

SULF:s kongress 2024

Housing crisis: universities must take action!

Shortage of affordable housing in the largest Swedish cities is a well-known issue, not confined to the higher education sector. However, early career researchers and PhD candidates are an exceptionally vulnerable group. They do not have permanent employment, their salaries are comparatively low, and many are recruited from abroad, coming to Sweden with no family support or accumulated housing queue time.

At this year's Contact Day of the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association, when we asked participating members what they see as the most pressing issue for SULF to work on, to our surprise, the most frequent answer was: housing!

Swedish universities have often dismissed the issue of housing as a matter that is the responsibility of the municipalities (kommuner). This does not reflect what is normal in other parts of the world. Leading universities in many other countries have access to housing that they reserve for newly recruited staff. In 2022, the Swedish Government passed an ordinance specifically to make it easier for higher education institutions to provide housing for staff and students (förordning om möjlighet för universitet och högskolor att tillhandahålla bostäder).

It is evident that the municipalities are failing to resolve the housing crisis. Universities employ thousands of junior staff on comparatively low incomes: individuals come and go, but the overall staff numbers are relatively constant over time. It stands to reason that universities should be able to secure access to housing for newly recruited staff. Failure to do so will result, over time, in Sweden losing attractiveness as a country where to pursue a career in university teaching and research.

The SULF Doctoral Candidate Association therefore submits that the Congress decide:

- that SULF shall engage with higher education institutions to expand their provision of housing for PhD candidates and early career researchers, including affordable housing suitable for families with children.

We wrote this motion in English, which is the main working language of the SULF Doctoral Candidate Association. Below is our proposal for decision in Swedish.

SULF:s doktorandförening hemställer därför:

- att SULF ska driva på för att lärosätena utökar sitt utbud av bostäder för doktorander och unga forskare, däribland ekonomiskt överkomliga bostäder som är lämpliga för barnfamiljer.

Motionen undertecknas för SULF:s doktorandförenings styrelse av:
Mohamed Al-Sabri, Chairperson