

## For, with and by – a follow-up of accessibility in the cultural sector



## Foreword

On 14 March 2013, the Committee on Cultural Affairs decided to carry out a follow-up and evaluation of issues relating to accessibility to culture for people with disabilities. The follow-up has focused on opportunities to access and take part in cultural activities, as well as issues relating to cultural heritage. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the citizens' or user perspective. The point of departure has been the Riksdag's decision on the cultural policy objectives as well as the disability policy objectives.

The project has been carried out by the Committee on Cultural Affairs' follow-up and evaluation group, with the support of the Evaluation and Research Secretariat at the Riksdag's Committee Services Division. The follow-up and evaluation group comprised the following members of the Riksdag: Per Lodenius (Centre Party), chair, Isak From (Social Democratic Party), Anne Marie Brodén (Moderate Party), Tina Ehn (Green Party), Maria Lundqvist-Brömster (Liberal Party), Margareta Larsson (Sweden Democrats), Bengt Berg (Left Party) and Lars-Axel Nordell (Christian Democrats). The background materials for the follow-up were prepared by Peter Strand at the Research and Evaluation Secretariat, in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Committee on Cultural Affairs. Elisabet Lindquist Michailaki, Fanny Lindvall and Christer Åström, all from the Evaluation and Research Secretariat, have also participated in the work.

The follow-up was conducted between November 2013 and March 2014 and the findings were reported back to the Committee on 3 April 2014. The report of the follow-up and evaluation group was published in the Reports from the Riksdag series (2013/14:RFR14). On 10 April, the Committee on Cultural Affairs held a public hearing in the Riksdag on the report. Participants in the hearing included the Minister for Culture and representatives of the Swedish Disability Federation, Equally Unique, the Spinn dance company, the Swedish Arts Council and Handisam (the Swedish Agency for Participation as from 1 May 2014).

**The assessments of the follow-up and evaluation group in brief:**

- For many years, extensive measures have been taken to increase accessibility in the field of culture. Despite this, much remains to be done in order to achieve the cultural policy objective that everyone should have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities.
- It is important that vigorous measures are taken to remove the existing obstacles and make culture accessible to all, both in terms of being able to access and to actively engage in cultural activities.
- There needs to be a greater focus on people with disabilities as active participants in, and not just recipients of, culture.
- There are significant shortcomings as regards basic access to several central cultural agencies.
- The extensive efforts being taken under the Swedish Arts Council's sectoral responsibility are positive, but much still remains to be done. It is positive that the Swedish Arts Council links the demand for action plans for increased accessibility to decisions on central government grants. It is also positive that the Council's second interim target is interpreted to mean that no cultural activities should take place in premises where easily eliminated obstacles remain.
- The improvements presented by the county administrative boards and county museums, that come under the sectoral responsibility of the Swedish National Heritage Board are positive. It is important that the new structure of the National Heritage Board's interim objectives is followed up.
- It is important that agencies and other actors enable continued and long-term measures for development projects that have proven successful in increasing accessibility.
- It is crucial that the disability organisations' opinions are taken into account and have an impact on agencies' activities.
- The results of the Haiku project have been very positive and it is important that the work that has been started is able to continue.
- It is important that the Government takes note of the problems identified in this follow-up and reports back on how work to address these problems is progressing.

## **Points of departure, focus and delimitations**

In recent years, the Committee on Cultural Affairs has, in several contexts, dealt with matters relating to culture and accessibility for people with disabilities. The Committee has stressed how important it is that culture is accessible for everyone and that the cultural heritage reflects the experiences of the whole population. Cultural policy should, among other things, reflect the great diversity that characterises today's society, and promote everyone's opportunities for cultural experiences, education, and to develop their creative abilities. In the light of this and as part of the follow-up of the Riksdag's cultural policy objectives, the Committee on Cultural Affairs decided in March 2013 to carry out a follow-up of matters relating to culture for people with disabilities.

The follow-up, which started in the autumn of 2013, has focused on three aspects:

- opportunities to access culture;
- opportunities to engage in cultural activity;
- highlighting our cultural heritage.

The point of departure for the follow-up is the cultural policy objectives adopted by the Riksdag in 2009, the Riksdag's disability policy objectives from 2000 and the positions adopted by the Committee on Cultural Affairs regarding the cultural sector's accessibility for people with disabilities. Special emphasis has been placed on the citizens' and user perspective. The purpose has been to provide the Committee with a greater knowledge for its consideration of matters relating to disability policy within the cultural sector. Media issues and matters relating to liberal adult education, information technology and electronic communication are not included in the follow-up and are just referred to briefly in certain contexts.

## **Regulatory frameworks**

The report presents the relevant international and national regulatory framework, including the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The follow-up and evaluation group would like to start by calling attention to the UN Convention, which states that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an

equal basis with others. The group also emphasises the fundamental principle of disability policy, according to which all people, regardless of functional capacity, shall have the same opportunities to take an active part in society and enjoy their human rights. People with disabilities have the same right to independence and self-determination as others.

The follow-up sets out that the principle of responsibility and financing, according to which each sector in society shall design and organise its activities in such a way that they are accessible for all citizens, including people with disabilities, is fundamental to disability policy. The costs of accessibility measures shall be funded within the framework of regular activities. The follow-up and evaluation group notes that this limits opportunities to follow-up the consequences of central government accessibility measures in the central government budget, as these are not accounted for separately.

### **Sectoral responsibilities of the Swedish Arts Council**

The sectoral responsibilities of the Swedish Arts Council include comprehensive efforts to make activities, premises and information accessible. Many actors work in a well-considered and strategic manner, with great awareness and a high level of ambition - but much still needs to be addressed. For example, far from all cultural institutions and other public cultural premises live up to the existing legislation as regards the requirement that easily eliminated obstacles are to be removed in public premises. Many actors highlight the general need for more information, education and skills development, and within the non-institutional cultural sphere, according to reports from the Swedish Arts Council, many cultural workers speak of both a lack of time and resources owing to the fact that their activities are run with low funding levels and with considerable voluntary input. The follow-up and evaluation group is positive to the extensive measures being undertaken as part of the Swedish Arts Council's sectoral responsibilities, but notes at the same time that much remains to be done. Like several of the disability organisations, the group is positive to the fact that the Swedish Arts Council links the demand for action plans for increased accessibility to decisions on central government grants for regional cultural activities.

Easily eliminated obstacles are to be removed promptly according to the Planning and Building Act, and should have been remedied by 2010, according

to the action plan for disability policy from the year 2000. The follow-up and evaluation group is therefore positive to the Swedish Arts Council's interpretation of the second interim objective that no cultural activities should take place in premises where easily eliminated obstacles remain.

### **Sectoral responsibilities of the Swedish National Heritage Board**

Within the Swedish National Heritage Board's sectoral responsibilities for the cultural environment field, knowledge, commitment and the number of measures have generally increased compared with previous years. In many areas, according to the Swedish National Heritage Board, the disability perspective has become more integrated into the various decision-making processes and contexts. The follow-up and evaluation group is positive to the improvements as regards measures taken by the county administrative boards and county museums, and that the Swedish National Heritage Board's interim objectives have been broken down into impact targets and specifications. In the opinion of the group, it is important that the new objective structure is followed up and that future reporting of results can therefore be clearer.

### **Interim objectives can be achieved**

The follow-up and evaluation group notes that, according to Handisam's overall assessment, culture is one of few areas within the strategy for the implementation of disability policy where the interim objectives may be achieved by 2016. In the opinion of Handisam, in order to ensure that the indicative objectives of cultural policy are also fulfilled, a greater focus needs to be placed on people with disabilities being regarded as active participants in, and not just recipients of, culture. This view is shared by the follow-up and evaluation group.

### **The Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis and the Swedish Inheritance Fund**

The Committee's follow-up further shows that the Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis has charted how the agencies and companies under the Ministry of Culture work with diversity, accessibility and equal opportunities. The follow-up and evaluation group looks forward to the Agency's follow-up of the sur-

vey and would like to emphasise the importance of following up the disability perspective, also within the framework of the cultural cooperation model.

In its report, the follow-up and evaluation group especially wants to highlight the role of the Swedish Inheritance Fund in funding development and cultural projects for people with disabilities. In addition to direct public funding, the Swedish Inheritance Fund's grants are of considerable importance for many activities linked to culture and accessibility. In this context, the group would like to stress how important it is that agencies and other actors in the cultural field, to a greater extent than previously, enable continued and long-term measures for development projects that have proven successful in promoting accessibility.

### **Central cultural agencies**

There are major shortcomings as regards basic accessibility at several of the central cultural agencies. At six agencies, accessibility has become worse during the last year, while seven agencies show improvements, according to the findings of the follow-up. The follow-up and evaluation group notes this with concern, and considers that the central government agencies should set a good example, and that shortcomings as regards accessibility should be drawn to attention and remedied.

### **Consultation**

The follow-up and evaluation group is positive to the procedures for consultation that have been established between the Swedish Arts Council, the Swedish National Heritage Board, the Swedish Disability Federation, Equally Unique, the Swedish Federation of People with Mobility Impairments and the Young People for Accessibility Network. The disability council that Handisam has initiated together with the Swedish Disability Federation, Equally Unique and the Young People for Accessibility Network also plays an important part in the development of disability policy in general, and for Handisam's central role. The group wishes to stress how crucial it is that the disability organisations' opinions are taken into account and have an impact on agencies' activities.

## **Much remains to be done to achieve the cultural policy objective**

The follow-up shows that extensive measures have been taken for many years now to increase accessibility within the field of culture. Despite this, opinions from the disability organisations and follow-ups from the Swedish Arts Council and the Swedish National Heritage Board show that there are still many obstacles and problems. The follow-up and evaluation group is positive to the measures taken to increase accessibility, but at the same time, makes the assessment that much remains to be done to achieve the cultural policy objective that everyone shall have the opportunity to participate in cultural life.

## **Lower level of participation and active engagement**

The report shows that people with disabilities participate or are actively engaged in cultural events to a considerably lesser extent than the rest of the population. Over the course of a year, 54 per cent of all people with disabilities have participated in some form of cultural event, compared with 68 per cent among the rest of the population. According to Handisam's "Rivkraft" survey from 2014, 40 per cent of the respondents say that they never participate in any cultural activity. The survey also shows that 61 per cent of the respondents would like to participate in cultural activities more often than they do today. A lack of accessibility in the form of various obstacles is what prevents their increased participation. As regards actively engaging in cultural activities, the proportion of people who perceive some form of obstacle is 77 per cent. In the opinion of the follow-up and evaluation group, this is not satisfactory. In the light of this, the group would like to stress the importance of vigorous measures to eliminate obstacles and make culture accessible for people with disabilities, both as regards participation and active engagement.

## **There are still many obstacles to accessing culture...**

There are still many obstacles as regards accessibility for people with disabilities and their opportunities to participate in various forms of cultural activity. In the follow-up, the disability organisations highlight, among other things, problems relating to cultural premises' physical accessibility, transport and personal assistance, audio description and sign language interpretation, hearing loops and subtitling, stressful environments and a lack of text information. At the same time, several organisations identify examples of



measures that have improved accessibility and have opened up new opportunities. In the opinion of the follow-up and evaluation group, it is important that the Government takes into account the problems identified in this follow-up in its continued development work.

### **... and even more to actively engaging in culture**

When it comes to opportunities for people with disabilities to actively engage in culture, several disability organisations state that the obstacles are partly the same as the obstacles to accessing culture. At the same time, the follow-up shows that the obstacles here are, in many cases, more extensive. Among other things, it is about the premises for cultural activities being inaccessible, about inaccessible courses, lack of hearing technology, sign-language interpreters and funding for payment of interpreters, lack of audio description and the need for accompaniment. The follow-up also shows many examples of people with disabilities who are actively engaged in cultural activities. The follow-up and evaluation group considers that it is important that these aspects are also noted by the Government.

### **Better accessibility in the long-term – but progress is slow**

The follow-up and evaluation group notes that several disability organisations consider that accessibility has developed in a positive direction in a more long-term perspective. Some of them stress that developments in information and communications technologies have had a significant impact and that the number of cultural activities available to people with disabilities has therefore increased. At the same time, some say that progress is too slow, and is even reversing in certain areas, for example, as regards the relaxation of building regulations and the right to assistance and parking permits. Furthermore, the disability organisations point out that people with disabilities often have a poorer economy than others. The group would like to stress the importance of continued efforts to promote measures that have been successful in improving accessibility.

### **Develop with and not for disability organisations!**

As regards the implementation of disability policy, some organisations highlight the importance of linking grants to the cultural institutions to demands for action plans that the Swedish Arts Council makes in its work to achieve its

interim objectives. The importance of following up the results of action plans is also pointed out. The follow-up shows that several disability organisations would like a greater influence in various projects and that the agencies should have an end-user focus. Several organisations stress that all new projects should be developed *in co-operation with* and not *for* disability organisations. In the opinion of the follow-up and evaluation group, these are matters that should be important to highlight in the agencies' continued development efforts.

### **The cultural heritage**

The follow-up and evaluation group is very positive to the Haiku project and its results. The group would especially like to stress how important it is that the work that has been initiated can continue and that the museums' measures to broaden the cultural heritage and make visible the history of all people continues. The disability organisations' own initiatives in the field of cultural heritage and the problems relating to resources that have emerged in connection with the follow-up should also be taken into account by the relevant agencies in their continued accessibility efforts.

### **The Government's performance report**

The follow-up and evaluation group notes that the performance report for disability policy in the field of culture has been developed in the Budget Bill in recent years. This applies in particular to the field Cultural activities extending over several artistic areas, where the Government's reporting has become more exhaustive. Other than this, some sporadic results of disability policy are reported according to cultural area. For the national dramatic arts institutions, as well as within the areas of the visual arts, architecture, design, artists' conditions and archives, no results are reported regarding accessibility measures in the Budget Bill for 2014. In the light of this, the follow-up and evaluation group would like to see a more detailed performance report in the field of disability policy within the areas mentioned above. The performance report in the Budget Bill is an important basis for the Riksdag's consideration of the central government budget.

Finally, the follow-up and evaluation group looks forward to an account from the Government of how its work to address the problems highlighted in this follow-up is progressing.

## **Follow-ups from the Committee on Cultural Affairs**

### *Thematic follow-ups*

The digitising of talking books – Follow-up of the Daisy project, Memorandum 13 January 2004, report 2003/04:KrU6

Price and salary indexing in the field of culture – Cost of premises, Memorandum 21 October 2004, memorandum 2 November 2004, report 2004/05:KrU1

The museums' costs of premises, Memorandum 13 October 2005, report 2005/06:KrU1

Price and salary indexing of central government funding to theatre and dance - Main study, report 2005/06:RFR5, report 2005/06:KrU1, report 2005/06:KrU27

The pensions of cultural workers, Report 2008/09:RFR1, report 2008/09:KrU1

Rent-setting in the field of culture, Report 2008/09:RFR13, report 2009/10:KrU1

Activities in the performing arts alliances, Report 2011/12:RFR10, report 2011/12:KrU6, report 2012/13:KrU1, report 2013/14:KrU1

For, with and by – a follow-up of accessibility in the cultural sector, Report 2013/14:RFR14

### *Ongoing follow-ups*

Follow-up of the Government's performance report for expenditure area 17, Report 2013/14:RFR2, report 2013/14:KrU1

