

## ICA Country Report 2004

### Sweden

#### *Introduction*

The Swedish public administration consists of independently managed public agencies and the Swedish approach to e-government has similarly been characterised by a high degree of decentralisation. This model has proven successful and Sweden has become one of the most developed countries in e-government. Today we find that the development has levelled off and for further progress a key success factor will be a networking administration.

In the past year, the Government has taken several initiatives in order to facilitate and catalyse the development of e-government and several new actors have appeared in the area:

- ICT Strategic Advisory Board,
- Government Interoperability Board and
- 24/7 Commission,

as well as new ways of working with e-services:

- Municipal Platform and
- Infra Services Procurement.

After a brief introduction of the Swedish government structure to give a picture of the basic conditions, this memo outlines the measures taken during 2003-2004 for reaching the next level of a modern public administration.

#### *Government Structure*

The Government Offices in Sweden form a single, integrated and relatively small public authority comprising the Prime Minister's Office, ten ministries and the Office for Administrative Affairs. It is a politically controlled body. The Government determines its policies and sets its priorities. In total there are three levels of the public sector; some 240 central government agencies and also 21 regional government authorities (county councils) and 290 local government authorities (municipalities). However, this should not be understood as a hierarchy of powers; regional and local government administrations are independent from the Government.

The Swedish public administration made an early start on computerizing its work systems and information. The Swedish administrative model, with its independently managed central-government agencies, is considered to have had a major bearing on the rapid development of digital applications and e-services within the public administration. Thanks to a parallel implementation of performance management and delegation of powers, it has been possible to create a development-oriented public administration.

There is no special investment facility for e-government projects, since these are seen as parts of the normal service and administrative development. Each administrative body is responsible for its own e-government projects, which are financed within the normal budget allocation system. The necessary co-ordination is achieved through consultations, co-operative forums and consensual agreements.

Concerning the legislation, there are no specific e-government acts either. E-government activities are regulated by general laws and ordinances on public administration, public registers and data security.

The Swedish Agency for Public Management is responsible for promoting an efficient public administration, and has a stated responsibility for promoting e-government services. It also co-ordinates public procurement of ICT equipment and services, through a system of framework agreements, and operates the national public information portal. The agency has, however, no mandatory powers.

### ***Strategic Approach***

The Swedish Government's approach to e-government is characterized by a high degree of decentralization. This approach has proven successful and has permitted a rapid development of e-services, however there are signs that it has now leveled off. Collaboration, particularly between national, regional and local government, has suffered and there are several projects under way to support increased cooperation. A new Government bill on IT is expected in spring 2005.

*“The development and implementation of the 24/7 Agency is the single most important issue within the field of public administration policy,” says Mr Gunnar Lund, Minister for International Economic Affairs and Financial Markets. “We must become able to deliver better public services to citizens, in terms of both quality and speed, and this requires becoming more efficient at sharing information between public authorities.”<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Making e-government happen in Sweden:  
<http://europa.eu.int/ISPO/ida/jsps/index.jsp?fuseAction=showDocument&documentID=1602&parent=chapter&preChapterID=0-140-196-299-488>

Based on the fundamental values of democracy, the rule of law and efficiency, the Swedish Government aims to deliver public administration that affords:

- Accessibility, irrespective of office hours and location.
- High-quality services and responses.
- Openness to users' opinions and ideas on how to improve public administration.
- Simple, fair rules.
- Optimal benefit to users through collaboration and continuous assessment and development of activities.

Sweden is committed to the European Union eEurope action plan 2005.

The Government shoulders the responsibility for setting the overriding goals, removing obstacles and legal barriers and supporting the agencies by providing them with guidelines and working methods; and by ensuring that the necessary infrastructure for e-government is put into place.

However, the Government policy is to not interfere more specifically in development. A prerequisite in further efforts to develop public e-services has been to preserve each agency's independent responsibility for its own business systems and for the public services it provides or may come to provide. Although a prioritized development area, there are no financial resources centrally allocated for the fulfillment of the 24/7-agency vision - it must be financed from each agency's assets. Every agency being fully responsible for developing its own business systems, the risk of sub-optimization must be taken into account, since each agency's decisions will necessarily be based solely on an assessment of benefits and costs for its own activities.

An implication of the development in the ICT area on the administration is that the public sector will have to adopt a networked model. Technically, the Swedish public administration has already made considerable progress. Now is the time to take the next major step – to renew the ways of working. The public agencies will have to increase their co-operation and exchange of information.

By and large this approach has proven quite successful and has made possible a rapid development of e-services. It has also resulted in an uneven development, with some parts of the public administration making very rapid progress while others are lagging somewhat behind. Collaboration between national, regional and local government is also poorly developed, although there are several local projects under way. The new strategy is to strengthen significantly the management framework for e-government. The advantages of a decentralized model need to be supported by a bit more central co-ordination.

The four main elements in this process are:

- A high-level 'Commission for the 24/7 Agency'.
- The Government Interoperability Board.
- Establishment of institutions necessary for secure electronic identification.
- Removal of legal obstacles to electronic communication.

### **ICT Strategic Advisory Group**

In 2003 the former IT Commission was closed down after ten years of activity. However, it was succeeded by a similar strategic advisory group. In summer 2003, the Government appointed an ICT political strategy group with the task of advising the Government on how to create an information society for all citizens. The commission work under the authority of the Ministry of Industry and Communications and its work is to be finalized and reported by November 2006.

The strategic advisory group is tasked to stimulate a democratic debate on the information society. It shall co-ordinate ICT-political efforts and inspire the Government Offices to an increased use of ICT as well as assist as advisor in ICT related political issues.

During its first year, the Strategic Advisory Group has selected four prioritized IT-political areas: growth; access and trust; healthcare and education. It has established several working groups under these. The working groups include professionals both from the public and the private sectors and are supposed to give proposals for national ICT-strategies to the Group by the end of this year.

The long term objectives are that the ICT-politics should be integrated in other political areas, the identification of areas where government has a role to play in order to reach the ICT-political objectives and that the working groups leave proposals of measures to be taken to fulfill identified objectives and support the carry out of these.

Among the further engagements of the Strategic Advisory Group are an increased presence in the ICT political arena; working group elaboration of national strategies; two new working groups in environment and culture; a hearing on ICT and disabled; and round table discussions on growth.

The strategic advisory group is more occupied in matters of communication and debating rather than development of actual strategies.

## *Organisational Issues*

### **Government Interoperability Board**

By January 1st 2004 the Government had appointed the Government Interoperability Board [GIB]. The board consists of Directors' General and Deputy Directors' General. Its task is to support and promote secure and effective electronic information exchange within the administration and between the administration and citizens. The GIB shall establish common standards for electronic information exchange; issue guidelines for electronic information exchange and promote the availability on the market of information exchange services and products.

The GIB is an agency in its own right, but it is supported by the Agency for public management [Statskontoret]. The GIB can issue regulations that are mandatory for all agencies, as well as non-mandatory guidelines. Regulations will not be binding for municipalities. Its regulations and guidelines will be prepared in joint projects, involving major agencies.

The GIB focus on the following areas:

- -effective information use,
- -e-identification and secure information exchange,
- -information security and
- -accessibility.

At a strategic level the GIB is expected to establish a government interoperability framework where the emphasis lies on *interoperability* rather than framework.

### **Commission for the 24/7 agency**

In October 2003, the Government appointed a Commission for the 24/7 agency to be working under the authority of the Ministry of Finance. Its main tasks are to promote co-operation and provide visionary and innovative thinking, while focusing on concrete actions (including funding arrangements for helping agencies and local authorities to implement the 24/7 concept).

In order to engage actors across society in wide-ranging collaboration, the Government has set up this committee comprising representatives of the central government, municipalities, county councils, R&D and the business sector. The Commission's efforts are to be action-oriented in order to catalyse the development and take up of public e-services. Its tasks include:

- Identifying areas where e-services are of great potential benefit to the public and businesses.
- Finding new ways of promoting collaboration between central, regional and local government.

- Showing how the business sector can gain a more active role in developing and delivering e-services.
- Considering the demand and possibilities for specific support in development of e-services.
- Stimulating the deployment of combined service channels such as advanced telephone services.
- Defining e-services appropriate for delivery through new communication platforms.

Progress reports will be issued every six months from May 2004 onwards and the Commission will present the final report on its results by November 2006.

### **IT and Democracy**

The opportunity to strengthen democracy through support of the dialogue between citizen and agency by the means of information technology is considered to be an important issue for the future and the Government has appointed a working group for IT and democracy under the authority of the Ministry of Justice. It is aiming to gather and co-ordinate a structured way of collaboration regarding the development of IT as a means of enhanced dialogue and social debate.

### ***Operational Issues***

#### **Infra Services**

During spring 2004 a framework procurement agreement on Infra Services was signed. <sup>2</sup>As indicated by its title, the Infra Services framework procurement agreement is not about products but about *services* for call off where the costs are related to the chosen service level and to the amount of transactions. It comprises two major infrastructural services, essential for the availability of e-services in the public administration. These two major services are verification of electronic identification/signatures and secure messaging by the government e-link. Moreover, there are related additional services and support services such as case management or design and implementation among others.

The framework procurement agreement connects multiple functions and providers to several subscribers (i.e. public agencies) in contract based relations. This approach is in line with the Swedish government organization consisting of a relatively small central administration (the Government offices) and independently managed government agencies. Similarly it is in line with the reliance on a market driven development of functions and solutions.

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<sup>2</sup> The model of Infra Services was presented in the ICA General Issue 2004.

### **Municipal Platform**

An initiative of collaboration at local level is the one of the Municipal Platform. A number of municipalities have identified processes and services common to all municipal administrations. This inventory comprises both common processes and common services. It is intended to serve as a basis for a voluntary collaboration among municipalities, aiming at developing common functions and shared infrastructure in a more cost efficient way.

The Municipal Platform is to be seen as an enabler in the e-services development to introduce economies of scale and overcome the large costs and efforts linked to development when the multiplicity of services is large and the volumes are small.

The following five have been outlined as pilot projects in the group of the Municipal platform:

- Daily child care;
- Application for upper secondary school;
- Reservation for premises;
- Digital assistants;
- Renewed application of financial aid.

A precondition for these common services is an open technical platform and the technical basis for the platform will be the Infra Service.

### **Portal**

The Government portal until today, [www.sverigedirekt.se](http://www.sverigedirekt.se), has been merely a directory of public agencies. However, during autumn 2004 a new portal will be launched, [www.sverige.se](http://www.sverige.se). The latter is intentions based but the ambition is still not to become a single entry to the public sector but to serve as an orientation portal. ??

### **Performance Measurement**

The Internet penetration in Sweden is comparatively very high, as well as the use of e-government web sites. 80 % of the citizens regularly use the Internet and 2/3 have access to the Internet in their homes. During the period of November 2003 – January 2004, 64% of the active Internet users visited the public sector's web sites.

*The country ranking [...] shows that the online sophistication of public services is still the most advanced in Sweden (87%), although Sweden remains at the same level as for the previous measurement.<sup>3</sup>*

The potential for public e-services is still large. According to a survey from the Swedish Agency for Public Management, 2/3 cases of high volume can be managed or introduced online and 1/3 actually is introduced online.

### **Examples of e-services**

A number of public e-services in Sweden are highly innovative and frequented.

An example of Swedish e-government services is the income tax declaration. In May 2004, 123 000 people used eID to do their income tax declaration on the web. This is an increase of 30% since the year before. Another 563 000 used the security PIN-codes, 274,000 citizens used the automatic telephone service and 87,000 did their income tax declaration via text messages. In total, 15 % of the income declarations from citizens were done electronically.

The Social Insurance Office [Försäkringskassan] provides an e-service for parents to manage matters related to the child allowance.

The Swedish Road Administration (Vägverket) provides a variety of services on-line as well as phone services. The text message service where you send a message with a car registration number and receive a response identifying the owner of this car has 200.000 users in a month.

Swedish Customs [Tullverket] was rewarded with the prestigious e-government services competition 'The Golden Link 2004' with the support for foreign trade performed by SMEs.

At the regional level a best practice example is Vårdguiden, an initiative from the county council of Stockholm that provides information on healthcare as well as the service of managing contacts such as reservation at the doctor's, to renew prescriptions of medicine.

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<sup>3</sup> *Online Availability of Public Services: How is Europe Progressing?*, by CapGemini ErnestYoung Jan 2004 for the European Commission

### *Other*

#### **Legal restraints**

Aiming to remove legal obstacles to electronic communication, the Government has undertaken a review of all laws, which prescribe written procedures of one kind or another. The aim of this review is to promote the use of electronic documents and electronic signatures by identifying and eliminating unnecessary legal requirements for written procedures. The first report shows that, out of 2000 requirements that were found in different legal acts, 1200 allow electronic signatures. The next phase of the work is to make adjustments in the remaining 800 legal acts.

#### **Broadband**

Broadband deployment is a prioritised area for the Swedish Government. The main obstacle to broadband deployment on our behalf is of course the dictate of the geography. Sweden's 20 inhabitants per square kilometre can be compared to Germany's 230. This illustrates the divergence in potential investment costs per inhabitant.

Three years have passed since the Swedish national broadband strategy was developed to meet this problem. The overall objective is that households and businesses in all parts of Sweden should have access to high speed IT infrastructure within the next few years. The Government initiative aims at making market deployment the prime alternative. But there is also government funding to be used in rural and remote areas where there is no market deployment.

### *To Conclude*

The development of public e-services in Sweden has been rapid and fruitful but has levelled off. However, there is still potential for further progress, and during the past year the Government has taken several initiatives in order to facilitate and catalyse the development of a modern public administration.

### *Further information*

Further information is to be found at the following web sites:

The Government Offices of Sweden

[www.sweden.gov.se](http://www.sweden.gov.se)

Directory to Swedish administration

<http://www.sverigedirekt.se/sprak/english.asp>

The 24/7 Agency (for professionals in e-government development)

[www.24-timmarsmyndigheten.se/DynPage.aspx?id=186](http://www.24-timmarsmyndigheten.se/DynPage.aspx?id=186)

The Swedish Agency for Public Management

<http://www.statskontoret.se/>

Examples of e-services mentioned in the report:

[www.skatteverket.se](http://www.skatteverket.se)

[www.forsakringskassan.se](http://www.forsakringskassan.se)

[www.tullverket.se](http://www.tullverket.se)

[www.varguiden.se](http://www.varguiden.se)

[www.vv.se](http://www.vv.se)