

Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship

Making women's entrepreneurship more visible, more possible and providing the tools for business development



WOMEN'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
STRENGTHENS
SWEDEN

Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship

The Swedish Government has since 2007 tasked the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket, with coordinating and implementing a number of initiatives throughout Sweden to promote women's entrepreneurship. The Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship programme at Tillväxtverket has an annual budget of SEK 65 million for the period 2011–2014. In 2007–2010 almost SEK 340 million was allocated to the programme, focusing on business development programmes. In 2007–2014, SEK 800 million in total is targeted by the Government on promoting women's entrepreneurship in Sweden.

Efforts to promote women's entrepreneurship in Sweden are conducted in cooperation with several actors on the national, regional and local levels, both public and private. The basis of these efforts is that women and men should have the same opportunities to run and develop companies. With more profitable companies run and developed by both women and men, Sweden will have better conditions to achieve sustainable growth. For this to happen, entrepreneurship must be perceived as a possible career choice for both women and men.

The programme Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship is about:

- **Providing the tools** for women entrepreneurs who want to develop ideas and companies, through activities such as business development programmes and counselling. During 2007–2011 more than 27 000 women have been involved in just over 700 business development programmes.
- **Making it more possible** for women entrepreneurs, now and in the future, to operate, take over and develop companies, through activities such as mentorship, business transfer initiatives, business angel networks, gender training of advisors and entrepreneurship among students. Since 2007, more than 500 new companies have been established by women students at universities.
- **Making women's entrepreneurship more visible** by continuing to work with facts and statistics, role models and attitudes regarding women entrepreneurs and women's entrepreneurship. The Ambassadors for women's entrepreneurship are especially important as role models – they reflect the entire range of women's entrepreneurship. The visibility of women's entrepreneurship in facts, statistics and in the media, and enhancing the knowledge of women's entrepreneurship, conditions and reality in general are of major importance.

The Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship Programme contributes to improving the possibilities for women to run, develop and start a business, thus also increasing the number of business start-ups among women and to promote growth among businesses run by women. The programme also addresses running a business on a full-time basis and employing people. In addition, the task is to increase knowledge about women's entrepreneurship among the general public, in the business sector and among public sector actors. Special efforts are made to reach women in green sectors, service sectors, creative and cultural industries, health and social care and education.

The Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship Programme

Business and Innovation Development Programmes

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket, is together with the 21 regions of Sweden coordinating business development programmes for businesses run by women. The focus is on meeting the needs of women entrepreneurs, ranging from advice customised to the company and the idea, a developed business model, increased profitability and business networking to the development of new business concepts.

The efforts vary in different parts of the country, but one common factor is that the business development programmes mainly are conducted in groups. This has proven to provide the best opportunities for business development and rewarding business networks. The majority of programme funding, SEK 45 million each year, goes to business and innovation development. So far, 27 000 women entrepreneurs have taken part in the 700 programmes. 91 per cent say they can recommend the programmes to others.

Business development programmes for businesses in the Green Sector

Tillväxtverket has decided on business development programmes targeting specifically on women-led businesses in the green sector, meaning processed agricultural products and services, forestry, garden centres, tourism, green health and such. The aim is to provide possibilities for women entrepreneurs to develop more competitive businesses.

Entrepreneurship at Universities

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket, is also promoting entrepreneurship at higher education institutions, focusing on education, advice and coaching efforts to raise the interest of entrepreneurship and also providing the opportunity to run a business. The objective is also to have entrepreneurship integrated in more of the university curriculums. More than 31 000 women students have taken part in different entrepreneurship programmes since 2007, and started more than 540 new companies.

In 2006:

... women's businesses employed **418 127** people.

... **293 928** (70 per cent) of those employed at women's businesses were other women.

... women's businesses paid a total of **SEK 91 billion** in wages.

... women's businesses paid more than **SEK 10 billion** in corporate tax.

... women's businesses paid more than **SEK 30 billion** in employee's contributions as employers.

... women's businesses paid more than **SEK 70 billion** in VAT on their turnover.

Source: Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket

Business Competition for Women Entrepreneurs

Each year a business competition for women entrepreneurs is taking place. Prizes are awarded in three categories – “Women Entrepreneur of the Year”, “Service Developer of the Year”, and “Runner-up of the Year”. With the prize “Service Developer of the Year”, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, seeks to emphasize the importance and opportunities of the service sector and service development, and also highlighting innovative and successful women entrepreneurs as role models. The main criteria for the prize category “Service Developer of the Year” are sustainability, innovation and growth ambition.

Ambassadors for Women’s Entrepreneurship

880 women entrepreneurs throughout Sweden are since 2008 selected as Ambassadors for Women’s Entrepreneurship. They serve as role models to raise the interest about entrepreneurship, so that more young women might consider running a business as a viable career choice. In 2011–2014 special attention is given to ambassadors who are innovators, particularly with regard to service innovations. Tillväxtverket is the national coordinator for the ambassadors.

Each ambassador agrees to carry out about four voluntary assignments during a year, such as speaking at schools and universities, welcoming study visits or holding personal meetings in order to exchange ideas and experiences. The ambassadors make an important contribution to business life and society as role models, when sharing their stories and experiences as entrepreneurs. The ambassadors reflect the whole range of entrepreneurship, so that more women will be able to identify themselves with being an entrepreneur, conveying that running a company is a viable option. During the period 2008–2011, the Ambassadors for Women’s Entrepreneurship met 107,000 people.

Ambassador Network in the EU

During autumn 2009, the European Union launched a European Ambassador Network for Women’s Entrepreneurship, inspired by Sweden and Great Britain. Ten of the European Ambassadors represent Sweden.

“Start-Up Days”

A number of agencies and authorities in Sweden provide information during one day on what is important to know and do when setting up a business. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket, addresses issues concerning the business concept and business plan, the Swedish Companies Registration Office provides information about how to register a company and the National Tax Board goes over accounting, taxation and value added tax. In 2011, 35 “Start-Up Days” were held all over Sweden.

Women's and men's enterprise in Sweden – Facts and statistics 2011

32% of all new businesses in Sweden are started by women.

93% of businesses run by women and **69%** of businesses run by men are in the service sector.

77% of women entrepreneurs want their company to grow.

30% of the companies report personal lack of time as the main obstacle to growth

45% of women entrepreneurs have a higher level of education compared to **35%** of men entrepreneurs

35% of women entrepreneurs are 45 years old or younger compared to **27%** of men entrepreneurs

6 out of 10 companies consider themselves to be innovative.

4 out of 10 companies have a policy on sustainability issues.

20% of businesses run by women and **26%** of businesses run by men are internationalised.

Source: Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket

Facts and Statistics

Facts, statistics and knowledge are continuously compiled by Tillväxtverket in order to highlight and disseminate knowledge about women's entrepreneurship in different areas and to different target groups.

Facts and knowledge on women's entrepreneurship

Women's businesses are a strong force in the creation of new job opportunities and are a contributing factor in the transition from a production economy to a service economy.

The perception of business as a male domain is changing and a great deal has happened in recent years, but women still have fewer role models and less research is carried out on women's entrepreneurship. In addition, education and training in entrepreneurship is still designed in line with entrepreneurship that has technical or male characteristics, even though measures that promote women's entrepreneurship have increased in recent years.

About 25 per cent of the businesses in Sweden are run by a woman, and women account for more than 30 per cent of business start-ups every year, 32 per cent in 2010. In addition, 7 per cent of the new businesses were started with joint management in 2010. If women's entrepreneurship continues to increase until it is as common as among men, it would mean 75,000 new businesses and some 278,000 new job opportunities.

Among women who are combiners (begin at part-time or run a company and are employed in parallel), the probability of moving on to full-time entrepreneurship is 25 times greater than if they go directly from employment to entrepreneurship.

Women's higher education level and will to grow their businesses constitute great potentials. Some 45 per cent of all women entrepreneurs have studied at higher education institutions – a considerably higher percentage than men entrepreneurs (35 per cent). The will to grow their businesses is also higher among women entrepreneurs – 77 per cent of the women would like to grow their businesses, compared to 72 per cent among men entrepreneurs.

Women's businesses are often found in the services industry such as business services, recreation, hotel and restaurant, retail trade and personal services. The entry barriers are lower in these industries, where smaller investments in machinery and other assets are required.

Sweden – a background

Women have always been entrepreneurial, but rules and traditions have meant that entrepreneurship has not always been a viable option for women. In Sweden, there is a long tradition of large, very successful companies with many employees, such as Volvo, Ericsson, ABB, AstraZenica, Electrolux, IKEA and H&M. The common view of an entrepreneur is a man in a suit or overalls who runs some kind of manufacturing company with many employees. Small businesses in the service sector, where many women are active, have neither been seen as “real” companies nor as equally important. This attitude affects how women are perceived in various situations, such as in an assessment of their business concepts and their financing opportunities.

The net wealth of women was and is still less than that of men. Founding, taking over or developing companies requires financing at some phase, and finding financing without savings and collateral is more difficult. At the same time, women’s networks have also not been career and business oriented in the same way as those of men. All of this affects women’s opportunities of founding, running, taking over and developing companies.

Women entrepreneurs in Sweden are a heterogeneous group. They vary in terms of age, background and education, and they are active in a wide range of sectors and businesses. Gender segregation among entrepreneurs, however, mirrors that of the labour market in general. Women more often work in professions where the opportunities and conditions for entrepreneurship have been limited, such as healthcare and education. This affects the proportion of women who run companies today.



Combining work and family

In order to understand women's entrepreneurship in any country, the position of women in society has to be examined as well. An important factor is that men and women can combine work and family life in Sweden. The high rate of participation of women in the labour force is, at least partly, linked to other factors, including the relatively generous parental benefits (at birth and when children are ill) and the supply of adequate day-care facilities. At the same time, Swedish women in the labour force work part-time more often than men.

Parental benefits and childcare

In Sweden, parents receive money from the State so they can spend more time at home with their children. All parents get 480 days of paid leave per child, which must be claimed before the child turns eight. Although more and more men take the opportunity to take care of their children, the bulk of parental leave is taken by mothers. Children are entitled to childcare when their parents run companies, work, study, etc. Childcare is provided by the municipality, but there are also cooperative and private alternatives. Children are entitled to attend pre-school or a family day nursery (childminder) between the ages 1 and 5, and childcare before and after school is offered to children between the ages of 6 and 12.

Facts about Sweden

Area: 174,000 sq mi (450,000 km²), the third largest country in Western Europe, almost the same size as Spain or France, and larger than California. Forest covers 53 per cent of the area, mountains 11 per cent, lakes and rivers 9 per cent, and cultivated land 8 per cent.

Longest north-south distance: 978 mi (1,574 km), almost the same distance as Seattle to Los Angeles or Berlin to Madrid.

Capital and major cities: Stockholm is the capital; the second largest city is Göteborg and the third largest is Malmö.

Population: 9.5 million inhabitants (2012) — about 0.1 per cent of the world's population.

Languages: Swedish; recognised minority languages: Sami (Lapp), Finnish, Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish), Yiddish and Romani Chib.

Form of government: Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy.

Parliament: The Riksdag, with 349 members in one chamber.

The European Union: Member of the European Union since January 1995.

Religion: In practice, Sweden is secularized. However, the majority of the population are members of The Church of Sweden (Evangelical Lutheran), which co-exists with other faiths. Islam is the second largest religion in Sweden.

Life expectancy: Women 83 years, men 79 years.

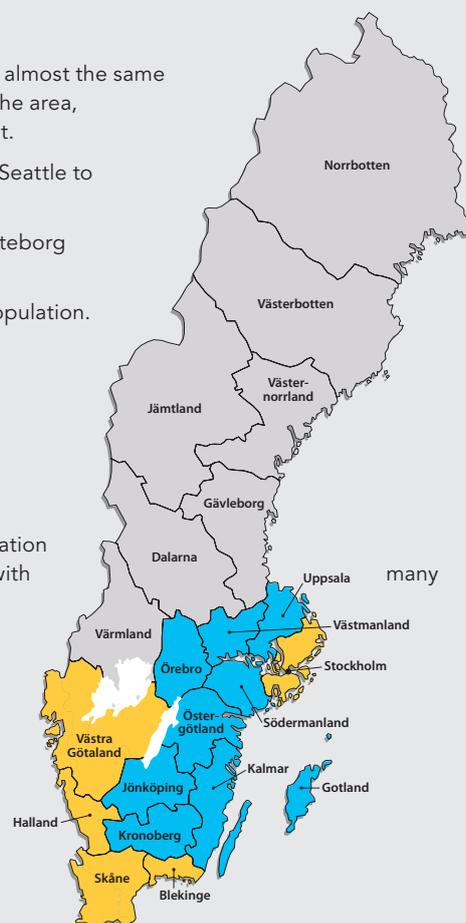
Currency (May 2012): SEK 100 = EUR 10,94

Source: In cooperation with sweden.se, which is administered by the Swedish Institute and is a cooperative effort by the Swedish Government Offices, the Swedish Trade Council and Invest in Sweden.

Population density in Sweden by county

Residents per sq. km

3–16 17–43 44–289



The aim of the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth – Tillväxtverket – is to work pro-actively for nationwide, sustainable growth by facilitating entrepreneurship.

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, Tillväxtverket, is since 2007 running the programme Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship. The programme is conducted in cooperation with several other organisations and players on the national, regional and local levels.

The basis of the programme is that more companies run and developed by women contribute to economic growth and a more dynamic business life in Sweden. With companies run and developed by both women and men, Sweden will have better conditions to achieve sustainable growth.

For this to happen, entrepreneurship must be perceived as a possible career choice for both women and men, and the business support system, public financing possibilities and such should be available on equal terms.

Women's entrepreneurship has gone from being a "non-issue" in the beginning of the 1990s to a top position on the political agenda, both in Sweden and in the European Union. Focus on and the interest in women's entrepreneurship has also increased in the media and various organisations.

About 25 per cent of the businesses in Sweden are run by a woman, and women account for more than 30 per cent of business start-ups every year, 32 per cent in 2010. In addition, 7 per cent of the new businesses were started with joint management in 2010.

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