

Harnessing ICT for social action, a digital volunteering programme (Spain, 25 March 2014)

Towards Digital Inclusion in Sweden¹

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1. Current situation and recent trends

The Ministry for Information Technology and Energy has set out Sweden's policy for digital inclusion in ICT for Everyone – A Digital Agenda for Sweden (2011) and states clearly that Sweden is working toward digital inclusion, where everyone who wants to must be able to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitisation. The Ministry underlines the importance for the digital agenda to collate all ongoing activities in a horizontal, cohesive strategy in order to make use of the opportunities offered by digitisation to individuals and businesses.

Digital inclusion is increasingly essential in order to be able to take part in modern day society and make use of education, community services, social participation and entertainment and amusement. The increasing trade in goods and services on the Internet also presents consumers and businesses with new opportunities and challenges. Digital inclusion is concerned with the possibility of taking part in all aspects of community life and being able to exercise one's rights and fulfil one's obligations as a citizen.

Important objectives to make digital inclusion possible are that Sweden has world-class broadband, and that all households and businesses have good opportunities to use electronic public services with broadband access. Activities contributing to the objectives are focused in four strategic areas based on the user's perspective: 1) easy and safe use; 2) services that create benefit; 3) infrastructure; and 4) societal development.

Statistics show that the majority of Swedish people use ICT and Internet quite regularly. The table below from the European Commission's Digital Agenda Scoreboard illustrates internet usage indicators for Sweden 2012.

To increase usage, measures are ongoing to increase trust in the internet, to increase digital "know-how" and to avoid economic circumstances that prevent usage.

On the European Commission's web site that reports actions taken by Member States to implement the Digital Agenda for Europe, it can be seen that Sweden carries out actions to fund projects and programmes to increase digital literacy/e-skills and to encourage use among particular target groups.

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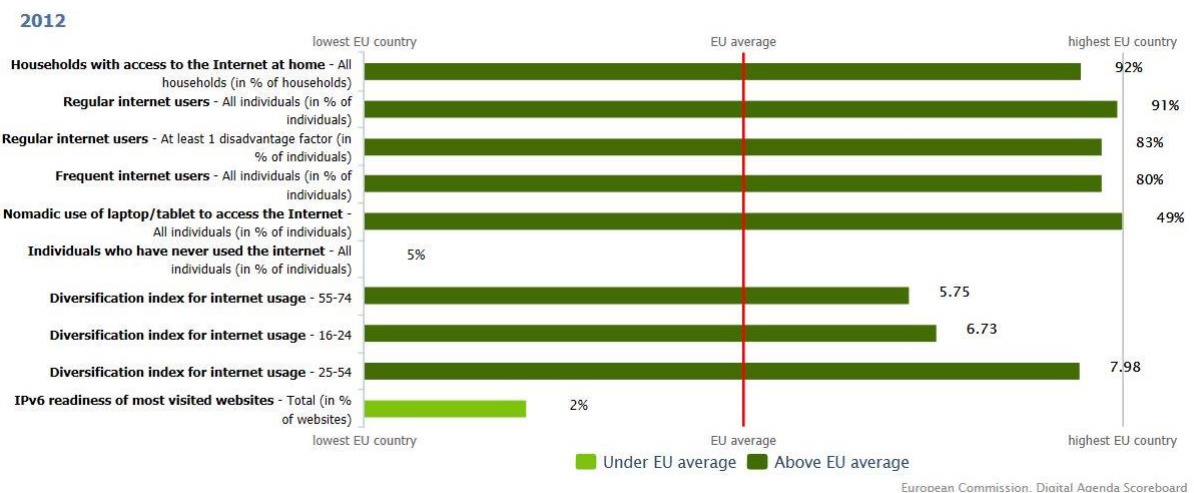


Table: Country profile for Sweden, Internet usage indicators

Easy and safe use

The issue of usability emerges in several different areas and among many different actors.

The strategy for the disability policy is listed as an effort within the Swedish Digital Agenda. The Swedish disability policy stresses that planning and implementation processes should build on diversity. The goal is to get it right from the start by creating general solutions to fit as many people as possible. Special solutions may be needed, but they should be complementary to the overall effort.

The ICT-area is a good example where an ongoing trend is that people with special needs due to disabilities more often can find what they need within standard products and services.

Within health and social services ICT is in Sweden seen as an important development area. The knowledge about accessibility and assistive technology is important in the efforts to improve the use of ICT in health and social services to benefit all citizens.

When working with accessibility and usability this often results in solutions and products that are easier to use for most persons, if not for everyone. In that sense the focus on accessibility and usability as a built in quality in services, is a key factor to motivate people who are not using digital solutions to start using them.

Services that create benefit

Public information and e-services are community-wide resources that can be used by others and in so doing contribute to the growth of society. By improving circumstances so that businesses and non-profit organisations can easily use the information and services for the development of their own services, these services can supplement the range of services provided by the administrative authority and meet the various needs that exist in society.

Since 2002, The Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS) has conducted a survey, called PTS Survey of Individuals - Swedes use of telephony and Internet which gathers information about the market from a consumer and demand perspective. The survey includes questions about electronic communications, including fixed telephony, mobile telephony, Internet and broadband.

The table below from the European Commission's Digital Agenda Scoreboard illustrates the take up of internet services indicators for Sweden 2012. Although



limited in the services measured it shows that in comparison to other European countries, up take of internet services is rather favourable in Sweden.

The government has focused on service development in the following areas:

- Public administration;
- Entrepreneurship and business development;
- Health care and social services;
- Education;
- Democracy;
- Culture.

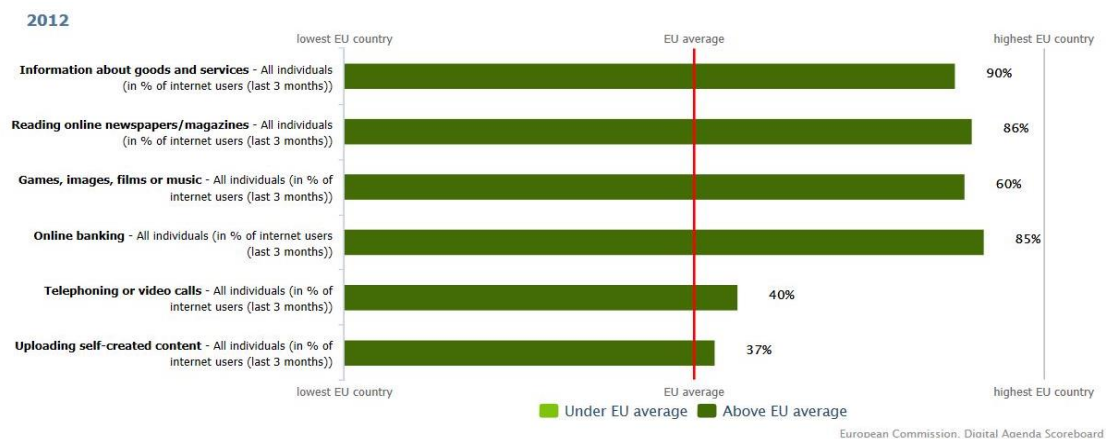


Table: Country profile for Sweden, Take up of internet service indicators

Infrastructure

The Government states clearly that to enable digital services to be used and offered, there is a need for a basic infrastructure with electronic communications that work well. The Internet as a carrier of services has to be accessible and robust, and the information transmitted online has to be processed in a secure manner. The table below from the European Commission's Digital Agenda Scoreboard illustrates the supply and take up of broadband indicators for Sweden 2012.

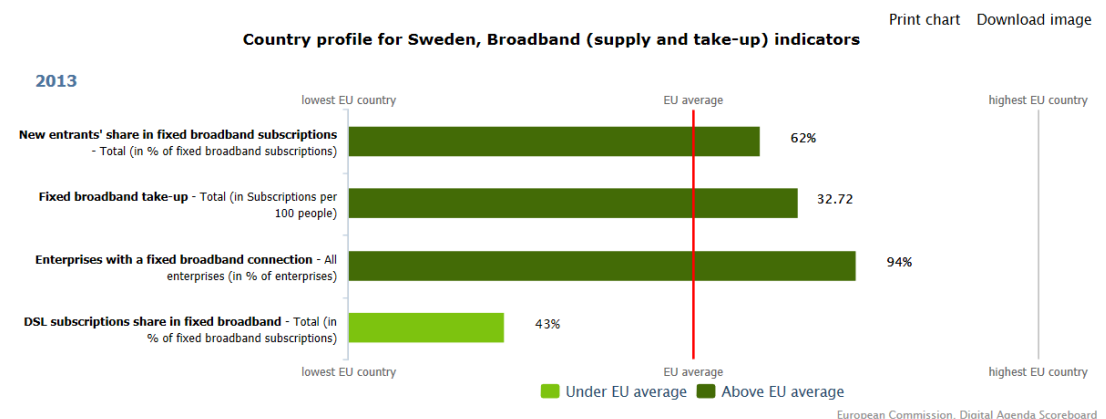


Table: Country profile for Sweden, Broadband (supply and take up) indicators

In January 2012, the penetration rate of fixed broadband in Sweden is 32.6% of the population. Sweden is the country with the lowest penetration growth rate among the countries of the EU. Sweden has 52.4% of fixed lines providing speeds



of 10 Mbps and above. With regards to high and ultra fast speeds, 2% of lines provide speeds between 30 Mbps and below 100 Mbps and 16.4% of fixed lines provide speeds equal or above 100 Mbps. Mobile broadband penetration is 97.5%, the highest in the EU. In 2011 91% of the population uses the internet regularly. With regards to disadvantaged people, the rate was 83%, the figure is the highest among EU27. 5% of citizens have never used the internet. Take-up of eCommerce is together with UK the highest in the EU. 38.5% of businesses purchased online, and 24.4% sold online. Sweden displays the second highest percentage of citizens using eGovernment services among the EU27 with 74%. Among businesses with 93% of eGovernment take-up it approaches saturation. In 2009, business expenditure on R&D (BERD) in the ICT sectors amounted to 1,872 mio €. The share of ICT in total BERD is quite high, at around 25%. (from http://daeimplementation.eu/member_states.php?id_pillar=45&id_country=26).

Societal development

ICT plays an important role in societal development and the development and use of ICT are often crucial factors in ongoing social change. In its ICT policy the government addresses a number of strategic areas where use of ICT can play an important role such as research and innovation, the environment, gender equality, freedom on the net, copyright and global development. The government has carried out actions in these strategic areas.

Follow-up

The government set up a Digitalisation Commission to promote attainment of the objectives of the digital agenda. The Government has tasked the Commission to report developments highlighting and analysing problems and identifying opportunities as well as to present proposals for suitable measures. The Digitalisation Commission collaborates with relevant authorities, individuals and organisations.

Several important agencies are involved in improving e-accessibility and follow up such as the Agency for Disability Policy Coordination (Handisam), Statistics Sweden, the eGovernment Delegation, The Swedish National Financial Management Authority (ESF), the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL), the Digitisation Commission and The Swedish Post and Telecom Authority (PTS). As Coordination is important to avoid duplication of efforts, there is a general assignment of areas of focus amongst these agencies. The Digitisation Commission focuses on promoting attainment of the objectives, the E-Delegation provides guidance for web developers and follows how government agencies work with the guidelines ; the E-Delegation and ESF follow how government agencies work with e-administration/management; Handisam follows the accessibility of government agencies' websites; Statistics Sweden compiles statistics relevant to the area; SKL follows the accessibility of municipal websites; and PTS monitors the electronic communications and postal sectors.

Activities carried out to support social outcomes in national policy

Many activities have been carried out to promote digital inclusion and multi-sector partnerships have been encouraged.

Activities have been carried out by many different actors and include:

- Consultations on a high strategic level with a forum of experts from the public sector, industry, R&D and end user organisations. The consultations have resulted in recommendations about accessible and usable ICT in which synergies have been identified when speaking together instead of speaking with the different groups separately;



- Yearly competitions to identify innovations that can facilitate usage by persons with disabilities (PTS);
- Guidance on-line for website developers to facilitate the development of accessible and usable web sites (e-delegation);
- On-line advice on how to set wireless networks and how to use Bluetooth securely and services such as "Test Your Computer" (scans the computer for security weaknesses) and "Test Your Password" (teaches tricks for the creation of strong passwords) (PTS);
- On-line advice and tips for parents concerning the internet and how youth use the internet with links to research to increase security and safety on the web (network organisation "Surf Calmly");
- Activities and courses to increase digital skills (SeniorNet, study associations, schools, libraries, etc.);
- Computers available for public use in libraries;
- Ongoing pilot projects to study and to demonstrate how service and support can be given to private individuals for free or at low expense to facilitate usage. Two such projects are E-service "workshops" in two communities and a telephone support service for older persons and persons with disabilities in several communities.

Many activities were carried out in the Digidel campaign (2011-2013) which had the aim to increase the share of the population actively using digital services and to support those who were in need of support by a nationwide network of approximately 450 partners comprised of NGOs, educational associations, libraries, companies, municipalities and individuals. During the three year Digidel campaign half a million Swedes, who previously stood outside the digital world, entered and became "included". The campaign reached out to a wide variety of people including young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), immigrants, elderly, homeless people and people with low-income. The final report of Digidel reflects on the success of the campaign but notes that a great need of efforts in the area still remains. After the campaign, it was estimated that more than one million people in Sweden still did not use the internet and that approximately 40% of those who used the internet were "shaky users" who need support to continue.

Target populations emphasised

In Sweden groups that have been targeted in the actions carried out include young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), immigrants, older people, homeless people and people with low-income.



2. Bibliography

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Hur är laget 2013 Uppföljning av funktionshinderpolitiken Handisam, 2013-05-15 Diarienummer 2012/0083.

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