

## **Swedes positive toward Internet-based contact with government agencies**

**- A majority of Swedes believe the Internet shortens government agencies' processing times, according to a survey by SIFO, a research institute. In addition to greater opportunities for processing and monitoring transactions via the Internet, a majority desired the option to perform their errands after business hours.**

**The survey revealed that nearly 70 percent of the respondents wanted to use the Internet to surveil official government business impacting them and their surrounding area. A majority of respondents also believe the Internet would shorten processing times and are positive to the Internet as a contact channel to local authorities, county councils, and other agencies.**

Posten's eGovernment division ordered the SIFO survey, which encompassed 1,000 respondents. The survey showed that 59 percent of Swedes are positive to the Internet as a complement to regular mail, telephone contact, or personal visits regarding business with local authorities, county councils, or other authorities. Time-savings and round-the-clock access were key factors prompting many to use the Internet for their business with government agencies. 56 percent of the respondents also wanted the option to perform errands after normal business hours. At 81 percent, this need was particularly strong among 15-29 year olds.

– The SIFO survey reveals strong pressure on local authorities, city councils, and other agencies to offer citizens Internet-based contact channels on their terms and when they have time, says Karin Norman, head of Posten eGovernment and the initiator of Tuesday's Almedal seminar *On the road to the world's most modern public administration*.

54 percent of the respondents and 68 percent of 15-49 year olds also believe that Internet-based contact with government agencies shortens processing times. This is in line with the 24-hour government agency effort that is beginning to see the light of day following the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development's initiative for increased citizen services through new channels.

– The SIFO survey shows that citizens expect contact with government agencies to be just as simple and natural as performing bank transactions via the Internet. The expectations provide room for a clear reformation and modernization of Swedish public administration on citizens' terms, says Karin Norman.

Posten is currently working together with, among others, the County Board in Stockholm to implement eGovernment solutions in an effort to reduce drastically the application time for commercial traffic. In addition to shorter application times, these solutions provide simplified contact, as applications may be filled in and submitted when the applicant has time.

69 percent of the respondents want to use the Internet to monitor official government business that impacts them and their surrounding area. Many also want to use the Internet to vote in local elections (59 percent) and in general elections (54 percent). Application submission, student loan affairs, and e-filing (tax returns) are other areas a majority of citizens would like to handle online.

74 percent of the respondents have Internet access. Access is at the place of residence (65 percent), at school or at work (44 percent), at the library (17 percent) or elsewhere (4 percent). But the disparity between various age groups is big. Among 15-29 year olds, 95 percent have access to the Internet. Internet access is also more widespread in cosmopolitan areas and among white collar and private sector employees. These groups are generally also more positive to the Internet as a contact channel to various government agencies.

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