

GOVERNMENTAL ELECTRONIC SERVICES FOR COMPANIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Trade and industry sector ad hoc working group for electronic commerce and trade and industry related IT issues

Nordic Council of Ministers



Governmental electronic services for companies in the Nordic countries

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Edited by Petteri Repo

The report is available on the Internet at www.norden.org and www.ncrc.fi

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Abstract

Nordic companies and Nordic authorities are pioneers in the utilization of information and communication technologies. The development of governmental electronic services is conducive to increasing the efficiency of operations of the Government and companies.

It is in the interest of both the Government and companies that such services are developed. In addition to increasing efficiency, the quality of services can also be improved. Practical measures are important when decreasing the administrative burden of companies. Simplified and standardized methods are favourable in this respect.

The collection of examples shows the types of governmental electronic services offered to companies in the Nordic countries.

The report is available on the Internet at www.norden.org and www.ncrc.fi.

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Referat

Nordiska företag och nordiska myndigheter är föregångare i utnyttjandet av informations- och kommunikationsteknologi. Utvecklingen av statliga elektroniska tjänster bidrar till att effektivisera statens och företagens verksamhet.

Det ligger i både statens och företagens intresse att statliga elektroniska tjänster utvecklas. Vid sidan av en effektivisering går det att förbättra tjänsternas kvalitet. Praktiska åtgärder är viktiga då man minskar den administrativa bördan för företag. Förenklade och standardiserade tillvägagångssätt är att föredra.

Rapportens exempelsamling visar vilka typer av statliga elektroniska tjänster som erbjuds till företag i de nordiska länderna.

Rapporten finns på Internet på adresserna www.norden.org och www.ncrc.fi.

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Tiivistelmä

Pohjoismaiset yritykset ja viranomaiset ovat edelläkävijöitä informaatio- ja viestintäteknologian hyödyntämisessä. Valtiollisten sähköisten palvelujen kehittäminen tehostaa valtion ja yritysten toimintaa.

Valtiollisten sähköisten palvelujen kehittäminen on sekä valtion että yritysten edun mukaista. Tehostamisen ohessa voidaan parantaa myös palvelujen laatua. Käytännön toimenpiteillä on tärkeä merkitys yritysten hallinnollisen kuormituksen vähentämisessä. Tässä tulee suosia yksinkertaistettuja ja standardoituja menetelmiä.

Raportin esimerkkikokoelmasta käy ilmi pohjoismaisille yrityksille tarjolla olevia valtiollisia sähköisiä palveluja.

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Introduction

Nordic companies and authorities are forerunners when it comes to the use of information and communication technologies. The necessary pre-requisites prevail to be able to benefit from governmental electronic services. There are many governmental projects in the Nordic countries that utilise new information technology to fulfil the needs of the Governments and companies as efficiently as possible.

Businesses and the general public have a great deal of faith in the authorities in the Nordic region. This faith is important for the development of governmental electronic services for business. Nordic companies are, for instance, generally positive to the legitimate needs of the authorities when it comes to the collection of information.

The development of governmental electronic services for companies will increase the efficiency and enhance the quality of the operations of the Government and companies. It will also improve the international competitiveness of business. Nordic authorities are forerunners when it comes to offering electronic services for companies. This report includes a compilation of examples of Nordic governmental electronic services for companies.

Efficiency

There are many transactions between companies and government authorities. It lies in the interests of both the Government and the companies that these transactions are efficient. When the Government tries to reduce its bureaucracy, it may mean that some of the administrative burden is transferred to the companies, who start to work as agents for the authorities. Hence, there is every reason to try to improve the effectiveness of the conditions for companies by offering electronic services for companies.

It is important to co-ordinate and develop information in electronic form in order to facilitate the work of businesses. The electronic channel is especially well suited for uncomplicated services. The Nordic government authorities have developed electronic services for applications, for example, and also for the co-ordinated dissemination of information and for public procurement. Please refer to the compilation of examples in this report for a more detailed description.

The authorities play an important role as promoters of e-Commerce since public procurement is so important for the Nordic economies. The transition to electronic public procurement makes the whole procurement procedure more efficient and develops the communication between the buyer and the suppliers. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the Government creates market places that in practice attract not only large companies but also small and medium-sized companies.

Government regulations and administrative measures have an impact on competition both within and between countries. Administrative costs are regressive since they have a greater impact on small companies than on large ones. Reducing the administrative burden might therefore stimulate the entrepreneurial spirit. According to an OECD study, administrative costs vary enormously between countries. The average of the eleven countries included in the study was 4% of the GNP of the business sector, while the national share varied from 2 - 7%. This discrepancy indicates that administrative costs should be regarded as a competitive factor between nations.

Quality

It is possible to enhance the quality of governmental services for companies by using electronic networks. This applies to both electronic and conventional services. Information that has previously been difficult to access or difficult to collect from different sources can quite simply be supplied via electronic networks. A better access to information services, applications, forms and instructions facilitate the operations of companies. Companies thus have round-the-clock access to the authorities.

When it comes to two-way electronic services, you can go one step further. Offering a conventional service via an electronic network is not sufficient. In order to achieve a higher quality of service, the development of electronic services should therefore be combined with making the administrative work behind these services more efficient.

Electronic services can save companies time and work and be a good source for the dissemination of many types of information. The services must be simple and practical in order to fulfil the needs of the companies.

Companies need to be consulted more when electronic services and regulations are being drawn up. Practical measures are important when the quality of services is being enhanced and the administrative burden for companies reduced. Simplified, standardised procedures are preferable. Using intermediaries might also make things easier.

Governmental electronic services for companies should be combined with necessary information security mechanisms. Information security is central to the establishment of trust between the parties and is therefore a pre-condition for company reports and the use of public information. The development of digital signatures and encryption is important in this context.

Conclusions

The development of governmental electronic services for companies makes it possible to both improve the efficiency of the operations of the Government and companies, and enhance the quality of the governmental services. Nordic government agencies and companies have every possibility of benefiting from developments since the governmental electronic services are being developed very rapidly.

Electronic networks facilitate the co-ordination of services. This co-ordination enhances the quality of the services for companies. At the same time, it is important to develop government administrations so that they can better fulfil the requirements put upon them by the co-ordination of services and the electronic environment.

The Nordic countries have every possibility of developing governmental electronic services for companies. Many such services have already been developed. The following examples indicate the types of governmental electronic services that are being offered currently to companies in the Nordic countries.

Examples of Governmental Electronic Services for Companies

Denmark

Laila Østergren

Indberetning.dk (reporting via the Web)

Indberetning.dk is a joint public centre where businesses can obtain an overview of their reporting obligations as well as draw up actual reports. Regardless of the type of report, application or payment a company wishes to make, the employee responsible for the work can enter via the Internet portal. From there, several routes to the relevant reports and payments can be selected. Today, there are more than 1195 forms for both governmental and municipal reports. Most of the forms and guidelines are in PDF format, but more and more are being turned into electronic files, which are submitted straight to the authority. Please go to www.indberetning.dk

Webreg

Webreg is an electronic Internet service, where you can report changes in existing companies (private/public limited). Webreg can be used to report changes in management, address, auditors and the financial year. The second version of the service was completed in September 2001. It is now possible, with the help of a digital signature, to set up a company via the Internet. Please go to www.webreg.dk

Publi-com

Publi-com is the direct source for all official up-to-date information from the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency. It includes over 100 000 Danish public and private limited companies as well as the other types of companies that are registered with the Agency. The information about companies is divided into two parts, a basic part, where information is free of charge and a broader part, with more detailed information and search options. You have to register and you pay a modest fee for the many reports and accounts that can be ordered. Publi-com is updated and developed by the Customer and Information Service of the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency, which is also responsible for the management and development of Webreg. Please go to www.publi.com.dk

ErhvervsService (The Business Service)

ErhvervsService is a service for small companies with up to ten employees. With ErhvervsService, small companies can hand over all or parts of their administration and reporting to an authorised ErhvervsService supplier. An authorised ErhvervsService supplier can offer its services for bookkeeping and wage administration, including reporting and making payments to public authorities. Thanks to the ErhvervsService, small companies have the time and can afford to concentrate on what is important - namely the core of their business. The service was set up in 1998. Please go to: www.eso.dk

LetLøn

LetLøn is a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Taxation, where the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency, the "owner of the building", has the overall political responsibility while the Central Customs and Taxation Administration, the "entrepreneur", is responsible for the actual development and management of LetLøn. The focal point of LetLøn is therefore the LetLøn Centre at the Central Customs and Taxation Administration. This is a centre that the companies will be able to contact if they require guidance regarding reports and payments. It is an electronic reporting system for information regarding wages and employees that the companies are obliged to report to the public authorities.

When LetLøn is launched in the spring of 2002, companies will only need to submit information regarding wages and employees to one place, namely to LetLøn, which in turn will send the information on to the authority in question. An automatic payment arrangement will also be part of the LetLøn service. LetLøn will be a free service for private and public employers, and it will be up to the companies themselves to register. Companies that register will then be able to let the recipient centre report to pension funds and trade associations.

The aim of LetLøn is to relieve the administrative burden of companies and to modernise the public sector.

From the 1st January 2003, the recipient centre will be responsible for all the tax calculations, supplementary pensions and attachment of wages of the companies. The administrative work with tax cards and attachment of wages cards is thus transferred from the companies to the recipient centre. Please go to www.letlon.dk

Digital accounts

The Danish Commerce and Companies Agency has for a long time been working on making it possible to report accountancy related information electronically to the public authorities with the help of EDI. The work is a central part of the Government's goal to lighten the administrative burden of companies and is in co-operation with the Central Customs and Taxation Administration and Statistics Denmark. Reports can be submitted to the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency from the end of 2001/the beginning of 2002, and the system is based on XML technology. It distinguishes itself because it is, for example, relatively easy to present the entered information in a browser. Moreover, the standard is not dependent on a specific platform, which is a great advantage if a technology is going to become widespread.

A programme for entering information has been developed, where the information can be entered in the correct index. The programme then transforms it into an XML file, which is sent to the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency. Entering accounts into this programme allows for a lot of leeway when it comes to the presentation of accounts. It is therefore possible to enter text straight from an HTML page, Word or Excel. Automatic data collection from various financial and accounting systems will in the long-term become a reality, so much so in fact that a large percentage of manual entries can be avoided. All submitted reports will be linked to a security system, where the user can submit accounts as an attachment from the mail client. All this requires is the installation and use of an approved certificate (at present only available from TDC). Please go to www.eogs.dk/adm/eadmin/digitalregnskab/digital_regnskab.asp

2002: The Portal Project

The Portal Project is a part of the e- Business system. The aim is to provide companies with digital services from the public authorities and allow them to appreciate the demands and possibilities of the public sector.

In order to realise these visions, a business portal is going to be developed. This portal will be the company entry point into the public sphere. Companies are the focal point in the business portal. Electronic solutions are being developed based on the wishes and needs of the companies, cutting across the organisational structure of individual authorities. Using the latest technology and knowledge of digital administration, new administrative procedures are created, adapted to each company.

Since the companies vary in size, sector and geographical positioning, the portal is being developed with individual solutions. This opens up the possibility of adapting the contents to the individual desires and needs of the companies. The long-term goal is also that international business-related conditions will be included on the portal. The portal will therefore be developed on an ongoing basis, so that it in the long term will become the successor to traditional administration. However, the aim is not to establish communication between business and industry monopoly. Hence, close co-operation is being established between the relevant public authorities, which are in contact with business and industry. It is primarily a question of the Ministry for Employment, the Danish Commerce and Companies Agency, the Central Customs and Taxation Administration, the Danish Agency for Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, the Ministry of the Environment and Statistics Denmark. The long-term aim is to expand the circle of participants, so that local authorities, county councils and other government agencies participate in the project.

Apart from the broad co-operation of the public sector, the aim is also to establish partnerships between the public and private spheres. Partnerships will ensure the creation of holistic solutions for the user. Please go to eogs.tangora.com

The Business Guide Denmark

The Danish Agency for Trade and Industry prepares and edits the Business Guide in co-operation with ministries, agencies, Technological Information Centres (TIC) and private companies. The Business Guide is updated on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, all information is sent twice a year to the

ministries and agencies responsible for the information for an update. You can subscribe to the Business Guide and receive an e-mail when the guide has been updated. This service was launched on 14th May 2001 and there are now 10 000 users per month. Please go to www.virksomhedsguiden.dk

Startguiden (The Start-up Guide)

The aim of the Start-up Guide is to act as an information entry point for all entrepreneurs. The information in the guide is updated and supplemented on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, the information is sent twice a year to the relevant external instances for checking. In the Start-up Guide you will find: News, Things worth knowing, Ask the expert, Calendar and Subscriptions. The idea is that the guide will be developed further to include interactive services like e-Learning and self-analysis tools, so that the entrepreneur can take the temperature of his/her own operations. The aim is turn it into an interactive market place, where entrepreneurs can find each other and spur each other on, are provided with tools and rapid answers to questions. The Start-up Guide is supported by: the Unemployment Fund for the Self-employed In Denmark (the ASE), Børsen (a financial newspaper) and the Danish Agency for Trade and Industry; and it comes under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The service was launched on 30th April 2001 and has about 8 000 users per month. Please go to www.startguiden.dk

Told-Skat (The Central Customs and Taxation Administration)

Companies can register on the Central Customs and Taxation Administration homepage, Told-Skat Erhverv. In order to be able to submit a report, companies must first register for the report scheme via the Internet. The companies use their SE number (organisation registration number) as an entry code and also have a personal pincode. Companies can submit VAT reports, list reports, tax deducted from income at source reports, civil registration number reports, information notes and pension reports on the homepage. Companies can also authorise another company (for example an auditor) to report on its behalf. If a company registers for tax deducted from income at source, it will automatically be given the option of supplying the civil registration numbers of those employees that are paid income where tax has been deducted. All companies, firms, organisations, authorities have to report the civil registration numbers of all those who receive income where tax has been deducted to the Central Customs and Taxation Administration every month. Companies can also supply the name of a contact in the company and add that e-mail address to the system. Please go to www.toldskat.dk

Finland

Petteri Repo

The JUNA project

The JUNA project co-ordinates and supports the development of Web communication and is responsible for ensuring that public administration provides interactive communication, Web-services and Web-culture on the Web. The project covers the entire public administration system - the Government, local authorities and the indirect governmental administration. The project focuses primarily on the needs of the citizens, companies and the service providers. As regards information and communication technology (ICT), the project is limited to the use of the Internet and a browser with a user interface for the production and use of the public services. One important aim is to broaden the services that are offered for Web communication and the skills that are required to produce the services to ensure that the citizens and companies are using good quality services in their daily lives. Please go to www.intermin.fi/suom/juna

YritysSuomi.fi

YritysSuomi.fi is a governmental portal project for companies. Companies gain better access to information provided by the Government via the portal. The portal enhances the quality of contact with governmental organisations and increases transparency and the feeling of trust. In practice, companies that use the portal get better access to service and production information. The governmental owner of the portal can in turn make its production and service development more efficient, find the right clients, develop new production processes and improve co-operation between companies. The owners of the portal: Finnvera, Finpro, Tecentralerna, Sitra and Tekes are governmental organisations working with finance, risk management, consulting and development. Please go to www.yrityssuomi.fi

FODS - The Finnish Business Information System

The Finnish Business Information System is a computer system that is run jointly by the National Board of Patents and Registration of Finland and the Finnish Tax Administration. Companies and foundations can register information to both authorities on one and the same application. The Business Information System includes all companies and foundations that have been registered in the Trade Register, Foundations Register, VAT Register, Withholding Tax Register or Employer Register and companies and foundations that have submitted an application to set up business but that have not yet been added to any of the registers. All companies and foundations that are in the Business Information System receive a company and organisational number (an FO number). The aim is that companies will be able to submit an application, receive an FO number and even register electronically. The Finnish Business Information System opens up new possibilities regarding co-operation between companies and authorities, for example, being able to electronically submit accounting information. Please go to www.ytj.fi

The TYVI System

The TYVI System provides companies with a uniform way of reporting information to the authorities. It simplifies the reporting procedure and uses fewer resources. Companies, agents and authorities can report via the TYVI System. Reports are received by the Tax Authorities, the Statistics Centre, Customs, pension funds and pension insurance companies. Reports are collected by operators that then send them on. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the co-ordination and development of the TYVI System. Please go to www.tyvi.org

JuI Ma

Public markets - the JuI Ma service has been launched in Finland. Through this service, companies are provided with information regarding public procurement in Finland and Sweden. Apart from procurement applications, document models and information regarding procurement units and all the procurement procedures of the public sector are provided. Please go to www.ktm.fi/julma

Iceland

Jonina S. Larusdottir

FiskiStofa (The Directorate of Fisheries)

The EDP system of the Directorate of Fisheries collects electronic data regarding catches from Icelandic sea territory. Information regarding allotted fishing quotas and quotas transferred between fishing vessels are also entered into the Directorate of Fisheries database at the same time as a registration is made. This information is then made easily available to seamen, shipping companies and the general public via the Internet. This swift and efficient flow of information is extremely important primarily because Icelandic fishing vessels are bound by individual quotas and over-fishing can lead to fines and the withdrawal of fishing permits. New information regarding the status of quotas and catches might therefore be decisive for both administration and fishing. The shipping companies can investigate the quota status of their vessels and react if they have fished and gone over the limit. They can also see if their catches have been registered correctly. Please go to www.fiskistofa.is

Ríkisskattstjóri (The Internal Revenue Directorate)

People and entrepreneurs with an annual turnover lower than ISK 1 500 000 can submit their tax returns to the Income and Capital Taxation in Iceland site. The Web tax return form is very similar to the printed version. In order to be able to submit a tax return via the Internet, a specific code has to be used. This code is printed on the first page of the form that is distributed to everyone who submits a tax return. If you go the Web-site www.rsk.is and click on tax return for 2001, a window will appear where you enter your ID number (organisation registration number or identification number) and the password. After you have entered this information, you click on "collect tax return". Entered data can be saved so that you are able to return to your tax return to complete it at a later stage. Various boxes on the form have been filled out in advance, for instance, income, pension payments, unemployment benefits, fixed capital, university loans and so on. The programme is also able to automatically add the items of expenditure that go together. When the form has been filled in and is ready to be sent off, an estimate of public taxes in relation to the tax return can be provided upon submission. In 2001, 63% of all those who had to submit a tax return did so electronically.

Entrepreneurs, who cannot submit their tax returns in the way described above, can submit them via an encrypted e-mail. It is possible to use a special tax return programme that is distributed by the Tax Authorities. Before the tax return is transferred to the e-mail programme, the file must be encrypted. Please go to www.rsk.is

Tollur (The Directorate of Customs)

In accordance with a parliamentary decision, pursuant to an amendment to the Customs Law, anyone who imports or exports goods for business purposes must introduce an electronic customs declaration system in 2001. Subsequently, the Ministry of Finance and the Directorate of Customs came to the decision to provide small companies with an electronic customs declaration system. This system consists of a customs office on the Web and is called the Web Customs Office. The only investment the user has to make is to get access to the Internet, a browser, a certificate and an electronic signature, provided by the customs authorities. This means that companies are able to complete customs forms, irrespective of time and place, have them declared automatically via the customs authorities and get information in electronic form, or put in requests for further information. At the same time, carriers and forwarding agents send information to the customs authorities regarding loads using EDI technology and are informed about declarations in the same way. In order to enhance security, electronic signatures are used to ensure that unauthorised persons cannot read the information that is sent via the Internet in the above-mentioned way. In September 2001, 99% of all customs declarations from companies that import or export goods for business purposes were filled in and declared automatically. Most companies submit their customs declarations electronically themselves, whilst others leave it to their forwarding agents. Please go to www.tollur.is

Réttarheimildir

The Web-site rettarheimild.is is the result of co-operation between authorities. There you can find Supreme Court judgements, judgements of lower courts, reports from the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Office of the Children's Ombudsman. Moreover, you can quite easily find agreements that have been concluded by the public authorities in Iceland. There is a search function on the site. Please go to www.rettarheimild.is

Reglugerdasafn

The authorities have now set up a Web-site where you can get access to all current reports. The archive is updated regularly. When the archive was opened in 2001, it contained approximately 220 reports. You can search using the name of the ministry, the year or the contents. Both old reports and reports that have been amended are also publicised. There is a detailed search function on the site. Please go to www.reglugerd.is

Hvar?is

The Web-site [hvar.is](http://www.hvar.is) is a service site for country access to electronic databases and magazines. Everyone in Iceland, who is hooked up to the Internet via an Icelandic Web provider, has access to these electronic databases. There you can find material on Social Sciences, Economics and Trade, Philosophy and Humanities, Medicine and Health, Technology and Science. There are 31 databases on the Web, 6 700 magazines, 330 000 literary publications, 3 encyclopædias, 1 dictionary and 1 Web portal. The country access collection of magazines includes 268 titles from Blackwell Publishers and 733 titles from Kluwer Academic Publishers. In the database Britannica Online, you can find the Encyclopædia Britannica, the Merriam-Webster dictionary and the Web portal the Internet Directory. Please go to www.hvar.is

Norway

Cecilie Krogsæter

BEDIN

Bedin stands for business information on the Internet and is a portal for enterprises and entrepreneurs (www.bedin.no). BEDIN is a tool that makes it easier to set up and run a business in Norway and it provides answers and solutions to the questions and problem areas experienced by entrepreneurs. The aim of BEDIN is to act as the natural portal for public information, framework conditions and as an agent for enterprises and entrepreneurs. Examples of theme areas are: setting up a company and registration, the requirements of the authorities, standards and patents, employers and employees, different company types, taxes and fees, audits and accounts, imports and exports. There is also an English version of BEDIN. Through BEDIN, you can also order a "start up package" either in electronic or printed form. These packages contain relevant brochures from public authorities.

BEDIN works in close co-operation with Narvik Telephones and this symbiosis has been very positively received by the users. Narvik Telephones acts as a uniform entry point to business information with a focus on small and medium-sized companies and entrepreneurs. During the year 2000, Narvik Telephones received over 14 800 inquiries. Electronic inquiries to Narvik Telephones have increased and now represent about 21% of all inquiries. BEDIN and Narvik Telephones are services that are run by VINN (www.vinn.no) on behalf of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The customs declaration system TVINN

The TVINN is the electronic system of the Norwegian Customs and Excise. The system is for the exchange of documents between businesses and Customs and Excise (www.toll.no). An electronic customs declaration from a company or forwarding agent is only submitted after it has been filled in. Thereafter, it is checked according to a number of control parameters that also include controls from other government agencies, for example the Norwegian Food Control Authority. 5% of all customs declarations are taken out for a manual control. An electronic customs declaration only takes a couple of minutes. Since 1995, all customs declarations have gone via the TVINN. That means around 350 000 customs declarations nation-wide per month.

The Brønnøysund Registers

The main task of the Register of the Reporting Obligations of Enterprises from the Brønnøysund Registers is to maintain a constantly updated overview of the reporting obligations of business and industry, and to find ways of co-ordinating and simplifying these obligations. The aim is to prevent the unnecessary collection and registration of information, particularly for small and medium-sized companies.

The interest in and need for using the Register of the Reporting Obligations of Enterprises when working with electronic reports is on the increase. The meta-database of the register is being developed in line with the expanding needs of the agencies. This development work will be completed by Spring 2002. At the same time, the Register of the Reporting Obligations of Enterprises is developing an application form guide for administration, since electronic reporting is becoming increasingly important.

The Register of the Reporting Obligations of Enterprises' database for permits and formal requirements is available electronically via the Internet. The Brønnøysund Registers are co-operating with the Norwegian Tax Administration and Statistics Norway regarding the development of an electronic solution for information from businesses.

The Register of Company Accounts, also under the Brønnøysund Registers, has been set up to receive annual accounts electronically. The Accounts Database enables the register to receive and maintain data electronically. Storing data electronically increases the re-use potential. A database has been established with corresponding software that makes it possible to receive and store annual accounts electronically. The database is also structured in such a way so as to make it possible to register results and figures from annual accounts that have been submitted in the printed version manually in order to be able to store and maintain these electronically.

Submitting VAT electronically

Submitting VAT electronically via the Internet is one of several electronic services provided by the Norwegian Tax Administration (www.skatteetaten.no). By submitting VAT figures via the Internet, the system can inform the users regarding mistakes in filling out the forms and calculation errors. This leads to fewer mistakes and thus fewer inquiries from the Tax Administration. The system was introduced for the entire country on 1st March 2001. The target group was businesses.

A 24-hour Administration

A 24-hour Administration is one of nine reforms in the "Programme for the Renewal of the Public Sector" of the authorities. The reform includes the communication between users and administration. On the one hand, the "24-hour Administration" means a more open administration where the users have a better understanding of how their questions and cases are dealt with and how the administration functions and its general processes. On the other hand, it also means a more cost-effective administration where you can utilise electronic services and public service offices, and release resources that can be used for areas where the needs are greater.

www.odin.dep.no/aad/norsk/publ/handlingsplaner/002011-990096/index-dok000-b-n-a.html

The portal handel.no (a trade portal)

The portal handel.no (www.handel.no) was launched in December 2000 and is an information and knowledge channel run by public services for the promotion of e-Commerce and e-Business. The target group for www.handel.no is anyone who is or who wants to be in on e-Commerce. The service must provide a content that is objective, based on facts and aimed at creating an understanding and increasing knowledge amongst, for example, Norwegian small and medium-sized companies. The aim is to create a joint communication and learning arena and to enable businesses to find public information regarding e-Commerce in one place. Handel.no is a joint meeting place for suppliers of information, expertise and solutions, and for companies, which are interested in e-Commerce and developing their businesses. Handel.no will develop and adapt itself to the challenges faced by the target groups at different times. Handel.no is "owned" by Fellesforum (the Business Forum), a broad forum for e-Commerce that has been set up by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Sweden

Sofia Lundquist

Public Administration in the Service of Democracy

Last year, the Government decided to adopt the action programme "Public Administration in the Service of Democracy". This is a broad programme aimed at improving services for citizens and companies. Small and medium-sized companies in particular often have limited administrative resources and therefore it is important to provide simple, electronic communication with public administration. This is one way of reducing the relative disadvantage experienced by small companies due to their limited administrative resources. Since an increasing number of companies with Internet access are using the electronic services of the authorities, it means that governmental resources are released and can be spent on improving information and service in general. Please go to justitie.regeringen.se/justitiefragor/staligforvaltningspolitik/handlingsprogram

24/7 Agencies

An important part of the development of the electronic public administration to support the development of companies is the criteria that the Swedish Agency for Public Management has drawn up for 24/7 agencies. The aim is to encourage the authorities to develop electronic services in a way that is suited to the needs of the citizens, companies and other users. The services must be available round-the-clock. "The 24/7 Agency" is a part of the action programme "Public Administration in the Service of Democracy". Please go to www.statskontoret.se

eSKD - an electronic tax return

The Swedish National Tax Board has had a system called the eSKD (the e-Tax Return) in place since March 2001. The system provides the service of electronic tax returns as well as the collection of information regarding VAT and payroll tax via the Internet between 7 am and 12 pm every day. Please go to: www.rsv.se/e-tjanster/eskd

e-TULL - The Virtual Customs Office

The goal of Swedish Customs is to be an electronic agency serving the citizens. Already today, Swedish Customs is a 24-hour/7 days a week authority with round-the-clock service and 80% of all customs declarations for all procedures are submitted electronically, no paper copies involved at all. About 60% of all applications and cases are dealt with automatically. The aim is a completely electronic flow and by 2005 at the latest, 90% of all applications will be dealt with automatically.

Swedish Customs is in the process of developing the next generation Internet services for customs. The new concept is called e-TULL (e-Customs) - The Virtual Customs Office and includes services that are provided by a traditional customs office and a number of electronic services for instance the world's first customs inquiry system, TARIC-on-line (already in production), submitting declarations (WEB-EDI), contact/call centre services and a number of new interactive Internet services, including information, subscriptions, news and statistics. A number of interactive communication services will also be developed including an electronic complaints system. Please go to www.tullverket.se/sv/framtiden/projekt/e_tull/default.asp

The Business Guide

The Business Guide is an Internet portal whose aim is to simplify the search for business information. The portal offers future and existing entrepreneurs up-to-date and adapted authority information from 20-odd authorities. For example, there is information regarding taxes and fees, permits and employer issues. Everything is in one place, the aim being to make it easier for companies to find relevant information in one place and it facilitates communication with the authorities. The portal is run by NUTEK (Swedish Business Development Agency) and some 20 organisations. Please go to www.foretagarguiden.gov.se/fgpub

Kontakt-N

Kontakt-N is a joint project between the Patent and Registration Office, the National Tax Board and NUTEK (Swedish Business Development Agency). The aim is to develop a joint electronic application procedure for companies via the Internet. The project has been up and running since 1st March 2001. Currently Kontakt-N enables companies to get hold of important information regarding setting up a company, registering VAT and so on and retrieving important forms to be completed all via the

Internet. The final phase of Kontakt-N is being developed, which will make it possible to submit applications to the respective authorities electronically. The use of electronic signatures is an important part of this work. Please go to www.kontakt-n.nu

Jobs on-line

The Swedish Labour Market Board has provided an Internet service for job placements for a few years now. During the last year, this service has been expanded to include further functions in order to create opportunities for communication between employers and job seekers. Both employers and job seekers can now enter information about themselves (a CV for job seekers) as a kind of contact information. Employers can register vacancies that are then put on the Internet and if they so wish also on the internal job placement system. Until now, simple security solutions have been sufficient. About 200 000 job seekers use the Internet services and about 30 000 employers use the job seeker bank, where there is information about 70 000 jobseekers. The internal systems have about 740 000 jobseekers. Please go to www.ams.se

Electronic business statistics

Statistics Sweden have a declared goal to make it possible for companies to submit information to Statistics Sweden via the Internet within the next few years. Certain trials are ongoing for the annual company statistics that are based on information collected from 5000 - 6000 companies with over 50 employees. A small trial project has been carried out for the collection of information. An evaluation is planned, but the preliminary impression is that the trial project has worked well. 70% of the material submitted by companies concerning company statistics comes from the accounts. One conceivable model would be to co-operate when it comes to figures that are based on the accounts and submitted to government agencies. Within the agricultural sector information is already collected directly based on the accounts of the companies. Please go to www.scb.se

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Trade and industry sector ad hoc working group for electronic commerce and trade and industry related IT issues

The working group was set up in 1999 by the Public Officials Committee for Business, which is a drafting committee for business issues within the Nordic Council of Ministers. The overall task of the working group is to strive to develop Nordic co-operation in the field of e-Commerce and IT issues in other areas related to trade and industry. The aim being to reap joint benefits at the Nordic level from this form of co-operation. The group has previously published one report regarding self-regulation in the area of e-Commerce in the Nordic region, please go to www.ncrc.fi/nmr

Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers, established in 1971, is the forum for inter-governmental co-operation at the Nordic level. This forum is co-ordinated by the Nordic ministers for co-operation. The Council of Ministers, despite its name, is not one but several Councils of Ministers. Most Nordic ministers for specific policy areas meet at Council of Ministers meetings a couple of times a year. The exceptions are the Foreign and Defence Ministers who remain outside the framework of the Council of Ministers. However, naturally this does not prevent these ministers from meeting at the Nordic level.

Nordic Council

The Nordic Council, established in 1952, is the forum for inter-parliamentary co-operation. The Council consists of 87 members, representing the five countries and the three autonomous territories. The Council Members are members of the national parliaments and are appointed by their respective parties. Hence, members are not elected directly to the Nordic Council.

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Governmental Electronic Services for Companies in the Nordic Countries

Trade and industry sector ad hoc working group for electronic commerce and trade and industry related IT issues

Nordic Council of Ministers

Nordic companies and Nordic authorities are forerunners when it comes to the use of information and communication technologies. The development of governmental electronic services makes the operations of the Government and companies more efficient. The development of governmental electronic services lies in the interests of both the Government and companies. Apart from making operations more efficient, it is also possible to enhance the quality of the services provided. Practical measures are important when the administrative burden of companies is being lightened. Simplified and standardised procedures are preferable. The compilation of examples in the report indicates the kinds of governmental electronic services that are offered to companies in the Nordic countries.

The report is available on the Internet at www.norden.org and www.ncrc.fi