

The importance of libraries to make the Nordic region safer, greener and freer

The joint Nordic Library Associations would like to address the Nordic Council of Ministers concerning the vital role of libraries in the region.

The Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers 2024 seeks to make the Nordic region safer, greener, and freer and to help it become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world. The vision of the UNs Sustainable Development Goals is of central importance in this context, as the principle of “leave no one behind” in the SDG:s is also the fundament of libraries.

We would like to point out how libraries can support this effort.

- Reading as a basic skill is required to become a democratically participating citizen in a democratic society, and for equal life chances for all Nordic citizens. Public libraries in the Nordic countries support increased reading from meeting the youngest children and their parents and then through life to the oldest who need to get their books straight home.
- The whole Nordic region must thrive. Libraries are the most widespread democratic and social space in the city and in the countryside. In many municipalities it is the only cultural institution. Public libraries are unique as a place where inhabitants can stay in a safe environment, and meet others, free of charge.
- The entire Nordic population is not digitally involved. Many need support to join the digital world. Public libraries contribute by offering tutoring to reduce the digital divide, and to increase media and information literacy. For many people access provided by libraries to wifi, computers and scanners is also important and for some the only place for digital inclusion.
- Public libraries strengthen the democratic competence of citizens through access to media so that people can form their own opinions. Through a well-functioning, fair copyright, libraries can continue to provide pathways to information, innovation, knowledge, and culture.

Public libraries, school libraries and academic libraries play a crucial role in ensuring national readiness. They contribute by providing access to information, promoting critical thinking, critical reading and fostering an informed population that can discern fake news and respond effectively to emergencies.

All kinds of libraries are important to the citizens throughout their lives and the different challenges they meet. To be able to meet these requirements we call on the Nordic

ministers to ensure that library funding is sufficient and that libraries have legislation that supports them.

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