

Summary of Government Bill 2012/13:147

New Library Act

In the bill *New Library Act*, the Government proposes a new act to form the basis for activities at the country's libraries. The act will apply to both municipal public libraries and other public libraries.

The legislative proposal is based on the importance of libraries to the development of democratic society and their role in knowledge communication and the free formation of opinion. In the bill, the Government also proposes a provision on access to electronic literature free of charge.

On 23 April 2013, the Government presented a bill to the Riksdag proposing a new Library Act (Govt Bill 2012/13:147) to replace the current Library Act from 1996. It is expected that the new act can enter into force on 1 January 2014.

The proposal is based on an evaluation of the current Library Act that was carried out in 2009, and a memorandum, *New Library Act* (Ds 2012:13), that was prepared at the Government Offices.

What does the new act cover?

The proposed new Library Act specifies the basis for activities in the public library system and which libraries are included in the public library system.

The public library system includes municipal public libraries, school libraries, county council regional library activities and state libraries such as the National Library of Sweden.

Knowledge communication, free formation of opinion and literature

The proposed new Library Act specifies what the main purpose of the public library system is to be. The act states that libraries in the public library system are to promote the development of democratic society by contributing to knowledge communication and the free formation of opinion.

Libraries in the public library system are also to promote the status of literature and interest in learning, information, education and research, and cultural activities in general. Library activities are to be available to everyone.



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Ministry of Culture
Sweden

FACT SHEET

Ministry of Culture, Sweden

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Read more

The Government bill *New Library Act* (Govt Bill 2012/13:147) can be ordered from the Riksdag Sales and Distribution Office, tel: +46 8 786 58 10, or email: ordermottagningen@riksdagen.se

The Bill is also available on the Government website: www.regeringen.se/publikationer.

Clearer division of responsibilities

The new act clarifies the division of responsibilities between various responsible bodies in the public library system.

The proposed legislation will mean that:

- municipalities are responsible for public libraries and some school libraries;
- the state is responsible for university libraries, lending centres, etc.;
- if a municipal or state library operates under contract, the responsible body, i.e. the municipality or the state, is responsible for ensuring that the contractor observes the law; and
- municipalities and county councils are to adopt plans for their library activities.

Public libraries for everyone

Under the proposed legislation, each municipality is to have one or more public libraries.

The responsibilities of public libraries are to:

- be accessible to everyone and adapted to the needs of users;
- particularly promote reading and access to literature; and
- pay special attention to children and young people to support their language development and encourage reading.

The proposal also means that fundamental quality criteria will be introduced regarding the selection of media and services at public libraries – this must be characterised by inclusiveness and quality.

Free of charge loaning at public libraries

The provisions on free of charge loaning at public libraries will be expanded. The provisions in the new act mean that the public are to be able to loan literature free of charge regardless of the form of publication, i.e. regardless of whether it is provided in physical form or digitally, for example eBooks.

Under the new Library Act, public libraries are also to promote knowledge about how information technology can be used for knowledge acquisition, learning and participation in cultural life.

Expanded responsibilities for certain groups

The responsibility of libraries to pay special attention to certain prioritised groups is clarified and expanded to the entire public library system. Under the previous Library Act, the provisions only applied to public libraries.

The prioritised groups under the new act are:

- people with disabilities;
- people whose mother tongue is not Swedish; and
- national minorities.

This means that the public library system is to pay special attention to people with disabilities by offering literature and technical aids based on their various needs and situations. They are also to pay special attention to the national minorities and people whose mother tongue is not Swedish by offering literature in relevant languages and in easy Swedish.

Cooperation between libraries

Regardless of where one lives, everyone is to have access to the collected resources of the country's libraries. To achieve this goal, libraries and responsible bodies in the public library system are to cooperate by making literature from their own collections available to one another free of charge. This will facilitate distance loans, and users throughout the country will have access to the literature they seek. However, municipal public and school libraries will be able to choose whether they wish to make literature available to other libraries.

National overview and cooperation

The new Library Act states that a government agency, appointed by the Government, is to have a national overview of and promote cooperation in the public library system. This task has been assigned to the National Library of Sweden and, through the provisions, its current mandate under its instructions will now be regulated by law. Together with the regional library activities and municipalities, the National Library is also to follow up how the library plans that have been adopted are formulated and used.



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