A Closer Look at e-government

The most senior managers within public administration’s view on e-government
We have a long way to go before we have created a simpler, more transparent and effective administration, one that can benefit citizens and businesses whilst, at the same time, also strengthening the competitiveness of Sweden, its county councils and municipalities. Such are the findings of a recent survey conducted by PwC.

PwC has a long tradition in the mapping and analysis of the driving forces, development and competency of a variety of industries. Thus, it is with great interest that we have conducted an interview-based survey concerning e-government with 180 of the most senior managers within public administration. The objective of such a mapping is to gain a clearer view of the directors-general, county council chief executives and municipal chief executives in terms of issues affecting e-government. Among other issues addressed in the survey are questions concerning the support from the Swedish government and The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, as well as IT governance, the national strategy for e-health, social media and open data.

Our analysis of the responses shows that extensive measures will need to be taken in order to manage the government’s goals for third generation of e-government. Still, we have a long way to go before we have a public administration which develops services effectively on the basis of the demands of citizens and businesses, and which utilises society’s combined capacity and power of innovation. The ability of government agencies, county councils and municipalities to interact with each other, and with their outer environment, must also be improved in order to achieve this goal.

We hope that you enjoy reading this, and do not hesitate to contact us for a more in-depth discussion.

Jon Arwidson
Director of e-government, PwC
Background

The importance of effective administration

Both the global and national economy face significant challenges. The International Monetary Fund warns, in an update of World Economic Outlook spring 2011, of increased economic risks, pointing out that it will take considerable effort to transition from economic recovery to growth.1

The Swedish government assesses that growth in the Swedish economy will decrease significantly. The business cycle will turn upwards in the long run; the recession will, however, remain for quite some time.2

Effective public administration characterized by transparency, efficiency and rule of law is essential for long-term, sustainable growth. Efficiency in public administration is also crucial in order to maintain a responsible use of public funds.

That there is a clear relationship between economic growth and the quality of a nation’s public administration is well documented.3 However, recent World Bank statistics have suggested that there is a trend, albeit not a significant one, indicating that the effectiveness of the Swedish public administration is on the decrease.4

Even if The World Bank’s figures are not alarming, there is reason for decision-makers within the government, municipalities and county councils to themselves challenge their organizations in order to create a more effective and modern administration. Insufficient efficiency leads to a waste of resources and, at the same time, impairs the quality of welfare; such deficiencies weaken the external competitiveness of Sweden, the regions and municipalities in the competition for new investments.

The third generation of e-government

With the government bill on public administration, “Public administration for democracy, participation and growth” (Government Bill 2009/10:175), the government did to a large extent adopt the new strategy for e-government, introduced by the E-government delegation in its first interim report “Strategy for the government agencies’ work with e-government” (SOU 2009:86). The E-government delegation describes this strategy as the third generation of e-government. This entails a new perspective on the development of public administration in which the objective is a more flexible, needs-based administration, and which due to its transparency and accessibility maximizes the benefit to all of society.5

In order to realise the third generation of e-government, in which companies and organisations can participate and develop services with public data or basic e-services as the foundation, public administration needs to better interact with its external environment. The government agencies’ information and e-services must be able to be provided in a standardised format. Transparency in decision-making processes must be improved and new innovative means of involving citizens and businesses in these processes must be developed.

In the government bill, the government characterises the third generation of e-government as follows: “By seeing, to a major extent, public information and e-services as shared resources that can be used by a number of operators, public administration can contribute to society’s capacity for development and innovative capacity. For instance, this may apply to the re-use of public e-services and information within commercial services, of e-identification within the framework of commercial activity, of a national permit service within the framework of a municipality portal or of an e-service for a grant application in the context of a non-profit organisation’s website.”6

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3. World Bank: Linking Administrative Reform to Economic Growth patterns: review of methods and findings, February 2005
5. Prop. 2009/10:175 Public Administration for Democracy, Participation and Growth
Method and Selection

PwC has conducted a survey with municipal chief executives, county council chief executives and directors-general in order to ascertain both how the public sector’s most senior managers view the development of e-government and what e-government means for their respective organisations. This survey was conducted between May and August of 2011.

The government agencies, or national public administration, have been divided in seven different sectors. These sectors are: civil emergencies and judicial services, business services, general government services, education, healthcare and social services, culture, and defence. Interviews have been conducted in each respective sector. Municipalities are divided, according to size, into eight different groups. Once again, interviews have been conducted with all of the groups.

A total of 180 telephone interviews have been carried out. Among the 180 interviewed individuals, 100 were municipal chief executives, 201 directors-general and 20 county council chief executives. This e-mail informed the recipients of the purpose of the survey, as well as the possibility of an interview.

This study primarily examines a comprehensive overall view based on all of the interviews. Governmental sectors, such as the municipalities, county and state administrations are further highlighted. The findings of the study are expressed in terms of percentages.

The survey was based on the following areas:

- Knowledge of e-government and the E-government delegation
- E-government and support from the government and Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
- The national strategy for e-health
- Social media
- E-government and the external environment
- Important premises for e-government

Results

E-government – what is it and why?

Initially, we asked respondents how they view the concept of e-government. They were asked to openly define what it means for their organisation. In terms of what e-government means for them, municipal chief executives stressed the following:

- Ability to offer e-services
- Increased service to citizens
- Faster service
- Increased availability for citizens
- Better communication with citizens – expanded democracy – facilitated dialogue
- Increased efficiency of our activities

County directors stress that, for them, e-government entails improving service to citizens in a variety of ways. One common aspect stressed by all the groups is that service and accessibility must be improved. The municipal side also emphasizes the potential for increased democratic participation.

E-government – what is it and why?

The number one reason for investing in and developing e-government is to increase service to citizens. Among all respondents, a total of 49 percent are of the opinion that increased service to citizens is the most important issue. Municipal chief executives place higher priority on increased service to citizens than either directors-general or county council chief executives. A total of 59 percent of municipal chief executives feel that increased service to citizens is important. The equivalent figure for directors-general is 37 percent, and for county council chief executives the figure is 40 percent.

A fourth of the respondents are of the opinion that the number one reason for e-government is a combination of the three alternatives: cost savings, automation, which, in turn, leads to more qualified work tasks for personnel, and extended service to citizens. There is no difference in prioritisation between these factors.

What is e-government’s most central function?

The following were the most common responses for directors-general:

- Ability to offer e-services
- Increased service to citizens
- Faster service
- Increased availability for citizens
- Better communication with citizens – expanded democracy – facilitated dialogue
- Increased efficiency of our activities

County directors stress that, for them, e-government entails improving service to citizens in a variety of ways. One common aspect stressed by all the groups is that service and accessibility must be improved. The municipal side also emphasizes the potential for increased democratic participation.
The most important starting point with regard to e-services, as confirmed by all respondents, is that their own organisation must be “in order” so that the e-service is, in turn, based on both efficient operations and systems. Another starting point, which is stressed nearly as often, is that the provision of e-services is a goal in itself. A third starting point is the ability to provide an infrastructure that will allow other players to build e-services based on the organisation’s own data.

Municipal chief executives stress, above all else, the possibility of offering e-services as a goal in itself.

Directors-general, on the other hand, prioritise the building of efficient operations and systems higher than the development of new e-services.

County council chief executives place the utmost importance on providing an infrastructure which also makes it possible for other players to build e-services based on their organisation’s own data and information.

### An effective operation and system before e-services are developed

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### Foremost to have the ability to offer e-services

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### To provide an infrastructure allowing others players the opportunity to build e-services from the organisation’s own data

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### Don’t know

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**Do government agencies and municipalities receive the support they need?**

An important issue is whether the managers in the public sector receive the support they need to work with e-government. In order to map this, we first asked the respondents how familiar they were with the E-government delegation. A total of 29 percent claim to be quite familiar, or very familiar, with the E-government delegation. Of these, seven percent claim to be very familiar with the E-government delegation.

The directors-general are most knowledgeable when it comes to the E-government delegation, as 44 percent maintain that they are fairly, or very, familiar with the E-government delegation and its tasks. The corresponding figure for municipal chief executives is 20 percent; for county council chief executives the figure is also 20 percent.

**Support from the government is viewed as weak**

We asked directors-general, municipal chief executives and county council chief executives if they feel that they receive the governmental support necessary to develop e-government. This is relevant, because the municipalities and county councils, through the co-operation of Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Region (SALAR), are also subjected to the tasks, which the government has assigned to the E-government delegation.

The government agencies’ view of governmental support is more favourable than that of the municipal chief executives. A total of 29 percent of directors-general experience governmental support as fairly good or very good, and of those, three percent assess support as very good. Within the municipal sector, nine percent feel that the degree of governmental support they receive necessary to develop e-government is good, and within the county sector the figure is the same at 30 percent.

A third of all respondents consider support from the government pertaining to matters of e-government to be fairly or very poor. In looking exclusively at the directors-general, only a fourth assess the support they receive as inadequate. A fifth of all respondents could not assess governmental support, maintaining that they do not know. A total of 26 percent within the municipal sector maintain that they do not know, and on the government agencies’ side, the equivalent figure is 10 percent. Within the county council sector, a total of 30 percent say they do not know.
What can be done to improve e-government?

What do the most senior managers in the public sector want help with? One question concerned the respondents’ views on what the E-government delegation should aspire to do. This is an open question without response options and is, primarily, targeted at those respondents familiar with the E-government delegation.

In terms of the aspects which the E-government delegation should set as top priority, municipal chief executives emphasised the following:

• Identifying joint and standardised solutions
• Providing tips and advice on the functioning of e-government
• Spreading knowledge and positive experiences, on the functioning of e-government
• Another common response is that respondents do not know or do not have an opinion.

The support from SALAR can also be improved

We questioned municipal chief executives and county council chief executives as to how they felt about the support they receive from the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) in developing e-government. A total of 46 percent of the respondents regard the support they receive from SALAR as quite good or very good; a total of five percent regard the support as very good.

A total of 15 percent of all respondents consider that the support from SALAR with regard to e-government issues is quite or very poor. A total of 14 percent of all municipalities and county councils are not able to assess the support they receive from SALAR and do not provide an answer.

A total of 70 percent of the county council chief executives regard support from SALAR as quite or very good; the corresponding figure for municipal chief executives is 44 percent.

The respondents were asked to rate the following areas on a 5-digit scale from very important to no importance:

- Development of business management
- Competence of employees
- IT management
- IT system
- E-services for citizens and companies
- Opening up and making information/data accessible
- Cooperation with other agencies in order to not having to do everything on one’s own
- Development of e-services requiring e-identification
- Development of intranet
- Increased general standardisation of all kinds of activities

The table below demonstrates the various areas and their importance to the respondents and their organisations.
From the perspective of all respondents, the development of e-services for citizens and companies is seen as top priority. Following this, interaction with other authorities is necessary to receive assistance so that one does not have to do everything on one’s own, to develop employee competence, to become more transparent and make the organisation’s information/data accessible.

The following areas are regarded as less important: increased general standardisation of all kinds of operations, the intranet and development of e-services requiring e-identification.

Municipalities and county councils consider the development of e-services to be more important than the government agencies do. The county council sector also prioritises cooperation with other authorities more than the municipalities and government agencies.

Directors-general do not prioritise the development of the intranet or increased general standardisation of all kinds of operations to the same extent as the municipalities and county councils.

Do your employees have the competency required for e-government?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Don’t know

A total of 44 percent of senior officials in the public sector maintain that their personnel lack the required competence to work with e-government. A total of 46 percent of respondents claim that their employees have the required competence; whilst ten percent state that they do not know.

A total of 36 percent of municipal chief executives maintain that their employees have the required competence to work with e-government. The corresponding figure for directors-general is 56 percent and for county council chief executives the figure is 70 percent. From these findings, it may be concluded that government agencies and county councils have a certain advantage when compared to municipalities in terms of employees’ competency in e-government.

In addition, the lack of knowledge of employee competency is relatively high among municipal chief executives. A total of 35 percent are unable to assess the level of competency among their employees, or whether they require additional training in e-government policy.

One half do not have the required competence

At present, is your IT management effective enough to introduce e-government?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Don’t know

A total of 36 percent of the respondents maintain that, at present, they lack the effective IT management making e-government possible. A total of 57 percent of all respondents claim to have effective IT management. A total of seven percent state that they do not know. In terms of what is required for IT management, the municipal sector is lagging somewhat behind. A total of 50 percent of municipal chief executives contend that, at present, they have IT management which is sufficiently efficient to introduce e-government. A total of 80 percent of the county councils maintain that their IT management is efficient. The corresponding figure for government agencies is 64 percent.

Is the work with e-health a success story?

We questioned the municipal chief executives and county council chief executives about e-health. A total of 16 percent of all municipal chief executives have never heard of the national strategy for e-health. A total of 21 percent claim to have heard of the national strategy for e-health by name only. A total of 21 percent know something about the national strategy for e-health, and a total of 42 percent maintain that they are fairly, or very, familiar with the national strategy for e-health. Of these 42 percent, a total of 13 percent claim to be very familiar with the national strategy for e-health.

The county council chief executives are best informed about the national strategy for e-health. A total of 60 percent of county council chief executives claim to be very familiar with the strategy.

One third lacks effective IT management

How informed are you about the national strategy for e-health?

- [ ] Never heard of it
- [ ] Heard of it by name only
- [ ] Somewhat familiar
- [ ] Rather familiar
- [ ] Very familiar

A total of 36 percent of the respondents maintain that, at present, they lack the effective IT management making e-government possible. A total of 57 percent of all respondents claim to have effective IT management. A total of seven percent state that they do not know. In terms of what is required for IT management, the municipal sector is lagging somewhat behind. A total of 50 percent of municipal chief executives contend that, at present, they have IT management which is sufficiently efficient to introduce e-government. A total of 80 percent of the county councils maintain that their IT management is efficient. The corresponding figure for government agencies is 64 percent.

The lack of knowledge of employee competency is relatively high among municipal chief executives. A total of 35 percent are unable to assess the level of competency among their employees, or whether they require additional training in e-government policy.
In this study, respondents were requested to express their views as to which of the investments below they considered to have the greatest priority in achieving the national strategy’s objectives for e-health. The predefined response options were:

- Increased central investments
- Joint solutions
- Standardisation
- Increased cooperation
- Competence development

The most important areas according to municipal chief executives were, in order of priority: increased cooperation, joint solutions, standardisation, competence development, and finally, increased central investments. The difference between county council chief executives and municipal chief executives is that the former primarily prioritises standardisation. In addition, increased cooperation is regarded as a highly prioritised area.

### Three claims regarding the national strategy for e-health

In interviews, municipal chief executives and county council chief executives were asked to express their views on three arguments pertaining to the national strategy for e-health. The first argument addressed the issue as to whether the national strategy for e-health is the right means to achieve operational changes in health care. The second argument highlighted the issue as to whether the strategy results in the development of effective e-services. Finally, the third argument addresses the issue as to whether the strategy for e-health is well anchored within the organisation. Nearly five out of ten municipal chief executives regard the national strategy for e-health as the right means and that it helps the municipality in its work with operational development. Three out of ten municipal chief executives are unable to assess whether it is the right means to achieving operational changes, stating simply that they do not know. A total of 90 percent of county council chief executives consider it to be the right approach to achieving operational changes.

Four out of ten municipal chief executives and seven out of ten county council chief executives are of the opinion that the national strategy for e-health facilitates the effective development of e-services in health care. Only a few respondents in the county council and municipal sector claim that the national strategy for e-health does not facilitate the effective development of e-services in the area.

Two out of ten municipal chief executives are of the opinion that the national strategy for e-health is well anchored in their organisations, whereas just over four out of ten municipal chief executives state that the strategy is not well anchored. Seven out of ten county council chief executives regard the national strategy for e-health as being sufficiently anchored in their organisations.

In conclusion, respondents were allowed to spontaneously express their other views on the national strategy for e-health. Nearly a fifth chose to provide a spontaneous answer. The most common response was that they had too little knowledge of the strategy for e-health. The following was a typical response:

“I do not know anything about e-health or what it is about.”

Nearby half of all respondents have developed a policy or strategy for how to work with these media. Among the municipalities, six out of ten have a strategy in place, whilst the corresponding figure for the county council is about five out of ten. Nearly four out of ten organisations have developed their personnel’s competency sufficiently to carry out work related to social media.

Another interesting aspect is that just over four out of ten of the interviewed respondents have discovered how the outside world wishes to communicate with their organisation. This method is more developed within the national government and county councils. Within the national government, just over five out of ten government agencies have conducted an analysis of their environment. On the county side, the figure is the same, with five out of ten counties having conducted a similar analysis. Among municipalities, the corresponding figure is just over three out of ten.

### Is social media an opportunity or a burden?

One of the areas discussed as part of the development of e-government is that of social media. PwC’s study, in part, deals with the public sector’s view on social media and how they use them in their operations.

The first aspect pertaining to social media addresses how the organisation, up to this point in time, has handled and responded to its development. Most commonly, the organisation has begun talks on social media and enters a phase in which it tests the use of social media.

Nearly one out of ten within the public administration state that social media creates neither demands nor opportunities, but rather has provided responses such as:

“We have decided not to pursue it.”

“Our organisation hasn’t had contact with the public in that way.”

A quarter of respondents are of the opinion that the social media only provides opportunities, and three percent claim that it only creates demands.

How have you approached social media?

In conclusion, we asked respondents how they view social media. Does social media merely make demands, or does it also create opportunities?

Just over six out of ten respondents believe that social media generates demand to the same extent that opportunities are created.

Are companies using social media?

Nearly one out of ten within the public administration state that social media creates neither demands nor opportunities, but rather has provided responses such as:

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Does social media make new demands, or does it provide opportunities?

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Does the public sector harness the combined innovativeness of the whole society?

An important issue for the third generation of e-government is the extent to which the public sector makes their information available to other parties for re-use.

Government agencies have made the most progress in this area, with 49 percent of the directors-general indicating that information may be downloaded electronically.

In the municipal sector, 35 percent of municipalities are considering the issue of making information accessible in this fashion, whilst the county council sector is primarily on planning stage.

How does the Swedish public sector make information available to others for re-use?
All figures are given in percentages.

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<td>Planning is underway to make it possible for data to be downloaded</td>
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<td>Do not know what should be done</td>
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It is worth noting that one out of ten directors-general claims not to have addressed the issue. In addition, just over one out of ten respondents maintain uncertainty as to how this should be done. Within the county council sector the figure is 30 percent.

Our overall assessment

It is essential to address the role of IT as a facilitator, if the public sector is to be successful with the efficiency measures required to provide citizens with the sorts of services they wish to receive.

To manage the transition, however, the right steps must be taken; a well-organized follow-up with conclusive findings is essential. Both our analysis of quantitative responses and open responses submitted by respondents, show that substantial efforts are needed for the vision of the third generation of e-government to become reality.

Particularly noteworthy is that over half of those surveyed maintained that they had no concrete plans to make their information available to other parties. It is also worth pointing out that the main idea behind the third generation of e-government is that society’s overall capacity for development and innovation should be utilized by making the public sector’s information accessible to others.

A remarkable number, 54 percent, report that their employees lack the skills needed, or that they do not know if their employees have the competency necessary to work with e-government. Add to that the fact that a large proportion of respondents indicate that they do not receive the kind of necessary assistance either from government or from The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) to work with the issue.

Swedish administration has a good foundation to build on in the development of a modern e-government. However, if no concrete steps are taken by either the government or SALAR as well as individual government agencies, counties and municipalities, the vision of the third generation of e-government will most likely not come to fruition. This, in turn, implies a lower level of service to citizens and businesses, and moreover, a less effective public administration than would have otherwise been the case. Sweden also runs the risk of losing its competitive edge.

It is essential that the IT and telecommunications suppliers take a more active role in delivering effective and easy to use services, which are based chiefly on open standards and are reusable.
The E-government delegation must have a greater impact

Even though the E-government delegation has been in operation for over two years, knowledge of its function is relatively low, particularly among municipalities and county councils. This is the case despite the ongoing focus on efficiency within the public sector. Add to that, the discussions in recent years about open government, which would create substantial opportunities for citizens and companies to participate in the development of the public sector and its service delivery. Many also think that the support they receive from the government which, among other things, is channelled via the E-government delegation, is inadequate.

Already today, the E-government delegation concerns itself with those issues which, according to respondents, demand support. Apparently, however, the delegation’s efforts do not sufficiently reach those municipalities and county councils managing the operations in the public sector. In many ways, the E-government delegation is a model in terms of how it creates a dialogue with the outside world. It achieves this by utilising different social media. The most significant target group’s lack of knowledge of the E-government delegation, however, demonstrates that the E-government delegation can work more proactively in providing information about its work. An appropriate means by which to reach municipal chief executives and county council chief executives must be achieved. Moreover, they must do a better job in highlighting the operations in the public sector.

Due to the fact that most respondents require assistance with joint and standardised solutions, the E-government delegation should more clearly bring about the efforts already made and increase focus on the issue in general. A challenge faced by the public administration is how competences and knowledge of standardisation work undertaken by various government agencies can be disseminated and put to use in practical solutions. Here, the E-government delegation can play an important role by, for example, building further on Verva’s national framework for interoperability. The E-government delegation can also coordinate various priorities and competences. The weaknesses seen in the E-government delegation’s impact refer, in the end, to weaknesses in the government’s handling of the development of a modern e-government. It can be seen that many of the important issues requiring measures to be undertaken by the cabinet have not resulted in any decisions. This applies, for example, on work with the review of statutory enactments on data processing, the government agencies’ work on a sourcing strategy and joint models for cooperation between municipalities and authorities in e-government projects.

Competence needs to be improved

In recent years, the issue of competence provision in public administration has been placed high on the agenda. A significant amount of work has been carried out in order to facilitate the generational change currently faced by the government agencies, county councils and municipalities of today. In the last few years, the government has also made strides to improve government employees’ knowledge as it pertains to maintaining the public ethos. Efforts have also been made to improve excellence in health care. However, there is no overall approach for dealing with the challenge of competence provision arising in the context of e-government development. It should also be added that, according to the Swedish Agency for Government Employers (SAGE), 52 percent of the authorities find it difficult to find suitable applicants for positions such as experts and senior managers within IT. From this perspective, it is easy to understand the responses provided by the senior managers within the public sector with regard to the competency of their employees within e-government.

In order to fully capitalise on IT investments it is important to have methods and tools for conducting benefit analysis and structured processes benefit retrieval. Unfortunately, it is common for government agencies, county councils and municipalities not to realise the impact of the initiative of e-government. Here, senior management must take responsibility for the joint work between IT and operations right from the start, in order to ensure that objectives are met.

In addition to the fact that senior management assumes greater responsibility for IT-related issues, the public sector may go even further in establishing a more strategic CIO function. This should be of particular relevance with regard to medium-sized and large organisations. This differs from the current situation, as a pure IT manager is usually responsible for IT operations and IT maintenance. A broader CIO function could manage the important issues regarding operational processes and strategies.

The municipalities need to be more involved in the work with e-health

The fact that a greater percentage of county council chief executives than municipal chief executives are familiar with the national strategy for e-health, and regard e-health as a good tool for operational development, is not surprising as health care is one of the county councils’ mandatory tasks. The number of services municipalities are obliged to offer their citizens is significantly greater and includes a wide selection of areas ranging from urban planning and sanitation to pre-school and elderly care.

In recent years, however, in addition to the other obligations to provide social services, and care for the elderly and the disabled, municipalities have become increasingly responsible for home health care. More queries concerning e-health should have been raised due to the fact that health care is the responsibility of the municipality. In light of this, it is surprising that just over four out of ten municipal chief executives state that they are fairly familiar, or very familiar, with the national strategy for e-health and that so few see its advantages within e-government.

Although several municipal chief executives are not aware of the strategy for e-health, nine out of ten responses by county council chief executives indicate that the strategy for e-health is on the right track.

There are, however, as pointed out by The Swedish National Audit Office, significant difficulties regarding the model based on voluntary action chosen by the government to make further advance in e-government. Neither the municipal leaders nor the county council chief executives desire an increase in central initiatives. Rather, they would like to see an increase in collaboration as well as in standardisations and joint solutions.

In this work, the government can adopt a supporting role and monitor whether there is a need for changes in the legal framework or additional resources. However, SALAR should be responsible for forging a cooperative effort. Such collaboration should result in concrete efforts and projects that can be vastly reused. In addition, work on e-health should more clearly be a responsibility for the E-government delegation in order to further increase the possibilities of coordinating the public sector’s work with e-government.
Social media needs to be taken more seriously

In the summer 2010, the E-government delegation examined how many government agencies utilise social media. Half of the respondents utilised some kind of social media; however, only a fifth had a policy for their presence in social media.10 In our study, which was conducted approximately one year after the one conducted by the E-government delegation, 60 percent of the authorities reported that they had attempted to establish themselves in social media; a third maintained that they have a policy or strategy to do this. A total of two thirds of respondents claim to use social media; nearly a half maintain to have a policy or strategy for social media.

Whilst a great portion of government agencies, county councils and municipalities today utilise social media, many of them do not have a well-established strategy or policy for such work; in fact, only 38 percent have improved the competency of their personnel to the extent necessary to carry out such work with any degree of success.

At present, Facebook has approximately 4.5 million Swedish users.11 More than 1.5 million people update their status on a daily basis in social network services.12 Additionally, lead to that the opportunity to scrutinize the public administration becomes more difficult and that unnecessary risks will be taken. To make the best use of the opportunities for open dialogue, transparency and a streamlining of processes such as the ones social tools provide, each government agency, county council and municipality should map out ways in which they intend to work with such tools.

Public information must be made accessible for others

Making public data and e-services accessible to other actors so that they can develop new products and services is one of the main ideas behind the third generation of e-government. The intention is partially to increase transparency in public operations and partially to provide more and improved e-services based on public data, but also to create opportunities for new companies to develop within the information sector.

Many attempts have been made to calculate the value of the market for information services based on public data and e-services. In 2008, The Institute for Growth Policy Studies presented a report on the market potential of public information.

According to the estimates of The Institute for Growth Policy Studies, the value of the Swedish market is annually between three and 13 billion Swedish kronor.13 In light of this fact, it is worth noting that only 29 percent of the respondents claim to have data which could be electronically downloaded, and that nearly half of the respondents do not have any concrete plans for making their data machine-accessible. Some respondents clearly state that either their data is not available or that the standards required for making data available do not exist in Sweden. In addition to the inadequate access to data, the high price Swedish government agencies place on information hampers development. In 2009, data sales were estimated to yield approximately half a billion Swedish kronor in government revenues of which the majority is derived from sales by The Land Survey.14 The high price placed on information makes it more difficult for entrepreneurs to develop their ideas and precludes the development of the third generation of e-government.

Government agencies, county councils and municipalities must all develop strategies for the way in which they intend to make their data accessible by electronic means. In addition, the government must assume responsibility for establishing rules for the electronic release of public documents, as well as a portal to make it as easy as possible to obtain information and to have access to public data sources. The government must also oversee the pricing of government data. This is particularly important with regard to data held by The Mapping, cadastral and land registration authority, The Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, The Transport Agency, The Maritime Administration, The Tax Agency, The Companies Registration Office, Statistics Sweden and The Geological Survey of Sweden. These agencies possess data with a high added value whilst they, at the same time, receive relatively high levels of revenue from data sales. From a societal perspective, it would be best to establish a general principle of freely available public data. The importance of universally accessible data may be illustrated by comparing the market for weather risk management, which in the United States is 50 times greater than in Europe. The American market for meteorological services is more than ten times greater than the corresponding market in Europe. For many years, the meteorology agency in the United States has provided free access to the agency’s data. In most European countries, the corresponding agencies charge for their data.15

Sweden can become the leader in e-government

Sweden is ranked highly in many international comparisons in terms of e-government. For many years, we have heard the benefits of having independent government agencies with great momentum and innovation. E-government requires, however, more a coordinated management and, despite increased efforts in recent years, the government must take a more holistic approach to the matter.

- Providing the E-government delegation with better tools to work with strategic e-government projects and spread knowledge about their work.
- Statutory enactments on data processing need to be reviewed.
- Knowledge on-going standardization work should be disseminated and lead to practical usage.
- The issue of competence should be given higher priority.
- The senior management in government agencies, municipalities and county councils should assume greater responsibility for issues pertaining to e-government, including IT management.
- Cooperation between municipalities, county councils and government agencies should be improved.
- The public sector should work in a more strategic manner with social media.
- Public data should be made freely available for re-use.
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