



Culture and Sports in Rural Areas

Policy Brief Sweden

Grant Agreement n°. 101084234



**Funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



Policy Brief SE04, 2025.

Culture and Sports in Rural Areas

The lack of culture and sports activities, particularly for children, makes rural areas less attractive. Families may choose to move to urban areas if this is lacking, and business owners may have difficulties in recruiting personnel.

Executive Summary

The interviews in FLIARA showed that parents in rural areas were keen on being able to provide their children with the same access to culture and sports as urban children. Regions and municipalities should provide opportunities for culture and sports, particularly for children, in all areas. The state may help finance it, or the state may mandate regions or municipalities to provide these services.

The Challenge

In addition to stressing the importance of a local school, women interviewed in the FLIARA project were keen on being able to provide their children with the same opportunities to take part in culture and sports as urban children. Also, women innovators in rural areas sometimes had problems recruiting and retaining personnel because of a lack of meaningful things to do for children.

Swedish municipalities typically run Culture and Music Schools where children learn to play an instrument, sing in a choir, dance, paint, or act. However, the national governmental allocation of funds to local culture and music schools has been up for debate and is not institutionalized or bounded by law. As such, for each budget cut these funds are at risk of being terminated. State



funding for these schools has recently been significantly reduced, making it harder for the municipalities to reach all children. For 2023 the funds for Culture and Music School were cut in half which led to rural municipalities struggling to keep these activities within their budget. In the current budget the allocation as kept at the same level as 2023.

The Swedish state subsidises all kinds of sports activities. The Swedish Sports Confederation has an annual budget of 156 million Euro used to support local sports clubs. Continued financing of sports activities for rural children must be safeguarded. Municipalities are not always aware of the relationship between rural development availability of culture in rural areas, so political awareness must be raised.

Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

The vision analysis in FLIARA found that women innovators in rural areas sometimes had problems recruiting and retaining personnel because of a lack of meaningful things to do for children. People want their children to have the same or similar opportunities regarding culture and sports as in urban areas. In the visions of an attractive rural living environment the stakeholders outlined that more ambulatory activities for children were important. Parents did not have time to drive their children to activities in urban areas, and public transport was often missing.

As best practice we highlight Riksteatern. In Sweden, the National Theatre (Riksteatern) plays a crucial role in rural development by bringing high-quality performing arts to communities across the country. With over 220 local theatre associations and nearly 38,000 members, it represents a significant cultural movement that ensures even the most remote areas have access to innovative and relevant performances. This widespread network allows each local association to tailor its repertoire, blending the National Theatre's own productions with those of other performing arts producers, thus catering to local tastes and interests.

Governmentally founded in 1933, the National Theatre was established with the belief that first-class theatrical art should be accessible to all citizens, not just those in the capital. This mission underscores the importance of cultural equity and the right of every community to enjoy professional artistic experiences. By focusing on towns without permanent municipal theatre operations, the National Theatre fills a vital gap, ensuring that professional cultural needs are met across the nation.

State funding plays a significant role in sustaining the National Theatre's operations, with substantial allocations supporting its activities. For instance, in 2015, the state provided SEK 259 million. For reference the Royal Opera in Stockholm was allocated SEK 522,7 million. It is important for rural development that state funding for Riksteatern is safeguarded or increased.

Sources:





Kuhmonen, T. and Tembo, B. (2024a), "D2.2: Future Vision Manifestations", 6 November, available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/14045244> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Kuhmonen, T. and Tembo, B. (2024b), "D2.3: Sustainability Innovations", 6 November, available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/14045277> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Riksteatern. (2015.). "Språk/Languages", *Riksteatern*, available at: <https://www.riksteatern.se/sprak-languages/> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Policy Solutions

We propose:

-  In Sweden, regions or municipalities must make sure that children in rural areas have the same or similar opportunities to take part in culture and sports as children in urban areas.
-  The state should help finance it, or the state may mandate regions or municipalities to provide these services in all areas.
-  The Swedish National Theater (Riksteatern) which tours the country with high quality productions fills an important role and must be safeguarded and developed.
-  Creative solutions are called for. Not every village can build a theatre, but theatre companies can tour the countryside, and music and drama teachers can travel. Distance learning may be used for some areas, such as playing an instrument. Municipalities can arrange bus services to theatres or sports events.

Conclusion & Call to Action

Culture and sports in rural areas, particularly for children, are important for rural viability and should be safeguarded and developed.

3

-  The national government should guarantee that culture and sports is available for children in all areas.
-  Municipalities should look for creative solutions, such as travelling teachers, travelling performances, or on-line music instruction.

Further Reading

Article on Culture education through distance learning: "Digital kulturskola - distans och fjärrundervisning för unga". (2025), *Kulturskolerådet*, 25 February, available at: <https://www.kulturskoleradet.se/nyheter/digital-kulturskola-distans-och-fjarrundervisning-for-unga/> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Information on Swedish Culture and Music Schools: "Den svenska musik- och kulturskolans bakgrund". (2025). *Kulturskolerådet*, available at: <https://www.kulturskoleradet.se/om-oss/historik/> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Information on the National Theatre: Riksteatern. (2015.). "Språk/Languages", *Riksteatern*, available at: <https://www.riksteatern.se/sprak-languages/> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Information on the Swedish Sports Confederation: Riksidrottsförbundet available at: <https://www.rf.se> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Kuhmonen, T. and Tembo, B. (2024a), "D2.2: Future Vision Manifestations", 6 November, available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/14045244> (accessed 31 March 2025).

Kuhmonen, T. and Tembo, B. (2024b), "D2.3: Sustainability Innovations", 6 November, available at: <https://zenodo.org/records/14045277> (accessed 31 March 2025).



About FLIARA

The project is on a mission to create a more sustainable future by highlighting the role of women in agriculture and rural areas. FLIARA will boost understanding of the needs and challenges facing women leading innovative environmental and rural development practices in EU farming and rural areas.

Contact

Email: info@fliara.eu

2025.



Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

www.fliara.eu



Funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

