



NORRBOTTEN – the northeast part of Sweden

(at first a short presentation of Per Lavander and Henry Lundgren)

Where is Norrbotten in Sweden and in the EU

- **Geographical perspective (OH)**
Norrbotten is 25 % of Sweden if you look at the area, but only 3 % of the inhabitants. From the very north of Norrbotten to the very south Norrbotten it's more than 500 km. The area of Norrbotten corresponds to Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland, all together.
- **Demographical dimensions (OH)**
Totally Norrbotten has 260.000 thousand inhabitants. The biggest municipality has got 70.000 inhabitants, and the smallest one 3.400.
- **The climate in Norrbotten**
6-7 months per year we got winter – that means we have snow on the ground and the average temperature is below zero. We got a very good environment in Norrbotten, which includes that we don't need to use pesticides or insect killers in producing agricultural products. Thanks to the climate.
- **The industrial structure of Norrbotten**
Norrbotten is still dominated by paper and timber industry, mining and the public sector, but the structure of the business world is changing, like in other parts of Sweden and Europe. Small enterprising is growing. In recent years the IT-business has grown, and probably grown too fast. The business world in Norrbotten is slowly changing towards a diversified private sector, which means that the public sector won't be that important tomorrow in the means of employment in Norrbotten as it is today.

The administrative structure in Sweden on national, regional and local level

The national level (OH)

The Parliament (taxation level 1)

The Riksdag is the highest representative of the Swedish people and the principal decision-making body in society. As in other countries the main function of the Parliament are to pass new laws, taxation and finance and frame making in all aspects of the development in Sweden. Sweden is a democracy, based on parliamentarism. This means that the government requires the parliament's (Riksdag's) confidence and support for all major decisions. In other words, a government which does not command the support of a majority within the Riksdag may be forced to resign.

The citizens elect those who are to run the country at local and national level in general elections. The elections to the Riksdag and the municipal and county councils take place simultaneously, every four years.

The cabinet

Is the Parliaments executive body – the Government. The Government draws up and submits legislative proposals to the Riksdag, implements decisions taken by the Riksdag, allocates the funds appropriated by the Riksdag for expenditure on items in the budget, represents Sweden in the EU, enters into agreements with other states, directs the activities and operations of the executive branch, and takes decisions in certain administrative areas not covered by other authorities.

Ministries

On this OH you see 4 ministries among others. The Government Offices, a unified government authority, comprise the Prime Minister's Office, ten ministries and the Office for Administrative Affairs. The Government has a staff of public officials and political appointees to assist it in the preparation of Government business. At the end of 2000, the Government Offices employed some 4,500 members of staff, of which 160 were political appointees.

Public authorities – agencies

The public authorities have the supervising duty. They see to it that the regional and levels are obeying the laws, the regulations, the finance frame and are working in accordance with the political aims of the Parliament and the government. Their task is to implement the laws adopted by the Riksdag. The Government supervises the operations of the agencies by issuing appropriation directions and ordinances that contain instructions about their activities. These serve as guidelines, stating what direction activities should take and the issues that should have priority.

County level

County administration (-board)

The county administration is the governmental body on the regional level. This authority has both a supervising duty and a responsibility of development in the region. The County council

appoints the political board. The County administration in Norrbotten has a great deal of money to stimulate development in the region. The money comes from the government.

County labour (-board)

Is responsible for the regional employment and further more for education of grown up, unemployed people who need to change their profession or improve their skills in order to get a job.

County council (taxation level 2)

The delegates of the County Council are appointed in open elections every 4th year. (at the same time as the Parliament and the municipal councils)

The County Council is responsible for health and medical service in the whole region.

Norrbotten is divided in five public health services districts. Each of which has a hospital and one up to 10 health centres, with doctors and nurses (non-institutional care). The healthcare in Norrbotten is publicly financed, i.e. by taxation from the county council. Except from health care the County Council also deals with culture, environment, communications and the regional development. All financed by taxation.

Association of local authorities

The board is elected by politicians from the municipalities (indirect election).

The Association of Local Authorities is a special interest organisation, which deals with about the same issues as the County Council except for hospitals and health centres. The Association is not an authority itself, i.e. the organisation can only give recommendations to the municipalities. On the other hand, the board of the organisation consists of municipal commissioners from all municipalities and this means that a recommendation by the board is already gained approval for.

The municipalities finance the Association.

Local level

Local authorities – municipalities (taxation level 3)

The delegates of the municipal council are elected every 4th year in open elections at the same time as the County Council and the Parliament.

In Norrbotten about 60% of the activities of a municipality is financed by taxes, about 20% by governmental subsidises and about 20% by fees and other income sources. The figures differ between large and small municipalities. The small municipalities are depending on governmental subsidises to a greater extent than the bigger ones. The municipalities have a rather high degree of independence from the government in what they do or not do and are completely detached from the County Council.

Governmental authorities on local level

There is an Employment Office and a Social Insurance Office in each municipality. Each of which are getting people jobs, educating grown ups, granting disability pension, early retirement pension and sickness benefits.

Other

Cooperation between municipalities and the governmental authorities has increased during the last 5-10 years. In many aspects they work together in order to gain an effective result, but the big problem still is that the financing is in many hands. The situation on the regional level is exactly the same. There is a growing interest in Norrbotten and in the rest of Sweden to merge the developmental issues from County Administration, County Council, County Labour board and the Association of Local Authorities into one regional organisation, run by a Council of politicians elected by the people of Norrbotten.

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