We show the way! Vision, strategies and focus areas 2022 - 2024

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SWEDISH ASSOCIATION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

Vision, strategies and focus areas 2022 – 2024 © Sveriges Arbetsterapeuter Illustrations: Matilda Petersson arbetsterapeuterna.se

Introduction

Vision, strategies and focus areas 2022 - 2024 is a strategy document that points the way for the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists in both the short and long term. It is based on the governing document that was produced in collaboration with the analytical company *Kairos Future* and adopted by the General Assembly in 2015, and which was further developed before the 2018 General Assembly.

During preparations for the 2021 General Assembly the Board of the Association, together with the Association's secretariat and a Strategic Council, have conducted external monitoring, the findings of which have been discussed, prioritized and finally resulted in a further developed strategy document. A draft version of this strategy document was also discussed at a meeting of the Association's chairpersons' council in May 2021. This process was guided by consultants from *Next Stop You*.

The strategy document *Vision, strategies and focus areas* 2022 - 2024 begins with a description of the Association's fundamental mission, followed by the Association's vision and the main strategies that we, the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists, need in order to realize it. The document goes on to describe our catalyzing strategies – what we need to do to make things happen – as well as our everyday approaches, aiming to mirror the culture of the Association. Finally, four areas that are to be in special focus during the current term of office are described. These focus areas are to be understood as the strategic direction for the Association's work during the term of office.



Our basic mission – a strong association in constant development

According to the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists' statutes, the Association's mission is to safeguard and pursue the members' trade union and professional interests. For us to be able to do this in the best possible manner and achieve the greatest possible success, we need to be a strong association that constantly evolves.

A strong association with many members has greater chances to influence and change the world around us. All occupational therapists should feel at home in the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists, regardless of where they practice their profession or what title they have. For the Association to continue to grow and increase the number of members, we work constantly to develop and show the benefits of membership for all of our various groups of members – students, employees, managers / leaders, researchers and self-employed occupational therapists in both public and private sectors. A strong association also requires strong and purposeful local activities, whereby both individual members and elected representatives can create activity and participation. One significant prerequisite is having an active student body that contributes to safeguarding and shaping our future, laying the foundation for lifelong participation and co-creation within the Association.

A constantly evolving organization needs to be flexible and bold as well as constantly ready to reconsider what we think we know. We show the way forward as well as welcome new ideas and working methods, adjust when necessary and learn new things. We continuously review our way of working and organization, both centrally and locally, ensuring that we are an association that best matches the needs of our members, now and in the future, effectively supporting both individual members and elected representatives.

We make sure to be present in all arenas and contexts in which conditions for the profession are formed. That is where we influence our environment, the development of occupational therapy and work to improve our members' working conditions. We do so by monitoring, driving public opinion and educating in areas that are strategically important to our members, now and in the future – issues relating to research, education, professional development, lifelong learning, working conditions and salaries.

Based on our vision and with the support of our strategies and approaches our intention is always to continuously improve and advance the positions of our profession and our members. In this way we ensure that the skills of occupational therapists are used in the most appropriate ways in the pursuit of an equal and sustainable society in accordance with the UN Agenda 2030 and global goals.

Vision

The vision is based on three distinct objectives: an occupational therapy perspective; development of the occupational therapy profession and working conditions and being a pro-active union.

Knowledge-based occupational therapy is to be a recognized pathway towards an equitable and sustainable society. The world around is to see that occupational therapists, regardless of where they carry out their work, enable people's everyday lives to function.

Occupational therapists are to have sustainable working lives with sound competence and positive salary developments.

The Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists is powered by dedicated members and is the natural home for everyone who has an Occupational Therapy qualification and all Occupational Therapy students.

Key strategies

Strategies are about showing the way. They are based on short descriptions of what we have to do to succeed in realizing our vision. Two broad strategies are keys in this work - two key strategies:

Show the value of occupational therapy in established and new arenas

For occupational therapists and occupational therapy to be given the recognition deserved, we must ensure that others understand, and value, our input in a different manner than at present. This is by no means a new insight, but it is even more important nowadays when we need to create conditions for occupational therapists and occupational therapy to have an effect in new arenas and with new roles. We must all – always and in all contexts – show the value of occupational therapists' input in our surroundings. It is we who must take the responsibility for describing and conveying a positive image. We must come out favorably from salary negotiations. And our expertise needs to be requested in the various arenas in which we can make great differences. Knowing what we can do is insufficient. We have to get others to understand and affirm it.

Work towards zero tolerance of unhealthy working lives

Currently, many of our members work in situations that are unsustainable in the long term. Increasing tempos, coupled with declining resources, often with leaders who do not see the benefits of occupational therapy, poses challenges for us. As a trade union it is a key issue that our members work in health-supporting contexts, with working conditions and salaries that are sustainable in the long term.



Catalyzing strategies

Catalyzing strategies are strategies which, in turn, boost other things, not least implementation of the two key strategies of the Association. In the Association we are to focus on three catalyzing strategies in the coming years:

Take command

It is crucial to our ability to succeed that our Association is permeated by a spirit of taking command in situations, large or small. We are to take command and highlight what is important to us: in coffee-break discussions, TV debates as well as in discussions with major policymakers. Wherever and whenever the opportunity arises, we are to highlight our competencies and, using creativity and innovative models, show the way towards tomorrow's solutions utilizing knowledge-based occupational therapy.

Initiate astute collaborations and interactions

The whole idea of trade unionism is based on the fundamental concept that we are strong together. We neither can, nor should, do everything on our own. But there is a risk that we, out of convenience choose old relationships without thinking about if there are others that can give greater benefits for us. By actively identifying which possible partners there are and deliberately choosing those we can ally ourselves with, we can ensure that 1 + 1 = 3.

Increase co-creation among members

We are, and will continue to be, a member-based movement. Without committed members we lose energy and our fire fades. So it is extremely important to create real commitment among members. We must always understand that our Association is nothing other than ourselves and conduct dialogue about this. This will be achieved through involvement and co-creation.

Approach in day-to-day lives

Even though strategies are about what we should do, we also need something to adhere to on a daily basis, actions that create a common culture and reinforce our common mission towards significantly better conditions for occupational therapists and occupational therapy. Here, we call this our approach.

Dare to experiment

Sticking to the old solutions just does not work, neither in the role of occupational therapist nor as a professional organization. We must build an internal culture in which we see, and dare to capture, opportunities that occur in a changing world.

Clarity in everything we do

A joint mission requires that we, more or less, have a common view of what lies ahead. This requires us to be clear and succinct in whatever we do. It is also important that those around us understand what we want and what we put forward – no one ought to be able to doubt what the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists is capable of and intends to accomplish.

Leadership and coaching

Showing the way, for others and each other, is natural in a member-based movement. This is also the case for us. We must continue to actively support and help one-another with common objectives and constantly have our strategies in mind.

Be educators

Just talking about things doesn't give rise to respect. A clear foundation, based on solid knowledge, provides a more resonant sounding board. So we are to make sure that we inform and educate those around us about matters related to the value of occupational therapy for individuals and Society.

Be curious and attentive

Being curious and attentive to where the world is heading will be critical to our ability to keep up with developments. This is often referred to as "business intelligence". We must, therefore, all have an ear to the ground and tell each other what we notice.

Spur one-another

Challenge, inspire and encourage each other in everything we do. We are to continue to build a culture in which we pep one-another up and affirm one-another in daring to try new things.

Active, adapted communication

Involving and convincing others is crucial if we are to succeed. Communication is not about information – it's about sharing between people. In our daily lives we have to train ourselves to interact, inwardly and outwardly, in smart and astute ways.

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Focus areas

If we are to achieve our vision, our Association needs to be clear and precise, so that we use our resources in the best possible manner.

To achieve this, the Association has highlighted four areas that will be in special focus during the current term of office – our focus areas. Focusing and directing efforts on a smaller selection of areas increases and enhances the impact of our work.

Our focus areas aim to clarify the direction of the Association's work during the current term of office and consequently do not specify which activities that will be carried out. Each focus area must be understood in the context of the Association's basic mission – to safeguard members' trade union and professional interests – and with sights set on our vision.

WE SHOW THE WAY TO AN EVERYDAY LIFE IN BALANCE

The complexity that characterizes today's society tends to create imbalance in people's everyday lives, which in turn risks leading to both physical and mental illness. The occupational therapist has significant competence in what is needed to achieve activity balance, manage everyday life better and to acquire, and maintain, a health-promoting lifestyle. At the same time, many occupational therapists themselves have a work situation where there is a lack of balance between requirements and resources, which risks creating unhealthy and unsustainable working conditions.

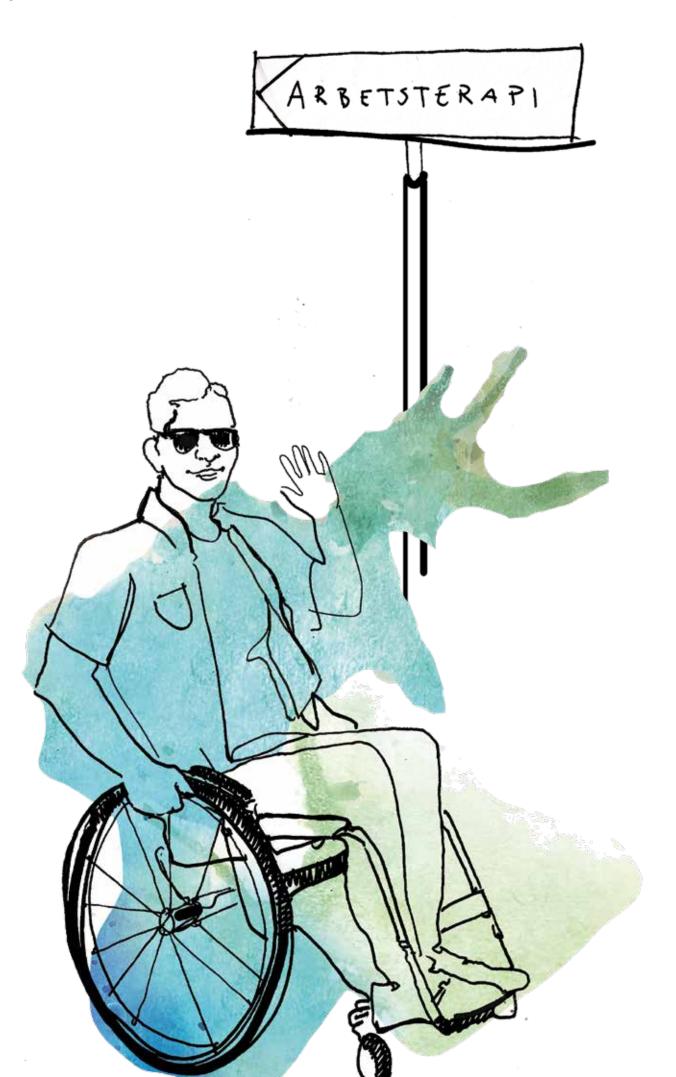
Working for an everyday life in balance is consequently a priority area for the Association both in relation to the person-centred professional practice and in the members' own everyday and professional life

Together, we work to improve our members' working conditions by actively driving public opinion on the issue, informing and educating about rights and opportunities. At the same time, we take every opportunity we can to show the value of occupational therapists' competence and skills for a sustainable and health-promoting everyday life in balance for everyone, at all ages and throughout life.

WE SHOW THE WAY TO INTEGRATED CARE

The transition to integrated care is one of the biggest changes in Swedish healthcare in modern times. During the present term of office, the current reform of primary care as well as investments in municipal healthcare will be by far the most important healthcare issue. In these areas the largest number of our members are employed, entailing our greatest challenges in terms of working conditions as well as development and supply of skills.

The skills of occupational therapists is a crucial piece of the puzzle towards having accessible care for people of all ages, but if we are to be players, we need to both show our value in this field and push towards sustainability in working life.



Consequently, the Association's focus during the current term of office is on occupational therapists' mission in accessible care, clarifying occupational therapists' input in health promotion, prevention and rehabilitation in regional primary care as well as municipal healthcare, and on the importance of establishing the function "Medically responsible for rehabilitation", in all municipalities. We will also focus on the need for reasonable pre-requisites for conducting occupational therapy in accessible care – on sustainable and health-promoting working conditions and better opportunities for professional lifelong learning.

WE SHOW THE WAY TOWARDS DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Digitization continues to change people's every day and working lives, a development that has great potential in terms of promoting activity and health in everyday life, but which also risks counteracting the same. To meet this challenge, it is necessary for occupational therapists to include digital activities and environments in occupational therapy investigations, actions and evaluations in order to counteract digital exclusion and promote digital participation for all.

In the welfare sector, digital solutions and e-health will be a significant catalyst in the task of ensuring efficient, secure and person-centred interventions of high quality. At the same time, in their professional practice, many of the Association's members encounter IT systems that are not adapted to occupational therapists' practice as well as systems that are incompatible with each other, thereby risking unsustainable digital working conditions, resulting in stress and ill health.

In our function as a trade union, we will actively follow and participate in developments that take place, whilst at the same time preparing ourselves to meet the new needs that arise in occupational therapists' professional practice.

We will continue to use digital solutions to increase our availability and co-creation with and among our members. We also work towards having sustainable digital working conditions, in which occupational therapists are enabled to use the potential of digitalization in their professional practice as well as having access to the continuous education they need to maintain and develop their digital skills.

WE SHOW THE WAY TOWARDS SALARY STRUCTURES THAT REFLECT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS ' COMPETENCE AND VALUE

Occupational therapy pays off, but occupational therapists lose out on their education! That equation does not add up. Occupational therapists' interventions benefit the national economy, making it important that employers recognize and value occupational therapists as a resource. Improving lifelong salary structures, i.e. overall income and pensions over an entire working life, for our members is an area in which we, as a trade union, must put particular focus on in order to bring about change. Occupational therapists must have access to lifelong learning, specialization and career development and a salary that reflects the skills and demands placed on their work.

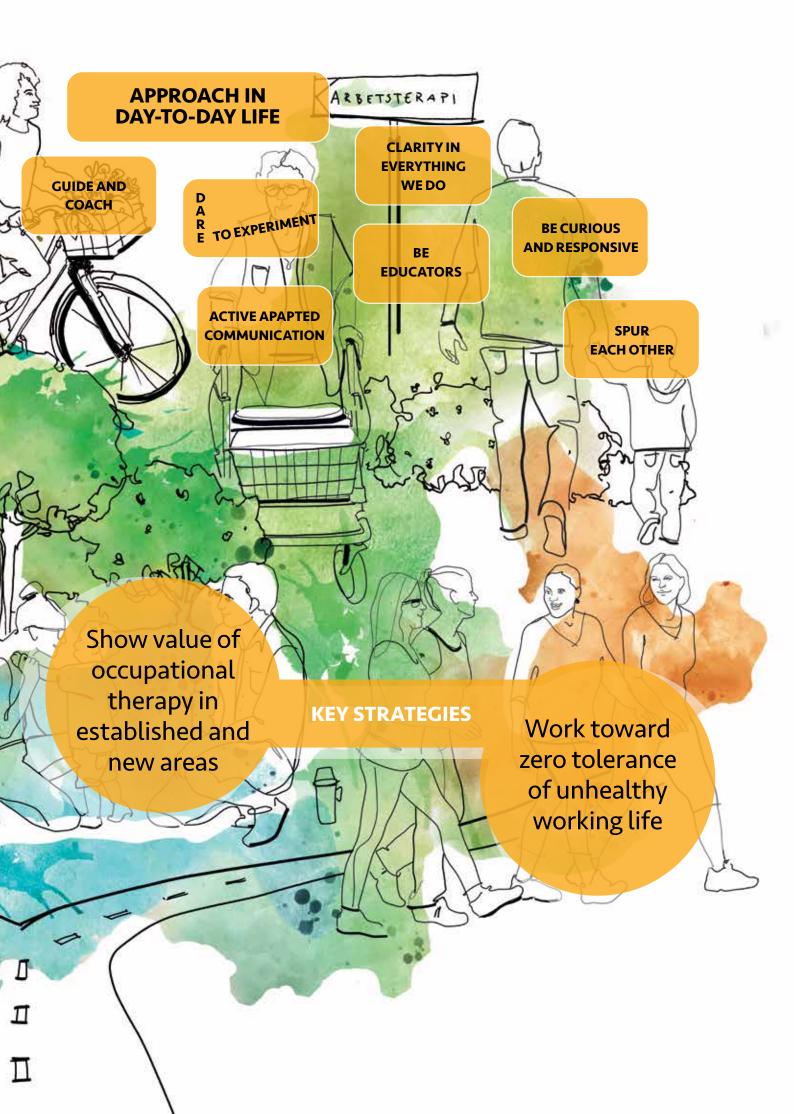
As a trade union, we take every opportunity to work towards increasing the salaries of occupational therapists by being a strong and constructive voice in public debate and in contact with employers. The Association's ongoing campaign "Gather strength: Get the right salary!" will continue throughout the current term of office. Through concrete tools, training and influencing opinion at local and central levels, we support individual members and locally elected representatives to take command at the negotiating table.



VISION

- Knowledge-based occupational therapy is a recognized pathway to an equitable and sustainable society. The world around us is to see that occupational therapists, regardless of where they carry out their work, enable people's everyday lives to function.
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Notes		

We show the way!

The Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists is an independent, non-political and non-denominational association of occupational therapists. Our organization, which is both a professional organization and a trade union, handles professional and training issues, monitors pertinent political developments, salaries, collective agreements, and questions related to professional development and formation of public opinion.



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