKB), Bekhterev Norge, Bipolarforeningen, Blodkreftforeningen, Blærekreftforeningen, Carcinor, Cerebral Parese Forening, CPF, Diabetesforbundet, DF, Dysleksi Norge, DIN, Foreningen for autoimmune leversykdommer, Foreningen for blødere i Norge, Foreningen for Fragilt X-syndrom, Foreningen for Hjertesyke Barn, FFHB, Foreningen for Kroniske Smertepasienter, FKS, Foreningen for Muskelsyke, FFM, Foreningen for Muskelsykes Ungdom, Foreningen for Marfans Syndrom, FMS, Foreningen for Søvnssykdommer, FFS, Foreningen Rastløse Bein, Gynkreftforeningen, Hjernesvulstforeningen, Hørselshemmedes barns organisasjon, HHBO, Hørselshemmedes Landsforbund, HLF, HHT-Oslerforeningen Norge, Hvite Ørn, hypoPARA NORGE, Foreningen for Bardet-Biedl Syndrom, Landsforeningen We Shall Overcome, WSO, Landsforbundet for kombinert syns- og hørselshemmede/døvblinde, LSHDB, Landsforbundet for Utviklingshemmede og Pårørende, LUPE, LHS, Landsforeningen for Huntingtons Sykdom, Landsforeningen for Hjerte-og Lungesyke, LHL, Landsforeningen for Nyrepasienter og Transplanterte, LFO, Landsforeningen for Overvektige, LPP, Landsforeningen for Pårørende innen Psykisk helse, Lymfekreftforeningen, Lungekreftforeningen, MH, Mental Helse, Mental Helse Ungdom, Momentum, Morbus Addisons Forening, MAF, MS-forbundet i Norge, MSF, Munn- og halskreftforeningen, Norges Astma- og Allergiforbundet, NAAF, Norges Blindeforbund, NBF, Norges Blindeforbunds Ungdom, NBfU, Norges Døveforbund, NDøF, Norges Fibromyalgi Forbund, NFF, Norges Førerhundforbund, NFF, Norges Handikapforbunds Ungdom, NHFU, Norges Myalgisk Encefalopati Forening, NMEF, Norges Parkinsonforbund, NPaf, Norsk Cøliakiforenings Ungdom, NCFU, Norsk Dystoniforening, NDyF, Norsk Epilepsiforbund, NEF, Norsk Forening for Albinisme, Norsk Forening for Cystisk Fibrose, Norsk Forening for Ehlers – Danlos Syndrom, EDS, Norsk forening for

	<p>slagrammede, NFS, Norsk Forbund for Svaksynte, NFS, Norsk Forening for Nevrofibromatose, NFFNF, Norsk Forening for Osteogenesis Imperfecta, NFOI, Norsk forening for stomi, reservoar og mage- og tarmkreft, NORILCO, Norsk Glaukomforening, Norsk Interesseforening for Kortvokste, NiK, Norsk Interesseforening for stamming og løpsk tale, Norsk lymfødem- og lipødemforbund, Norsk Revmatikerforbund, NRF, Norsk Tourette Forening, NTF, Norske servicehunder, Norske Synshemmedes Sjakkforbund, NSSF, Norsk Dysmeliforening, Norsk forening for Angelmans Syndrom, PEF Ung, Personskadeforbundet LTN, Prostatakreftforeningen, Psoriasis- og eksemforbundet, PEF, Ryggforeningen i Norge, RIN, Retinitis Pigmentosa-foreningen i Norge, Ryggmargsbrokk – og Hydrocephalusforeningen, RBHF, Rådgivning om spiseforstyrrelser, ROS, Ridderrennet, Sarkomer, Spandyloartrittforbundet Norge, Stoffskifteforbundet Stofo, Turnersyndromforeningen Norge, Ung Kreft, Unge Funksjonshemmede, Voksne med medfødt hjertefeil, VMH</p>
<p>Idrettens Studieforbund</p>	<p>Norges Ake-, Bob- og Skeletonforbund, Norges Amerikanske idretters Forbund, Norges Badminton Forbund, Norges Bandyforbund, Norges Basketballforbund, Norges Bedriftsidrettsforbund, Norges Biljardforbund, Norges Bokseforbund, Norges Bordtennisforbund, Norges Bowlingforbund, Norges Brettforbund, Norges Bryteforbund, Norges Bueskytterforbund, Norges Castingforbund, Norges Cricketforbund, Norges Curlingforbund, Norges Cycleforbund, Norges Danseforbund, Norges Dykkeforbund, Norges Fekteforbund, Norges Fotballforbund, Norges Fleridrettsforbund, Norges Friidrettsforbund, Norges Functional Fitnessforbund, Norges Golfforbund, Norges Gymnastikk- og Turnforbund, Norges Hundekjørerforbund, Norges Håndballforbund, Norges Ishockeyforbund, Norges Judoforbund, Norges Kampsportforbund, Norges Kickboxing Forbund, Norges Klatreforbund, Norges Luftsportsforbund, Norges Motorsportsforbund, Norges Orienteringsforbund, Norges Padleforbund, Norges Roforbund, Norges Rugbyforbund, Norges Rytterforbund, Norges Seilforbund, Norges Skiforbund, Norges Skiskytterforbund, Norges Skytterforbund, Norges Skøyteforbund, Norges Softball og Baseball Forbund, Norges Squashforbund, Norges Studentidrettsforbund, Norges Styrkeløftforbund, Norges Svømmeforbund, Norges Tennisforbund, Norges Triathlonforbund, Norges Vannskiforbund og Wakeboard forbund, Norges Vektløfterforbund, Norges Volleyballforbund</p>
<p>Kristelig studieforbund (K-stud)</p>	<p>Areopagos, Blå Kors i Norge, Caritas Norge, Credokirken Studieråd, Den Eritreiske Evangelisk Lutherske Kirke i Norge, Den indre Sjømannsmisjon, Den Nordiske Katolske Kirke i Norge, Det Norske Bibelselskap, Det Norske Baptistsamfunn, Den Evangelisk Lutherske Frikirke, Den Norske Israelsmisjon, Den norske kirke, Det Evangelisk-Lutherske Kirkesamfunn, Det Norske Misjonsselskap, DMI Norge (Internasjonal Døvemisjon), Doxa Bibelsenter, EWTN Norge (Rita medier og produksjon), For bibel og bekjennelse, Frelsesarmeens Studieråd, Granheinstiftelsen, Guds menighet Vegårdshei, Haugeinstituttet, HEKTA, Himmelpartner, Hemsedal Høyfjellssenter, IKO - Kirkelig pedagogisk senter, Indremisjonsforbundet, KA Kirkelig arbeidsgiver- og interesseorganisasjon, KFUK-KFUM-speiderne, Kirkelig undervisningsforbund, Kirkens SOS i Norge, Klesutdeling, Kristen Idrettskontakt, Kristent Interkulturelt Arbeid, Kristent Arbeid Blant Blinde og svaksynte, Kingdom of God Light of Christ, Kirken i Dalen, Kvinner i Nettverk, Lærernes Misjonsforbund, Landsorganisasjonen</p>

	for Tverrkirkelig Ungdom, NMSU, NaMu Norge, Metodistkirken, Maran Ata Norge, Mercy House, Misjonskirken Norge, Navigatørene, Noracta, Nordic Harvest Mission, Norges KFUK/KFUM, Norges Kristelige Folkehøgskolelag, Norges Kristelige Student- og Skoleungdomslag, Norges Kristelige Studentforbund, Norme, Norsk Råd for Misjon og Evangelisering, Normisjon, Norsk Luthersk Misjonssamband, Norges Kristne Råd, Norges Unge Katolikker, Norges Samemisjon, Norske Kirkeakademier, Pinsebevegelsen, Stiftelsen Lia Gård retreatsenter, Stiftelsen Skaperkraft, Stiftelsen Korsvei, Sandomstiftelsen, Scandinavia Chinese Christian Church in Oslo, Sjømannskirken, Skjærgårds Live, Skjærgårdsgospel, Stavanger Internasjonal Church, Stiftelsen Ellev Ministries Norge, Stiftelsen Kraft, Stiftelsen MorFarBarn, Stiftelsen Oase, Syvendedags Adventist-kirken, Søgne Menighetsforening, Søndagsskolen Norge, Stiftelsen Lia Gård retreatsenter, Tent Norge AS, Troens Ord Sandefjord, Teleios Life Norge, Ungdom i Oppdrag, Vineyard Norge Support, Ynglingeforeningen, Y's Men region Norge
Musikkens studieforbund	AKKS, BandORG, De unges Orkesterforbund – UNOF, Dissimilis Norge, ESTA Norge (European String Teachers Organisation Norway), FolkOrg, Foreningen norske kordirigenter, JM Norway, Klassisk, Korpsnett Norge, Musikk fra livets begynnelse, Musikk i Skolen, Musikkpedagogene Norge, Norges kirkesangforbund, Norges Korforbund, Norsk Countrymusikk Forbund, Norsk Bluesunion, Norsk Forening For Musikkterapi, Norsk jazzforum, Norsk Kammermusikkforbund, Norsk Mandolin- og Balalaikaorkesterforbund, Norsk Munnspillforum, Norsk Sangerforbund, Norsk sangerforum, Norsk Stemme pedagogisk Forum, Norsk Suzukiforbund, Norsk Viseforum, Norske Konsertarrangører, Norske Symfoniorkestres Landsforbund-NASOL, Norske Trekkspilleres Landsforbund, Pascal Norge, Ung i Kor, Ung kirkesang
Samisk studieforbund	Norgga Sámiid Riikkasearvi /Norske Samers Riksforbund
Senterpartiets studieforbund	Senterkvinnene, Senterpartiet, Senterungdommen
Studieforbundet kultur og tradisjon	Båtlaget Braute, Fantasiforbundet, Folkeakademiens landsforbund, Forbundet KYSTEN, Foreningen Norske Historiske Festivaler, Fortidsminneforeningen, Frilynt Norge, Hologaland Amatørteaterselskap HATS, Humanetisk forbund, Håleyg vikingmarked, Knipleforeningen i Norge, Landslaget for lokalhistorie, Lofoten Vikinglag, Memoar, Møre frie vikingar, Nettverket for regionale teaterråd, Nordfjord Vikinglag, Noregs Mållag, Noregs Ungdomslag, Norges bygdekvinnelag, Norges Husflidslag, Norges Linforening, Norges museumsforbund, Norsk Amatørteaterforbund, Norsk filatelistforbund, Norsk Folkedraktforum, Norsk Forening for Fartøyvern, Norsk Quilteforbund, Norsk Selskap For Fotografi, Norske historiske spel, Numedal Middelaldersenter, Organisasjon for Scenekjempere i Norge, Organisasjonen Landsbyen, Oseberg tekstilgruppe, Oslo amatørbyggerlaug, Ravn Formidling, Seniordans Norge, Slekt og Data, Stiftelsen Norsk Kulturarv, Yddir Vikingelag, Vestlandske Teatersenter, Vestnorsk kulturakademi
Studieforbundet livslang læring	Acem Studieorganisasjon, ANSA, Ergoterapeutforbundet, Foreningen SeniorIKT Trondheim, Landslaget for norskundervisning, LIN - Likestilling, Inkludering og Nettverk, Maskinentreprenørenes forbund, Nasjonalforeningen for folkehelse, Norges Helsedansforbund, Norges Musikkorps

	<p>Forbund, Norges Røde Kors, Norgesunionen av Soroptimister, Norsk Filmklubbforbund, Norsk Fysioterapeutforbund, Norsk Radio Relæ Liga, Norske Kunstforeninger, Norske Kvinners Sanitetsforening, Organisasjonen Voksne for Barn, Parat, Seniornett, Studieorganisasjonen Folkeuniversitetet</p>
Studieforbundet natur og miljø	<p>4H Norge, Den Norske Turistforening, Det norske hageselskap, Foreningen Arbeidshesten, Hest og Helse, Jakt- og Fiskesenteret, Natur og Ungdom, Norges Birøkterlag, Norges Bondelag, Norges Bygdeungdomslag, Norges Fritids- og Småfiskerforbund, Norges Jeger- og Fiskerforbund, Norges Kaninavlsforbund, Norges Naturvernforbund, Norges sopp- og nyttevekstforbund, Norges speiderforbund, Norsk Bonde- og Småbrukarlag, Norsk Botanisk Forening, Norsk Kennel Klub, Norsk kolonihageforbund, Norsk Ornitologisk Forening, Norske Redningshunder, Sabima</p>
Studieforbundet Solidaritet	<p>A-larm, Art of Living, Bayan kompetansesenter, Biologisk-Dynamisk Forening, Bulgarsk kulturforening – lii-ha, Camphillbevegelsen i Norge, Fellesrådet for Afrika, Folkets Strålevern, Forandre Verden, Foreningen for livsveiledning og selvutvikling, Foreningen Ny Skole, Friends for Understanding, Fritt Helsevalg, Fritt Norden-Norge, Gardsopplevelser BA, Helseforum for Kvinner, Helsepedagogisk Forening, Holistisk Forbund, Hypatia, International Kvinnelige for Fred og Frihet, Innvandrernes Landsorganisasjon, Indian Rhythms, Kompetanse og Utdanningsforeningen, Kvenlandsforbundet, Landsforbundet for Lesbiske, Homofile og transpersoner-FRI, Mangfoldhuset, NOAH-for dyrs rettigheter, Nordisk Alba-Norge, Norske Økosamfunns Forening, Norsk Gardsost, Norsk Kvinnesaksforening, Norsk Seterkultur, Permakulturforeningen, Prosilva-Økologisk Skogbruk, Rettspolitisk Forening, Samarbeidsorganisasjonene for film og teater, Sandnes Songlag, Sangkoret Mixdur, Sangkoret Sarpazz, Sangkoret SJOKK, Senter for integrering og utvikling, Vannbevegelsen, Vestbygda Blandakor</p>
Venstres studieforbund	<p>Norges Liberale Studentforbund, Norges Unge Venstre, Norges Venstrekvinnelag, Venstres Hovedorganisasjon</p>
Akademisk Studieforbund	<p>Aftenskolen Agder, Aftenskolen Rogaland, Akademikerforbundet, Arkitektenes Fagforbund, Delta, Presteforeningen, Den norske legeforening, Den norske tannlegeforening, Den norske veterinærforening, Econa, Fjellugla kompetanse, Krigsskoleutdannede Offiserers Landsforening, Norges Farmaceutiske Forening, Naturviterforbundet, NITO - Norges Ingeniør- og Teknologorganisasjon, Norges Interne Revisorers Forening, Norges Juristforbund, Norges Kommunerevisorforbund, Norsk forening for integrativ terapi, Norsk forskerforbund, Norsk Psykologforening, Norsk Radiografforbund, Norsk Sykepleierforbund, Politiets Fellesforbund, Samfunnsviternes fagforening, Tekna – Teknisk-naturvitenskapelig forening, Utdanningsforbundet.</p>
Studieforbundet næring og samfunn	<p>Attac Norge, Bygdeservice Norge SA, Børelv og omeng grunneierlag, CISV - Internasjonale barneleire, DNT - Edru Livsstil, Norsk Esperantoforbund, Norsk Fagutdanning AS, Forbundet mot rusgift, Friskgården, GENO, Hyperion, Håndverkstedet for Barn og Unge, Spiseforstyrrelsesforeningen, IOGT, Junior Chamber International Norge Landslaget for offentlige pensjonister, Libra Helse- og Kostholdsorganisasjon, mPOWER Academy, MA Rusfri trafikk og livsstil, Miljøpartiet De Grønne, NAF SVO, Nei til EU, Norges Fredsråd, Norges Jegerforbund, Norges Kvinne- og Familieforbund, Norges Skogeierforbund, Norsk Forbund for</p>

Utviklingshemmede, Norsk Fosterhjemsforening, Norsk Landbruksrådgivning, Norsk Landbrukssamvirke, Norsk Sau og Geit, Norske Landbrukstjenester, Norsvin, Nortura, Oppdal Pensjonistforening, Operasjon Dagsverk, Utset- og Tranvikveiens Grunneierlag, Rogaland Veidemann og Viltstell forening, Rusfri Oppvekst, Rød Ungdom, Raudt/Rødt/Ruoksat, Senter for Opplæring i Anleggsgartnerfaget, Skogbrukets Kursinstitutt (Skogkurs), TINE Medlem og Rådgivning SA, Spire, Wild X

COUNTRY REPORT

SWEDEN

Introduction

This chapter aims to give an overview of study associations and study circles in Sweden. Study circles are facilitated within study associations, known as 'studieförbund' in Swedish, which are integral components of institutionalised popular adult education alongside folk high schools. Study associations are dedicated organisations that arrange free and voluntary educational activities and cultural events, such as public lectures, debates, exhibitions, and performances, primarily for adults. Study circles have been described as a mass phenomenon in the Swedish context. A considerable proportion of Sweden's adult population has participated in study circles or taken part in the cultural events organised by study associations at some stage in their lives. In 2022, 345,900 unique individuals actively participated in a study circle, while the cultural programmes organised by study associations engaged 8.9 million (non-unique) visitors (Folkbildningsrådet 2023a, p. 41-45). This chapter will give a brief contextualisation of the study associations in the Swedish context in terms of how they have developed, their regulations and funding, their organisation, and what types of activities they carry out.

Description and definition of the field

Sweden has a system of publicly subsidised popular adult education, where study associations and folk high schools receive state funds to provide citizens with educational opportunities. In 2022, the funds allocated for study associations was 1.8 billion SEK. The public subsidies stand for around 1/3 of the study associations' incomes (Bjursell & Nordvall 2016 p.9). The allocation of these funds is managed by The Swedish National Council of Adult Education (in Swedish 'Folkbildningsrådet'), a non-governmental umbrella organisation with the mandate to distribute state funding for popular adult education and ensure that the activities supported meet the state's objectives for the funding.

In 2022, there were ten study associations (and 155 folk high schools) eligible for state support (see Organisation). These study associations stem from different ideological backgrounds and have distinctive profiles. The study associations offer three types of activities that are eligible for state support: 1) study circles, 2) 'other popular adult education', and 3) cultural programmes. The basic premise for all these activities is the same: participation must be voluntary and open to anyone.

History

The historical roots of the Swedish study associations are intertwined with the historical development of the popular movements. At the end of the 1800s, democratically governed popular movements grew drastically, prompting a need to educate the members. At the same time, there was a strong engagement in education and enlightenment of the general public, i.e. general education and popular science, and public lectures were established as something which everyone could attend throughout the country (Edquist 2006; Larsson 1999; 2001). After experimenting with other pedagogies within the temperance movement, the study circle was proposed in 1902 by one of the leaders of the temperance organisation

IOGT, Oscar Olsson, as the preferred study form for popular movements. The heart of the envisioned pedagogy was a group without a teacher, which learnt through books and the discussions of their content. It was a pragmatic solution to the realities, but also in line with the emerging democratic culture within the movements. The study circles in fact operated like independent associations within the local branch of the popular movement. Members essentially decided everything: what to study, how and when, and who should lead their meetings. They bought books, which became a small library after some years. The circles operated year after year with the same members, except those who left and those who were recruited. Oscar Olsson stressed equality between members and that it should be fun – that they should sing and read poems and be inventive. The adaptation to what was a suitable pedagogy in the context was stressed, however with books at the centre. It turned out to be a rather quick success (Olsson 1918; 1922).

Organisations with many members, such as the temperance organisation IOGT, could receive a state grant for buying books for their study circles in 1912, while the workers' movement with its many organisations started a study association – ABF (The Workers' Educational Association (WEA)). However, study circles also received support from the movements to some extent and later also from municipalities. In the 1930s, several new study associations were started by e.g. the farmers' organisations, the state church, and the white-collar workers' union, and in the 1940s also by the conservatives and the liberals. Each study association is typically linked to many organisations and in the mid-1900s, very few organisations were without such links (Andersson 1980; Larsson, 2023).

There were few restrictions in terms of content from the start since study circles were an independent part of civil society. The only link to the state was the subsidy for books from 1912 to 1947. The perspectives on education from the leading figures were also broad – there was no advocacy for elite education. Instead, there was a focus on the culturation of all sides of human life. The shares of different kinds of content have changed a lot in more than a century. In the middle of the 1920s, fiction was the most popular subject in WEA, while knowledge about how to run an association was second, and knowledge about the state and municipalities came in third place. Many circles at that time revolved around school subjects such as maths, Swedish language, and foreign languages. In the early 1930s, fiction almost disappeared as a subject, while language studies increased and other topics were on approximately the same level. Correspondence circles became very common at the same time as well as study plans with textbooks (Larsson 2023).

In 1947, the state grant was expanded to also include salaries for the circle leaders. This was followed by substantial changes in the practices. Advertised courses became common, which also meant that the popular movement context was transgressed in terms of recruitment. To lead a study circle also became an income, often part-time. This is important not least for those in the cultural sector with scarce finances. There was a strong expansion of courses about art, music, and handicrafts, which also meant that books became less central in the pedagogy of this sector. A 'workshop' pedagogy emerged. From the 1950s, around 30 per cent of the subjects were art subjects and by 1981/82 it constituted 38 per cent.

However, the old movement-related circles also continued to hold a large share (Johansson 1986; Larsson 2023).

There was a very strong and constant increase in participation up until the end of the 1970s with 199,000 participants in 1946/47 and more than three million participants in 1979/80. After that, the increase stagnated and participation eventually dropped, especially after the turn of the millennium. However, many participate in several courses which means that the actual number of participants is lower. The expansion of study circles was supported by a system, where a percentage of the costs were covered by the state – initially 50 per cent and later (in 1963) 75 per cent. In 1981, this principle was abandoned and state subsidies have since been based on a decision about a fixed sum in the yearly budget. Study circles are also supported to varying degrees by municipalities and regions. However, this has decreased during later decades (Johansson, 1986). The subsidies from the state have also meant that study circles have had to follow certain rules to be entitled to the funding. The control and distribution of the state grant was in the hands of a state authority until 1991, when an independent organisation, the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, created by representatives for folk high schools and study associations took over the distribution and control of the state grant.

Another important shift happened in 2006 when the study association, The Sports Trainers (SISU), linked to the 19,000 sports associations in Sweden, left the Swedish Adult Education Association (Studieförbunden i Samverkan) and the other study associations. SISU now allocates public subsidies within the sports movement, similar to how the Swedish National Council of Adult Education operates. This is one factor that helps explain the gradual decline in overall participation, which has, however, become more pronounced in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, in 2024, the study association 'Kulturens bildningsverksamhet' decided to terminate its activities, leaving nine study associations in total in 2024.

Rules and regulations

The political responsibility for popular adult education lies with a responsible minister at the Ministry of Education. In that sense, study associations are part of the Swedish education sector. At the same time, they also have strong connections to Swedish cultural life and civil society, which is also reflected in national policies. In the parliament, issues related to popular adult education are managed by the Committee on Culture. Popular adult education is also one of the areas monitored by the Agency for Youth and Civil Society. Study associations thus find themselves in a grey area between education policy, cultural policy and policies related to civil society. The study associations are, together with the folk high schools, part of the non-formal educational system in Sweden and receive state funding for providing popular adult education.

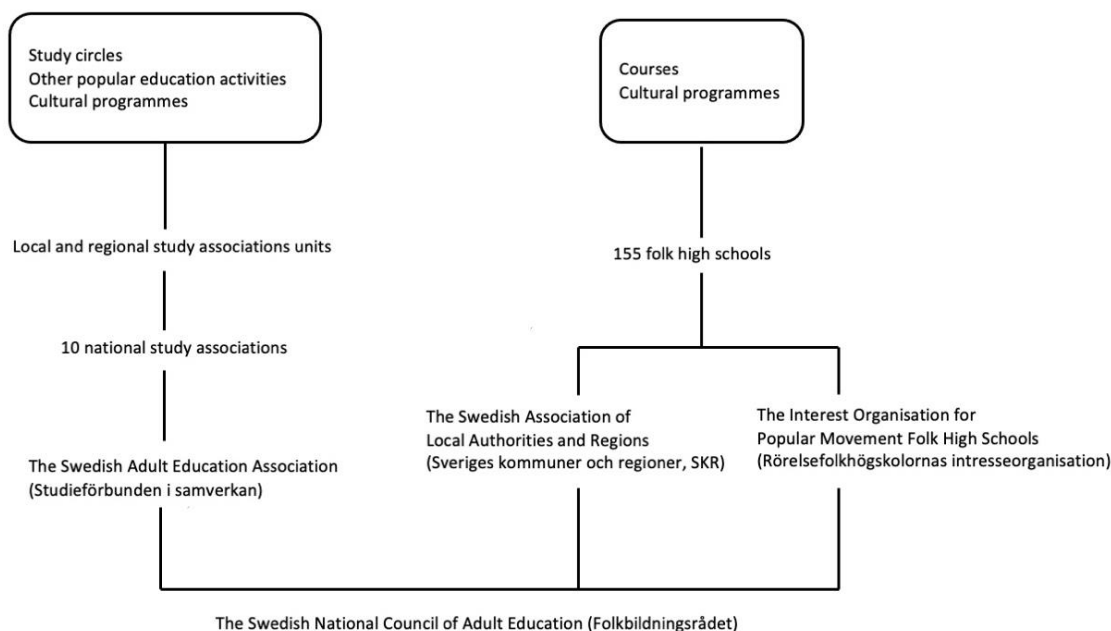
Popular adult education in Sweden receives state support based on four main objectives described in the Ordinance (2015:218) on state subsidies to popular adult education. The current regulation states that popular adult education should contribute to (1) promoting

democracy, (2) empowering individuals to influence their life situation and engage in society, (3) reducing educational inequalities and raising the level of education in society, and (4) broadening and increasing participation in cultural life (SFS 1991:977).

In 2022, the state funding for popular adult education (folkbildning) amounted to 4.4 billion SEK, with slightly less than half of this funding distributed among the then ten operating study associations (1.8 billion). The allocation of these funds is managed by the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, a non-governmental umbrella organisation with the mandate to distribute state funding for popular adult education and ensure that the activities supported meet the state's objectives for the funding. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education was established in 1991 and consists of three member organisations representing the country's folk high schools and study associations.

The study associations are members of the Swedish National Council of Adult Education through their joint organisation, The Swedish Adult Education Association (Studieförbunden i samverkan). Folk high schools are represented by the Interest Organisation for Popular Movement Folk High Schools (Rörelsefolkhögskolornas intresseorganisation), which represents association and foundation-owned folk high schools, as well as by the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (Sveriges kommuner och regioner, SKR), representing folk high schools owned by municipalities or regions.

Figure 3.1: The organisation of popular adult education in Sweden



The figure is based on a figure in Nordvall et al. (2020).

The conditions for state funding to study associations beyond the overarching framework set in the current regulation (SFS 2015:218) on state support for popular adult education are determined by the board of The Swedish National Council of Adult Education. The

regulation stipulates that a study association must have a responsible board and that “study circle activities with common, systematic studies should form the basis of the activities.” It also specifies that for “each study circle or cultural activity, there must be a leader approved by a local study association division.”

Moreover, a number of operating conditions have been established by The Swedish National Council of Adult Education. These conditions, among other things, allow study associations to receive state support for three forms of activities: (1) study circles, (2) cultural programmes, and (3) ‘other popular adult education’ (see Activities). The study associations must document the content and form of all activities to ensure that they fulfil the demands for state support. The documentation is then reported to The Swedish National Council of Adult Education which has the responsibility to control and evaluate whether the study associations fulfill all demands.

Funding

The study associations receive funding from national, regional, and local authorities. The nature of the regulatory system surrounding the subsidies has changed over time, and they have not only supported current activities but also played a part in shaping the structure of study circle activities. The rules governing these subsidies have impacted the scope of what can be studied, participant prioritisation, and overall development (Larsson & Nordvall 2010).

In 1880, Sweden introduced its initial public support for study activities, allowing associations to receive subsidies for organising public lectures (Edqvist 2006). This support was further expanded in 1912 when organisations with at least 20,000 members received subsidies for the purchase of books for study circle libraries. Consequently, the labour movement established the first study association, ABF (WEA), in 1912 to meet these funding criteria. Other political movements followed and created study associations to qualify for financial aid for educational activities.

The most significant change in relation to funding from national authorities, however, took place in 1947, when support came to include not only the purchase of books but also support for paying study circle leaders and for the administration. This created the conditions for a significant expansion of the study associations as organisations (Andersson 1980; Vestlund 1996).

After the change in state grants in Sweden in 1947, 50 per cent of the costs were covered by state aid, which later increased to 75 per cent for leadership fees and study materials in accordance with a decision in 1963 (Johansson 1986; Prop 1967, 85). In addition, municipalities and county councils provided financial support. In 1981, this automatic linkage of percentages was abolished, and budget frameworks were introduced. This means that the share of state aid in revenue decreases if expansion occurs beyond the allocated space in the budget.

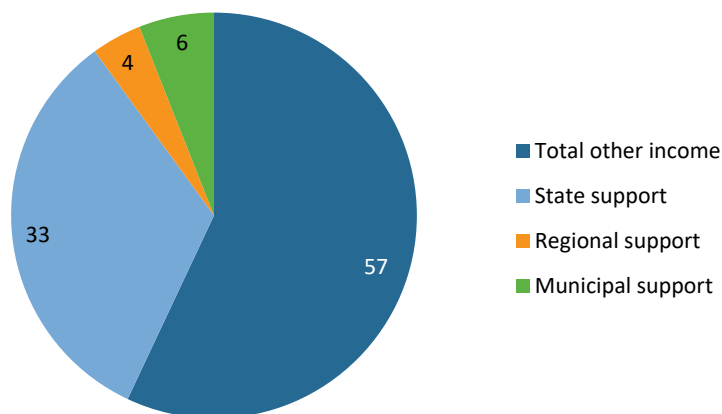
In 1991, the board of The Swedish National Council of Adult Education was formed and given the responsibility to allocate state support to popular adult education. Before 1991, The National School Board was responsible for overseeing and deciding on financial support for popular adult education (Larsson & Nordvall 2010). The distribution of funds has undergone several changes over the years, and a new system will be implemented starting in 2024. In the new system, the basis for receiving support is that the activities of the study associations should ensure quality in terms of five indicators: (1) 'Bildung', (2) democracy and participation, (3) education, (4) civil society and (5) cultural life. A study association should work with these indicators based on its profile, ideological foundation, and operational objectives (Folkbildningsrådet 2023b). However, for the year 2022, which is the focus of this report, The Swedish National Council of Adult Education divided the regular state grant into three different types of grants:

- Organisational grant (10 per cent) – for fulfilling the criteria for study associations by The Swedish National Council of Adult Education.
- Accessibility grant (8 per cent) – for developing activities that meet the needs of participants with special needs.
- Activity grant (82 per cent) (62 per cent for study circles, 5 per cent for other popular education activities and 15 per cent for cultural programmes) – the majority of the grant goes to the activities provided by the study associations.

These grants consist of a fixed amount given to all study associations equally, and a variable portion distributed based on each study association's level of activity. Thus, the study associations with higher levels of activity and participants receive more state support. It varies between study associations how much of the total funding the state support makes up. In 2014, the share of state support out of the total financial support across all study associations was 33 per cent, with variations between 10 and 59 per cent across the different associations, according to The Swedish National Council of Adult Education. This shows a great variation between the different associations (Bjursell & Nordvall 2016, 9).

Apart from state support for popular adult education, the study associations receive grants from the regional level and the municipalities. Figure 3.2 shows that the share of municipal grants among all study associations is 6 per cent. The share of regional grants is 4 per cent. However, the largest share of the funding which makes up 57 per cent of the total funding comes from elsewhere. This includes fees from participants and member organisations and can also come from other activities than the three activities that are eligible to receive state support.

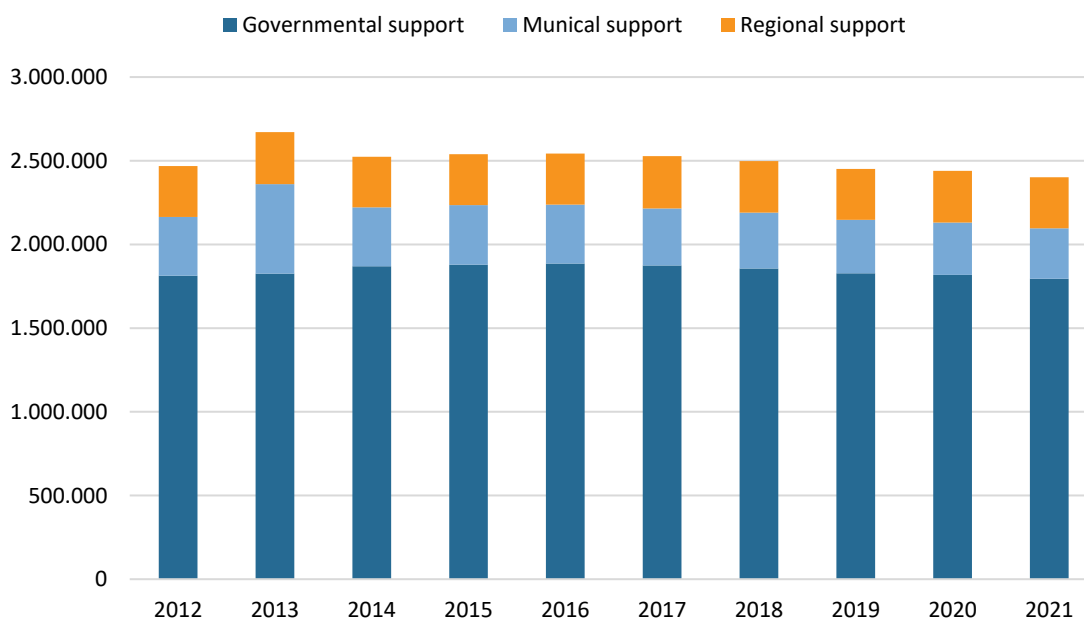
Figure 3.2: The share of state subsidies in relation to other forms of funding (2014)



Based on Bjursell & Nordvall (2016: p. 9)

Figure 3.3 shows the development of public support from state, municipalities and regions. The level of support has been relatively stable in the 10-year period from 2012-2021 – with a slight decrease in the last years. Moreover, it is evident that the vast majority of the support comes from the state.

Figure 3.3: Public support for national study associations (2012-2021) in 1000 SEK



The figure shows the development of total support from state, municipalities and regions in 2021. The numbers are inflation adjusted with 2021 as the base year. Source: Folkbildningsrådet.

The price for participating in a study circle varies a lot depending on the location, the activity, the cost of materials, whether the study circle leader is remunerated etc. The participation fees are decided locally by the local study association unit, and some of the activities

are provided free of charge. Textbox 3.1 shows two different price examples for a similar course in two different study associations in two different cities in Sweden.

Textbox 3.1: Price examples

ABF (WEA) Sundsvall (city with 59,000 inhabitants)

Watercolour painting for beginners

Price 900 SEK (= 80 EUR) for six sessions (1½ hours)

Studieförbundet Vuxenskolan Göteborg (city with 608,000 inhabitants)

Watercolour painting basic

Price 2180 SEK (= 195 EUR) for seven sessions (2 hours)

Price for two different courses on watercolour painting in spring 2024 – retrieved from the study associations' websites

Premises and facilities

When it comes to the locations of Swedish study circles, the study associations provide participants with dedicated spaces for their studies. Unlike Denmark, where municipalities are responsible for providing premises, the Swedish popular adult education regulatory system lacks specific guidelines regarding the general standard for how study associations should manage facilities. In Sweden, folk high schools have a more distinct and logical connection to a physical location. This is rooted in their historical origins, as the first schools were established in rural areas by farmers. As a result, folk high schools often incorporate a residential component, with students living on campus.

Study associations play a crucial role within the established popular adult educational infrastructure. The study associations have activities spanning all 290 municipalities, and in 250 municipalities there are at least five study associations represented (Folkbildningsrådet 2019b, 21). This diversity leads to variations in where study associations arrange their activities. For example, some study associations own their facilities, others lease spaces, and some rent classrooms. According to the Swedish National Council of Adult Education, 14 per cent of the study associations' overall expenses in 2021 were allocated to cover the costs associated with premises (Folkbildningsrådet 2022, 12).

Organisation

In 2024, there are nine study associations in Sweden with different ideological profiles that receive state funding. However, one study association, Kulturens bildningsverksamhet, ceased its operations in the beginning of 2024. Since 2022 is the year for comparison in this report, we have included Kulturens bildningsverksamhet in the overview, since its activities are included in the statistics and general framework for popular adult education in Sweden.

Table 3.1 below provides an overview of the study associations in terms of their foundation and organisational structure.

Table 3.1: Overview of the study associations' establishment, ideological roots and organisational form (including number of member organisations)

Study association	Year of establishment	Ideological roots	Organisational form (Number of member organisations in 2024)
Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (ABF)	1912	Workers Educational Association – labour movement (the Social Democrats is one of the founding organisations)	Federative structure (49)
Bilda	1947 (as Frikyrkliga studieförbundet)	The free church movement	Federative structure (47)
Folkuniversitetet	1942 (as Kursverksamheten)	Extramural university tradition	Foundation-based (N/a)
Ibn Rushd	2001	The Muslim movement	Federative structure (4)
Kulturens Bildningsverksamhet	2010 (ceased to exist in 2024)	Cultural organisations	Federative structure (17 before it closed in 2024)
Medborgarskolan	1940	Humanist values (the Moderate Party is one of founding organisations)	Federative structure (6)
Nykterhetsrörelsens Bildningsverksamhet (NBV)	1971 (after amalgamation of Sveriges Blåbandförbunds studieförbund, Godtemplarordens studieförbund and Nationalttemplarordens studieförbund)	The temperance movement	Federative structure (19)
Sensus	2004 (after the merger between KFUK-KFUM's studieförbund, Sveriges Kyrkliga studieförbund and Tjänstemännens bildningsverksamhet)	Church of Sweden, other religious organisations, and the white-collar trade union movement	Federative structure (31)
Studieförbundet	1959	The nature and recreation movement	Federative structure (19)
Studieförbundet vuxenskolan (SV)	1967 (after the merger between Svenska Landsbygdens studieförbund and Liberala studieförbundet)	The liberal movement and the rural movement (Centre Party and The Liberals are two of the founding organisations)	Federative structure (40 + 3 founding organisations)

The table is inspired by Nordvall et al. (2020)

Despite the study associations' different ideological backgrounds and varied historical origins, the organisational structures of study associations in Sweden appear relatively similar. Nine out of ten study associations in 2022 had a federative structure, which means they consist of member organisations and collaborative organisations. This means that study associations are affiliated with significant portions of Swedish civil society. Folkuniversitetet stands apart from the other study associations in having a foundation-based

organisational form. This means that the organisation does not consist of several other member organisations, but only of its own organisation (Nordvall et al. 2020).

The study associations are all national organisations, but the internal organisational structure of study associations varies. Some operate based on regional units covering multiple counties, while others have districts and smaller local branches. Also, they differ in how much influence the member organisations have on the ideological profile of the study association. In some cases, the member organisations that have founded the study association play a role in establishing legitimacy, allowing the study associations to assert uniqueness and autonomy in relation to other study associations and other forms of formal education (von Essen & Åberg 2009). Newer member organisations on the other hand have the potential to diversify activities and thereby attract additional government grants. This collaboration is often driven by practical benefits for the cooperating organisations (von Essen & Åberg 2009). Thus, study associations are large, professionalised entities conducting activities both independently and in collaboration with member organisations and partners, and they encompass large parts of civil society.

Activities

The activities that receive public subsidies are divided into three categories: 1) study circles, (2) 'other popular adult education', and 3) cultural programmes.

The first activity, the study circle, is what most people associate with study associations in Sweden. The study circle consists of a group of between three and 20 members, including the study circle leader, who engage in planned studies through conversations and dialogue. The leader must be approved by the study association, and participants must be at least 13 years old for it to count as a study circle. Additionally, it is required that the group meets at least three times and that the circle covers nine study hours (where one study hour equals 45 minutes). The group should engage in free and voluntary non-formal learning and be active in deciding the form and content of the studies. This means that the content that is dealt with in a study circle can range from reading Sartre, to learning how to play an instrument to taking a service dog course. The study circles can either be advertised by the study associations as 'general market courses' or be initiated by a group of friends or an organisation.

The second type of activity is referred to as 'other popular adult education activities.' Study associations can carry out other adult education activities in a more flexible manner to test and develop new forms and methods. This activity only requires a single meeting, and there is a lower age limit (participants must be six years old during the fiscal year). However, a leader and at least three participants are still required for this type of activity. Other popular adult education activities include activities that do not fit the criteria for being a study circle, for example, a choir with more than 20 participants, a one-day course in genealogical research or a course for children.

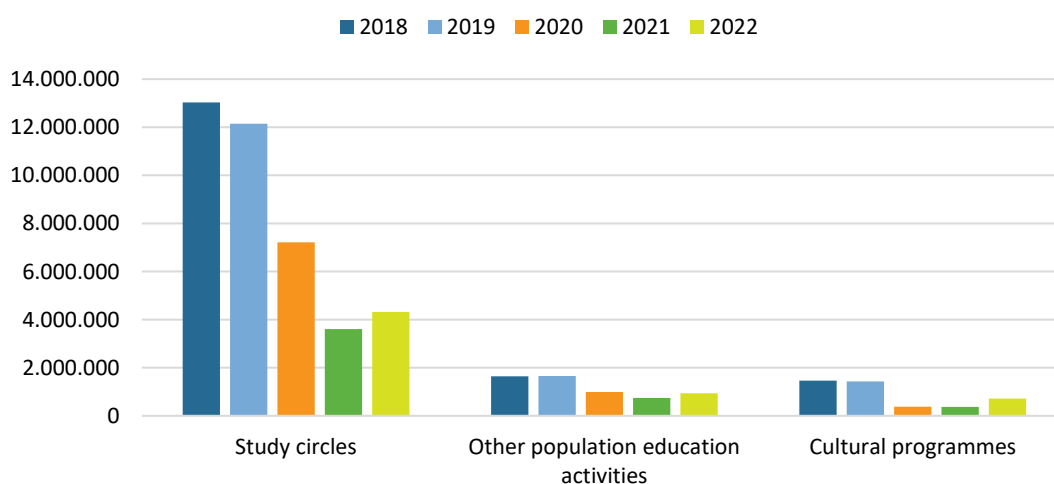
The third type of activity, cultural programmes, is the activity that gathers the highest number of participants. The cultural programmes should provide cultural experiences through lectures, singing/music, dramatic presentations, film/photos/images, dance, exhibitions, literature, art/crafts, or cross-cultural activities (Folkbildningsrådet 2019a, 8). Similar to study circles and other adult education, the cultural programmes can be on a wide range of subjects, such as a lecture about the current political situation in Guatemala, a presentation for a children's book or a rock concert. Cultural programmes should have a duration of at least 30 minutes, include at least five participants over 13 years old, and be announced in advance.

As has been mentioned previously, study associations also offer activities that are not regulated by state grants, for example in cooperation with their member organisations. However, in this chapter, we will focus on the activities that are eligible for state support.

The scope of activities

One of the most effective ways to measure the scope of the activities is by tracking the number of study hours. The figure below shows the total number of study hours between the years 2020-2022 across the three types of activities that receive public funding. Because the study circles have as a criteria that the participants must meet at least three times and cover at least nine study hours, the study circles have the most study hours with around 4.300.000 in 2022, 3.500.000 in 2021, and 7.000.000 in 2020. However, in 2020, participation in study circles started to decrease, which The Swedish National Council of Adult Education explains as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. In comparison, the total number of study hours in study circles was above 12.000.000 in 2018 and 2019 (Folkbildningsrådet 2021, 40). Both cultural programmes and other popular adult education activities often take place on one single occasion, which means that they accumulate fewer study hours. In 2022, other popular adult education activities made up almost 1.000.000 study hours and the cultural programmes made up around 1.500.000 study hours.

Figure 3.4: Yearly number of study hours by activity (2018-2022)



Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2021). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse (2020, p. 40) and Folkbildningsrådet (2023a). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse (2022, p. 40).

Types of subjects

The study associations organise study circles on a wide range of subjects. The subject area that was most popular in 2022 (see table 3.2 below) is without a doubt ‘art, music and media’ which makes up 53 per cent of all study circles and gathers 47 per cent of the study circle participants. The second most popular subject area is humanities (languages and history) which makes up 18 per cent of all the study circles and 20 per cent of the study circle participants. The third most popular subject area is ‘agriculture, garden, forest, and fishing’ with 7 per cent of the study circles and 6 per cent of the study circle participants.

Table 3.2: Study circles’ subject focus – number and share of arrangements and participants

	Arrangements		Participants*	
	Number (N)	Share (per cent)	Number (N)	Share (per cent)
Art, music, and media	60,674	53	189,762	47
<i>Visual and performing arts</i>	4427	4	19,264	5
<i>Music, dance and drama</i>	41,488	39	112,576	28
<i>Media production</i>	866	1	1909	0
<i>Design</i>	112	0	474	0
<i>Arts and crafts</i>	13,781	13	55,539	14
Humanities (languages, history)	18,712	18	78,310	20
<i>Religion</i>	4091	4	19,135	5
<i>Foreign languages</i>	7263	7	27,098	7
<i>Swedish and literary studies (including home languages)</i>	4577	4	17,598	4
<i>History and archaeology</i>	2145	2	11,007	3
<i>Philosophy, logic, and ethics</i>	636	1	3472	1
Social and behavioural sciences	6145	6	27,766	7
Personal services	4048	4	19,902	5
Agriculture, horticulture, forestry, and fishing	6454	7	32,775	8
Data	1712	1	7764	2
Health care	1417	1	6154	2
Social work and care	1371	1	5786	1
Business, trade, and administration	872	1	4101	1
Engineering and technical industry	542	1	2403	1
Pedagogy and circle leader training	1809	2	7927	2
Learning to read and write for adults	180	0	628	0
Others	3449	4	18,269	5

*Unique participants. Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023c). Folkbildningsrådets samlade bedömning. Folkbildningens betydelse för samhället (2022, 72)

Educators and facilitators

In Sweden, formal qualifications for trainers are not obligatory, meaning that study circle leaders are not required to be certified educators. Historically, these leaders have often played the role of facilitators. As mentioned briefly, study circles emerged in the early 1900s alongside the rise of popular movements. The underlying concept was that groups of individuals could come together and learn without a formal teacher; someone within the group would assume the responsibility of guiding the discussions. This historical context likely contributes to the enduring ideal within study associations that anyone should have the opportunity to be a study circle leader (Larsson & Nordvall 2010). To support new leaders, study associations offer courses in study circle leadership, which all leaders are encouraged to take. These historical ideals have also influenced the belief that study circles should be grounded in a pedagogy where discussions take precedence. However, the role of the teacher can vary significantly between different circles. For example, a language circle focused on Italian might closely resemble a conventional language course, where the teacher assumes a prominent and leading role.

Given the diverse range of activities and circles offered by study associations across different subjects, educational methods within study circles vary. Circle leaders can be full-time employees as well as remunerated and non-remunerated (non-profit). Typically, study circle leaders involved in general market courses are paid, while those leading 'free' study circles act as facilitators without financial compensation. In 2021, there were 62,739 study circle leaders in total, out of which 8435 were remunerated and 54,035 were non-remunerated (Folkbildningsrådet 2023d). Looking at the table below, the total number of study circle leaders has drastically decreased in a three-year period. This drop is explained by The Swedish National Council of Adult Education as being a result of the pandemic.

Table 3.3: Number of study circle leaders and other staff in Swedish study associations (2019-2021)

	2019	2020	2021
Circle leaders (all)	114,040	85,507	62,739
of which			
<i>non-remunerated CL</i>	100,322	75,835	54,035
<i>paid employees</i>	13,498	9424	8453
<i>permanent employees</i>	248	248	251
Staff, not circle leaders (annual average)	4383	4201	4196

Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023d). Studieförbundens ekonomi (2021, 6)

Thus, teaching positions are not very common in Swedish study associations. Except for study circle leaders, who work directly in pedagogical practice, other categories of staff are mainly focused on organising and administering activities, although active participation in training and programme activities may occur. In addition to employed staff, there are also

representatives appointed by the study associations who represent the member organisations (Nordvall et al. 2020).

Participants

As study associations organise study circles covering a wide range of subjects across the country, the participants vary greatly in terms of demographics. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education collects data on participants in study circles and other popular adult education activities but only counts the total number of participants in the cultural programmes.

In 2022, the total number of participants in study circles was 694,600 (Folkbildningsrådet 2023a). The total numbers indicate that every participant in each circle has been counted, which means that one person can participate in several study circles and thus be included in the statistics as a participant more than one time. The number of participants has decreased dramatically in the years affected by the pandemic. For instance, in 2019, the year before the pandemic broke out in Sweden, the total number of participants was 1,548,200 (Folkbildningsrådet 2021, 41).

Table 3.4: The study association's study circle activity (2018-2022)

Year	Circles	Participants	Men	Women	Study hours
2018	261,000	1,642,500	726,500	916,000	13,033,000
2019	241,800	1,548,200	666,900	881,300	12,143,900
2020	153,200	907,400	407,900	499,500	7,213,900
2021	85,600	520,300	216,300	304,000	3,608,600
2022	107,400	694,600	274,700	420,000	4,318,900

Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred. Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023a). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse 2022, p. 41 and Folkbildningsrådet (2021). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse 2020 p. 41.

The total number of participants in other popular adult education was 612,300 participants in 2022. In 2021, there were 451,000 participants, and in 2020 there were 942,900 participants.

Table 3.5: Other popular adult education activities (2020-2022)

Year	Arrangements	Participants	Men	Women	Study hours
2020	54,100	942,900	331,200	611,700	1,658,100
2021	41,200	451,000	149,000	302,000	746,500
2022	50,400	612,300	200,500	411,800	938,700

Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred. Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023a). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse (2022, 43)

When it comes to participation in cultural programmes, the total number of visitors was 8,872,000 in 2022, 4,715,000 in 2021 and 6,076,500 in 2020 (Folkbildningsrådet, 2022, p. 9).

The high participation numbers also reflect that every visitor at every event is counted and that some individuals might participate in a large number of cultural programmes.

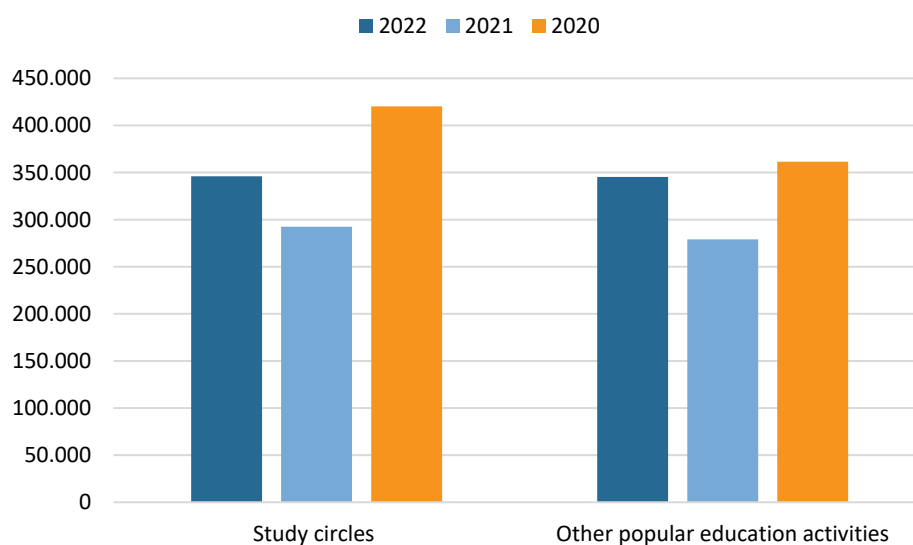
Table 3.6: Cultural programme activities 2020-2022

Year	Arrangements	Participants	Men	Women	Contributors ²³
2020	146,200	6,076,500	2,755,000	3,321,500	374,700
2021	116,600	4,715,800	2,153,000	2,562,800	373,000
2022	176,000	8,872,000	3,895,900	4,976,100	715,600

Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred. Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023a). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse 2022, p. 44

345,900 unique individuals participated in study circles in 2022 (figure 3.5), out of which 64 per cent were women and 36 per cent were men (Folkbildningsrådet 2023c, 9). Additionally, 345,300 unique individuals participated in other popular education activities in 2022. 83,500 individuals participated in both activity forms, which means that 607,700 unique individuals participated in the study associations' educational activities, representing approximately 5.8 per cent of the total population in Sweden (Folkbildningsrådet 2023a, 45)

Figure 3.5: Unique participants in study circles and other popular education activities (2020-2022)

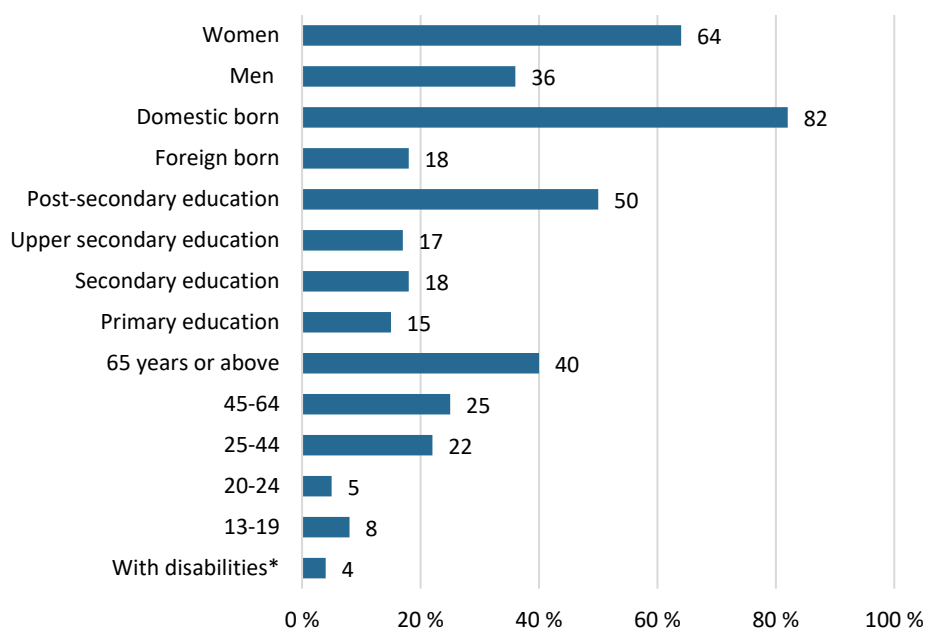


Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023a). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse (2022, 45)

As figure 3.6 shows, the most typical study circle participant is a well-educated woman above 65 years old born in Sweden.

²³ Contributors (in Swedish 'medverkande') refers to individuals involved in the cultural programmes – e.g. panel members in a panel talk or dancers in a dance performance.

Figure 3.6: Characteristics of participants in study circles in 2022 (per cent)



Folkbildningsrådet (2023c). Folkbildningsrådets samlade bedömning. Folkbildningens betydelse för samhället (2022, 15). * When more than half of the participants in a study circle are people with disabilities, the study circle and all its participants will be defined as part of the target group in the reporting.

As is showcased in the table above, women participate to a higher degree than men. more than 80 per cent of the participants are born in Sweden and less than 20 per cent are born abroad. When it comes to educational background, 50 per cent of the circle participants have a post-secondary degree. More than 60 per cent of the participants are 45 years or older. The number of participants with reported disabilities is 4 per cent.

Table 3.7: Study circle activity for persons with disabilities (2020-2022)

Year	Circles	Participants	Share of participants (per cent)	Men	Women	Study hours
2020	4600	30,700	4.4	10,000	20,700	130,300
2021	3000	19,500	3.7	6300	13,200	86,400
2022	5500	38,300	4.2	12,200	26,100	149,100

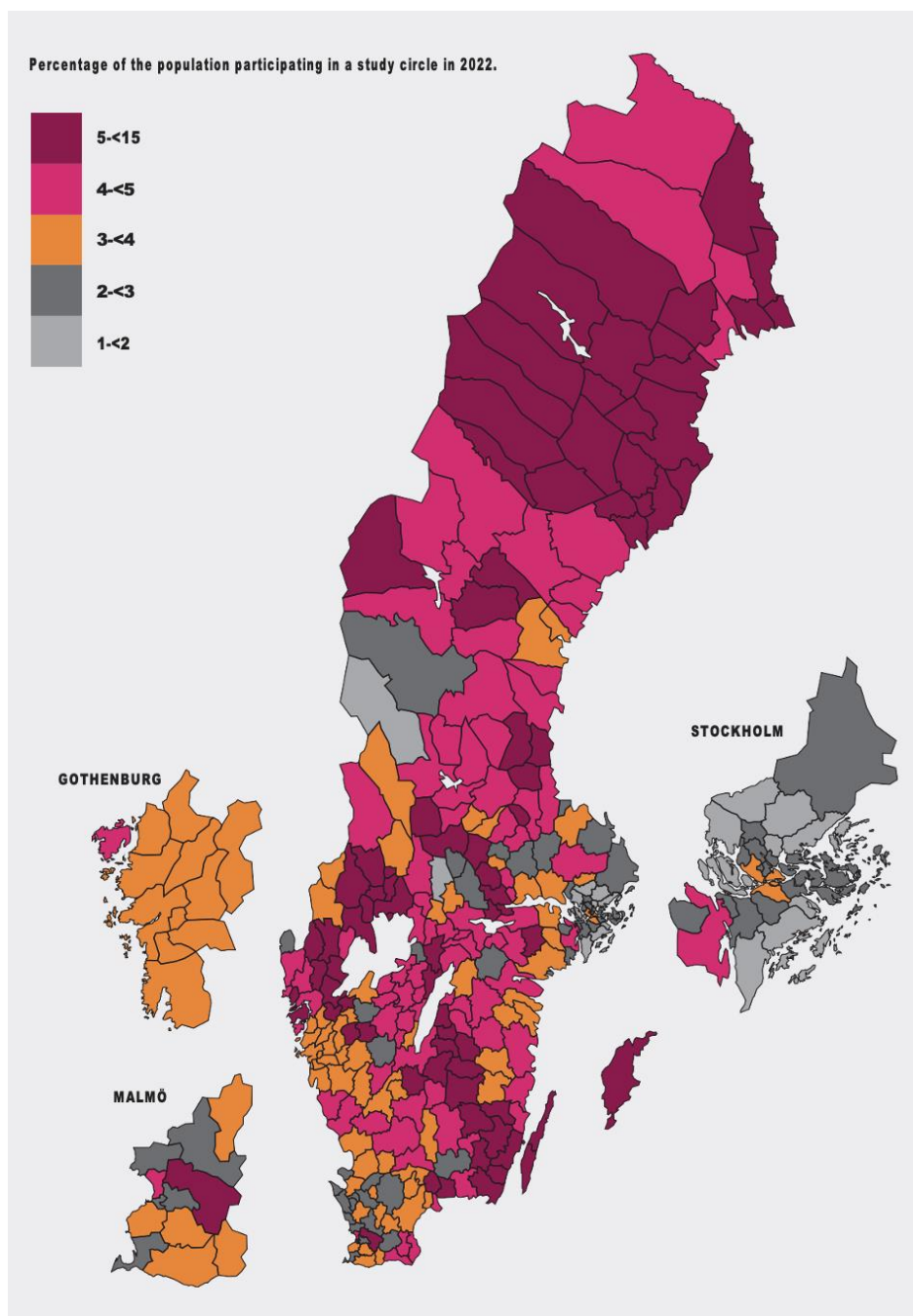
Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023a). Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse (2022, 43)

Looking at the participants with reported disabilities, there were a total of 30,700 participants in 2022 out of which almost 60 per cent were women. Most of the circles targeted towards persons with disabilities concern rights issues (Folkbildningsrådet 2023c, 15-16).

Focusing on the spread across the country (figure 3.7), study circle participation is much more common in smaller municipalities in the countryside, than in the areas around the biggest cities Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. In some sparsely populated areas, the share of the population that participates in a study circle is 5-15 per cent on an annual

basis, whereas in the Stockholm area, approximately 1 per cent of the population participates in study circles. In rural areas, study associations often play a more central role as a community centre since there is limited access to other educational or cultural opportunities. Therefore, study associations become social meeting places, providing infrastructure for local engagement, offering local competence development, and contributing to cultural activities (Åberg et al. 2024; Svedberg & von Essen 2014).

Figure 3.7: Map of the percentage of the population participating in a study circle (2022)



Source: Folkbildningsrådet (2023c). Folkbildningsrådets samlade bedömning. Folkbildningens betydelse för samhället (2022, 23)

The information about participants gathered by The Swedish National Council of Adult Education also includes data on the participation of groups with particular needs. For example, in recent years, the study associations have organised study circles in ‘Swedish from day one’ for asylum seekers and newly arrived immigrants living in institutional accommodations. The number of participants in the study circle ‘Swedish from day one’ was 12,200 in 2022, 6,300 in 2021 and 9,900 in 2020 (Folkbildningsrådet 2023c, 23)

Conclusion

Together with folk high schools, study associations are part of the state-subsidised popular adult education (folkbildning) in Sweden. The ten study associations that received state support in 2022 emerged from various movements and organisations which in different ways have characterised large parts of the the Swedish 20th-century history. Study associations are, therefore, often mentioned in relation to their democratic significance and role in civil society. The study associations receive state support in order to organise activities that contribute to democratic life, and cultural expression and give educational opportunities to all citizens.

Throughout this chapter, we have delved into the multifaceted aspects of Swedish study associations and study circles, describing their history, regulatory framework, funding, organisational structures, premises, activities, facilitators, and participants. Despite the different ideological backgrounds of the ten study associations that received state support in 2022, there are large similarities between them in how they organise themselves and which participants they attract. The study associations offer educational activities and cultural programmes that attract a large part of the Swedish population. Research has shown that participating in these activities serves a meaningful purpose, which also appears to have broader implications for other forms of organisation and society at large.

Schematic overview – Sweden

Theme	Description
<p>Definition and description of the field:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The common definition of the field is the movement/form of popular education characterised in each country as a study circle/evening school/local study association. The study has a particular focus on the local activities and organisations organised under national study associations that work with non-formal education/non-formal learning. In countries where this is relevant, activities are included that are directly comparable to the local activities of the study associations that receive funding according to the same legislation/guidelines. Where appropriate, the field is briefly described in relation to other non-formal adult education actors/categories that are not included in the study. 	<p>‘Studieförbund’ or study associations in Sweden are organisations that arrange free and voluntary educational activities, primarily for adults.</p> <p>The study associations are, together with the folk high schools, part of the non-formal educational system in Sweden and receive public subsidies for providing popular adult education.</p> <p>The study associations receive public subsidies to offer activities that are divided into three categories: (1) study circles, (2) ‘other popular adult education’, and (3) cultural programmes.</p>
<p>History: Briefly describe the most important turning points in the history of study associations and study circles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When were the central national organisations in the field established? Which movements are the central national organisations rooted in? When were they first mentioned in the law? What key legislative changes have been made since then? 	<p>1902 – After experimenting with other pedagogies within the temperance movement IOGT, the study circle was proposed in 1902 by one of the IOGT leaders, Oscar Olsson, as the preferred form for popular movements and the organisation decided to try it.</p> <p>1912 – Organisations with many members, such as IOGT, could receive a state grant for buying books for their study circles. The workers’ movements with its many organisations started a study association – ABF (WEA). During the following decades, a number of study associations were started covering a broad spectrum of civil society.</p> <p>1947 – The state grant was expanded to also include pay for the circle leaders. This was followed by substantial changes in the practices. Advertised courses became common, which also meant that the popular movement context was transgressed in terms of recruitment.</p> <p>1991 – The subsidy from the state also meant that study circles had to follow certain rules to be entitled to the funding. The control and distribution of the state grant was in the hands of a state authority until 1991, when an independent organisation, created by</p>

	<p>representatives for folk high schools and study associations took this role.</p>
<p>Rules and regulations: Describe the national laws/legal frameworks regulating the economy and activities of study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the name of the law/legislative framework regulating the activities and/or the financial support for the local study associations/study circles? • How is the aim of the local study associations/study circles described in the law/legal framework? • How is the field delimited in the law/legal framework? <p>Public authority oversight: Describe the mechanisms that ensure local compliance with regulations in the field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this performed by local or national authorities? • And how does it work in practice? 	<p>Popular adult education in Sweden receives state support based on four main objectives described in the Ordinance (2015:218) on state subsidies to popular adult education. The current regulation states that popular adult education should contribute to (1) promoting democracy, (2) empowering individuals to influence their life situation and engage in society, (3) reducing educational inequalities and raising the level of education in society, and (4) broadening and increasing participation in cultural life (SFS 1991:977).</p> <p>In 2022, the state subsidies for popular adult education amounted to 4.4 billion SEK, with slightly less than half of this funding distributed among the then ten study associations (1.8 billion). The allocation of these funds is managed by the Swedish National Council for Adult Education, an umbrella organisation with the mandate to distribute state funding for popular adult education and ensure that the activities supported meet the state’s objectives for the funding. The Swedish National Council for Adult Education was established in 1991 and consists of three member organisations representing the country’s folk high schools and study associations.</p> <p>The conditions for state funding to study associations – beyond the overarching framework set in the current regulation (SFS 2015:218) on state support for popular adult education – are determined by the board of the Swedish National Council for Adult Education. The regulation stipulates that a study association must have a responsible board and that “study circle activities with common, systematic studies should form the basis of the activities.” It also specifies that for “each study circle or cultural activity, there must be a leader approved by a local study association division.”</p> <p>Moreover, a number of operating conditions have been established by The Swedish National Council for Adult Education These conditions, among other things, allow study associations to receive state support for three forms of activities: (1) study circles, (2) ‘other popular adult education’, and (3) cultural programmes.</p>
<p>Funding: Describe briefly the sources of funding for the activities of study circles/evening schools (for instance government budgets, grants, subsidies, donations, and participant fees.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the size of the fees for participants? • How do these compare to participant costs of other leisure activities (e.g. sports clubs)? 	<p>The study associations receive subsidies from the state, the regions and the municipalities, but they also receive funding through participant and member organisation fees.</p> <p>The level of public support has been relatively stable between 2012-2021.</p> <p>It varies between study associations how much of the total funding is made up of state support. In 2014, the share of state support in relation to the total financial support was 33 per cent across all study associations, however, the Swedish National Council for Adult Education reports that it differs between 10 and 59 per cent,</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the public support come from the local level, national level or both? • How has the local and/or national financial support developed in 2012-2022 in both absolute (level of support) and relative (support per capita) measures? 	<p>showing a great variation between the different associations (2016: p.9).²⁴</p>
<p>Premises and facilities: Describe in which type of premises and facilities the activities take place.</p> <p>Describe who is responsible for finding the premises/facilities.</p>	<p>In Sweden, the study associations are responsible for finding and providing facilities for their activities. Therefore, there is variation in terms of ownership, leasing, and general standards.</p> <p>According to the Swedish National Council for Adult Education, in 2021, 14 per cent of the study associations' total costs went to facilities. (Folkbildningsrådet, 2022:25).</p>
<p>Organisation (national/local): Describe the organisational structure of the study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they organised as voluntary associations or as other types of organisations? • How many organisations exist? At the national level (national study organisations), and at the local level (local study associations/study circles)? <p>Give concrete examples of the different types of organisations at the local level.</p>	<p>In 2022, ten study associations in Sweden received public subsidies. Kulturens bildningsverksamhet ceased to exist at the beginning of 2024. The study associations have different profiles and ideological distinctiveness.</p> <p>Despite their different ideological backgrounds and varied historical origins, the organisational structures of study associations in Sweden appear relatively similar. Eight out of nine study associations have a federative structure, which means they consist of member organisations and collaborative organisations. This means that study associations are affiliated with significant portions of Swedish civil society. The Swedish National Council for Adult Education stands apart from the other study associations in having a foundation-based organisational form. This means that the organisation doesn't consist of several other member organisations but only of its own organisation.</p> <p>The study associations work at two levels: the local or regional unit, often at the county level or larger, and a national federation (SOU 2004:30, p. 39).²⁶</p>
<p>Activities: Describe the <i>format</i> of the activities and the <i>content/subject</i> of the activities.</p>	<p>The Swedish National Council for Adult Education allow study associations to receive state support for three forms of activities: (1) study circles, (2) 'other popular adult education', and (3) cultural programmes.</p>

²⁴ Bjursell & Nordvall (2016). Folkbildningens frihet och värde. Metaperspektiv på folkhögskolor och studieförbund, p. 9 https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/media/ljnhvjnc/fbr_meta_webb.pdf

²⁵ Folkbildningsrådet (2022). Studieförbundens ekonomi 2021, p.12 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/media/qgei4smo/studieforbundens-ekonomi-2021.pdf>

²⁶ SOU 2004:30. Folkbildning i brytningstid – en utvärdering av studieförbund och folkhögskolor. Stockholm: Utbildningsdepartementet.

<p>Describe the <i>scope</i> of the activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many activity hours are included in the overall scope of activities of the study circles/evening schools (2012-2022)? • How are the activity hours distributed across subjects? 	<p>The total amount of study hours in study circles in 2022 was approximately 4,300,000.</p> <p>In 2022, the subject area that was most popular in study circles was Art, Music and Media which stands for 53 per cent of all study circles and gathers 47 per cent of the study circle participants. The second most popular subject area was Humanities (Languages and History) which stands for 18 per cent of all the study circles and 20 per cent of the study circle participants. The third most popular subject area is Agriculture, Garden, Forest and Fishing with 7 per cent of the study circles and 6 per cent of the study circle participants.²⁷</p>
<p>Educators and facilitators: Describe whether there are any qualification requirements for educators/facilitators in study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the educators/facilitators volunteers or paid? 	<p>In Sweden, there are no formal requirements for trainers' qualifications.</p> <p>The study associations offer courses in study circle leadership.</p> <p>There are both salaried and volunteer study circle leaders.</p>
<p>Participants: Profile the participants in study circles/evening schools including their age, gender and educational backgrounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who and how many participate in the activities? • What is the proportion of the adult population participating in study circles/evening school activities? • Describe, if possible, to what extent marginalised groups (e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, people living in remote areas), participate in study circles/evening school activities. 	<p>There are statistics on the age, gender and educational background of the participants. See tables in report.</p> <p>A predominance of women, persons above the age of 65 years, and individuals with an above-average level of education.</p> <p>50 per cent of the participants in study circles had secondary school or higher education.²⁸</p> <p>The total number of participants was 694,600 in 2022.²⁹ 345,900 unique individuals participated in a study circle in 2022, where 64 per cent were women and 36 per cent were men. 40 per cent of the participants in study circles were over the age of 65.</p> <p>5.8 per cent of the Swedish population participates in study circles or 'other popular education' activities.</p> <p>Study circle participation is more common in sparsely populated areas in the bigger cities. In some municipalities, between 5-15 per cent of the population participate in study circles on an annual</p>

²⁷ From: Folkbildningsrådets samlade bedömning. Folkbildningens betydelse för samhället 2022, p. 72. https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/media/otcnp23r/fbr_sb2023_webb.pdf

²⁸ Folkbildningsrådet. (2023). Folkbildningsrådets samlade bedömning. Folkbildningens betydelse för samhället 2022, p. 15. https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/media/otcnp23r/fbr_sb2023_webb.pdf

²⁹ From: Folkbildningsrådet. Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse 2022, p. 41. <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/media/rnljau1k/ar-2022-slutversion.pdf>

basis, whereas approximately 1 per cent of the population goes to study circles in the Stockholm area.³⁰

4 per cent of the study circle participants are persons with reported disabilities, which is 30,700 individuals in 2022.³¹

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³⁰ Folkbildningsrådets samlade bedömning. Folkbildningens betydelse för samhället 2022, p. 23. https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/media/otcnp23r/fbr_sb2023_webb.pdf

³¹ Folkbildningsrådet. Årsredovisning och verksamhetsberättelse 2022, p. 43 <https://www.folkbildningsradet.se/media/rnljau1k/ar-2022-slutversion.pdf>

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COUNTRY REPORT

FINLAND

Introduction

In Finland, there are five liberal adult education institutions: adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities, sports institutes, and study centres. Study circles and study clubs (as they were called before 1920) have been marked as the core pedagogy and form of liberal adult educational work in study centres (in Finnish, *opintokeskus*, in Swedish: *studieförbund*) but historically, the study circles have also been a way of organising teaching and self-education in workers' (labour) colleges (In Finnish, *työväenopisto*) and in adult education centres (In Finnish, *kansalaisopisto*). In addition, it must be stated that study circles such as reading circles, are organised locally even outside of liberal adult education institutions, without ties to study centres or other organisations. Here, people come together completely self-directed around a theme of common interest, and these circles do not necessarily seek funding or guidance from study centres or organisations.

The concept of study circles can be considered in two different terms:

- The study circle (In Finnish, *opintokerho* or *opintopiiri*, in Swedish, *studiecirkel*) as an **administrative form** of organising an educational group: Here, the term refers to the organisation of self-directed education groups (a study circle) which can apply for small amounts of funding from study centres. Of all liberal adult education institutions, study centres are the only ones which can operate and fund study circles in administrative terms and which have decided to run study circles as part of their education curriculum. These kinds of study circles are run by the group itself, or if needed they hire a specialist to work as a teacher within their area of interest. This is an administrative definition.
- The study circle as a **pedagogic method**: Here, the term refers to a pedagogical group learning idea that is used as part of educational activities. Peer-learning groups, education teamwork projects, study clubs, reading circles, and group dialogical methods are all part of the study circle 'ideology'. This kind of pedagogical way of learning is at the core of study centre education also outside administrative study circles.

In addition, study circles were and are organised in adult education centres. Within adult education centres, study circles have historically meant groups studying different subjects, e.g. study circles in languages or history. In study circles of adult education centres, the subjects are taught by trained teachers – and not by one of the members of the group. Political neutrality and scientific-based teaching are required for the education activity.

This report will focus on study centres and their study circles. Adult education centres are discussed in the section on history. In other sections, we will focus on study circles as part of study centres' education. The report will make it possible to gain a comparative understanding of study circles in different Nordic countries.

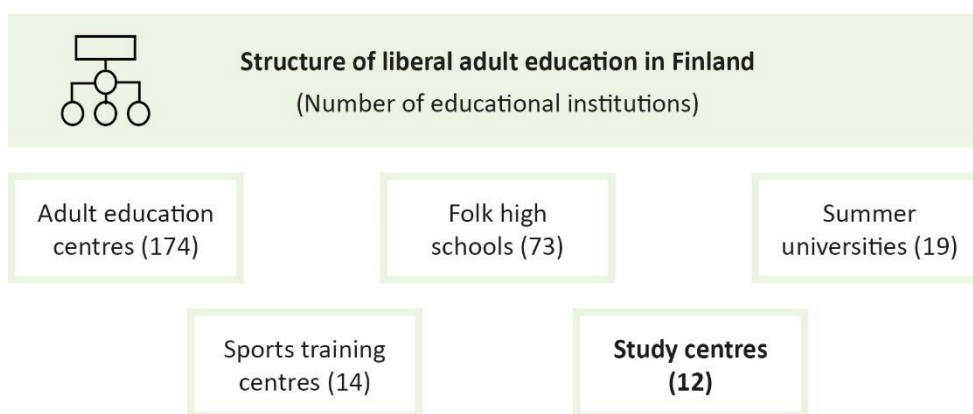
Please note that in the report, activities before 1920 are defined as study clubs, and activities after that as study circles, because study club is a historical term and study circle is used today and refers more to the form of studying.

Definition

Liberal adult education in Finland

In Finland, there are five liberal adult education institutions: adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities, sports institutes, and study centres. Figure 4.1 shows the structure of liberal adult education in Finland and the number of educational institutions nationally.

Figure 4.1: The structure of liberal adult education in Finland



Source: Vipunen Education Statistics of Finland (2024). After 30.6.2024, the number of study centres declined to 11.

The Finnish Adult Education Association FAEA (Vapaa Sivistystyö – Fritt bildningsarbete VST ry.) is the umbrella advocacy organisation for all liberal adult education institutions in Finland. It is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1969. FAEA is not an educational institution itself, but FAEA's main responsibilities are advocacy and building dialogue between liberal adult education and policymakers. FAEA also promotes non-formal adult education and learning, collaboration between research and education, and international cooperation. One of FAEA's most significant projects is the Freedom and Responsibility of Liberal Adult Education (Sivistystyön Vapaus ja Vastuu, SVV) network, within the framework of scientific research together with Tampere University, Åbo Akademi University, and the University of Eastern Finland.

In this report, we look especially at study centres as actors that have organised or are still organising their educational activities in the form of study circles or study clubs both on a larger pedagogic level and in administrative terms.

Study centres

Study centres are educational institutions which are maintained by educational unions. These unions are formed by civic associations, which are members of the educational unions running the study centres.

Today, there are 12 unions running their own study centre. By the beginning of 2023, the unions maintaining study centres had a total of 372 member associations. In 2022, educational cooperation was carried out with 1366 different associations and other co-operators.

Table 4.1: The twelve study centres in Finland

Study centres (general structure of member associations)	Number of union member organisations running study centres
The Association for Rural Culture and Education (The Centre Party of Finland) (Cultural and agricultural associations/federations)	12
Citizens' Forum (Art, culture and multicultural associations)	8
Democratic Civic Association (DCA) (Associations with Marxist, socialist and other leftist ideologies)	44
KSL Civic Association for Adult Learning (Trade unions, Left Alliance and cultural and social associations)	18
National Educational Foundation Kansio (National Coalition Party)	93
Pekasus – Education and culture based on national values (The Finns Party) ³²	4
Sivis Study Centre (Social, health and environmental associations)	80
STEP Christian Associations (Education, materials and counselling for Christian organisational activities and church)	59
Svenska folkskolans vänner (Swedish speaking associations)	Only co-operators 69
TJS Study Centre – Educational and Cultural Centre for Professional Employees (Trade unions of professional employees)	2
VISIO – Green ideas, training and culture (the Greens party)	22
Workers' Educational Association WEA Finland (Social democratic party and workers unions)	29

Being linked to civil society organisations and associations, study centres focus on citizenship and community education, promoting active citizenship, democracy, and civil society more than other Finnish liberal adult education organisations (Manninen & Vuorikoski 2024). As study centres provide education independently or in cooperation with their member organisations, the range of studies offered is determined based on the ideologies of the centre's collaborating affiliations. The study centres offer associations financial support for organising education as well as expertise and training in pedagogical planning, advocacy, administration, marketing, communications, digitalisation, and evaluation.

³² Pekasus ceased its activities 30.6.2024.

Study circles

Study centres are the only liberal adult education institutions enabling study circles in *administrative terms*. Study centres offer study circles small monetary support and guidance such as manuals of group dialogue methods and instructions on how to get the most out of self-organised study circle group. According to the Act on Liberal Adult Education and decree § 4, a 'study circle' means a group formed by at least five people over 15 years old studying at least ten hours following instructions given by the study centre. The study circle chooses an instructor from among its own members (Ministry of Education and Culture 2023). This means that any group of people can apply for subsidies to create their own group and learning process. The group decides the theme, time, and place of studies.

The study centres fund study circles organised by co-organisers. A requirement for study circle funding is that the group work is goal-oriented, communal, development-oriented, has an educational goal, and is based on peer learning. The funding for study circles and their activities varies between 3-16.67 euros per teaching hour depending on the study centre. In addition, the share of the subsidies for study circles in the total budget of study circle operations varies depending on the study centre. Subsidies can cover either part of the expenses or all expenses of the study circle. Some study centres have defined a maximum euro amount that each study circle can receive. Depending on the study centre, the maximum amount varies between 100 euros and 500 euros (Ministry of Education and Culture 2023).

The number of official study circles organised as a mode of learning has decreased since 2016 (more information in the section on financial structures). Today, five out of twelve study centres organise study circles in administrative terms. However, study centres have assimilated the study circle as a pedagogic method to their more teacher-led courses by favouring peer learning and dialogical methods of creating meaning and understanding on the chosen theme.

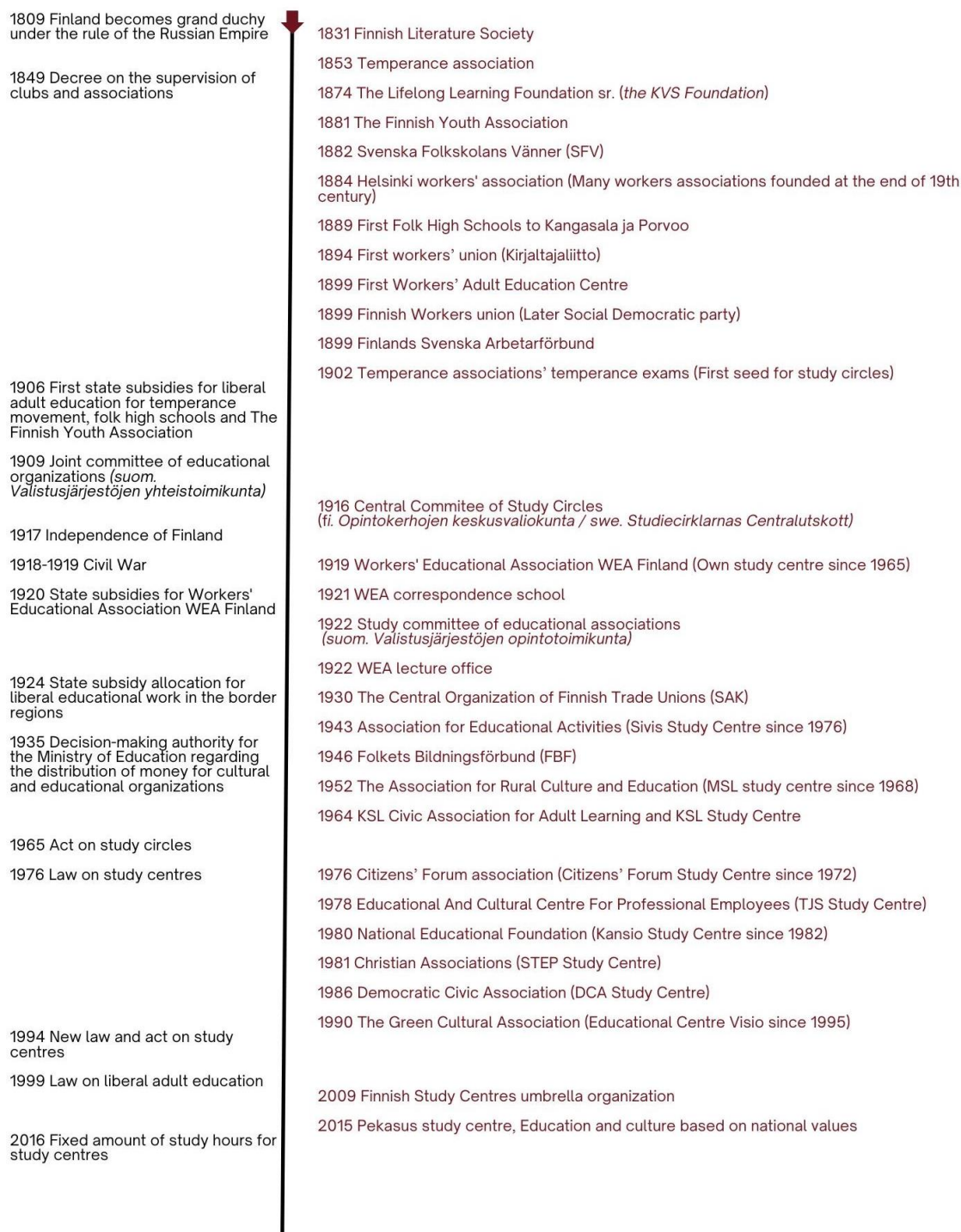
History

The historical roots of Finnish liberal adult education lie in the popular enlightenment alongside the idea of nationality and neo-humanism in the first decades of the 19th century. At that time, Finland was still an autonomous grand duchy in the Russian Empire (Nyström 2019, 17). From the 1840s and onwards, public education work meant the development of general public education and the promotion of the cultural pursuits of the adult population, which was later called liberal public education and public enlightenment, thus emphasising its free nature of civic activity (Huuhka 1990, 16).

The end of the 19th century was marked by population growth, the liberalisation of trade, industrialisation, the development of transport connections, and the breakthrough of new ideologies in Finland. The agricultural-dominated state society changed into an industrialised modern society, and the working-class population grew large in the cities (Nyström 2019, 19). The home study movement, village schools, and reading associations created the base for study club work together with the youth club movement, the temperance

movement, the folk school movement, and the Wrightian labour movement. Study clubs were seen as supplementing the education of school institutions and promoting social education, the so-called civic education (Parjo 1983; Nyström 2019, 19; Huuhka 1990, 98).

Figure 4.2: Timeline with central events in the history and the development of the study centres in Finland



From the 1850s, voluntary social and educational activities were organised for working people: evening entertainment, folk festivals, lending libraries, popular presentations, singing choirs, and reading clubs. In 1866, on the initiative of one factory owner, a study club for cotton factory employees was founded in Tampere. In 1881, the first Peasants' Youth Society was founded with a self-educated effort towards liberal adult education. The goal of learning was to be a good person and a decent citizen. There was a rapid growth in the number of youth clubs. At the turn of the century, there were already 247 clubs and 17,000 members (Huuhka 1990, 20–24).

Finland's first labour union was founded in Helsinki in 1894. At the turn of the century, there were 20 workers' unions operating in different parts of Finland. However, only the bourgeois, estate and employers could establish or manage the unions. The goal of the union associations was confidential cooperation to correct social grievances (to prevent escalation and socialist ideas). Efforts were made to improve the living conditions of the working people and to build mutual trust and a sense of belonging between employers and workers. In addition to the amusement programme, the associations established savings, pension and other funds, and organised job placement and elementary education courses to teach writing, calculation, accounting, and other subjects to the workers (Huuhka 1990, 28–31; Nyström 2019, 20).

The turn of the century was a troubled time in Finland. The working class radicalised as they wanted to achieve equal voting rights. According to Huuhka (1990), the workers' associations started to arrange agitator courses and party college courses. Because of this, the educational work of the working class had to be achieved outside of subversive doctrines. When equal voting rights were finally accomplished and people again had the right to assemble, the political and professional organisation of the labour movement expanded. In 1900, there were 7,000 members, but in 1906, it was already 85,000 members in the associations (Huuhka 1990, 47–49, 65–67).

In 1917, Finland gained independence. In January 1918, civil war broke out in Finland. The war was fought between the forces led by the Finnish Senate and the Finnish People's Delegation, also called the white troops, and the Red Guards, i.e. the Reds, respectively. According to Huuhka (1990), folk high school students and members of youth clubs joined the ranks of the whites, which the winning side considered the merit of these forms of education. Students from workers' colleges had instead joined the Reds, which is why their educational work was assessed as 'wrong-headed and ineffective'. Raising the level of education was seen as important for the preservation of independence and the success of a democratic society between different social groups (Huuhka 1990, 129–131). After the Civil War, there was a need for education and the development of social conditions, and a need to "raise the moral level of the people" (Nyström 2019, 12–14).

Study clubs in adult education centres

Adult education centres have organised study circles since the beginning of 1900 century (at that time named workers' colleges), but their study circle activities were later strongly reduced. Stockholm's labour institute (Stockholms arbetarinstitut), founded in 1880, became a role model for Finland. The first Finnish workers' college was founded according to the Stockholm model in 1899 in Tampere (KoL 2024). In the workers' colleges, efforts were made to respond to the needs and living conditions of the working people with a close connection with the labour movements. Decisions to establish colleges were made in councils with a merchant majority, although initiatives often came from workers or workers' associations. The workforce and many associations also got their representatives on the boards of colleges, which strengthened their civic nature. Colleges were financed with the profits of the retail and liquor association or by the municipality's funds. In addition, the municipality had to provide the college with a suitable facility (Huuhka 1990, 56, 94, 164).

The Workers' Education Union was seen to promote and strengthen education, and it was founded after the Civil War in 1919. The union's purpose was defined as "promoting the workers' union ideology, monitoring the common interests of colleges and maintaining interaction between colleges". In the 1920s, college activities developed into a college institution (KoL 2024). After the Civil War, it was emphasised that adult education centres had to be open to all people and free from political, societal, and religious commitments. The teaching had to be based on science, but still rousing the national spirit (Huuhka 1990, 58, 60, 96–111). During the first decades, the share of the working population made up more than 80 per cent of all students. Most of the students had public school as their basic education, but some had no education. In many colleges, most students were men (Nyström 2019, 21).

In the 1920s, a study circle method developed in workers' colleges alongside group teaching. The interaction was mainly discussions, but also seminar work. Study circles, study clubs, and discussion circles were used as designations. In the years 1930–1931, there were already 49 teaching subjects in colleges and an average of 14 per college. Accounting, the Finnish language, and mathematics were taught most. In the 1920s and 1930s, to become a teacher, a degree from a university, postgraduate college, junior high school teacher's seminar, or vocational school education was required. Teaching had to be done without party agitation (Huuhka 1990, 235–237, 256, 272). Teachers were not expected to have 'comradeship' but competence.

The state began to support the operation of adult education centres in 1921. However, as the number of colleges grew, the allocations were no longer sufficient. The conditions of the grant were that the centres must stay outside of social, state, and religious party disputes and meet conditions related to ownership, administration, management, working hours, students, and rules. These conditions harmonised the centres but limited their freedom of action (Huuhka 1990, 173–176). By 1926–1927, a new law increased the state aid to 50 per cent of the actual expenses (Nyström 2019, 32–40).

During the 1920s, the adult education centres started student union activities. After that, the students were called *opistolainen* in Finnish, which means something like a student from the student union. Adult education centres had student unions, and workers' colleges had comrades-in-arms (in Finnish, *toverikunta*). During the 1930s, student unions hoped for more teaching based on social and civic knowledge in the form of study circles. Students also supported cooperation with workers' associations. The purpose of the student union was to develop a spirit of togetherness and cooperation, to provide amusement, and to encourage studying. In addition, it included advocacy tasks, socialising evenings, programme events, and parties: the so-called 'club activities'. Also, excursions, visits, summer camps, and trips were organised. Student unions had representatives on the board of the college (Huuhka 1990, 167–168, 236, 244, 299–301). Without the student unions, the workers' college movement would hardly have grown into such a large people's movement as it eventually became (Nyström 2019, 23).

During the war years 1939–1945, study circles were mostly on intermission. However, some study circles strived to strengthen the spiritual maintenance of the home front, which would in turn strengthen national consensus and internal integrity. The lectures were related to the war and information on civil protection, public welfare, household, handicrafts, and health care. Efforts were also made to acquaint the migrant population and the local population with each other and with the locality. There was also teaching in hospitals (Huuhka 1990, 307–315). After the Second World War, there was a great demand for workers' college activities. The number of students doubled between 1945 and 1949, rising to around 40,000 students at the turn of the decade. At the same time, a total of 46 new colleges were established (Nyström 2019, 43).

In 1963, the title 'adult education centre' was mentioned for the first time in legislation. The law also made it possible to establish adult education centres in rural areas. In the years 1960–1974, 150 new adult education centres were established, most of them specifically for rural areas. By the 1980s, the total number of centres was over 270. There were now adult education centre activities in every municipality. In 1974, colleges received permission to organise music lessons for children under the age of 16 (KoL 2024; Nyström 2019, 41).

Today, there are 174 adult education centres in Finland and their activities cover the whole country and all municipalities. More than 500,000 students take part in the courses every year and about 2 million teaching hours are organised. Anyone can participate in the education, regardless of age and educational background. Adult education centres respond to local educational needs and societal changes. Most often, adult education centres offer courses in arts, handicrafts, music, languages, literature, home economics, physical education, and information technology, as well as subjects related to societal questions (KoL 2024). At the beginning of the 21st century, however, the interest in being part of the student union decreased. The activities rested on the shoulders of older students and the traditional ideology of education no longer seemed to hold. By the end of 2009, there were only 22 student union associations compared to the 200 associations in the 1980s (Nyström 2019, 55, 85, 102).

The Finnish Association of Adult Education Centres (in Finnish, Kansalaisopistojen liitto KoL ry) acts as an umbrella organisation for adult education centres in Finland. KoL, founded in 1919, is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) with the main task of improving and promoting non-formal adult education and learning in Finland (KoL 2024).

Textbox 4.1: Study circles offered by Adult Education Centres by 2024

A brief search of the study circles offered by adult education centres in the spring of 2024 shows that the service (<https://kurssit.kansalaisopistot.fi/fi>) currently has 42,783 courses, groups, and events.

The keyword 'study circle' found 222 courses (though the search engine also found other Finnish words with the word *circle* in them). However, most of the courses were language courses at different levels, from Norwegian to Hebrew and Chinese, Korean and Ukrainian. With the word 'circle' alone, 809 courses were found, including only a few reading circles and study circles. The keyword 'study club' found three courses. Only one of each was found with the keywords 'peer' or 'companion', but they were not related to the topic.

Examples of courses and course descriptions:

Literature circle: *The literature circle is conversational in nature, but you can also join just to listen. The teacher always introduces the topic to be discussed at the beginning of the meeting, after which we discuss and exchange opinions.*

Philosophical questions about death: *In the course, we get to know the questions asked in philosophy about death and reflect on our own relationship with mortality. How is death defined? Is death a bad thing? Is death worth fearing? What if there was no death? What happens after death? How do we relate to death and mortality?*

Panel discussion on knife making: *Introduction and joint discussion on topics related to knife manufacturing (materials, methods, design) and marketing. You can follow the programme and, if you wish, participate via the Zoom video conference service. We will have the very distinguished master knifemith (name) as the expert. There will be an interesting discussion related to the topic.*

In addition, there was also a poetry recitation course and a fantasy writing course.

There were also university-level courses organised by the university itself: *If your trade union (Pro/Jyty/Meto/MVL) provide financial support for courses, choose the reduced price offered by your union. We check the memberships of the union When the courses have been confirmed, you must register for the university via the registration link sent by e-mail. The university charges the student a registration fee. The union does not cover the university's registration fee. The course is included in the basic studies of work and organisational psychology (25 credits). The studies are suitable for anyone interested in the field and can create support for other studies.*

Study clubs in study centres

The study clubs and circles organised in study centres are rooted in the same historical movements as discussed earlier in this same chapter: the temperance movement, the workers movement and the youth movement. Following the example of the Swedish Arbetarnas

Bildningsförbundet (ABF), the Finnish Workers' Educational Association (WEA Finland) was founded in 1919. Nowadays, it is considered to be the oldest study centre in Finland. WEA Finland organised lectures, study circles, and correspondence schools. It had its own lecture office. In addition, there were two other lecture offices in Finland. The three separate lecture offices managed the distribution of the funds granted for study clubs, study circles and lecture activities until 1943. Funding for study circle activities was minimal in the beginning, but in 1921, the Finnish government started to fund study circle activities by stabilizing the share of subsidies. However, the funding was still minimal.

At the beginning of the 20th century, study club meetings were usually held twice a month, and in addition, there were other more official meetings where decisions were made about acquisitions and the study programme. The study club's practical affairs were handled by a committee consisting of a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, and one or more study advisors. In addition, regular and deputy auditors were needed (Hautamäki 1937).

According to Hautamäki (1937), the types of discussions in study clubs were:

- *Argument*, where the aim was to win arguments, reflect and get 'to the truth'
- *Active listening*, because it awakens one's own thoughts and information is digested and assimilated.
- *Matter-of-fact discussion*, which can only be successful if people know something about the topic. Therefore, people had to prepare for the coming discussions at home.
-

For almost 40 years, the Study Committee of Educational Associations (in Finnish, Valistusjärjestöjen opintotoimikunta) published common subject textbooks, which were recommended for use by clubs. Most clubs chose to use the books. During the war years (1940s), the topics were related to national defence and religion. Study clubs were long-lived, there were study clubs that operated for 12 years, those that operated for 20 or even 30-40 years, and even though the Second World War interrupted study club activities, the clubs could move to operate in new locations after the war if the previous place of operation had remained behind the new border (Parjo 1983).

Organisations engaged in study club activities differed greatly in terms of their goals, programme, and membership structure. The development of the study club movement's organisational structure reflected the differentiation and specialisation that took place in the industrialising society (Alanen 1963). Since the beginning of the study clubs, group leaders received training for group leading.

The Association for Educational Activities was established in 1943 and became an important organiser of the study clubs. A few years later it got the rights to manage the distribution of the funds granted by the government for study clubs and lectures (Harju & Turunen 2024).

Study club work remained the dominant form of organising studies in study centres for a long time, but the significant quantitative growth of the study clubs began in the 1960s. The reason for the slow growth was a lack of governmental financial support. Education organised by civil society associations was not recognised in the same terms as traditional institutional education, because civil society education happened at the grassroots level among people rather than in traditional institutions and premises (Harju & Turunen 2024).

Persistent self-motivated liberal adult education work of civil society organisations and active advocacy work eventually led to the first law on study clubs coming into force in 1964. The purpose section of the new law stipulated as follows: “Promoting the practice of law is the development of young and adult citizens by providing them with opportunities for study and productive use of free time. It should take place according to educational principles without party agitation.” State support was weaker than in other liberal adult education institutions and especially weaker compared to other Nordic countries, which also caused some disappointment among the study centres. All in all, after the new law came into force, the number of study clubs started to increase rapidly. The overall number of study clubs multiplied and went from around 3000 clubs in 1960 to more than 24,000 in 1975 (Harju & Turunen 2024).

In the 1960s, almost two hundred different subjects were studied in study circles every year, and new population groups expanded the number of subjects. Subjects were for example social studies, psychology and education, knowledge of religion, literature and art, history, natural sciences and geographical knowledge, foreign languages, organisational skills, vocational-practical subjects, stage work and oral presentation skills, musical performance, crafts, and physical education. In addition, there were additional programmes, trips, parties, informal and unguided socialising, singing together, games, and visits. Invigorating activities and time for free socialising were always important (Alanen 1963).

The law for study centres was approved in parliament in March 1975, which increased the number of courses in study centres. At the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, the number of courses went from 923 courses to more than 7500, while the number of course participants rose from 27,229 to 200,000. The sharp increase in the number of courses forced the study centres to develop the pedagogical level of the courses. This was partly helped by the amendment to the Study Centres Act in 1986, which allowed course instructor training in study centres. At the same time, some of the study centres built their own, partially fee-based course activities, for which participants were sought from member organisations (Harju & Turunen 2024).

Laws and regulations

The Act on Liberal Adult Education entered into force on 1 January 1998. For the first time, the law united all actors of liberal adult education under the same entity by name. The Act stated that: “Based on the principle of lifelong learning, the purpose of liberal adult education is to support the versatile development of individuals’ personality and ability to function in communities, and to promote the realisation of democracy, equality and pluralism

in Finnish society” (Nyström 2019, 81). The institutions that have official maintenance permits for liberal adult education institutions from the Ministry of Education and Culture are considered to act under the law of liberal adult education. Official institutions are adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities, sports institutes and study centres which all can have maintenance permits and are eligible for subsidies indicated in the law. New maintenance permits are rarely given from The Ministry of Education and Culture. The activities of Finnish liberal adult education are governed by the law on liberal adult education. An unofficial translation of the law on liberal adult education (21.8.1998/632) states that:

“The purpose of liberal adult educational work is to organise education that supports the integrity of society, equality, and active citizenship on the basis of the principle of lifelong learning. The aim of education organised as liberal adult education is to promote the diverse development and well-being of people and the realisation of democracy, pluralism, sustainable development, multiculturalism, and internationality. Liberal adult education emphasises voluntary learning, communality, and inclusion.” (Free translation)

(1 § (29.12.2009/1765))

The law also defines a specific task for each organisation type. A specific task for study centres is stated as:

“The study centres operate as nationwide educational institutions by organising studies themselves and together with civic and cultural organisations to promote lifelong learning, well-being, and active citizenship, as well as democracy and civil society.” (Free translation)

(2 § (29.12.2009/1765))

According to the law, there is no age or other limits for participation in liberal adult education. Basically, the education is open for all age groups. Age discrimination or other types of discrimination is not allowed when targeting courses at different groups. For example, some courses can be targeted at retired people but by law, anyone can participate. The exception is made in relation to study circles in which participants must be over 15 years old. Study centres are the only liberal adult education institutions which are enabled by law to organise study circles and substitute them as the law defines:

“Study centres can agree with organisations or independent study circles on the payment of education and study circle support to the organisations or study circles. The support is paid from the state share received by the study centres according to this chapter. Supported studies must be included in the study centre’s curriculum for organising education.” (Free translation)

(13 b § (21.12.2023/1212))

Financial structures

Each of the liberal adult education institutions has a slightly different funding calculation formula, although the same law regulates the state subsidies. The Ministry of Education

and Culture confirms the number of student weeks, student days, and teaching hours used as the basis for calculating the state contribution annually within the limits of the state budget. The Ministry of Education and Culture determines the unit prices for student weeks, student days, and teaching hours for the following year. The unit prices are calculated according to the finance and level of activities of previous years. Study centres' unit is teaching hours so the subsidies for study centres are calculated based on teaching hours, which are confirmed yearly.

In addition to the state share, the administrators of educational institutions can be granted quality and development grants, study voucher grants, grants supporting structural development, and additional grants for operating costs within the limits of the allocations in the state budget.

Study centres' financial structure

Study centres are mainly run by state subsidies. The matrix for counting the yearly subsidy is stated in the law on liberal adult education. The unit price is counted yearly, and each teaching hour is worth the unit price. Each study centre is allocated a certain number of hours a year depending on the size of the centre. The hours stabilised in 2016. Before that study centres competed on hours. The study centre with the most hours got more hours allocated next year. By stabilising the number of hours for each study centre they can concentrate more on quality rather than quantity. Study centres may use more study hours than the decided state share at their own cost. If a study centre does not use all allocated hours, the hours will be divided between other study centres next year.

A state contribution is paid to cover the operating costs of the education provided for in this law at educational institutions of liberal adult education, the annual basis of which is calculated for study centres by multiplying them with the confirmed number of teaching hours per teaching hour, the unit prices set for each type of educational institution. (Freely translated)

§ 8 (8.5.2015/579)

The unit price of a teaching hour for study centres is calculated annually by dividing the operating costs of the study centres in the year before the unit price is determined by the number of teaching hours of the study centres in the same year. (Freely translated)

§ 11 (8.5.2015/579)

Member associations pay a fee to the study centre they are members of. Being a member enables an association to apply for and receive a share of the teaching hours and the state subsidy allocated to the study centre. Depending on the study centre, the subsidy for the course is between 0–100 per cent of the cost of the course. In 2021, the average financial support was 27 per cent of the course costs. The rest of the costs must be covered by course fees or other incomes of the association (Ministry of Education and Culture 2023).

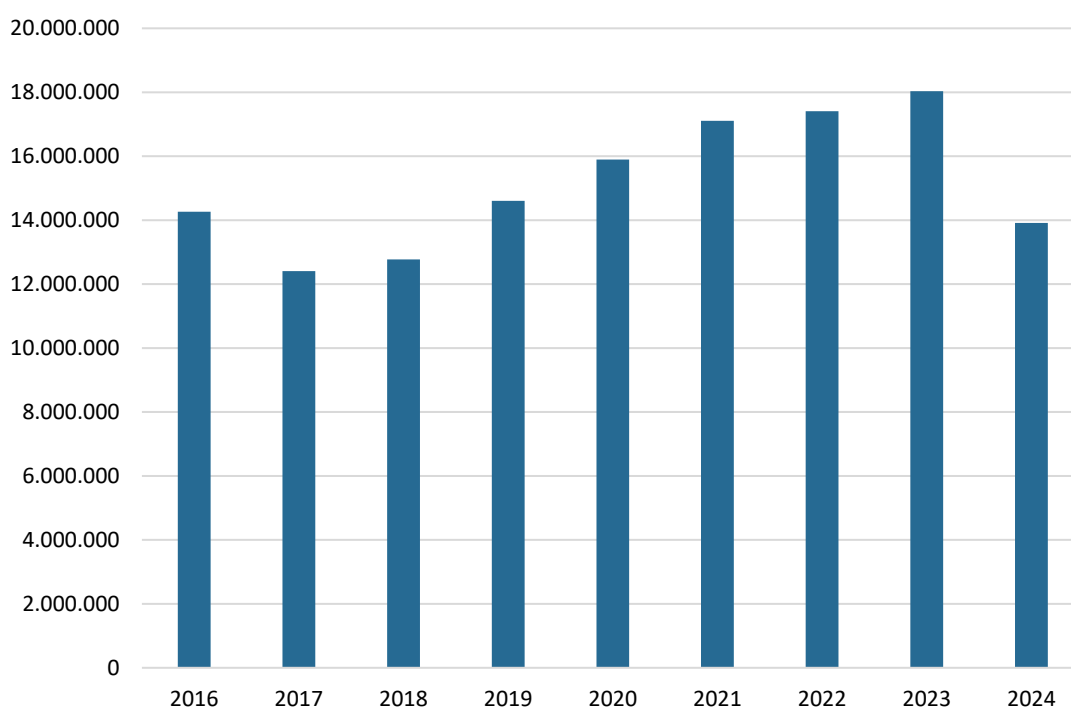
According to the law on liberal adult education, students may be charged reasonable fees for their education (§ 24). What constitutes a reasonable fee is up to the liberal adult education institutions to decide. In addition to the general state subsidies, many study centres

apply for and receive project funding from the EU, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and different foundations.

The state contribution to the educational operations of study centres is 65 per cent of the amount calculated according to the Act on Liberal Adult Education, § 8.

However, the state subsidy for study centres for the education of immigrants is 100 per cent in accordance with § 8 for education that the immigrant completes during the period in which he has a valid integration plan or within one year after the expiration of the last integration plan. The next figures show the operating costs of education and the state subsidy.

Figure 4.3: State subsidy for twelve study centres in Finland between 2016-2024 (euro)



Source: State budget proposals (2024) – current prices.

Table 4.2: Allocated hours, unit price, and state subsidy for different study centres in 2024 (euro)

Study Centre	Confirmed study hours	Calculation basis of the state share (€)	Confirmed study hours immigrant integration	Calculation basis of the state share for immigrant integration
Democratic Civic Association	2849	475,128	0	0
National Educational Foundation Kansio	6538	1,090,342	0	0
KSL Civic Association for Adult Learning	9646	1,608,663	822	137,085
STEP Christian Associations	10,394	1,733,407	0	0
The Association for Rural Culture and Education	10,188	1,699,053	224	37,356
Sivis: Study Centre	35,890	5,985,375	0	0
Pekasus Study Centre	698	116,405	0	0
Study Centre Citizens' Forum	11,451	1,909,683	0	0
SFV Bildning	4714	786,154	0	0
TJS: Educational And Cultural Centre For Professional Employees	10,072	1,679,707	0	0
TSL: Workers' Educational Association WEA Finland	20,789	3,466,982	197	32,854
VISIO: Green ideas, training and culture	2731	455,449	629	104,898
Total	125,960	21,006,349	1872	312,193
Paid (per cent)		65 per cent		100 per cent

Source: Finnish National Agency for Education (2024), modified version.

It is important to note that the allocated study hours mentioned in the table is not the same as the actual number of study hours being carried out by the study centres. In 2022 the number of study hours in the study centres were 218,764 (see schematic overview for more details).

Premises and facilities

Study centres operate through associations, and therefore they do not have big premises, school buildings, or campuses. Most of the education is organised in the associations' own or rented premises (see also Lang et al. 2019). Many bigger associations have their own premises for education. Religious associations can gather on premises belonging to the church.

The idea of study centres is that education takes place among people and where people are, rather than in traditional educational institutions and buildings. Some study centres rent or own small premises which they can sublet to their members or co-organisations at reasonable prices. Study circles can also gather at the homes of participants. As remote learning has increased, some study centres have enabled courses via Teams, Zoom, Google Meet or

other digital platforms for education. Some study centres offer licenses for digital platforms for their member organisations.

Organisation

The organisational structure of study centres is a unique network of civic and cultural associations. Study centres are run by organisations formed by associations. About half of the member associations that back study centres are affiliated with political parties or labour (trade) unions, and the rest are formed by independent non-governmental organisations. One study centre has mostly religious member organisations and one has mostly art and culture-based member organisations.

The board of each study centre is formed by member organisations and usually, the study centres have a general secretary or CEO to run the organisation. Each study centre has a varied number of employees, who run educational support applications, communications, accountancy, pedagogic support, and research and development etc.

Together, all the study centres form The Finnish Study Centres Association (in Finnish, Opintokeskukset ry) which acts as an umbrella and advocacy organisation for the twelve study centres. The purpose of the association is to promote cooperation between study centres and the associations that maintain them. The Finnish Study Centres Association also does advocacy, operational development, implements joint projects, research, and development. The Finnish Study Centres Association has one employee. The association is funded by member fees, state grants, and project funding.

Activities

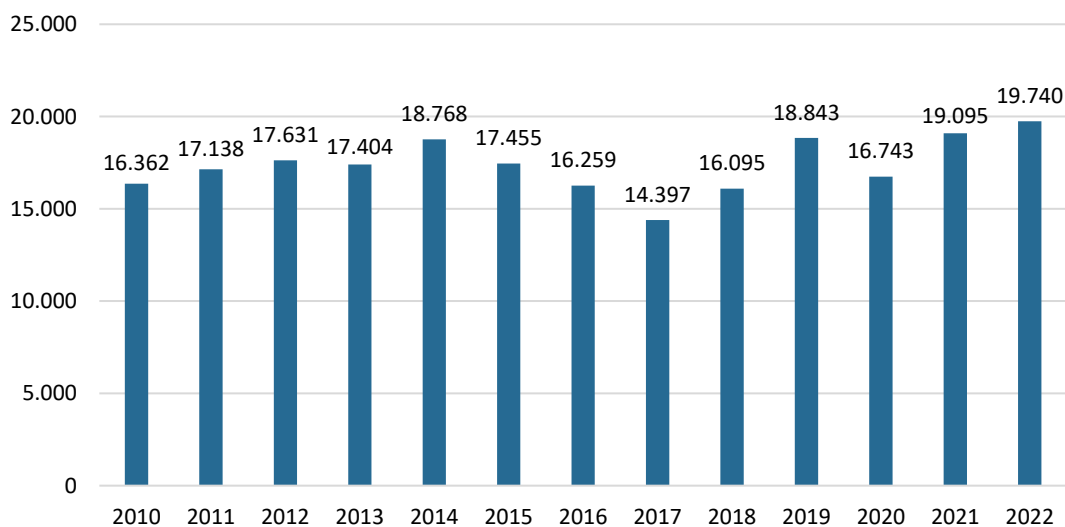
Activities of liberal adult education

In 2021, liberal adult education institutions organised 113,055 courses, which amounted to a total of 2,740,402 teaching hours. There was a total of 1,537,766 participants. This does not include official study circles. The courses that were offered most often were handicrafts and music followed by humanities and education (Vipunen Education Statistics Finland 2024). The law on liberal adult education is broadly interpretable in terms of what kind of education liberal adult education institutions can offer. Historical traditions, societal needs and the law of supply and demand partly determine the course offers. Alongside the convergent development, however, the different forms of educational institutions within liberal adult education have maintained a distinctiveness in the courses they offer, especially due to the influence of their different background communities. Especially study centres have taken a stand on the changing needs of civic activities and their members, for example by shortening and modularising their course offerings. In the 2010s, separate funding was available for the education of migrants, which has significantly increased the number of Finnish language courses as well as courses related to the development of learning abilities and motivation in liberal adult education institutions (Saloheimo et al. 2019).

Activities of study centres

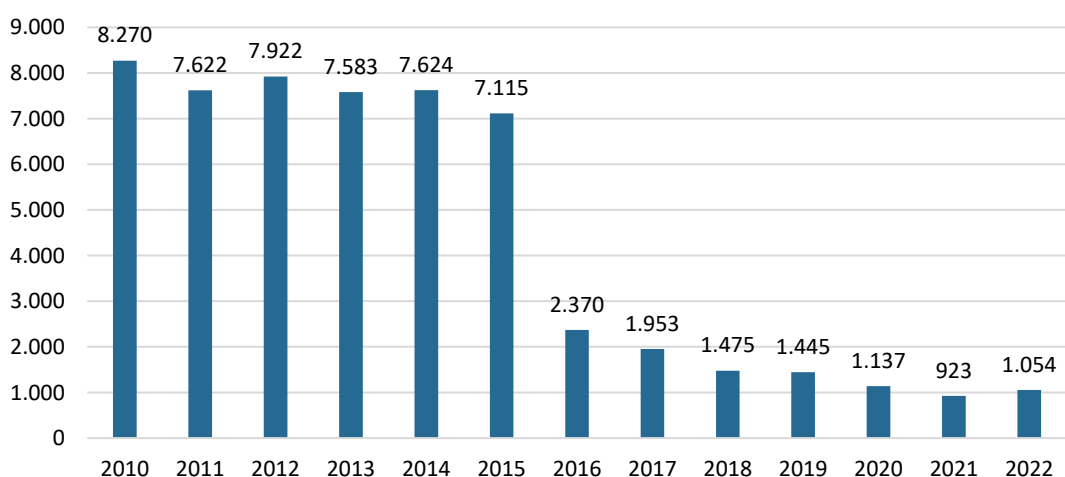
National statistics of study centres have been collected since 2004. In figure 4.4, the total number of courses is presented and in figure 4.5 the number of study circles. As seen in figure 5, the number of study circles dropped in 2016. This is due to the new legislation and changes made in 2016. Most study centres gave up the traditional way of organising studies through study circles as it was economically more beneficial to stick to more general types of courses, which were more organised as well as teacher and leader-based. However, the idea of study circles as a pedagogic method stressing peer learning and dialogue stayed strong in the study centres' teaching ideology.

Figure 4.4: The number of courses in study centres between 2010-2022



Source: Vipunen Education Statistics Finland (2024); Finnish National Agency for Education (2024).

Figure 4.5: The number of study circles in study centres between 2010-2022



Source: Vipunen Education Statistics Finland (2024); Finnish National Agency for Education (2024).

Because of the old tradition of calculating the data based on a principle where only the courses lasting a full day or more were counted, the courses lasting less than six hours have

not been categorised or calculated. Therefore, statistics concerning course categorisations have been partial and do not give a good overall picture of study centres' course provision. Some official statistics exist on Finnish Study Centres' teaching hours, participation rates, and course provision but this data is partly incomplete. The biggest problem is that the official course types used in the statistics are developed for the needs of formal education and are therefore unable to provide a clear picture of the liberal adult education course provision.

In the research on course provision of Finnish study centres, Manninen and Vuorikoski (2024) made a programme analysis (Käpplinger 2018) to analyse the course provision of nine study centres between the years 2016 and 2021 (n = 77,655 course descriptions). The study aimed to collect course data from Finnish study centres from courses organised between 2016 and 2021 and to analyse what type of courses were organised by the study centres, and how the course provision matched the aims defined in the law on liberal adult education (Manninen & Vuorikoski 2024).

Based on the coding of the data (77,655 courses), six main categories and a total of 43 course types were defined. The first percentage column in table 4.3 shows the percentage of course types placed under each category within the category, and the second percentage column shows the percentages of each category and course type in the entire data set. For example, there have been a total of 1049 basic skills courses, which is 1.4 per cent of all courses. The majority of these (f = 564 pcs, 53.8 per cent), were basic language skills courses, i.e. Finnish or Swedish language courses for immigrants. These made up 0.7 per cent of the entire course offer (Manninen & Vuorikoski 2024).

Table 4.3: Categories and course types of study centres

Categories and course types	f	Per cent of category	Per cent of all courses	Course examples
Basic skills	1049		1.4	
Basic language skills	564	53.8	0.7	Learn Finnish by speaking
General skills	335	31.9	0.4	Everyday skills training
Basic literacy skills	108	10.3	0.1	Literacy training
Basic ICT skills	31	3.0	0.0	IT basic course
Basic numeracy skills	11	1.0	0.0	Basics of everyday mathematics
Health and sports	8467		10.9	
Physical education	5386	63.6	6.9	Water workout
Health and well-being	3081	36.4	4.0	Work ergonomics
Personal growth	30,727		39.6	
Handicrafts	7859	25.6	10.1	From clay to ceramics
Singing	4680	15.2	6.0	Choral singing weekend
Dance	3038	9.9	3.9	Polish dance course
Religion	2625	8.5	3.4	Bible course

Information and communication technology	2487	8.1	3.2	Office365 training
Baking and food	2178	7.1	2.8	Sausage course
Theatre and other performing arts	1724	5.6	2.2	Circus group for adults
Arts	1299	4.2	1.7	Classic drawing
Music	1092	3.6	1.4	Getting to know the ukulele
Languages	913	3.0	1.2	Hungarian conversation course
Nature	709	2.3	0.9	Fell plant course in Lapland
Culture	521	1.7	0.7	Ilya Repin at Ateneum Museum
Special skills	386	1.3	0.5	Braille course
Writing	424	1.4	0.5	Creative writing
History	373	1.2	0.5	Local history in Elimäki
Animals	169	0.6	0.2	Horse course
Science	145	0.5	0.2	Comet study club
Philosophy	105	0.3	0.1	Philosophy cafe
Work & income	5516		7.1	
Career and income-related skills	5516	100.0	7.1	CV workshop
Social and community support	8640		11.1	
Social support	3390	39.2	4.4	Basic course in friendship
First aid and safety	1428	16.5	1.8	First aid course I
Peer support groups	1503	17.4	1.9	ADHD peer group for adults
Parenting	1266	14.7	1.6	Growing into parenthood
Parents with children - courses	329	3.8	0.4	Adult/child dance group
Relationships	301	3.5	0.4	Couples course
Special characteristics and difficulties	242	2.8	0.3	Slitting as a behavioural problem
Interaction skills	108	1.3	0.1	Talk about everyday worries
Communities	73	0.8	0.1	Multiculturalism in a housing association and neighbourhood mediation
Citizenship and associations	23,256		29.9	
Trade union training	8916	38.3	11.5	Active trade union I
NGO and association administration	6083	26.2	7.8	Association accounting
Courses for voluntary NGO actors	5027	21.6	6.5	Basic course of voluntary rescue service

Political party education	1908	8.2	2.5	Marketing training for election candidates
Social policy	651	2.8	0.8	The new winds of municipal politics
Sustainable development	422	1.8	0.5	Low-carbon villages seminar
Housing company activist courses	249	1.1	0.3	A successful general meeting for the housing company's board

Source: Manninen & Vuorikoski (2024).

Distance learning and the COVID-19 pandemic

Various diverse models combining face-to-face teaching and online teaching were already in use in liberal adult education before 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic. Digitalisation has strengthened the accessibility and equality of liberal adult education, as it can be used to secure course offerings in sparsely populated areas. On the other hand, it does not replace physical presence and interaction (Lang et al. 2019).

Values characteristic of study centres' training are participation, community, and functionality. Enabling those online takes good planning. During the COVID-19 pandemic distance courses were held actively. Training provided by a local association became nationwide instantly, and it was no longer meaningful to produce the same training in many localities. Study centres started to invest in joint online implementations and carefully build joint learning entities because they saved effort and improved the quality of the training. However, the critical point in volunteer training was how the volunteers were directed to local activities after the training. In addition, education administration became a demand during and after the pandemic (Salo 2021).

However, not all associations and members kept up with digitalisation. Moniheli is a Finnish multicultural network that includes more than 100 associations and is a member of the study centre Opintokeskus Kansalaisfoorumi. Some of Moniheli's associations had to stop their activities during the COVID-19 period due to a lack of expertise, equipment, and resources. Even if the associations had the capability to transfer activities to online platforms, their community members would not necessarily have been able to participate in online activities. Getting to know online environments requires repetition and patience, as well as individual guidance, which in turn requires time and human resources (Kuosti & Kitaba 2022).

Competence badges and marks

The study centres are using digital competence badges such as open badges to recognise the skills and knowledge achieved through the course and make it visible to learners. Competence badges help organisations structure their own training and activities. For competence badges, the organisation must describe what competence is achieved in the activity. The recipient of the competence badge (often a member of the association) receives a digital tool that can be used to easily highlight one's own competence. At the same time, it

becomes easier to visualise and articulate your own skills. Competence badges can be used, for example, when applying for a study or a job (SivisNYT 2022).

However, challenges have arisen in the introduction of competence marks. The technology involved in using competence badges is considered difficult. In addition, the cost of the service is an obstacle, especially for small associations. Not all badge recipients want to register or download an application to receive the badge. Guidance is needed in applying for, using, and receiving badges. The use or benefit of the badge is also not sufficiently recognised yet (SivisNYT 2022).

During 2024, national competence marks for basic skills will be introduced in liberal adult education, with which a person can demonstrate their competence. The target group for competence marks is especially adults with weak or deficient basic skills. The changes to the law regarding competence marks for liberal adult education entered into force on 1 January 2024, and the administrator of an educational institution for liberal adult education can export marks of competence to the national Koski database from 1 August 2024. The national competency marks for basic skills, the KAPOS marks, are built around six themes: 1) learning skills, 2) text skills 3) numerical and financial skills 4) interaction and work well-being skills 5) digital skills 6) sustainability skills. There are 32 competency marks in total, i.e. three to eight marks per theme (Finnish National Agency for Education 2024a).

Educators and facilitators

At the beginning of the 20th century, the instructors of the study clubs were called study instructors. In study clubs, the instructors were usually 'comrades', who, in the words of Hautamäki (1937), were more fellows than leaders of studies. The instructor did not have to be a learned person, referring to university studies, but it was seen that reading and enthusiasm for studying and supervising tasks were enough (Hautamäki 1937). In the 1960s, there were still mostly fellow instructors and counsellors in study clubs, but one in three counsellors was a teacher, counsellor, or youth counsellor by profession. All study centres organised courses for their instructors, but still, almost none of the instructors had received special instructor training. Directing study clubs was mostly an unpaid hobby. Only 17 per cent were paid (Alanen 1963).

During the 1960s, the comparison of fellow and expert instructors was studied in Finland, but there was yet no 'suitability profile' of study instructors. However, Alanen (1963) states that the instructor's specialisation in the subject and its teaching is obviously important for the success of the studies in courses where it is important to have systematic and specific knowledge of one certain field. However, in discussion clubs with broad general education and civic education goals, the instructor's subject knowledge and teacher training are not as central as a guarantor of the success and level of the studies. In fact, the active participation of members tends to be even weaker in a club led by a teacher than a fellow, because a school role from which the teacher cannot detach can turn into a problem and produce disruptive effects. Therefore, the ideal instructor combines the best help of a good teacher and a good fellow instructor (Alanen 1963).

Today, the study circle as a pedagogical method is still an important part of study centres' pedagogy. Anyone with personal motivation can study to become a voluntary worker or a group leader for hobby and peer support groups. It is empowering pedagogy in which people become active participants in their own communities, teach and help each other to learn and create meaning about life. Educated pedagogical experts working in study centres help their member associations strengthen the pedagogical quality of their education. However, there is no collected data on how many per cent of study centres' workers or teachers (working in member associations) have official teacher qualifications or have studied educational sciences. According to Lang et al. (2019), the situation in liberal adult education in general is characterised by teaching work that is carried out under many titles, and there is no uniform collective agreement about salaries. In Finland, there is no official formal liberal adult education teacher training, there is only general vocational and university teacher training, where people can get a pedagogical qualification.

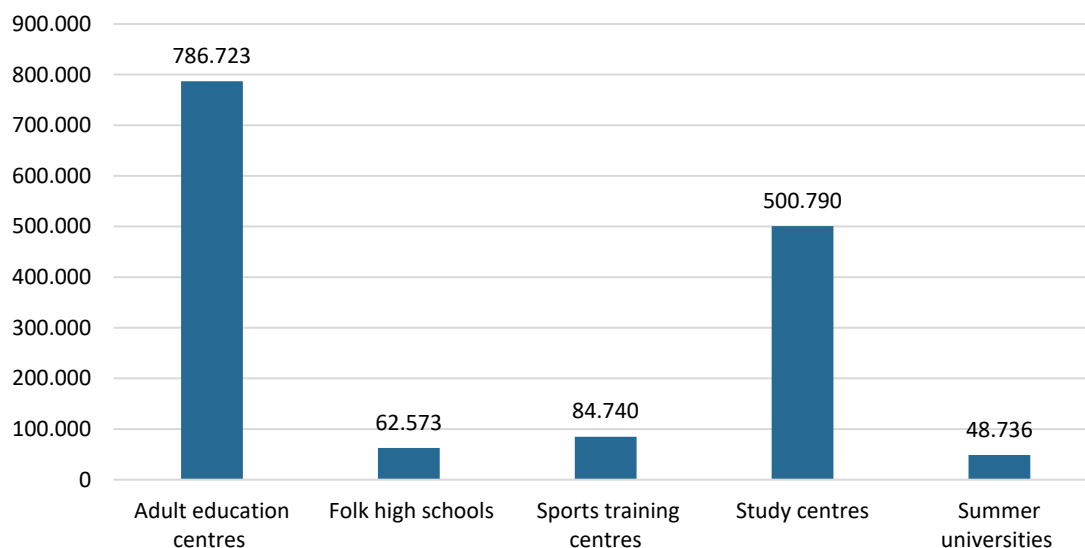
In study centres, study circle activities are focused on peer learning and sharing between peers. Marion Fields has studied peer learning in Finnish study circles. In her study (Fields 2013) she noticed, however, that in peer groups, there may be a lot of instructor-led learning events, which challenge the notion of peer-to-peer as the basis of learning. In large groups, peer learning often takes place in situations where the students are on an equal footing with each other and the boundary between the students and the instructor blurs or disappears when the learner questions and seeks confirmation from other learners to develop their own understanding. People of different ages also relate to peers and guidance in different ways: in groups of older students, the students talked about the group's guidance counsellor like a teacher, but in groups of young people, such a way of speaking did not occur (Fields 2013).

Participants

Participants in liberal adult education

In the 21st century, the total number of students in liberal adult education has grown. In 2021 there were a total of 1,537,766 participants in liberal adult education (Vipunen Education Statistics Finland 2024). In addition, educational institutions from liberal adult education have become an important provider of the educational needs of elderly citizens, because that task is not carried out by any other education organiser. The share of migrants has also grown significantly (Saloheimo et al. 2019). Figure 4.6 presents the number of participants in different liberal adult education institutions in the year 2021.

Figure 4.6: Number of participants in liberal education in 2021



Source: Vipunen Education Statistics Finland (2024).

The changes that have taken place in the student structure of liberal adult education have largely corresponded to changes in the demographic structure, according to which students are now older and more educated than before. At the same time, the student structure of liberal adult education embodies the accumulation of education, which the current supply mechanisms have contributed to. The structural development projects or cost-saving measures have not reversed the trend (Saloheimo et al. 2019).

Statistics Finland annually collects quantitative basic data on liberal adult education. The data collection is not person-based, so the quantitative statistical information obtained through the national data collection is indicative. In 2019, Statistics Finland did a survey on participant profiles in Finnish liberal adult education. They collected detailed data about participants' profiles, including age, highest completed degree and principal activity of participants. Approximately 72 per cent of all participants were women (Statistics Finland 2024). Saloheimo et al. (2019) argue that since women and girls are more eager to study, educational institutions have organised teaching that interests them, which in turn may have reduced men's interest in participating in the activity.

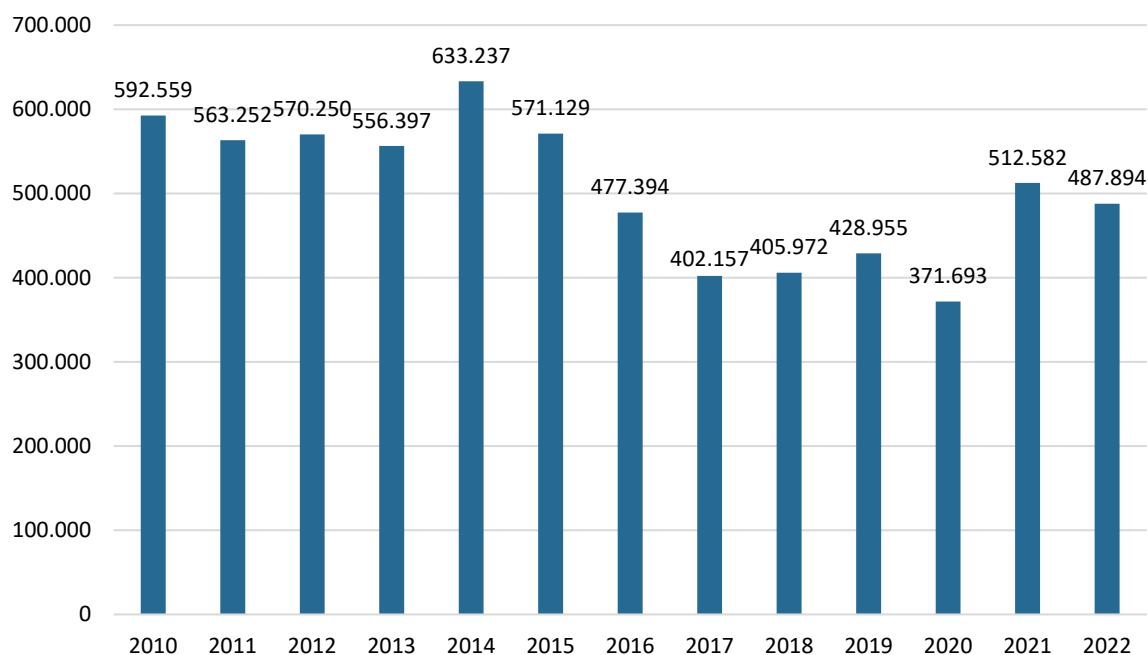
In 2019, about 6 per cent of those who took part in liberal adult education training had another native language than Finnish or Swedish. Quantitatively, the largest group of foreign speakers were Russian speakers, with approximately 10,000 students participating in the training. The next largest group was English-speaking students with just under 5,000 students participating in the training. The range of students who speak foreign languages is wide, but five separate languages, Russian, Estonian, Somali, Arabic and English, were distinguished for data collection. A total of about 24,500 students were included in the 'other language' group (Statistics Finland 2024).

Generally, the educational background of liberal adult education students is somewhat higher than the educational level of the population over the age of 15. There were 24 per cent of students without a post-primary degree, while the corresponding share for the entire population over the age of 15 is 26 per cent. 37 per cent had a university degree, while the corresponding share in the entire population is 33 per cent. However, the large proportion of liberal adult education students over the age of 60 is notable (Statistics Finland 2024).

Participants in study centres

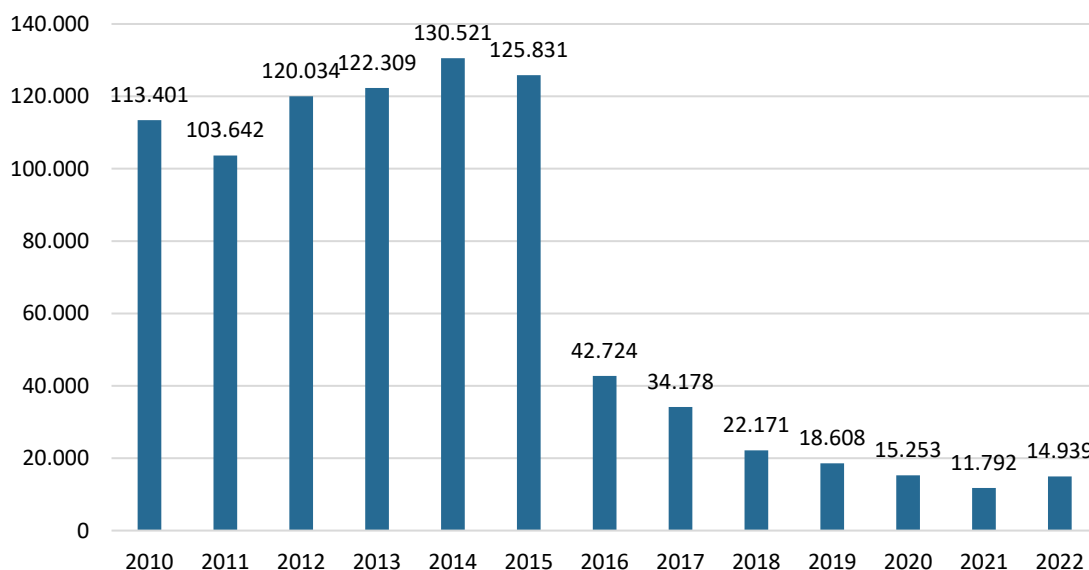
Study centres are obliged to collect certain information about courses and participants and deliver the information to the Ministry of Education and Culture via Statistics Finland. Obligatory information about participants includes for example the number of participants and gender. National statistics officially report only the total participation number. Figure 4.7 shows the number of participants in study centres' education and study circles between 2010–2022.

Figure 4.7: The number of participants in study centres' education and study circles between 2010–2022



Source: Vipunen Education Statistics Finland 2024; Finnish National Agency for Education 2024b.

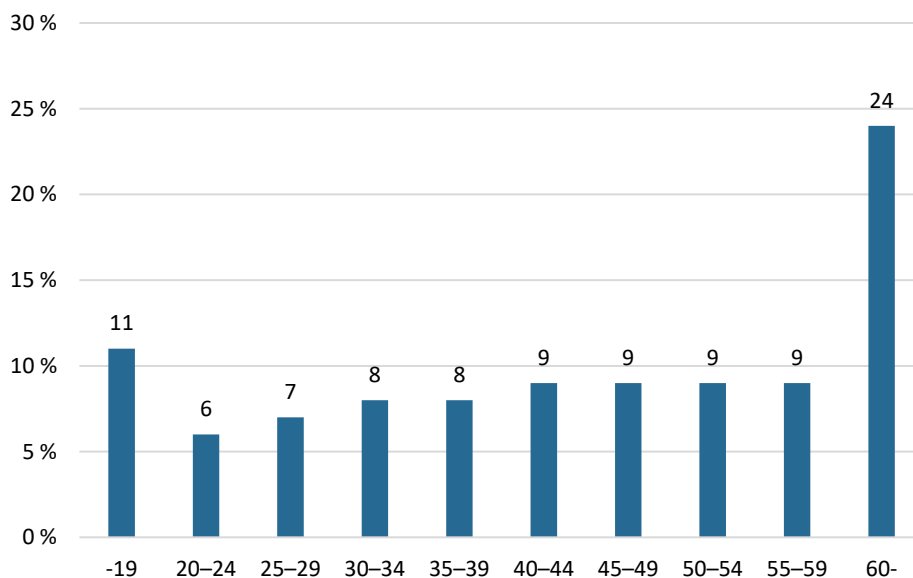
Figure 4.8: The number of participants in study circles between 2010-2022



Source: Vipunen Education Statistics Finland 2024; Finnish National Agency for Education 2024b.

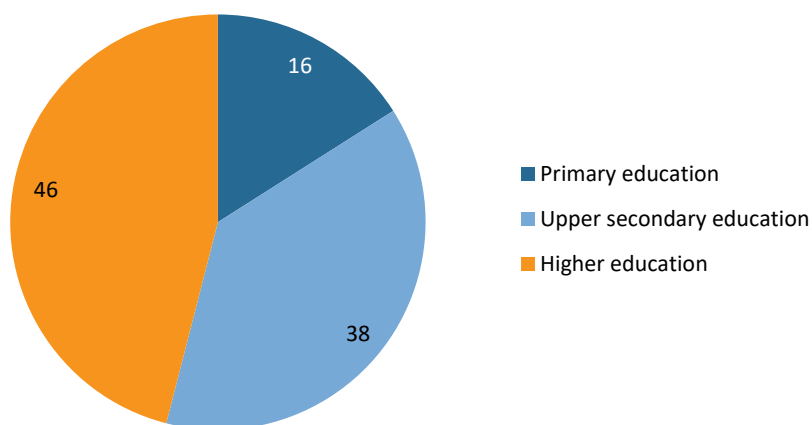
In relation to the study centres' participants, the figures show that 24 per cent of the participants are over 60 years old. 46 per cent have a higher education and 54 per cent are employed.

Figure 4.9: Participation according to age (per cent)



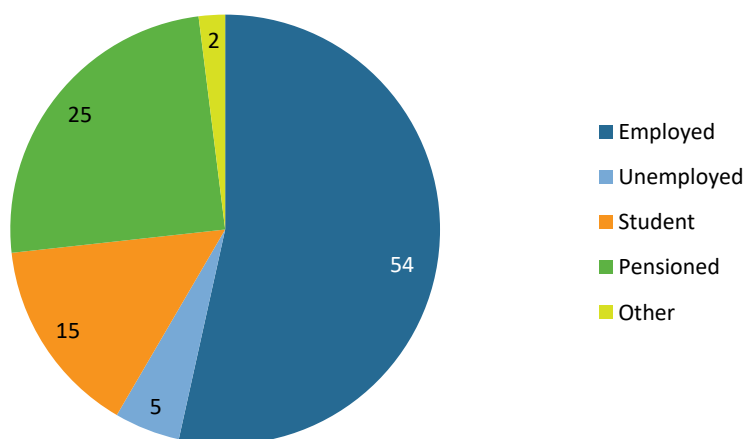
Source: Statistics Finland (2024).

Figure 4.10: Highest completed education (per cent)



Source: Statistics Finland (2024).

Figure 4.11: Principal occupation of participants in study centres (per cent)



Source: Statistics Finland (2024).

In the 1960s, a study conducted by Alanen (1963) showed that the study circle members' goals for participating were, for example, Christian competition, supporting school studies, refreshing leisure time, increasing professional qualifications, useful leisure skills, improving general education, being together and exchanging ideas, developing character, and deepening one's outlook on life, self-expression, knowledge, and skills necessary in organisational life and positions of trust. The most common study goal was improving general education (Alanen 1963). Today, current studies on study circles have been more interested in the learning and benefits of participants than the reasons why people participate.

According to Fields (2013), peer learning, such as mentoring and ad hoc sharing of knowledge, is of particular interest to younger volunteers in study centres. Young people's voluntariness is determined by the need for informality and doing things instead of seeking status (Fields 2013). Many of those who have participated in voluntary activities have felt that they have gained several important skills, which will also benefit them in their working life and studies. However, there is an accumulation of voluntary participation activities: people with higher education, those in a good labour market position and young

people have worked more often than others in tasks that enable extensive learning and recognise that they have learned more different skills than others. They have also been able to utilise the experience they gained from volunteer work more than others (Fields 2019).

The task of the study centres is to try to answer the educational needs of their member organisations. In 2022, a study centre called Opintokeskus Siviis conducted a survey (Fields & Hannukainen 2022) on the skills needs of organisations and associations operating in Finland. According to their results, communication, management and fundraising are emerging as the most significant skills needed among organisational actors. Skills related to guiding and organising events are more important for volunteers. In addition, the competence needs related to diversity and sustainable development have grown. According to the survey, organisations' abilities to renew themselves are being tested. It is affected by the constant pressure of professionalism and the experience of not getting new generations involved in the activity (Fields & Hannukainen 2022).

Schematic overview – Finland

Theme	Description
<p>Definition and description of the field:</p> <p>The common definition of the field is the movement/form of popular education characterised in each country as a study circle/evening school/local study association.</p> <p>The study has a particular focus on the local activities and organisations organised under national study associations that work with non-formal education/non-formal learning. In countries where this is relevant, activities are included that are directly comparable to the local activities of the study associations that receive funding according to the same legislation/guidelines.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the field is briefly described in relation to other non-formal adult education actors/categories that are not included in the study.</p>	<p>'Opintokeskukset' or study centres in Finland organise education and training for their member associations. Study circles are one part of their activities.</p> <p>In Finland, study centres belong to liberal adult education together with adult education centres, summer universities, folk high schools and sports institutions.</p> <p>Based on the law, study centres are the only ones which can operate and fund study circles in Finland.</p> <p>Study associations receive public subsidies for providing liberal adult education.</p>
<p>History:</p> <p>Briefly describe the most important turning points in the history of study associations and study circles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When were the central national organisations in the field established? • Which movements are the central national organisations rooted in? • When were they first mentioned in the law? • What key legislative changes have been made since then? 	<p>The home study movement, village schools and reading associations created the basement to study club work. At the end of the 19th century, the youth club movement, the temperance movement, the folk school movement and the Wrightian labour movement developed free educational activities for adults, i.e. reading rooms, libraries, lecture events, reading circles and educational magazines.</p> <p>Timeline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1881: the first Peasants' Youth Society was founded. • 1883: Finland's first labour union was founded in Helsinki. • 1919: The Workers' Educational Association was founded. • 1920: the first state subsidies for Workers' Educational Associations. • 1927: Law on state subsidies for worker's colleges. • 1965: Law on study circles. • 1976: Law on study centres. • 1993: Law based on performance in adult education centres. • 1999: Law for liberal adult education (one law for all institutions). • 2009: the Finnish Study Centres umbrella organisation is established. • 2015: The state contribution to study clubs ends.
<p>Rules and regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the national laws/legal frameworks regulating the economy and activities of study 	<p>The Law on liberal education (<i>Laki vapaasta sivistystyöstä</i>): The purpose of liberal adult educational work is to organise education that supports the integrity of society, equality and active citizenship based on the principle of lifelong learning.</p>

<p>circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the name of the law/legislative framework regulating the activities and/or the financial support for the local study associations/study circles? • How is the aim of the local study associations/study circles described in the law/legal framework? • How is the field delimited in the law/legal framework? <p>Public authority oversight: Describe the mechanisms that ensure local compliance with regulations in the field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this performed by local or national authorities? • And how does it work in practice? 	<p>The aim of education is to promote the diverse development and well-being of people and the realisation of democracy, pluralism, sustainable development, multiculturalism and internationality. Liberal adult education emphasises voluntary learning, communal-ity and inclusion.</p> <p>Study centres operate as nationwide educational institutions by organising studies themselves and together with civic and cultural organisations to promote lifelong learning, well-being, and active citizenship, as well as democracy and civil society.</p> <p>A 'study circle' means a group formed by at least five persons over 15 years old studying at least ten hours based on instructions given by the study centre. (Study centres are the only liberal adult education institutions enabling study circles based on law.)</p>
<p>Funding: Describe briefly the sources of funding for the activities of study circles/evening schools (for instance government budgets, grants, subsidies, donations, and participant fees.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the size of the fees for participants? How do these compare to participant costs of other leisure activities (e.g. sports clubs)? • Does the public support come from the local level, national level or both? • How has the local and/or national financial support developed in 2012-2022 in both absolute (level of support) and relative (support per capita) measures? 	<p>Study centres' are mainly run by state subsidies. The unit price is counted yearly, and each teaching hour is worth a unit price. Each study centre is allocated a certain number of hours yearly depending on the size of the centre.</p> <p>Member associations of study centres pay member fees for their own study centre. Being a member enables an association to apply for and receive its own share of teaching hours and state subsidy allocated to the study centre. Depending on the study centre the support for the course is between 0-100 per cent of the costs of the course. In 2021 the average monetary support was 27 per cent of the course costs.</p> <p>According to the law on liberal adult education, students may be charged reasonable fees for teaching. What is a reasonable payment is left to liberal adult education institutions to decide.</p> <p>The state contribution is 100 per cent of the euro amount for the education of migrants – for education that the migrant completes during the period in which he has a valid integration plan or within one year after the expiration of the last integration plan.</p> <p>In addition to general state subsidies, many study centres apply for and receive project funding from the EU, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and different foundations.</p>
<p>Premises and facilities: Describe in which type of premises and facilities the activities take place.</p> <p>Describe who is responsible for finding the premises/facilities.</p>	<p>Study centres operate with associations. Most of the education is organised in associations' own or rented premises or in the homes of the participants. Some large associations have their own premises and for example, Christian associations can gather on premises belonging to a church. Some study centres have small premises that they can rent for their member organisations.</p>

	<p>As remote learning has increased, some study centres have enabled digital platforms for education. This is done by offering licenses.</p>
<p>Organisation (national/local): Describe the organisational structure of the study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they organised as voluntary associations or as other types of organisations? • How many organisations exist? At the national level (national study organisations), and at the local level (local study associations/study circles)? <p>Give concrete examples of the different types of organisations at the local level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give concrete examples of the different types of organisations at the local level. 	<p>The Finnish Adult Education Association FAEA (Vapaa Sivistystyö – Fritt bildningsarbete VST ry.) is the umbrella organisation for all liberal adult education institutions in Finland.</p> <p>There are 12 associations running their own study centre in Finland. At the beginning of 2023, the associations that maintain study centres had a total of 372 member organisations. In 2022, educational cooperation was carried out with 1366 different organisational partners. These associations operate often locally but nationwide.</p> <p>All the study centres together form the Finnish Study Centres Association which acts as an umbrella and advocacy organisation of the twelve study centres.</p> <p>Study centres are educational organisations which are maintained by private civic organisations. Half of the organisations that back study centres are affiliated with political parties or labour unions, and the rest are formed by independent non-governmental organisations.</p> <p>Under the member organisations, there are hundreds of voluntary people and members.</p>
<p>Activities: Describe the <i>format</i> of the activities and the <i>content/subject</i> of the activities.</p> <p>Describe the <i>scope</i> of the activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many activity hours are included in the overall scope of activities of the study circles/evening schools (2012-2022)? • How are the activity hours distributed across subjects? 	<p>The format of activities is for example classroom courses, peer-learning, voluntary work, peer support groups, and study circles. Course categorisation for study clubs do not exist. Course provision categories of study centres in general includes for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Growth: 39.9 per cent • Citizenship and associations: 29.9 per cent • Social and community support: 11.1 per cent • Health and Sport: 10.3 per cent • Work and Income: 7.1 per cent • Basic skills: 1.4 per cent <p>Key figures for 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of courses: 19,740 • The number of study circles: 1054 • Study hours: 218,764 • Study hours of study circles: 37,690
<p>Educators and facilitators: Describe whether there are any qualification requirements for educators/facilitators in study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the educators/facilitators volunteers or paid? 	<p>No official qualification requirements. Study centres and member associations can make their own qualification requirements for their educators.</p> <p>Educators/facilitators are both volunteers and paid.</p>
<p>Participants: Profile the participants in study circles/evening schools including their age, gender and</p>	<p>Participation in study centres 2019 according to age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 19 years: 11 per cent

<p>educational backgrounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who and how many participate in the activities? • What is the proportion of the adult population participating in study circles/evening school activities? • Describe, if possible, to what extent marginalised groups (e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, people living in remote areas), participate in study circles/evening school activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20–24: 6 per cent • 25–29: 7 per cent • 30–34: 8 per cent • 35–39: 8 per cent • 40–44: 9 per cent • 45–49: 9 per cent • 50–54: 9 per cent • 55–59: 9 per cent • 60+: 24 per cent <p>Highest completed degree (per cent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary education: 16 per cent • Upper secondary education: 38 per cent • Higher education: 46 per cent <p>Principal activity (per cent)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed: 54 per cent • Unemployed: 5 per cent • Student: 15 per cent • Pensionary: 25 per cent • Other: 2 per cent <p>No official data exist of how many of the participants belong to marginalised groups.</p>
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COUNTRY REPORT

DENMARK

Introduction

The local study associations in Denmark have had various roles and organisational affiliations since the first mention of 'evening schools' in the Danish School Act from 1814. Compared to the other three countries in the study, the classroom form and school connotations seem to be more prevalent and consistent. Thus, the classic study circle that was widespread in both Sweden, Finland and partly in Norway has not been seen as a central part of the study association activities in Denmark. Book circles and study clubs were often private and not part of the study association landscape.

Despite the connection to the more formal system, the documentation and statistics of the field are, at best, deficient. As the section on rules and regulations will show, the legislation that ensures subsidies to the local study associations is a framework legislation, and the municipalities are the key players for the local study associations. Apparently, there has not been a national interest in collecting systematic data in this area. Hence, the data for this country report is primarily based on previous mappings and surveys conducted by Vifo (the Danish Institute for Non-Formal Education).

Description and definition of the field

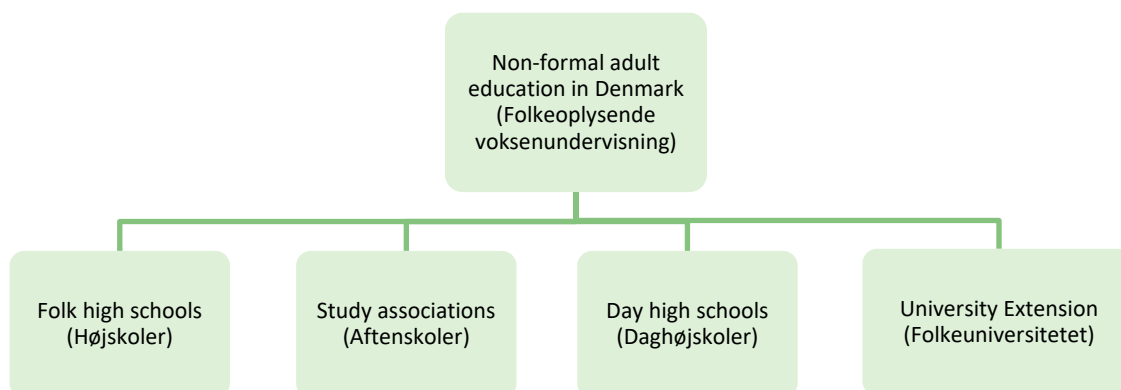
The local study associations in Denmark are defined by 'The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity'. The act is a framework legislation, and it roots the local study associations in the municipalities. A local study association is defined as an association that offers non-formal/popular adult education³³. The association has to be non-profit and must be approved by the municipality to be entitled to receive public financial support.

The local study associations can choose to be part of one of five national study associations. In 2017, there were 1080 local study associations. 47 per cent of the local study associations are members of a national study association (Bjerrum and Thøgersen 2018, 19).

The study associations constitute one of several actors within non-formal adult education in Denmark. Figure 5.1 shows the centrally organised agents within the wider field. Hence organisations that in some of the other Nordic countries will be an intrinsic part of the field – e.g. 'University Extension' – are not included in the Danish definition of local study associations.

³³ 'Folkeoplysende voksenundervisning'.

Figure 5.1: Non-formal adult education in Denmark



Likewise, other national organisations (like the scouts, national sporting associations³⁴ and organisations with a focus on the social sphere) will have elaborate non-formal education activities targeted at their leaders and volunteers, which are not defined as study association activities.

In summary, study associations in Denmark are locally rooted associations offering adult education with no specific end but the personal ‘bildung’ or general education of the participants.

History

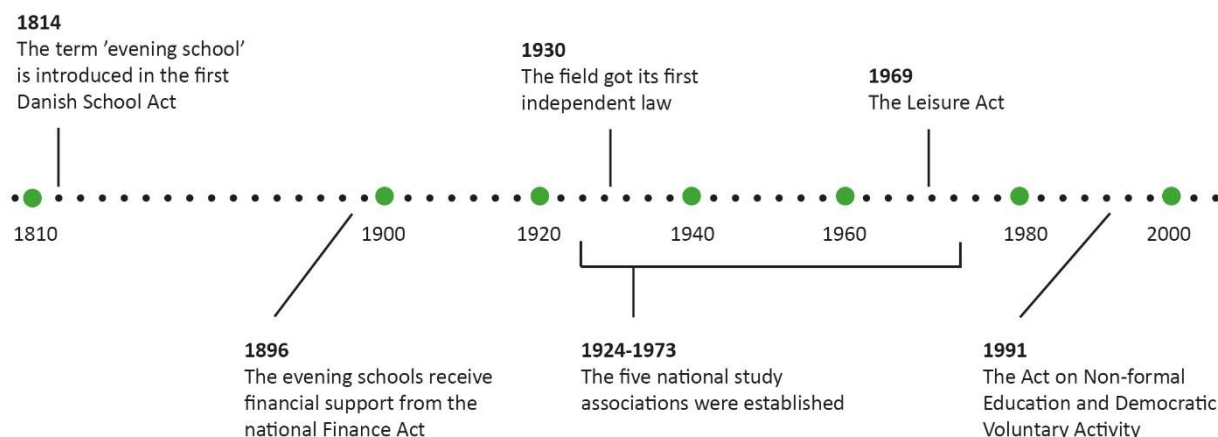
The Danish study associations have their ideational roots in the first Danish School Act from 1814. Here, the word ‘evening school’ – which is the Danish vernacular term for study associations – is registered for the first time.

In this act, the local village teachers in all parts of the country were obliged to offer evening classes for students of age who needed to improve their reading and writing skills and their knowledge of the (at that time) central protestant script: Luther’s Small Catechism. Hence, the aim of the evening schools was to create good Christians and through the teaching of basic skills to ensure the development of abled and informed citizens who could play a role in the developing democracy (Korsgaard 1997, 145). The spread of the evening schools was, however, slow and with great local variation. In 1870, only half the parishes in Denmark had evening school activities (Eigaard et al. 1987, 42).

Figure 5.2 shows selected central historical occasions from the beginning of the evening schools in 1814 to present-day local study associations.

³⁴ The National Olympic Committee and Sports Confederation of Denmark and DGI (About DGI)

Figure 5.2: Central occasions in the history of local study associations in Denmark



In the late 19th century, a rising focus on citizen education and folk enlightenment secured the evening schools financial support from the national Finance Act in 1896. And by 1905, 1038 public and 119 private evening schools were registered (Eigaard et al. 1987, 64).

A new era

In 1924, the first national study association, AOF (Arbejdernes Oplysningsforbund / The Worker's Study Association), was established and marked a change in the organisation of the field. Whereas the evening schools up until now were part of and/or associated with the national school system, the local associations and civil society now evolved the engagement and activities in non-formal adult education.

In 1930, the field got its first independent law which ensured that both the government and the municipalities were obliged to offer financial support to the national and local study associations, respectively. At the same time, more topics were acknowledged as basic skills, and the variation in activities grew (Eigaard et al 1987, 101; Nordentoft & Løvgreen 1998, 169; Korsgaard 2010).

With AOF as the first national study association, the period 1924-1973 saw the establishment of the five national study associations that exist today (box 5.2 – section on organisation). The first four were all closely associated with different political parties, and the study associations had a clear ideological element. In 1973, the apolitical study association DOF (Dansk Oplysnings Forbund/ Danish Enlightenment Association) was established and marked a development that had started in the 1950s and 1960s.

From basic skills to meaning and life skills

The development of the welfare state and the economic growth had changed the role of the study associations from a focus on vocational/employment-related skills to a wider range of topics and courses. (Eigaard 1987; Eigaard 2002, 71). In 1969, a new law called 'The Leisure Act' (Fritidsloven) situated the study associations with other associations that targeted

children and young people in one common law and hence rooted the field with other leisure activities (Korsgaard 1997, 334; 404; Eigaard 2002, 76).

With the Leisure Act, the study associations were also set free to choose their topics without the municipalities having to approve them. As long as they were “topics that adults wanted to be taught in their spare time” (§ 37, Fritidsloven, Engberg 1970). Consequently, hobby-based courses like painting, crafts, culinary and cultural activities became part of the local study associations’ profiles.

In 1991, the Leisure Act was substituted by the current framework legislation: The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity, which will be described further below.

Rules and regulations

‘The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity’ (Folkeoplysningsloven) is the most important law when it comes to local study associations in Denmark. This framework law obliges municipalities to support non-formal adult education in local study associations financially and describes the terms and conditions for the subsidies.

The overall aim of the law is “in respect of different opinions to ensure public grants etc. for non-formal education and democratic voluntary activities that are based on community and the ideological basis of each initiator” (The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity, section 1). Apart from this overall aim, the law also explicitly states the aim of the municipal subsidies for local study associations:

“To advance democratic understanding and active citizenship, and, with a point of departure in the teaching, to increase the participants’ general and subject-related insights and skills. The aim is to strengthen the individuals’ ability and desire to take responsibility for their own lives and to play an active and engaged part in society.”

The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Activity, section 7

From this quote, it is evident that the historical focus on abled and informed citizens – as described earlier – still has a prominent position in the law. The law obliges municipalities to support the local study associations in two different ways:

- 1) Support targeted teaching activities: Financial subsidies for the local study associations’ expenses for teachers and leaders. There is not a minimum but a maximum level of subsidies of 1/3 of the expenses – underlining the obligation for participation fees.
- 2) Support through facilities: Municipalities are obliged to assign available and suitable public premises and facilities to evening schools’ activities. If no suitable premises and facilities are available, municipalities must give grants for the local study associations’ expenses for renting or owning premises. When it comes to ordinary premises the minimum level of grant is 75 per cent of the operating costs, while the

municipalities are free to decide the level of support when it comes to premises with special equipment.

However, to be entitled to subsidies, the local study associations must live up to several requirements:

- The non-formal adult education must take place in democratically organised voluntary associations with a board.
- No grants can be given for formally qualifying learning activities.
- There must be a participation fee for the participants.
- The activities must be open to all.
- The local study association must spend 10 per cent of the financial support on activities that can create debate.

The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity, chapter 4

The local study associations decide the teaching methods and the themes and subjects of their activities. However, in the consolidation act of the law, a few limitations are mentioned:

- No grants can be given for teaching with the aim of 'agitation, election campaigns (e.g. unions, political parties), therapy, entertainment, preaching or the spread of superstition.'
- No grants can be given for teaching within 'games, sports and, competitive activities – including dance, except folk dance – or subjects on the production of drugs.'

The Consolidation Act for Non-formal Adult Education and Democratic Activity, section 5, stk. 2 og 3

When it comes to the financial support for teaching activities, there are different conditions in the law across different types of teaching (table 5.1). This means that it is possible to raise the level of financial support when participants have a disability in relation to the subject taught. The same is the case for teaching instruments and similar subjects where a smaller number of participants is required. Furthermore, it is possible to support 'flexibly organised teaching', where the financial support is not necessarily bound to expenses for teacher salaries but can be calculated on other types of expenses. This opens for study circles and other types of less formalised teaching methods.

Table 5.1: Different types of teaching activities with different conditions in the law

Common teaching activities	Public support with up to 1/3 of the expenses for teaching and leader salaries.
Teaching for people with disabilities	Public support with up to 8/9 of the expenses for teaching and leader salaries.
Teaching in classes with a need for a small number of participants	Public support can be higher than 1/3 of the expenses for teaching and leader salaries. No maximum is stated in the law.
Flexibly organised teaching	The local study associations can spend up to 40 per cent of their total support on flexibly organised teaching (excluding the 10 per cent on debate-generating activities)
Debate-generating activities	The local study associations are obliged to spend 10 per cent of their public grant on debate-generating activities.
Lectures	The local study associations can get public support for lectures. Municipalities are free to decide how this support is calculated.

The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity, chapter 4

Municipalities are responsible for overseeing the use of the allocated grants. Municipal control often takes place both through risk-based selection of associations and through random checks. However, it is a field based on trust, and there is an increasing focus on dialogue with the associations (Thøgersen & Bjerrum 2020, 27-31). Moreover, municipalities typically require external audits when the size of financial grants exceeds a certain level.

Altogether, the Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity is a framework legislation within which municipalities can make specific local rules for the financial support and the level of it. However, despite the framework characteristics, the law also includes some quite detailed criteria for municipal support for local study association activities and the different types of teaching methods and activities.

Funding

As described above, the local study associations are partly funded by the municipalities following The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity, and partly by participation fees. These are the main sources of income at the local level, although some local study associations also have income from other sources – e.g. from donations. At the national level, the national study associations are funded by The Lottery Act (Udlodningsloven).

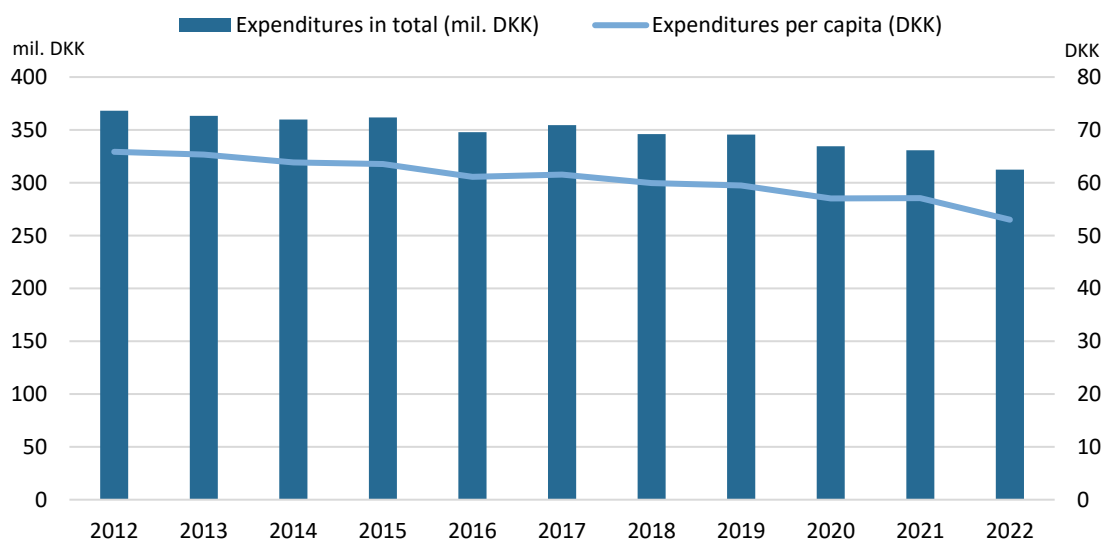
The primary focus of this section will be the local level and the municipal subsidies for the local study associations, and how the level of these grants has developed over time. However, to get the full picture of the public subsidies to the field, the section will also include an overview of the public support for national study associations.

Funding at the local level

As described above, municipalities are obliged to subsidise the local study associations. There is no minimum level of the grants. However – with some exceptions – most municipalities align the subsidies with the maximum fractions described in the law. Since the size of the subsidies is calculated based on the teaching expenses, there is a very close relationship between the activity level and the level of subsidies.

Figure 5.3 shows the development of the municipal subsidies for activities in local study associations during the last 10-year period. It is evident that there has been a slight decline from DKK 368 million in 2012 (DKK 66 per capita) to DKK 312 million in 2022 (DKK 53 per capita) (adjusted for inflation). However, it is also important to look at this in relation to the development in the number of teaching hours, which has also decreased in the period (see the section on activities). The decline between 2021 and 2022 can both be related to exceptionally high inflation rates and that the activity level has not fully recovered after the COVID-19 shutdowns. Apart from the support for teaching activities, some local study associations also get subsidies for their expenses for premises and facilities. There are no separate statistics on the size of this exclusively for local study associations. However, in 2019, the amount was estimated to be DKK 95 million (Thøgersen 2021, 13).

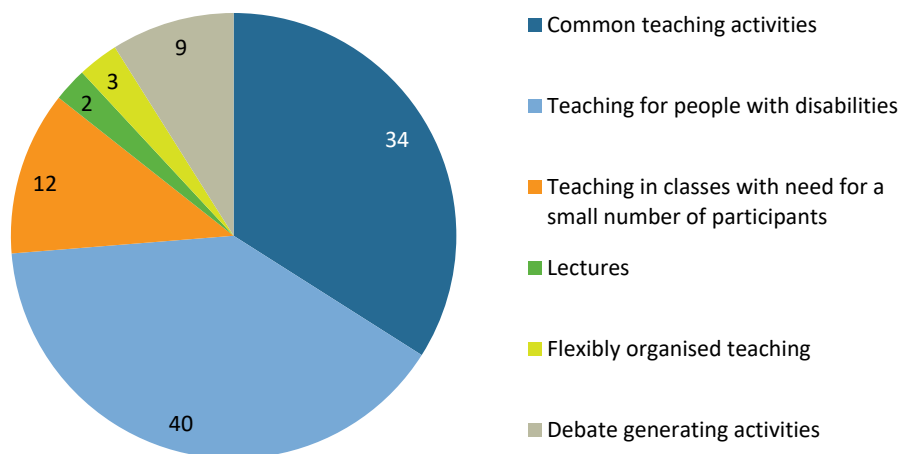
Figure 5.3: Municipal expenditures on local study associations teaching activities 2012-2022



The figure visualises the levels and changes in municipal expenditure on local study association teaching. These numbers do not include subsidies for facilities. All amounts are adjusted for inflation with 2022 as the base year. Source: Statistics Denmark (REGK31)

Figure 5.4 shows how municipal support is distributed among the different types of teaching activities. As is evident quite a large share of the subsidies goes to teaching activities for participants with disabilities.

Figure 5.4: The distribution of municipal support across teaching activities in 2018 (per cent)



Source: Thøgersen 2021 (n:65 municipalities).

The second important source of income in the local study associations is participant fees. There is no knowledge of the size of the total income from participation fees in the field, and there is a large variation between both schools and subjects, as the size of the fees is decided locally. Box 5.1 shows two different price examples for a similar course in a large local study association in one of the largest cities in Denmark (FOF Aarhus) and in a small study association in a small town (Horne Tistrup Aftenskole).

Box 5.1: Price examples - course on upholstery (2023)

<p>Horne Tistrup Aftenskole: Upholstering Price: DKK 750 for 8 sessions from 18.30-21.15</p>
<p>FOF Aarhus Upholstering Price: DKK 1.685 for 10 sessions from 18.30-21.30</p>

Source: www.hornetistrupaftenskole.dk, www.fof.dk/da/aarhus/kurser

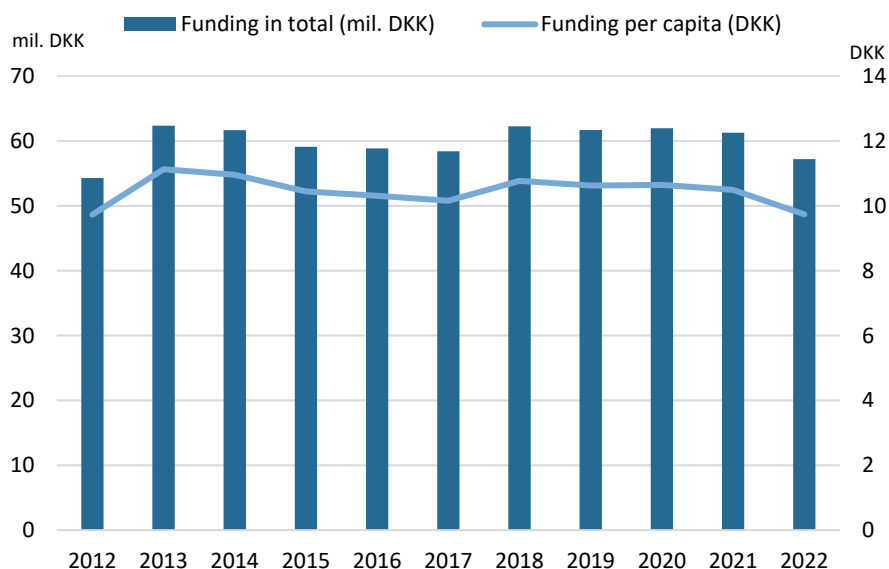
Despite the differences in prizes the local study associations seem to prize the activities as low as their expenses allow them to. There is a general concern that the activities must be accessible for all - also financially (Thøgersen et al. 2023).

Funding at the national level

At the national level, the national study associations are supported by The Lottery Act (Udlodningsloven). Figure 5.5 shows the development in the level of funding during the last 10 years. It is evident that the level of funding at the national level has been relatively stable

during the last years – around DKK 60 million and a little less in 2022 – probably due to high inflation rates.

Figure 5.5: State funding of national study associations 2012-2022 (mil. DKK)



The figure visualises the levels and changes in state funding of national study associations in total (left y-axis in mil. DKK) and funding per capita (right y-axis in DKK). All amounts are adjusted for inflation with 2022 as the base year. Source: Statistics Denmark (BEVIL01 & BEVIL01B)

Premises and facilities

The access and funding of access to premises and facilities for local study associations is also regulated in chapters 6 and 7 of The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity and is a vital part of the municipal support of local study associations. The municipalities are responsible for assigning public facilities that are ‘available and suitable for the purpose’ of activities (this condition is not further specified in the legal provision), with all premise-related expenses being covered by municipal funding.

If no public facilities are available, local study associations are eligible for subsidies for rented or owned facilities. For ordinary premises, the municipalities must provide grants corresponding to at least 75 per cent of the operating expenses, but they are free to decide the size of the subsidies when it comes to premises with special equipment (Section 23). This generally incentivises the assignment of public premises to local study associations.

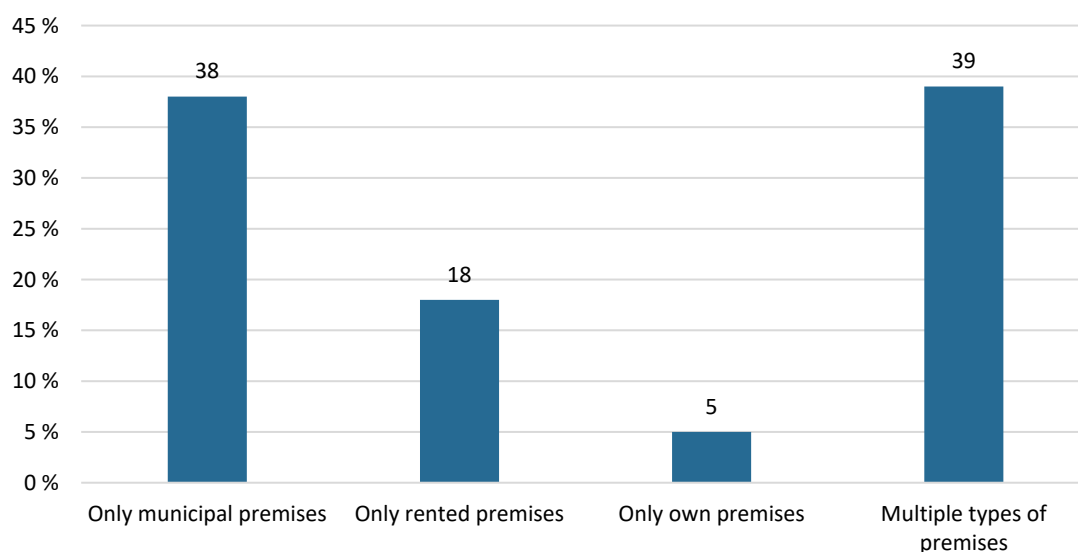
Local study associations’ actual use of different types of facilities and premises varies from one municipality to another, and it also varies within the single local study associations. A national investigation from 2018 showed that 73 per cent of the local study associations used municipal premises, 54 per cent used rented facilities with municipal subsidies, and 17 per cent used their own premises (Bjerrum & Thøgersen, 2018).

As figure 5.6 shows, 38 per cent of the local study associations used only municipal facilities and 18 per cent used only rented, subsidised facilities. It is also evident that many local

study associations use multiple facilities. On average local study associations used 7.7 different localities for their activities with numbers varying depending on the size and the number of subjects.

The investigation found that 73 per cent of local study associations used municipal premises, 54 per cent used rented facilities with municipal subsidies, and 17 per cent used premises that they themselves owned. Local study associations used on average 7.7 facilities for their activities with numbers varying depending on size and the number of subjects.

Figure 5.6: Type of premises used by local evening associations in 2018 (per cent)



Visualised based on a table in Bjerrum & Thøgersen (2018, pp. 89). n=331

A more recent in-depth report specifically investigated the facilities and premises of local study associations in the Municipality of Copenhagen where 71 local study associations operate. Here, just 15 per cent of all activity hours were conducted in municipality-owned facilities in contrast to 80 per cent conducted in rented or own facilities. Specifically, when it comes to facilities with special equipment, the local study associations to a very large extent use private facilities even though only very few of them are subsidised for their expenses (Thøgersen et al. 2023). However, this example stands out from the general picture, and the share of large local study associations which have their own facilities is generally higher in city areas than in more rural areas (Thøgersen 2021).

Organisation

As outlined in the definition, the study associations in Denmark are defined as voluntary non-profit organisations. They are locally anchored and have a board that is responsible for the school/association. In a mapping from 2018, Bjerrum and Thøgersen identified 1080 local study associations countrywide.

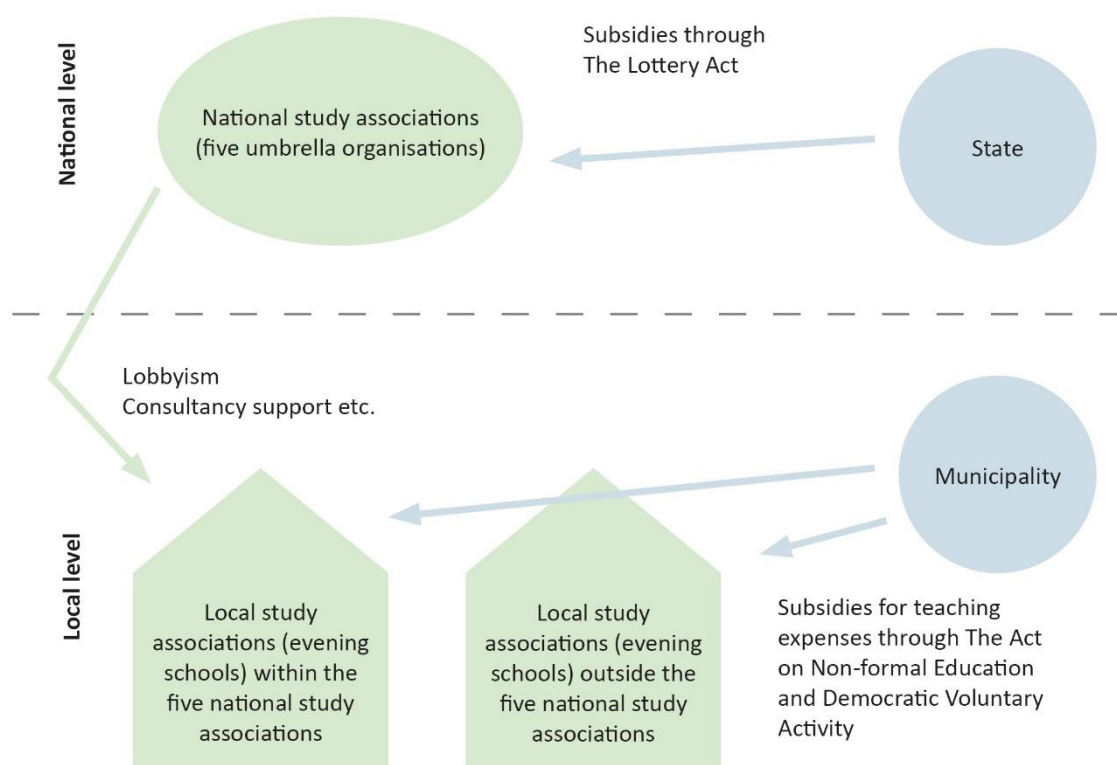
As mentioned above, the local study associations can choose to become members of one of the five national study associations (box 5.2).

Box 5.2: The five national study associations

AOF – Arbejdernes Oplysningsforbund (owned by 16 member organisations/unions and is established in 1924).
 LOF – Liberalt Oplysningsforbund (established by the party 'Venstre' (The Liberal Party of Denmark) in 1945).
 FOF – Folkeligt Oplysningsforbund (originates from The Conservative Peoples Party and is established in 1947).
 DOF – Dansk Oplysnings Forbund (established independent from party politics in 1973).
 Fora – Until Autumn 2014 called NETOP – Netværk for Oplysning, which was a amalgamation of Dansk Husflidsselskab and Frit Oplysningsforbund (established by Det Radikale Venstre (The Danish Social Liberal Party) in 1952).

Hence the national study associations function as umbrella organisations that offer services and support to their member organisations and lobby on their behalf. The national study associations are partly financed by membership fees and partly by subsidiary support from the state (as described above). Figure 5.7 illustrates the organisation at the local and national level.

Figure 5.7: Organisation of the field at local and national level



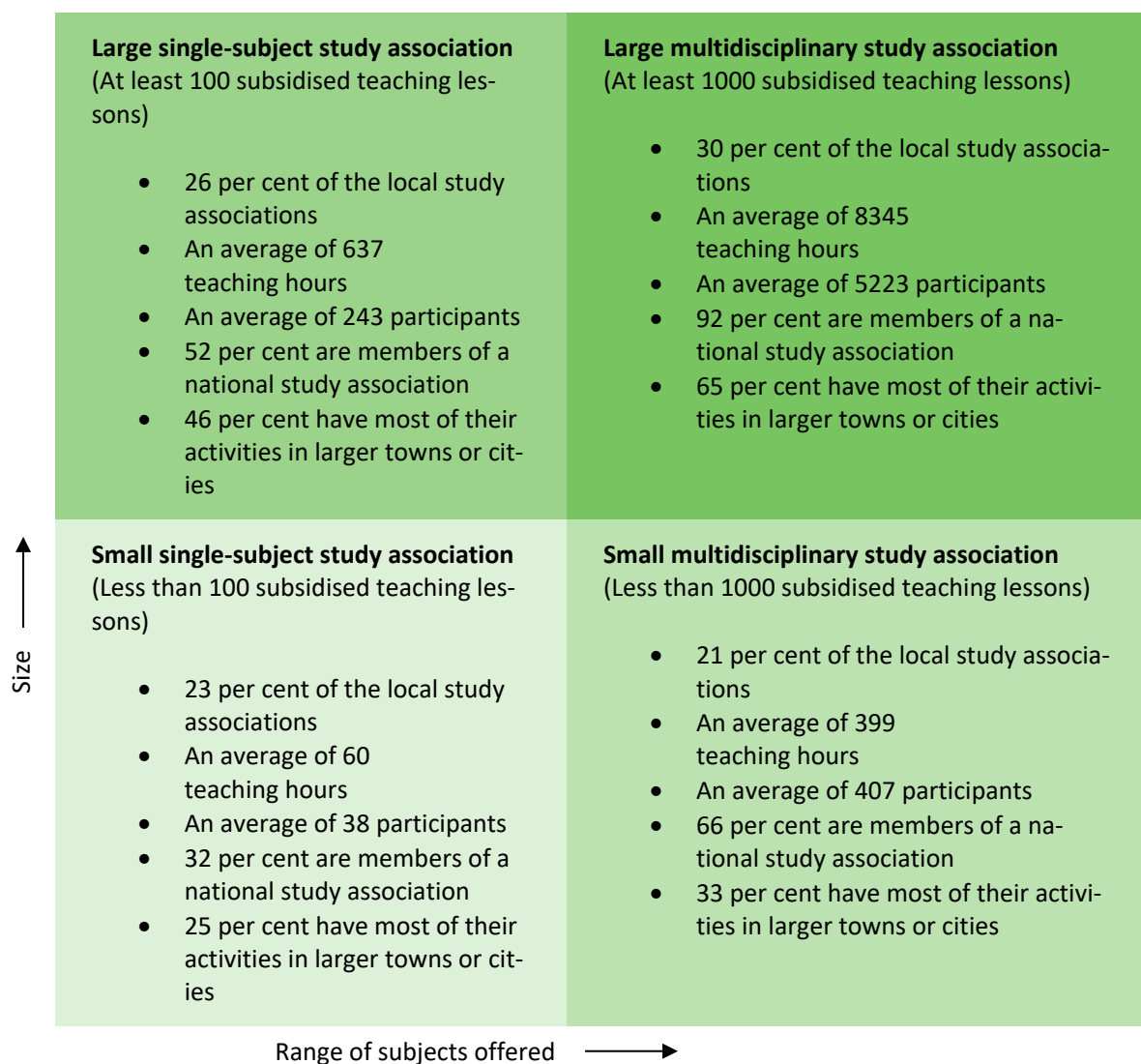
In organising the activities in the local study associations, the remnants of the affiliation with the educational systems still leave a trace, and in contrast to most Danish associations,

the participants are not necessarily members of the study association but paying participants in the specific course.

That said, the variations between the local study associations can be more striking than the similarities. Some local study associations are very small with only one type of activity, less than 50 teaching lessons a year and only volunteer resources to organise and execute the activities. On the other end of the scale, there are big study associations that have a top professional team to develop, offer and implement courses. In 2018 the three biggest study associations in Denmark each had more than 75.000 teaching lessons a year (Bjerrum & Thøgersen 2018).

In a publication from 2018 Bjerrum and Thøgersen identified four types of study associations to illustrate the wide range of differences. Figure 5.8 shows the landscape divided into the four categories.

Figure 5.8: Four categories of study associations



The figure shows the average number of subsidised study hours for the local study associations within each of the categories having subsidised teaching, and the average number of participants in the subsidised activities (Bjerrum og Thøgersen 2018, 22)

Case studies into four types of study associations

A foray into the course and activity development in 28 local study associations analysed the course catalogues over a ten-year period (from the season 2007/2008 to 2016/2017). The study gives a close-up of a local study association within each of the four categories (Bjerrum 2020). The following descriptions will be based on these cases.

Small single-subject study association

There are a few associations within this category that focus on physical activity, but the majority will typically offer music or crafts. The case school specialises in crafts and is an excellent example of one of these schools.

This study association has a long history and celebrated its 140th anniversary in 2016. Many of the small crafts-based schools have a similar story and have been an integral part of the local community for a long time. This school is a membership-based association in contrast to many larger schools and is – like 32 per cent of the small single-subject study associations – a member of a national study association. The premises used for its activities are in an elementary school. In 2016/17, it offered ten courses which varied in length from two to eight hours. For this local study association, the core activity is an ‘open workshop’ every Wednesday where members meet in the crafts facilities and work on individual projects.

Case: small single-subject study association

- National study association: Member of Fora
- Number of subject categories: 1-2 subject categories
- Development in number of courses: From 9 courses in 2008 to 10 in 2017
- Lectures/public speeches: none in the ten years

Whereas the overall study association landscape has seen a centralisation of activities in the last 20 years, the small single-subject schools in general still have the ability to create local engagement, and more than half of these schools have their main activities in villages or smaller cities (Bjerrum and Thøgersen 2018, 23).

Large single-subject study association

Like the small single-subject study associations many of the large single-subject study associations have crafts (30 per cent) or music (36 per cent) as their core activity. However, 25 per cent of the study associations in this category have physical activity as their core activity.

The case study association in question focuses on music. In 2017 it had 20 courses. Like 52 per cent of the large single-subject study associations nationwide, this study association is a member of a national study association.

The main activity is one-on-one lessons in a chosen instrument. Hence the course catalogues mainly introduce the different teachers, their instruments and their experiences. The participants then arrange the lectures directly with the teachers. In the ten-year period of the study, piano, guitar and voice training were consistently a part of the catalogue. Other instruments like the accordion, ukulele, saxophone, clarinet and different flutes were occasionally offered in the study association.

At the same time, several choirs and a big band were rooted in the study association over the period. Band for beginners was also an integral part of the catalogues. Occasionally the study association also had courses like songwriting, music theory etc. And in 2014, it started a choir for people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which is still active.

Case: Large single-subject study association

- National study association: Member of DOF
- Number of subject categories: 2-3 subject categories
- Development in number of courses: From 27 kurser i 2007/08 til 20 kurser i 2016/17
- Lectures/public speeches: none in the ten years

Small multidisciplinary study association

This small multidisciplinary study association was established in 1968 as a part of an association that focuses on enhancing the health of Danish families through information on for example processed food, nutrition and food culture. It is member-based which is not a general feature for this type of study association. In contrast to most small multidisciplinary study associations this school is not a member of one of the five national study associations.

In the ten-year period of the study, this school had between three and five types of subjects with physical activity and crafts as the most consistent subjects. Other subjects like communication and IT, music and basic subjects were offered occasionally.

Case: Large single-subject study association

- National study association: Not a member
- Number of subject categories: 3-5 subject categories
- Development in number of courses: From 28 courses in 2007/08 to 25 in 2016/17
- Lectures/public speeches: From 6 in 2007/2008 to 4 in 2016/17

In analysing the four different school types, Bjerrum and Thøgersen pointed out that the small multidisciplinary study associations are most prone to experiencing financial and organisational challenges (Bjerrum & Thøgersen 2018, 139). They are ambitious and want to offer a wide range of subjects and activities. At the same time, the subsidiary structure makes it hard to transform from the voluntary to the professional realm, which is often a precondition for development and growth.

There has been no follow-up on the 2018 study, but there seems to be a continued trend to merge and centralise the study associations, and hence fewer schools of this type. This case study association is an example. In 2022 it closed, and a few of the activities are now offered by two other local associations.

Large multi-disciplinary study association

30 per cent of the Danish study associations can be found in this category and in the 2018 study, these schools represented just over 90 per cent of the total number of study lessons. Hence in relation to activities, this type of study association plays a vital role.

92 per cent of these schools are members of one of the national study associations and the case school is a member of FOF. In analysing the development of the subjects, 11 subject types were used. This case school offered all the subject types and had a significant (58 per cent) growth in the number of courses. Courses in physical activity were at the core of this development and almost doubled in the ten-year period.

This study association have courses that are open for all as well as courses targeted to specific segments like people with disabilities, families, and basic subjects like Danish and maths for dyslectics. The school offers a wide range of social and cultural activities. Today, the study association has activities in five different municipalities, which emphasises a tendency where the big study associations tend to get bigger while the smaller either tend to have the same level of activity or a lower level of activity.

Case: Large single-subject study association

- National study association: Member of FOF
- Number of subject categories: 11 subject categories
- Development in number of courses: From 389 courses in 2007/08 to 613 in 2016/17
- Lectures/public speeches: From 44 in 2007/2008 to 26 in 2016/17

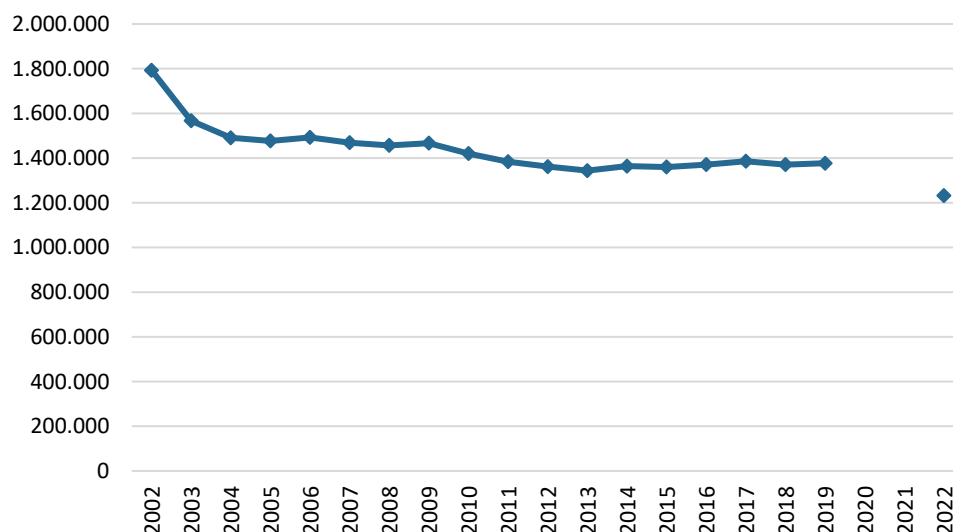
Activities

The scope of activities

The core service of the Danish study associations is courses organised as non-formal education, which are subsidised according to the number of activity hours. The number of teaching hours within the five national study associations was 1.23 million in 2022. The number of teaching hours in local study associations outside the national study associations is not counted at the national level. However, the total number of study hours was estimated to 1.44 million study hours in 2018, indicating that the number of study hours outside the national study associations is rather limited (Thøgersen 2021).

Figure 5.9 shows the development in the total number of teaching hours within the five national study associations during the last ten years. It is evident that the number of teaching hours at the national level has been relatively stable during the last years – but with a drop in 2022, probably due to challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 5.9: The number of teaching hours within the national study associations 2002-2022



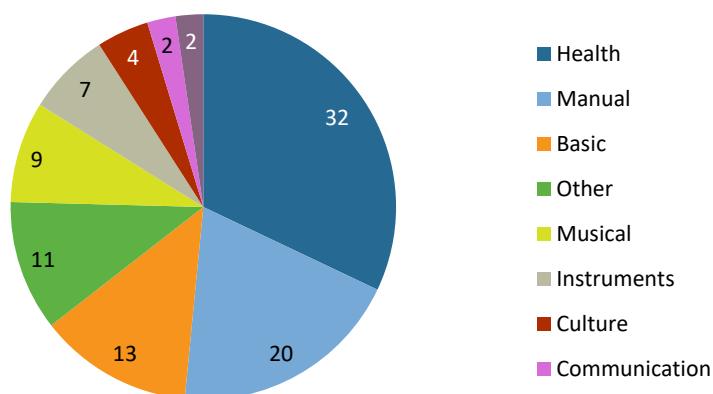
The figure shows the development of the total number of teaching hours within the five national study associations. The national study associations have not calculated the number of teaching hours in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Source: Oplysningsforbundenes Fællesråd).

The relative prevalence of study associations is significantly higher in the country's peripheral areas than in other parts of the country. But at the same time, it is also the peripheral and rural municipalities that have the lowest level of activity, when the number of inhabitants is considered. This suggests that the study associations in the peripheral areas are characterised by many small study associations, while in more densely populated areas there are relatively fewer, but larger study associations (Thøgersen 2021).

Types of subjects

The range of subjects offered by study associations has evolved over time, and in recent years there have been very few limitations on which subjects study associations can offer. There are no nationwide statistics on the development of study association subjects over time, nor is it a widespread practice among municipalities to document the distribution of teaching hours by subject. Hence, figure 5.10 is based on responses from 15 municipalities and is therefore not necessarily representative of the distribution of subjects nationwide. However, as it is most common among medium-sized and urban municipalities to calculate the distribution of subjects, the distribution in the figure still represents 40 per cent of the total number of teaching hours nationwide and can be assumed to provide a good insight into the trends (Bjerrum & Thøgersen 2018, 30).

Figure 5.10: Teaching hours across subjects (per cent)

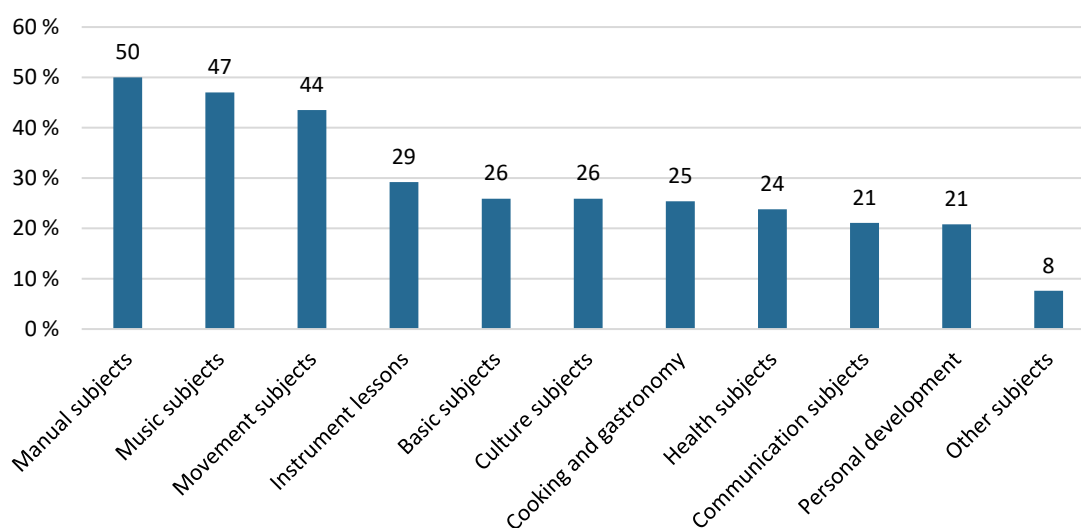


Based on data from 15 of 98 municipalities comprising 40 per cent of teaching hours in Denmark.

As figure 5.10 shows, health subjects which include various types of physical activities (e.g. exercise gymnastics, pilates, yoga, etc.), are the largest subject category. Almost one-third of the teaching hours belong to this subject group. The other two major categories are manual subjects (creative and crafts subjects) and basic subjects (language, Danish, arithmetic, etc.), which comprise 20 and 13 per cent of teaching hours, respectively. Music (e.g. choir, ensemble, drama) and instrumental subjects also feature prominently with 9 and 7 per cent, respectively. This means that subjects related to music and the musical field together comprise more hours than basic subjects.

Looking instead at the proportion of schools offering the different types of subjects (figure 5.11), manual subjects (e.g. crafts and creative subjects) and music stand out as the most common subject types – followed by physical activity. This indicates that many small study associations offer music and crafts.

Figure 5.11: Study associations’ range and types of subjects (per cent)

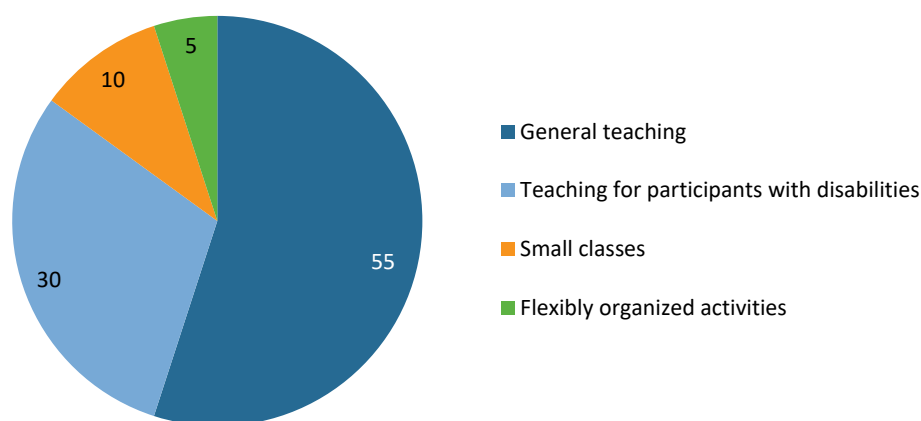


The figure shows how many study associations offered courses in 2016 within the types of subjects mentioned (percentages). n = 370. The respondents had the opportunity to tick all the subject types in which they offer courses, and therefore the percentages do not add up to 100 per cent (Source: Bjerrum and Thøgersen 2018).

Different types of teaching

As described earlier, the activities of study associations take place within several different types and forms with different subsidy options. Figure 5.12 shows how the teaching hours are distributed across the different types of teaching. General education accounts for 55 per cent of the teaching hours and teaching for people with disabilities accounts for 30 per cent. The rest of the study hours comprise small classes (typically instrument teaching) and flexibly organised activities (Thøgersen 2021). Many study associations also provide lectures and debates, but these activities are not counted in study hours.

Figure 5.12: Distribution of study hours between types of teaching (per cent)



The figure shows how the teaching hours are distributed across different types of organisations based on the question: “State the number of teaching hours divided into the following types of teaching” (n=82 municipalities, 1,256,235 teaching hours). (Source: Bjerrum & Thøgersen, 2018)

Activities outside the Act

More than half of the study associations have activities for which they do not receive public subsidies. It is especially courses and lectures, events and social activities that the study associations organise without subsidies. However, 11 per cent of study associations have activities that they organise according to other legislations. Especially the large multidisciplinary study associations have programmes such as preparatory adult education, dyslexia education and Danish for foreigners. For some of these large schools, activities outside the Act can account for more than 50 per cent of their total turnover (Bjerrum & Thøgersen 2018).

Educators and facilitators

The framework for the professional qualifications of teachers in local study associations has changed over time. Until the Leisure Act was replaced by the Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity in 1991, there was a requirement for formal approval of teachers’ professional and pedagogical competencies, and a 120-hour general adult education basic course was a formal requirement (Bjerrum & Thøgersen, 2016). Courses like this still exist to some extent but are no longer mandatory. Today, there are no formal requirements, and it is up to the individual local study association to ensure the professional competencies of their teachers. The various national study associations often offer different types of courses for their teachers (Bjerrum & Thøgersen, 2016).

There are no current overall statistics on the number of people working as teachers in local study associations, and also no statistics on the profile of the teachers. However, in a nationwide survey from 1998, the gender distribution among study association teachers was 66 per cent women and 34 per cent men (Løvgreen 1996, 4). A case study from the Danish municipality of Aalborg shows a similar picture in a survey among teachers (68 per cent female and 32 per cent male). The average age of the teachers in the case study survey was 49 years, and 27 per cent of teachers were over 60 years old. Hence, there was a predominance of mature teachers, and they had a high level of education. More than 60 per cent of the teachers were loosely affiliated with the local study association and only taught one or two classes per week, while 13 per cent of teachers were employed more or less full-time at the local study association. However, the study comprised only a limited number of teachers (Bjerrum & Thøgersen, 2016). The teachers in the local study associations are typically paid, as the financial support is targeted towards expenses for teacher salaries, but there are also examples of local study associations working only with volunteer teachers (Bjerrum & Thøgersen 2018).

Participants

In Denmark, there are no general statistics on the number of participants in local study association activities. Hence, the prevalence of participation in local study association activities is described by looking at the proportion of adults participating.

The main source of public statistics is a survey on cultural habits (Kulturvaneundersøgelsen), which was published about once every decade from 1964 to 2012 by the Danish Ministry of Culture, and which is now conducted continuously by Statistics Denmark. Furthermore, there have been two nationwide surveys on participation in sports and leisure activities in 2016 and 2020, which also covered participation in local study association activities.

Table 5.2 shows the proportion of adults participating in local study association activities for each of the surveys in the period 2004-2022.

Table 5.2: Statistics on participation in local study associations (2004-2022)

Publication	Population	Female	Age group 60-69	Question wording***
Danskernes kultur- og fritidsvaner 2004 (Ministry of Culture)	15 per cent	17 per cent	21 per cent	“Have you participated in evening school activities or study circles within the previous year? ”
Danskernes kulturvaner 2012 (Ministry of Culture)	8 per cent	11 per cent	13 per cent	“Have you participated in [...] evening school activities within the previous year? ”
Danskernes motions- og sportsvaner 2016 (Danish Institute for Sports Studies)	11 per cent	14 per cent	18 per cent	Have you been active [...] in evening school within the previous 12 months? ”?
Danskernes fritidsvaner 2020 (Vifo)	8 per cent	9 per cent	9 per cent	Have you participated [...] in evening school activities within the previous 12 months? ”?
Statistics Denmark 2022*	3 per cent	4 per cent	4 per cent**	“Have you participated in [...] evening school activities within the previous three months? ”?

* Percentages in this row are incomparable to previous years since only participation within the previous three months is recorded. The yearly figure is the average of the four quarters. ** Due to a change in age groups, this percentage is the average between age groups 55-64 (3 per cent) and 65-74 (5 per cent). Sources: Danskernes kultur- og fritidsvaner 2004, Danskernes kulturvaner 2012 & Statistics Denmark (KVUARFR3). *** The question is written here in a shorter form. See the respective publications for the full wording.

Looking at the numbers, it is important to be aware that the specific questions asked vary between the different surveys. The numbers in 2004 and 2012 are not directly comparable due to the inclusion of study circle activities in 2004 which was not the case in 2012. But particularly the change from ‘within the previous 12 months’ to ‘within the previous three months’ in the question wording can be expected to affect the proportion significantly.

As the table shows, 15 per cent of the adult population participated in local study associations or study circles in 2004. This number was reduced to 8 per cent in 2012. In the newest survey in 2022, the proportion was further reduced to just 3 per cent of the adult population – but as mentioned above – the changes in the wording of the question can probably explain some of this decline.

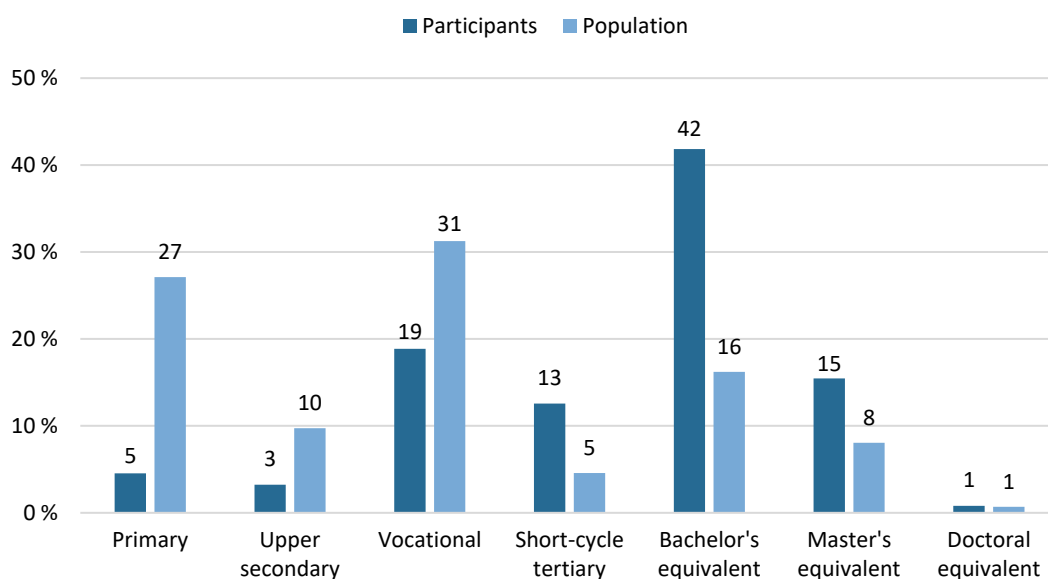
However, although the numbers do not allow for a direct comparison across time, it is safe to assume that the proportion of the population participating in local study association activities has decreased significantly since 2004.

Generally, local study association participants are a diverse group, and the following characteristics will describe the average participants and thus reflect the predominant group of participants. This description is based on a survey among all participants, members, volunteers and employees (aged 16 and above) in local study associations. The following is based on a subsample only covering participants (n=4968) (Østerlund & Ibsen, 2015).

The data shows that 79 per cent of the local study association participants are female. The average age of participants is 59 years with 80 per cent of the participants being 50 years and above. The high average age is also reflected in the occupational status of the participants where 38 per cent are retired. Also across all the surveys and years mentioned above, there is an overweight of female and older participants.

Moreover, participants are more well-educated than the population on average (figure 5.13). 58 per cent hold a degree from higher education compared to 25 per cent of the general population. Conversely, only 8 per cent of the participants have high school or less as their highest education compared to 37 per cent of the population.

Figure 5.13: Educational background among study association participants and the population



The figure visualises the educational background (in per cent) of participants in activities by local study associations in the sample (n=4,901) by Østergaard & Ibsen (2015) compared to the educational background of the Danish population of ages 15-69 (Statistics Denmark, HFUDD11). 'Primary' includes persons having completed anywhere from 7th to 10th. grade of primary school. 'Bachelor's equivalent' includes both vocational ('mellemlang videregående uddannelse') and academic bachelor's degrees. Note that differences in age groups confound a direct comparison. The bars do not necessarily sum to 100 per cent as not all educational categories are shown.

Box 5.3: The typical participant in Danish local study association activities

Age: 59.34 (mean)

Gender: Woman (mode)

Level of education: Bachelor's degree or equivalent (mode)

Sample from Østergaard & Ibsen (2015)

Turning towards minorities' participation in local study association activities, 3 per cent of participants in the survey are raised outside Denmark and 2 per cent do not have Danish citizenship. No statistics exist on the number of participants with disabilities, but local study associations in Denmark have a long tradition of working with people with special needs. This is also evident in the fact that 33 per cent of all municipal-supported activity hours are targeted specifically towards persons with disabilities (Thøgersen, 2021). However, it should be noted that the definition of 'participants with disabilities' is relatively wide since the law defines this as "participants with disabilities related to the teaching of a specific topic" (Section 8, (2)). As a result, participants in these activities include both people with severe disabilities, mentally vulnerable people, and different patient groups with special needs – e.g. people with arthritis who need training in hot water.

Schematic overview – Denmark

Theme	Description
<p>Definition and description of the field: The common definition of the field is the movement/form of popular education characterised in each country as a study circle/evening school/local study association.</p> <p>The study has a particular focus on the local activities and organisations organised under national study associations that work with non-formal education/non-formal learning. In countries where this is relevant, activities are included that are directly comparable to the local activities of the study associations that receive funding according to the same legislation/guidelines.</p> <p>Where appropriate, the field is briefly described in relation to other non-formal adult education actors/categories that are not included in the study.</p>	<p>Local study associations in Denmark include associations that are approved by a municipality as a provider of non-formal adult education under The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity.</p> <p>They are voluntary, non-profit organisations and part of the voluntary sector.</p> <p>University extension that for example is counted as a study association in Sweden is not included in this landscape in Denmark.</p>
<p>History: Briefly describe the most important turning points in the history of study associations and study circles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When were the central national organisations in the field established? • Which movements are the central national organisations rooted in? • When were they first mentioned in the law? • What key legislative changes have been made since then? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1814: The concept of “evening schools/local study associations is mentioned for the first time in the country's first school law • 1896: ‘Evening schools’ are included in the Finance Act • 1930: The first ‘evening school law’ • 1924-1973: Establishment of the five nationwide study associations (Oplysningsforbund) • 1969: ‘The Leisure Act’ (Fritidsloven) • 1991: ‘The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity’ (Folkeoplysningsloven) <p>Four out of five national study associations are rooted in political parties.</p>
<p>Rules and regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the national laws/legal frameworks regulating the economy and activities of study circles/evening schools. • What is the name of the law/legislative framework regulating the activities and/or the financial support for the local study associations/study circles? 	<p>The Act on Non-formal Education and Democratic Voluntary Activity (Folkeoplysningsloven) is the framework law that describes the terms and conditions for receiving grants for organisations that are described as non-formal adult education voluntary organisations in Denmark.</p> <p>Each municipality is authorised to set the financial framework and local rules. Although the local rules must of course comply with the guidelines in the law, municipalities can develop their own interpretations and local rules.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the aim of the local study associations/study circles described in the law/legal framework? • How is the field delimited in the law/legal framework? <p>Public authority oversight: Describe the mechanisms that ensure local compliance with regulations in the field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this performed by local or national authorities? • And how does it work in practice? 	<p>Each individual organiser has a high degree of self-management within the established guidelines of the law. This means that the municipality has no influence on aspects such as course duration, choice of teachers, number of participants or how the activities are planned.</p> <p>The purpose of adult non-formal adult education as defined by law is:</p> <p>“to promote democratic understanding and active citizenship and, based on the teaching, to increase the participants' general and professional insight and skills. The aim is to strengthen the individual's ability and desire to take responsibility for their own life and to participate actively and committedly in society.” (Folkeoplysningsloven, § 7)</p> <p>According to the law, adult non-formal adult education includes:</p> <p>“teaching, study groups, lectures and debate-creating activities to which a participation fee is attached.” (Folkeoplysningsloven, stk. 2 § 7)</p> <p>Municipalities are responsible for overseeing the use of the allocated grants. It is a field based on trust, and control typically takes place through random checks.</p>
<p>Funding: Describe briefly the sources of funding for the activities of study circles/evening schools (for instance government budgets, grants, subsidies, donations, and participant fees.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the size of the fees for participants? How do these compare to participant costs of other leisure activities (e.g. sports clubs)? • Does the public support come from the local level, national level or both? • How has the local and/or national financial support developed in 2012-2022 in both absolute (level of support) and relative (support per capita) measures? 	<p>State support for national study associations: The Lottery Act, in Danish ‘udlodningsloven’ (Act on the distribution of profits and dividends from lotteries) ensures financial support for the five national study associations (The Lottery Act, section 4, subsection 8).</p> <p>Municipal support for local study associations: It is a requirement for receiving support that local study associations are organised as voluntary associations (Folkeoplysningsloven, § 3)</p> <p>Municipal subsidies for local study associations are targeted at salary costs for teaching. Municipalities can support up to 1/3 of the local study associations’ expenses for manager and teacher salaries for general education.</p> <p>In order to receive subsidies, it is a requirement that there is also a participation fee.</p> <p>In 2022, the municipal expenditure on support for adult non-formal adult education was DKK 312 million.</p> <p>In addition, the municipality provides premises or, alternatively, the municipality subsidises premises.</p> <p>According to the law, 10 per cent of the subsidy received by the evening schools must be used for debate-creating activities (section 8(3)).</p>
<p>Premises and facilities:</p>	<p>In Denmark, municipalities are obliged to provide public, available, and suitable facilities. If the municipalities are unable to provide</p>

<p>Describe in which type of premises and facilities the activities take place.</p> <p>Describe who is responsible for finding the premises/facilities.</p>	<p>suitable facilities, they are obliged to subsidise the associations' own and rented facilities.</p>
<p>Organisation (national/local): Describe the organisational structure of the study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they organised as voluntary associations or as other types of organisations? • How many organisations exist? At the national level (national study organisations), and at the local level (local study associations/study circles)? • Give concrete examples of the different types of organisations at the local level. 	<p>The overall organisational framework for independent non-formal adult education activities is the concept of 'foreninger' – from now on called associations:</p> <p>"The independent non-formal adult education activity must be established by a non-formal adult education association with statutes, cf. sections 4 and 5, in order to be eligible for subsidies or to be allocated premises" (Folkeoplysningsloven, § 3)</p> <p>This means that the local study associations in Denmark are organised as voluntary associations with a voluntary board. However, participants are not necessarily members of the association.</p> <p>In 2017, a mapping found that there are 1,080 local study associations nationwide.</p> <p>There is a great variation in the size and reach among the existing evening schools. From very small local study associations with a focus on choir or handicrafts to large multidisciplinary local study associations with a professional administration and a wide range of subjects. Bjerrum and Thøgersen divided the schools into four different categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small single-subject evening schools/ local study associations • Large single-subject evening schools/ local study associations • Small multidisciplinary evening schools/ local study associations • Large multidisciplinary evening schools/ local study associations <p>The local study associations can choose to become a part of one of the five national umbrella organisations within the field.</p> <p>47 per cent of the local study associations/evening schools are members of one of the five national study associations, while the remaining are outside of these (Bjerrum & Thøgersen 2018: 19).</p>
<p>Activities: Describe the <i>format</i> of the activities and the <i>content/subject</i> of the activities.</p> <p>Describe the <i>scope</i> of the activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many activity hours are included in the overall scope of 	<p>The core service of local study associations is courses that are organised as general education and are subsidised according to the number of teaching hours.</p> <p>Local study associations also offer lectures, more flexibly organised activities, disability education, small classes and debate activities.</p>

<p>activities of the study circles/evening schools (2012-2022)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are the activity hours distributed across subjects? 	<p>Generally characterised by a wide range of subjects (e.g. physical activity, language, basic subjects, creative subjects, etc.) The most prevalent being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health (physical activity and physical education) • Manual (craft and creativity) • Basic subjects (Danish, languages, mathematics ect.) <p>The number of teaching hours: There are no comprehensive statistics on the evening classes that take place in local study associations outside of the nationwide study associations. In 2022, the number of teaching hours within the five national associations totalled 1,230,000 hours</p>
<p>Educators and facilitators: Describe whether there are any qualification requirements for educators/facilitators in study circles/evening schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the educators/facilitators volunteers or paid? 	<p>In Denmark, there are no formal requirements for trainers' qualifications.</p> <p>They are typically paid, as the financial support is targeted towards subsidising teacher salaries, but there are also examples of volunteer teachers.</p>
<p>Participants: Profile the participants in study circles/evening schools including their age, gender and educational backgrounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who and how many participate in the activities? • What is the proportion of the adult population participating in study circles/evening school activities? • Describe, if possible, to what extent marginalised groups (e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, people living in remote areas), participate in study circles/evening school activities. 	<p>In Denmark, there are very limited statistics available on the number of participants, and there are no statistics on the total number of participants in evening school activities.</p> <p>The surveys conducted in the field are not fully comparable but indicate a decline in the participation rate from 2004 up til today.</p> <p>Participants are generally diverse, which is why the following should only be seen as general characteristics that are reflected in the predominance of the participant group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High average age of almost 60 years • A predominance of women, who represent approximately three-quarters of the evening school participants. • Above-average level of education – predominance of participants with medium and long-term higher education

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