

Municipalities and Regions on the
The Competitive Edge



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Municipalities and Regions on the **Competitive Edge**

– Ten Swedish Examples

Municipalities and regions in Sweden are very important welfare actors in Sweden: child care, schools, care of the elderly, social welfare, health and medical services, water and sewerage, waste treatment and spatial planning are but a few of their tasks. Swedish municipalities and regions have independent power of taxation, and almost all income tax goes directly to municipalities and regions. They employ almost one third of the Swedish labour force, and their services make up more than 20% of Swedish GDP.

Several of the Swedish municipalities and regions, all of which are members of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), are on the competitive edge in various welfare services. In the light of the Swedish presidency in the European Union the autumn of 2009, we would like to expose some of them in this leaflet.

The selection of examples is done to reflect both a geographical and a thematic span. The intention is to illustrate examples from different parts of Sweden, as well as their unique conditions. As a result we have examples from Umeå in the north to Malmö in the south. Thematically there is an equally wide variety. Among many subjects there are chapters on district heating, ecological tourism and a working-competence centre.

Obviously there are many other Swedish examples that could have been exposed. Wherever possible, we have enclosed references in the text, that with any luck will help to those interested to find more information and further examples. Please also feel free to contact Karin Flordal at SALAR for further information, tel +46 8 452 7834, e-mail karin.flordal@skl.se.

Hopefully, this leaflet will bring inspiration to local and regional authorities well outside of our own country in developing solutions.

Stockholm, May 2009

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Director of International Affairs

Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions



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FACTS

- In the urban areas of Borlänge, district heating is used in more than 95 per cent of the buildings, where approximately half the heating emanates from industrial residual heat.
- During 2007, 7 per cent of the fuel used in the total Swedish production of district heating came from residual heat from the industry.
- In Borlänge, the emissions from the district heating is about 10 grams per kWh, while the number for houses with direct acting electricity is 900 grams per kWh.
- Several other Swedish municipalities produce more than 100 GWh industrial waste heat, including: Göteborg, Helsingborg, Gävle, Piteå, Karlshamn, Malmö, Vänersborg, Köping, Sundsvall and Varberg.

No wasted residual heat

The residual heat generated as a by-product in many industries is an enormous energy resource not always utilised. But in the county of Borlänge it accounts for about half the district heating. Using new environmental techniques, the city will also be able to use even more of the otherwise wasted heat.

The heat generated when paper pulp is boiled or when ore is transformed into steel is an excellent environmentally friendly alternative in a district heating network. Rather than wasting the residual heat, it can be used to energy-efficiently heat houses and premises without causing any emissions. In Borlänge, the most important industrial town of the county of Dalarna, the municipality has been cooperating for a long time with the paper factory Stora Enso Kvarnsveden and SSAB Sheet Metal, whose energy excess goes directly into the district heating network.

– In Borlänge we have unique opportunities to take advantage of the residual heat from our two large industries. Approximately half the district heating we consume emanates from by-product heat. At the paper factory we have built a condensator of gas fumes, a separate installation for taking care of the heat emanating from the gas fumes in the central heating, says Anders Åberg, production manager of the municipality-owned Borlänge Energy.

If Borlänge was to apply the new internationally award-winning technique developed by the environmental engineering company Climatewell, it would be able to even better utilise the hidden resource found in the sheet metal factory's residual heat. With the new technique, which has been analysed in a pre-study at SSAB, the temperature of all the water used to cool steel and machinery in the hot-rolling mill can be raised in order to be channelled directly to the district heating central of Borlänge. It amounts to about 1 TWh water-borne residual heat in total, which is the same amount of energy used by 40,000 electricity-heated freestanding homes each year.

– If we could fully apply the technique developed by Climatewell, the residual heat emerging from SSAB would more than enough fulfil Borlänge's requirements, says Anders Åberg.

Another major effort made by Borlänge Energy results in a more reliable supply of district heating and the disappearance of the use of oil. In the autumn of 2008, a newly constructed facility, which burns recyclable waste and bio fuels from Borlänge and other municipalities in the region, was brought into use. The boiler can burn 80,000 tons of waste each year, which is twice the amount

handled by the old boiler. A new feature is that it produces electricity, which means important environmental gains since the energy use during electricity production thereby is dramatically reduced. The boiler is able to produce 23 MW district heating and 7 MW electricity per year, which amounts to 170 GWh of heat and 50 GWh of electricity per year.

– We no longer need to use oil for heating during our cold winter days, which was both expensive and meant undesired emissions in the atmosphere, says Anders Åberg.

The new facility also constitutes a better foundation for being able to develop district cooling. The more reliable supply of district heating results in more possibilities of using waste heat in district cooling and experiments are already being carried out in Borlänge. The waste heat of the industry is available all year round and there are large excesses of heat during the summer half when demand of district heating remains low.

FOR MORE INFO

www.borlange-energi.se/en

www.climatewell.com

www.svenskfarrvarme.se



People into employment

In the municipality of Botkyrka, one of the 26 municipalities in the county of Stockholm, almost a third of the citizens have their roots in more than 100 countries around the world. The Employment Skills Centre of Botkyrka is the hub for cooperation between different organisations that help the unemployed to enter the labour market.

"The work process is characterised by speed and minimal of bureaucracy."

The Employment Skills Centre of Botkyrka is located in the heart of a flourishing industrial area called the Alfa Laval area. Employees of both the municipality and the Public Employment Service are located in the centre. Furthermore, the industry is represented in the building, providing training programmes such as welding, carpentry, kitchen, restaurant and retail. The task is clear – helping people into employment. It is a great challenge as 80–90 per cent of the job applicants have foreign backgrounds.

The employers' needs steer the way. With several organisations located in the same building, decision processes are shortened. The employers' expectations are matched with suitable applicants through an ongoing active investigating organisation, where the municipality and the Public Employment Service together visit the employers. The work process is characterised by speed and minimal of bureaucracy.

The concept is working. When a large restaurant chain needed to recruit staff, the Employment Skills Centre was contacted, and a tailored training programme was created. Several people were employed and the restaurant chain acquired staff that fulfilled their expectations.

A few years ago the municipalities of Botkyrka, Södertälje and Tyresö, as well as The Swedish Water & Wastewater Association, worked in cooperation focusing on the training of operating technicians. The reason was the high average age of technical administrations, and several operating technicians were about to retire. The Employment Skills Centre organised a Water and Draining training programme with internships. The result was that several newly arrived immigrants were hired as operating technicians.

– We need more people into employment, everybody's skills should be put to use and provide a high standard of service to the economy. To be able to succeed, the concerned organisations need to work closely together with the business community, says Anette Berggren, in charge of the Employment Skills Centre.

Botkyrka has since 2000 been working actively with the development of methodology concerning the validation of labour, which means evaluation and



acknowledgement of skills people have although they lack certificates, degrees or similar documentation. The validation serves to document these skills. The municipality has agreements with 70 employers regarding the validation of 19 different professions. The validation is carried out within sectors such as catering, childcare, healthcare, cleaning, welding and carpentry. In 2008, 80 people were validated and consequently they are now prepared to take up positions in fields where a need has been identified.

Another project is Södertörn Matching where the demands of the business community for employing people is matched with the available skills of the job seekers – primarily newly arrived job seekers not yet part of the labour market. Eight municipalities participate and the goal is to create a permanent organisation for matching in the region of Södertörn. The project is partly financed by the structural funds of the EU.

FOR MORE INFO

www.botkyrka.se

www.bfc.se

www.jobs-society.se

www.ifs.a.se

FACTS

- During 2008, the amount of City of Gothenburg employees who normally drive their car to work, decreased by 19 percent. The city has also implemented guidelines for a unified travel policy.
- Other Swedish municipalities ahead in sustainable travels are Linköping, Lund, Malmö and Örebro.

Unique campaign for sustainable travel

Is every car ride equally necessary? This is the question that the City of Gothenburg wants its residents to ask themselves. The “Off to work without the car” challenge is one of the city’s many successful campaigns striving to change the travel habits of public employees as well as those of private motorists and local businesses.

Gothenburg is Sweden’s second largest city with a population of over 481,000. It is also the hub of Scandinavian transportation and an industrial center with a history of great environmental issues. The city prioritizes goals aimed at reducing the use of fossil fuels and car use while increasing the use of public transportation and bicycles. By 2020 Gothenburg will have reduced emissions of carbon dioxide by 30 percent, compared to 1990 levels.

– Our opinion is that we, as a city, must practice what we preach. Today the City of Gothenburg has a fleet of 80 percent clean vehicles and many of our committees and enterprises use a car pool for business errands, says Eva Rhodin, manager of the Traffic and Public Transport Authority.

In 1996 the City of Gothenburg implemented environmental zones for heavy vehicles. Since then the city has worked toward increasing sustainability in the goods flow, resulting in better air quality, mainly in the central parts of the city. But acting tough is not enough. The city aims at changing the actual demand for transportation with Mobility Management, affecting the public as well as employers and business owners.

The “Off to work without the car” challenge is the most recent campaign within the city’s Mobility Management program. It encourages the City of Gothenburg’s 45,000 employees to lead by example; leaving the car behind in order to get to work by alternate means. This campaign is now being launched for a third consecutive year in connection with the European Mobility Week. In 2008 there were an equal number of city and non-city employees taking up the challenge. This year the goal is to have 120,000 employee participants from various companies. Large private companies, like Volvo and Ericsson, are encouraged to participate as much as public organizations like Sahlgrenska University Hospital and the police force.

– What started as a challenge for employees of the City of Gothenburg has



now developed into a joint demonstration in which the entire city participates. There are other Swedish municipalities that have come a long way with sustainable travels too. What makes us unique is that we work together with our neighbor municipalities. Working together we send a uniform message posted by a unified sender, a message that reaches both the business leader working within the city, as well as the parent living in the adjacent municipality, says Eva Rhodin.

Revisions of the “Off to work without the car” campaign shows that as much as 90 percent of the entire population know of the project and that one out of four employees have discussed their driving habits at work. In 2008, the campaign resulted in 17,433 participants cutting back on vehicle usage equal to 16 laps around the world, or 50 tons of carbon dioxide.

The City of Gothenburg employs a long term and endeavoring work towards sustainable travel.

– Having a permanent staff enables us to not rely on project funding. This allows us to work with more continuity and to plan for the future. It is also of great help when discussing participation with outside employers that can see the advantage of long term interventions, says Eva Rhodin.

The city’s Mobility Management project has attracted attention nationally as well as internationally. The Traffic and Public Transport Authority has participated in several European cooperation projects and is actively engaged in CIVITAS (CItY VITAlity Sustainability). As a result we saw the pilot project The Lundby Mobility Centre between 2002 and 2007. Since 2002 a traffic educator has worked for the Traffic and Public Transport Authority, and the students have been very appreciative of the “On your own two feet” campaign. This campaign encourages students to go to school, either by themselves or with an adult, without being given a ride.

– Our efforts towards sustainable travel are all about creating a social context that views alternative means of transport as positive. But we also wish to be a kick-in-the-behind, reminding people to change old habits, says Eva Rhodin.

FOR MORE INFO

www.goteborg.se

www.nyavagvanor.se

www.visionlundby.goteborg.se/english/index.html

FACTS

Today patient safety is a priority topic and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions is making a national effort together with all regions and county councils. The goal is to reduce all health care-related infections by half.

The focus is upon six predominant and especially serious types of health care-related injuries:

- Urinary tract infection associated to health care
- Central venous catheter infections
- Post-operative wound infections
- Medical errors in health care transitions
- Fall injuries in health care settings
- Pressure wound in health care settings

No quick fix for patient safety

The least we need is for patients to be affected by infections while in hospital. In November 2008 an estimate made at all Swedish hospitals showed that 11.1 percent of all hospitalized patients within somatic institutional care suffered from hospital-acquired infections. With an estimate of 6.4 percent the Halland County Council is the best in country. How was that achieved?

– We have mainly achieved this success by working systematically over a long period of time. The Halland County Council has for a long time focused on health care-related infections, starting within orthopedics in the 80's, says Catarina Dahlöf, County Council Chief Executive.

– First and foremost it's about the daily work with the patients, but it's also about being observant on a strategic level. The work has been visible in our overall steering documents, for politicians as well as public servants. We have put a lot of work into communicating the importance of hygiene within health care. We have undertaken several measures and follow ups. For increased presence within activities and routines, we have had all the head doctors assembled in a joint county council steering committee.



Good routines are important success factors contributing to reduce the overall risk for patients to be affected by health care-related infections. Routine descriptions form the base for patient safety. The staff needs standardized care procedures, order and discipline and documented hygiene routines, as well as they need to understand the importance of these practices. It is also imperative to show how much there is to be gained by preventing risks, both for the patients and for the entire health care chain. We have to create an understanding of how important it is to make it right from the beginning. Reacting only to crisis is both energy and cost demanding.

– As always, it's all about creating comprehension and commitment. It's about starting in your own backyard; finding work routines that involve the

staff to a great extent, as well as getting the heads of the departments to focus, and demand results.

– To us patient safety is about focusing on the patient, applying long term quality goals and strategies that move us toward an economy sustainable over the long run. Our work has been progressing in the open, engaging even the patients. Patient safety is not a quick fix, it's a long term assignment that involves everybody, Catarina Dahlöf concludes.

FOR MORE INFO

www.skl.se/patientsakerhet



FACTS

- Half the district heating fuel in Linköping consists of household refuse. In Sweden, 17 per cent of the district heating fuel consists of waste and waste gases.
- Other Swedish municipalities that produce much district heating from waste include Uppsala, Göteborg, Partille, Malmö, Jönköping, Halmstad, Umeå and Norrköping.
- Approximately 80 per cent of the fuel in the district heating systems of Linköping is recyclable fuel.
- Roughly 90 per cent of the households in the urban areas of Linköping have their houses heated from district heating, while the average number in Sweden is about 50 per cent.
- All of Linköping's 60 local buses, as well as half its fleet of taxis, operate on biogases.
- Approximately 6 per cent of Linköping's total fuel consumption comes from biogases.

From waste to energy

Growing refuse sites and an energy supply that affects the climate? A solution to both problems lies in harvesting energy from the refuse. The houses in Linköping are heated by district heating from household refuses and the buses are run on biogases from organic waste.

Household refuse is not just any kind of waste. Different materials need to be separated, recycled and converted into new products. The remainder can be burned and converted into energy. The household refuse in Linköping and roughly 30 municipalities in the region is collected and used to produce heating and electricity through the district heating plant. The municipality of Linköping has a well-developed network of district heating, which utilises energy flows that would otherwise go to waste.

– Through the combustion of approximately 390,000 tons of waste per year at the Gärstad-plant, we eliminate the problem of household refuse in an environmentally efficient manner. At the same time we heat the residents' households with district heating, says Helena Kock Åström, Environmental-strategist of the municipality of Linköping.

The energy recycling through the combustion of waste is replacing about 85,000 tons of oil per year in Linköping, which reduces the emissions of carbon dioxide, i.e. the greenhouse effect. A small amount of residual products and emissions remain after the combustion. This is partially a result of high environmental standards and efficient environmental technologies, and partially due to the high quality of the waste. Households and companies in the region are good at separating the dangerous waste, the electricity waste and recyclable material such as paper, plastic, glass and metals. The residual waste is mainly composed of recyclable materials.

– The involvement of the citizens is hugely important and we have focused a lot on education and information – not only concerning this topic but on also on climate and environmental issues in general, says Helena Kock Åström.

There is a great deal of interest from other countries concerning waste management. The municipality-owned energy and environmental inter-group company receives many field trips, especially from China. Linköping also has a successful biogas project which sees organic waste from the food industry, agriculture and large-scale catering, among other sectors, converted into gas for vehicles.

– Linköping has overhauled an entire bus organisation, which originally used diesel to now run on biogases. Today taxis, refuse collectors and the

municipality's car-fleet as well as private vehicles use biogases. It has dramatically reduced the emissions of particles and carbon dioxides. The municipality was one of the first to obtain the know-how and organisation required to be able to extract vehicle gas from organic waste, says Muharrem Demirok, the environmental commissioner of the municipality of Linköping.

There is a pipeline drawn directly from the processed-meats company Scan in Linköping, to the production plant of Svensk Biogas, reducing transportations and emissions. In addition, the train route Linköping to the coastal town of Västervik is serviced by Amanda – the first train in the world to operate on biogas.

FOR MORE INFO

www.linkoping.se

www.tekniskaverken.se

www.svenskbiogas.se

www.usitall.se



FACTS

Some results of Malmö's public environmental investments.

- The Malmö People's Park visitor's numbers hit a record high in 2008, with 2.6 million visitors – a 60 percent increase since 2007.
- According to the 2008 survey, one fourth of Malmö's residents (three times as many as in 2005) claimed they had experienced improved changes to public areas, indicated by more people being out in the streets, creating a more lively city environment.
- In 2008 two thirds of Malmö's residents thought Malmö was an eventful city.
- 66 percent of the city's inhabitants claim they felt safe in the city centre during the day and 14 percent feel safe even at night, which is an increase.
- In 2008, almost six times as many residents as in 2005, claimed to not avoid any city centre places due to an unsafe environment.

The city that livened up

The City of Malmö wanted its public environment to offer places for meetings and happenings that really attract people. Thus the city has made huge efforts and undergone substantial changes. Today, streets and squares, parks and playgrounds act as the city's recreational living room; where residents meet and thrive.

Fifteen years ago, Malmö's public environment started to see a change. The city has since been improving and developing parks and squares in line with this new concept. It has also built theme playgrounds, invested in innovative lighting, broadened the range of festivals and events and engaged its citizens in a dialogue.

The effects today are apparent: More Malmö residents visit the city centre squares, parks and events. They also feel safer in the city. To add to this, Malmö won the first prize of the Whole City Awards 2007, an international competition awarding increased well being and empowered communities.

There has been a focus on making Malmö attractive to the youth community. One especially successful and esteemed initiative is the Stapelbädd activity park, featuring Europe's biggest skateboard arena. The skateboard park opened in 2005 and has hosted the World Cup of Skateboarding for three years in a row. It was the young skater, John Magnusson, who came up with the idea of a new skateboard park; the park was then developed in co-operation between the city and the skaters. Non-skating children and youths were also asked about what they wanted from an activity park.

– The park has become a meeting place exceeding our expectations. It creates unity and pride in the city and has also contributed to strengthening Malmö's international position, says Gunnar Ericsson, City Gardener and the Head of the Streets and Parks Department.

The first major skate board successes have been exploited to broaden the events in the park and to create new contacts between different age groups and groups of citizens. But the Malmö People's Park has also developed new contact areas.

– We have rebuilt the People's Park and launched new events with a new direction, targeting youth and children. Today the People's Park is one of the hottest meeting places in Malmö. It's a park open to everybody.

Another piece of the puzzle is the night environment. This has become much more important as the public began using the public areas after dark. The city's lighting has been adjusted to contribute to greater accessibility and safety, allowing for families with children to use playgrounds during the dark after-



noons and evenings. Malmö is possibly the only European municipality employing two full-time lighting engineers. The city has also had two light festivals, showing the city's parks, streets and square in a completely different light.

Altogether, the residents of Malmö are very positive to the changes they have experienced in the city.

– There are obviously many more people out in the streets today, as well as a greater demand for spreading the work to all of the city districts, says Gunnar Ericsson.

It is cities like Lyon and Barcelona that has inspired much of the work done to Malmö's public environment. But now the time has come for Malmö to attract international attention, says Gunnar Ericsson.

– Malmö is probably the Swedish city that has worked the longest and most systematically with regards to a very politically important issue. Helsingborg, Norrköping, Växjö, Linköping and Umeå have also recently developed a more distinct strategy.

FOR MORE INFO

www.malmo.se

www.livcomawards.com

FACTS

- Other municipalities with successful family centers are Bollnäs, Burlös, Umeå and Östersund.

The Family House – all under one roof

The Family House is a family care center run by the City of Malmö and the Skåne Region. The purpose is to promote good health for parents and children between 0 and 6 years, living in the central parts of the city. The premises offer a midwife clinic, child health care, family pre-school, open pre-school and social counseling, all under one roof.

In 1998 The Family House opened up to all parents with young children living in the southern inner city of Malmö. Britt Harborg is a pre-school teacher telling us about one of the many young women and men who have been helped by the family care center:

– Assetou is originally from Kongo. When she came here to talk to a social counselor, through an interpreter, she was anxious and worried about her situation. She had a small daughter but wanted to separate from her husband. She didn't think it possible to move back to Kongo as that would put her and the daughter in danger.

The southern inner city district has the oldest housing complexes in all of Malmö. Nearly all of the houses are built prior to the Second World War. The area around the Möllevången square started to develop soon after the end of the 19-th century. It still has a very unique character made out of apartment houses, grocery markets, working places, corner shops and entertainments. The district hosts people from more than 100 nations and a third of the population is between 20 and 30 years of age. The average income is lower than in the rest of Malmö, while unemployment, criminality and drug abuse is over-represented.

– We gathered our resources to be able to meet the challenges, says Britt Harborg. It all started as a cooperative project focusing on children facing acute risks. But operations soon developed into general preventive work aimed at helping all children living in the district.

– In The Family House we have a midwife clinic, child health care (BVC), open pre-school, social counseling and family pre-school. Parents are welcome to bring their children to the open pre-school to meet other families, and anyone communicate a problem here can easily be appointed an advisor within the right profession, by the pre-school teacher. We all have the same door. As you come here, no one else can tell whether you are going to measure your child or ask for social counseling.

Assetou was assisted with her residence permit, her finances and how to apply for divorce. She also joined a group of French speaking African women who built a network to prevent isolation and promote self confidence as well as supporting each other as parents.

By the help of The Family House Assetou was granted permanent residency by the Migration Office. She managed to get in contact with her husband, who also wanted a divorce. They also agreed on housing and support for the daughter Nana. Assetou was then assisted in applying for economic support and parental allowance.

– We're much appreciated and I'm very proud of that. The Family House is viewed as a great resource by the area residents. After we're closed for the day the premises are being used for several other activities.

Are there really no problems?

– We sometimes encounter languages problems, although we cover all of the major language groups. Sometimes we also have problems reaching out with our group activities to people who are used to turn to their relatives for help. We are also faced by the challenge of belonging to different organizations, which calls for the managers to cooperate, says Britt Harborg

– The positive effects are in abundance. We learn from each other and find it very inspiring working across the professional borders. But what matters the most is that we make a difference.

(Assetou and Nana are fictional names.)

FOR MORE INFO

www.malmo.se/familjenshus

www.familjecentraler.se



FACTS

This is how accessibility has increased in Stockholm between 1999 and 2008:

- 4,530 crosswalks (6 out of 10) have been adjusted to facilitate people with visual impairments and curbs have been lowered to cater wheelchair users.
- 7,610 (6 out of 10) flagstone gutters have been installed to prevent wheelchairs, wheeled suitcases and strollers from getting stuck.
- 3,367 (almost 50%) of the city's public sofas and park benches have been fitted with arm rests.
- 856 stairs have been fitted with new handrails as well as contrast markings on the steps.
- 252 bus stops have been fitted with raised curbstones to facilitate people getting on and off the busses.
- 33 public toilets have been adapted for the handicapped.
- Playgrounds, jetties, streets, and squares have been rebuilt for improved access.

A city for everybody

Rebuilt cross walks, safer stair cases and more easily accessible bus stops. Stockholm has made an effort to make sure that everyone, regardless of impairment, should be able to get around in the outdoor environment. The city strives to be the most accessible city in the world.

In Stockholm it has become much easier for people with impairments to move about outdoors. Over the past ten years the city of Stockholm has spent 100 million kronor per year towards improving accessibility. By 2010 Stockholm aims to be the most accessible capital in the world.

– Most work has involved minor projects, such as the rebuilding of cross walks and bus stops, the contrast-marking of stairs, and providing more public toilets with handicap access. It's an incomparable amount of work. Over a period of ten years we have worked all over the city and the results are really starting to show, says Lars Cedergrund, manager of The Accessibility Project.

He also mentions a project called Dignified Entrance, in which The City of Stockholm cooperates with The National Property Board. This is a project aimed at finding new products and smart solutions for improving access to the entrances to historical buildings, such as the Stockholm City Hall. Wheelchairs and prams should not have to take the side entrance or the service elevator.

– This is a unique project with architects and designers working together to develop access ramps, lifts and elevators that are aesthetic and functional, allowing everyone to use the same entrance. There is a great demand for these types of solutions.

But it isn't only the street environment and the public buildings that need adjusting. Shops, cafés, banks, theatres and other business establishments also need to improve their accessibility. The City of Stockholm, from 2006 to 2010, awards business owners the St. Julian prize for designing premises and entries accessible to everyone.

During autumn 2008 the City of Stockholm launched a major advertising campaign informing residents about completed accessibility improvements and encouraging business owners to improve accessibility to their shops. The campaign was met with great response from the public and many said they had already noticed outdoor improvements. The interest in The Accessibility Project has also been great throughout the rest of Sweden, and abroad.

– So far we have had 18 study visits from Japan and nine from Norway, as well as visits from other countries such as France and Chile, says Lars

Cedergrund. He also mentions Västerås and Lund as other Swedish cities at the forefront of accessibility.

New techniques have also been implemented to facilitate people with vision impairment to move around the city. The Stockholm City Traffic Authority is currently engaged in a project, in which digital walk-way networks are being developed, allowing road directions delivery via mobile phones or GPS- receivers. During the walk the user will be given information about road construction, outdoor restaurants, public seats, cross walks and much more that can turn up along the walk.

FOR MORE INFO

www.stockholm.se/tillganglig

www.e-adept.se



FACTS

Other municipalities who have won IT-municipality of the year:

Malmö 2005 www.malmo.se

Nacka 2003 www.nacka.se

Kalix 2001 www.kalix.se

The IT-city in the North

Umeå is the municipality with the highest broadband density in Sweden, and probably the world. There is much to gain from well-developed information technology. The citizens of the municipality gain effectiveness as well as quality. Umeå was named the IT-municipality of Sweden 2007/2008.

Umeå, also known as the city of the Birch trees, is the largest city in the north of Sweden. It has close to 113,000 inhabitants. In the centre of the city you find wide avenues lined with 3,000 birch trees, and every year the municipality give away new birch plants to those who want them.

Umeå is a young city, as 38 is the average age of its inhabitants. There are two universities with a total of 29,000 students. The population has more than doubled in the past 30 years, but the municipality's aim is to achieve further growth. Umeå has for a long time been one of Sweden's main growing cities. The explicit cooperation between the business community, the universities and leading politicians who dare boldly plan further growth allows Umeå to continue to expand. In Umeå, everyone is a winner. At least that's the municipality's vision, "citizens should gain from living and working in Umeå".

One important key to success is the municipality's work with information, communication and technology. Umeå was named the IT-municipality of Sweden in 2007/2008. The jury's reasons were "Intelligent IT-solutions are the foundation for a more efficient public sector. The youthful student city of Umeå with its breadth and its ability to innovate shows us how IT today is the most important tool for strengthening the economy."

Virtually all households in Umeå have broadband access. All businesses and staff have access to broadband. Secondary and primary schools have wireless networks. The implementation of new wireless radio technology WIMAX in the domestic care sector gives all staff access to the data they require for their work in the homes of the sick and the elderly.

On the municipality's homepage you will find a list of so-called e-services. For example, you can find all ongoing and planned digging projects in the municipality. In Umeå, you need to apply for digging permits using the website, and the information is stored in a database consisting of maps. Through the website, the citizens can also view the municipality's existing building- and development projects in 3D-models and films.

– SMS Services allow the citizens to acquire information about sport premises being under construction as well as ski tracks that recently have been



drawn. This is a very popular service, says Lars Klefbohm, operational manager of IT and Quality at the Committee for recreational activities.

The municipality of Umeå has both saved money and developed operations using the new information technology. The digital bank of forms has saved about 800 man-hours per year as well as shortened the case handling process. The municipality works with a self-reporting salary system which lets employees report sickness absence, among other things. This has reduced the costs for salary administration by 10 million Swedish kronor per year.

Environmental and climate gains are also to be made. A computer that runs for an hour without being used is automatically switched to stand-by. This saves many kWh and is expected to reduce electricity costs by around 1.2 millions per year.

The municipality of Umeå makes sure to develop the e-services according to user needs.

– The municipality is always discussing how to best reach its target groups and which channels to use. Today we are discussing whether to use YouTube as a more efficient channel to reach younger citizens, says Lars Klefbohm.

FOR MORE INFO

www.umea.se

edialog2.net.umea.se

Åre leads the development of Swedish ecotourism

The sparsely-populated municipality and ski resort Åre has through its concerted ecotourism drive become the municipality with the highest number of ecotourism-certified companies and events, not only in Sweden, but in Europe. Behind this success lies a unique cooperation between the municipality of Åre and the Swedish Ecotourism Society.

"Since the ecotourism drive was initiated, Åre has managed to double its number of ecotourism-certified companies."

In the municipality of Åre, with its 10,259 citizens, the mountain Åreskutan is located, rising 1,420 metres above sea level. For a long time Åre has been known for being the far most important ski-centre in Sweden, and it has hosted the World Championships, among other events. Åre has over a long period of time been implementing an ecotourism drive, aiming to attract an even greater number of tourists to the area.

– Åre is already host to Sweden's largest number of ecotourism-certified companies. We have also seen ecotourism become increasingly important to strengthen the area's offers during high season, whilst it attracts more visitors throughout the year. Right from the start we made the decision to work together with the Swedish Ecotourism Society as we realised there would be questions concerning what can and what cannot be defined as good ecotourism, says Magnus Dahlin, trade secretary of the municipality of Åre.

During 2006, Åre intensified its ecotourism efforts. The municipality had decided to start working together with the neighbouring Norwegian municipality Meråker in order to develop and assure the quality of ecotourism. Maria Kjellström, one of the founders of the Swedish Ecotourism Society, was chosen by the municipality to lead the project. Since the ecotourism drive was initiated, Åre has managed to double its number of ecotourism-certified companies. And this is just the beginning, according to Maria Kjellström.

– Our vision is for Åre and Meråker to become a hub for development of ecotourism in all of Scandinavia. In the long run we also hope to be able to support other countries such as Spain, Italy, Austria and Romania. In Scandinavia alone, there is a potential for approximately 1,000 ecotourism companies in 10-20 years, with a combined annual turnover of two billion Swedish kronor.

The greatest interest in ecotourism in Åre comes from Great Britain. This



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www.aren.se

www.naturesbasta.se

is partly a result of the short time of travel; less than four hours by plane from London to Trondheim lufthavn Vaernes, where Åre is only a short distance away by car or by train.

Once in Åre, families are free to choose from activities such as traditional skiing, as well as a growing range of ecotourism activities, including dog sleigh, ice-fishing, snow-shoe hiking and sled rides with reindeer.

– Ecotourism companies can cooperate with large holiday companies to package their offers while the organisers diversify their offers, says Magnus Dahlin.

The certification Natures Best is used for quality assurance of the ecotourism companies. It is a method of certification developed by the Swedish Ecotourism Society, The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation and VisitSweden, developed in connection with the United Nations International year of Ecotourism 2002.

Natures Best is based on six underlying principles, embracing various issues such as respecting the destinations' limitations, helping the local economy and ensuring the organisations are adjusted to their environment.

There are 80 accredited ecotourism companies in Sweden today and 300 ecotourism-certified travel arrangements. Åre has the highest share of Natures Best-certified companies in Sweden. An example can be found in ATI Mountain Experience, founded by the adventurers Torkel Ideström and his wife Annica Ideström.

The current trend shows tourists want to experience adventure, although in comfort. Initially our focus is Great Britain, but in a couple of years we expect to be working on markets such as Holland and Germany, says Torkel Ideström.

Municipalities and Regions on the **Competitive Edge**

– Ten Swedish Examples

Municipalities and regions in Sweden are very important welfare actors in Sweden: child care, schools, spatial planning, health and medical care are but a few of their tasks. Swedish municipalities and regions have independent power of taxation, and almost all income tax goes directly to municipalities and regions. They employ almost one third of the Swedish labour force, and their services make up more than 20% of Swedish GDP.

Several of the Swedish municipalities and regions are on the competitive edge in various welfare services. In the light of the Swedish presidency in the European Union the autumn of 2009, we would like to expose some of them in this leaflet.

The selection of examples reflects both a geographical and a thematic span. As a result we have examples from Umeå in the north to Malmö in the south. Thematically there is an equally wide variety. Among many subjects there are chapters on district heating, ecological tourism and a working-competence centre.

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