

Folkbildning can be

1. a place for learning
2. the biker meeting the granny
3. everywhere and for everyone
4. something that sparks your interest, and gets you going
5. making new friends
6. the local meeting place
7. learning to become human, and get a grip on life
8. something quite unexpected
9. pushing, probing and creating democracy
10. learning by doing
11. where we decide ourselves what to learn
12. easy to access
13. the smell of coffee and cinnamon rolls
14. fighting prejudice, mine and yours
15. a place for growing
16. a creative process
17. Nordic lust
18. developing practical skills
19. learning by laughter
20. helping you make sense of it all
21. a warm house during the cold long winter
22. empowering you to participate
23. the first step in a new direction
24. where you can disagree and still be friends
25. a lifelong learning

A really short lesson on history

Folkbildning begins with the folk high school movement in Denmark around 1840, from where it spreads to all Nordic countries. The design of the Study Circle in Swedish labour- and temperance movements in the beginning of the 20th century adds to the picture.

Folkbildning today

A common trait in the Nordic countries is that the state provides financial support to folkbildning. There is a general agreement that it should be run separately from the state, but be co-financed by public funds. The importance of folkbildning to the Nordic societies is recognized by all political parties. Folkbildning is a cornerstone in our civil society and thus crucial for democracy.

So what was that all about?

When we tried to translate "Folkbildning" we ran into a wall. The concept could be called "popular enlightenment" or "Nordic enlightenment". Some even call it non-formal adult education. We have also seen the words "Popular adult learning and education" used. None of these manage to fully convey the concept. In order to explain this phenomena, a Nordic group of adult educators have set up these statements on what typical folkbildning really could be.