



Boverket

Swedish National Board of Housing
Building and Planning

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Introduction

Boverket is the national agency for planning, the management of land and water resources, urban development, building and housing. Boverket monitors the function of the legislative system under the Planning and Building Act and related legislation and proposes regulatory changes. In these fields Boverket represents Sweden in the European Commission, and works for the implementation of EU directives in the Swedish legislation. To ensure effective implementation Boverket also provides information to those engaged in planning, housing, construction and building inspection activities.

The Government gives its main instructions and commissions to Boverket through the Ministry of Environment. But due to the integrative nature of urban development and spatial planning Boverket also gets commissions from other ministries as well as cooperates with many other national agencies – nationally as well as internationally. Additionally, Boverket works in cooperation with the Swedish Association of Local and Regional Authorities, as well as the County Administrative Boards and municipalities.

Boverket is one of the Government's key tools for implementing its sustainable development policy "The Green Welfare State", especially in terms of Housing, Construction and Urban Development.

The structure of the Swedish Government

The Local Level

There are almost 300 municipalities in Sweden, ranging in population from 4000 to 800 000 (Stockholm). The municipal council is elected every four years. The municipality is in charge of social services, schools, recreation, roads and parks etc. Planning, building permits and housing are important municipal tasks. The municipalities are autonomous in relation to the national and regional levels, they determine their own taxes (which are higher than the national and county taxes. The Swedish income tax is almost entirely municipal). The so called municipal planning monopoly means that the municipality decides on its plans and unless appealed, the county administration can only object on very limited aspects of the plan proposals.

The Regional Level

There are 21 counties in Sweden. The county has two organisations with different obligations, the County Council and the County Administration. The County Council is an elected body and is financed by county council taxes. It is mainly in charge of medical care, dental care, hospitals but also regional public transport.

Photo: Britt-Louise Morell



The County Administration is the regional office for national administration and policy. Headed by a county governor, the county administration is obliged to carry out national policy at the regional level: administrative civil defence, social security, transport, food and drug control, animal protection, agriculture and fishing, gender equality, cultural heritage, housing subsidies planning and environmental protection. It is often said that the county administration is the link between the local and the national level, as it represents national government locally and local interests nationally.

The National level

The Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) which is elected every four years has 349 members representing different political parties. Its main obligation is legislation. The Parliament appoints the Government.

The Swedish government structure is different to most other countries in so far that the government agencies are separated from the Ministries. This peculiarity dates back to the 17th Century, and the statesman Axel Oxenstierna (1583-1654) who under Gustavus Adolphus reformed the national public administration from the ground in order to build an effective organisation for at that time one of the leading European states. In doing so, Oxenstierna separated the national

administration from the political power as well as he laid the foundation for the County administrations. For centuries this division between administration and policy has been an important principle. Today this principle is fading away as the agencies are becoming less autonomous and more part of the central Government and an instrument for National Policy. But still a Minister may not intervene in the decisions of a national agency.

Despite the fact that the National agencies are more and more integrated in the central government, they are often based in remote parts of Sweden, in line with regional policy to fill unemployment gaps due to industrial cut backs or the reduction of National Defence. Thus, Boverket was relocated to the southeast part of Sweden, Karlskrona in 1989.

Boverket's areas of operation

Boverket's work is governed by the main instructions, given by the Ministry of Environment describing its general tasks and responsibilities: the annual instruction, laying out the current goals for our work and how they shall be reported back; and commissions on various issues that the Ministry needs in its own work.



Kalmar town



The Parliament in Stockholm

Boverket´s Obligation

Boverket's overarching obligation is to promote sustain-able development in its environmental, economic, cultural and social aspects. It is to be ensured in all the agency's activities.

In the field of planning and urban development the focus is increasingly turned to regional development, sustainable urban development and urban design. In the field of construction Boverket is responsible for developing design and building regulations including the implementation of EC directives and other regulative measures for construction.

In the field of housing Boverket's task is to promote the availability of affordable good-quality housing through efficient and fair subsidies as well as long term analyses e.g. with regard to exclusion and availability of housing in different parts of the country.

Different Types of Work

Boverket does not design buildings or make plans. Our work is oriented at evaluations, investigations, interpretation of the legislation into development of provisions and standards, advise to the Government and local and regional authorities as well as to the general public:

- Reports commissioned by the Government.
- Supervision of the planning and construction systems.
- Expert advice to government and legal courts in the appeal process on plans a building permits.
- Supervision and development of building subsidies.
- Harmonisation according to EU Directives and implementation of such directives into Swedish provisions.
- Providing local authorities with relevant facts and methods for housing, building and planning.

Output

Boverket's work is issued in publications of various dignity, ranging from provisions and regulations for construction and housing subsidies to housing statistics reports and information material, e g on best practice and suitable planning methods. A bimonthly magazine and many newsletters are published. Many conferences are arranged.

Areas of operation

The Division of Planning and Urban Development

The Division is responsible for the built environment, spatial planning and resource conservation. Environment and energy policy is often implemented through the planning system.

The Analysis Unit reviews developments within the fields of housing, building and planning. It gathers relevant facts and statistics in Sweden and internationally to describe, understand, forecast and make policy suggestions. It undertakes evaluations and impact assessments of policy initiatives at national and regional levels. The unit is responsible for the assessment the national environmental quality goal "Good Built



Environment” as well as the comprehensive goal of “Spatial Planning and Resource Conservation of Land and Water”. Social inclusion is given much attention.

The Planning Unit supervises spatial planning in Sweden from legislative, procedural and architectural perspectives. The focus is on Detailed Development Planning. Based on this work, the unit works with the implementation of relevant EC directives in Swedish planning legislation and develops planning policy guidance. An important task is to assist the Ministry with comments when decisions on plans are appealed to the Government. Municipal planners and politicians, as well as the general public, can also get advice by the unit.

The Urban and Regional Unit works for the development of sustainable regions and communities and for quality of life. Examples are infrastructure and transport, the importance of urban environment and social issues, and development of the planning process and its instruments. The circulation of best practice is an important part of the work.

The Division of Building Construction

The Division is responsible for many of the national subsidies and grants, mainly for housing, and for building regulations.

The Subsidy Unit administrates and supervises the national financial support to buildings. It also issues regulations and provisions for this support. Most grants and subsidies are granted by the county administrations and municipalities and they range from home adaption grants for disabled persons, reduction of radon radiation and reduction of electricity heating to subsidies for special housing for elderly people. The total amount for these purposes is approximately 340 million Euros. Most of the subsidies are distributed from Boverket, which also decides on appeals against such decisions and evaluates the effects of the subsidies. In the capacity of surveillance authority, Boverket performs surveillance of the county administrations and municipals handling of the subsidies.

The Building and Management Unit focuses on the building as a system, managing issues applied to construction, reconstruction and building management aiming towards technical, environmental and economical sustainability.

The unit works with development and implementation of national and EU regulations and standards regarding safety, indoor climate, energy conservation, recycling etc. The Building Regulation Unit provides legal assistance in the development of building and design regulations and is responsible for the rules for suitability, user safety and accessibility for disabled persons. The development of

Photo: Gunnar Britse, Bildarkivet, Mats Alm/JollyMedia, Klas Andersson.



general recommendations for reconstruction and alteration of buildings also lies under the unit's competence. Major tasks are supervision of the national application of building regulations, building permits and the building control system as well as market surveillance of construction products. Important missions are also to assist the Government with the development and implementation of EC legislation with reference to the construction sector and to assist courts of law with expertise when building permits are appealed.

International Work

One of Boverket's main tasks is cooperation within the European Union. Appointed employees serve as Swedish representatives in different committees and expert groups to the European Commission. In the field of construction an important task is the harmonization and implementation of EC directives in Sweden, such as the Construction Products Directive and the Directive of Energy Performance of Buildings. In the field of planning Boverket takes part in the work of ESPON (the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network), Territorial Cohesion and Urban Matters, the Sustainable Urban Development Committee and the implementation of the European transnational programmes in the Baltic Sea and North Sea Regions. In the field of housing Boverket is cooperating within the Housing Statistics of the European Union and taking part in a number of annually arranged conferences, such as those arranged by the European Union.

Network for Housing Research

According to the official Swedish policy document, Policy for Global Development, all government departments and governmental agencies are to assume shared responsibilities in working for global sustainable development. Increased international cooperation and knowledge exchange are two other goals of the Swedish government.

Boverket is supporting the Government in international

cooperation such as the biannual UN-Habitat arrangement of World Urban Forum. In this work and in development projects in specific countries our agency has a close cooperation with Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Within all our working fields – housing, building and planning – Boverket has a long tradition of cooperation with national authorities and ministries in the Nordic countries.

Legislation and Policy Implementation

Boverket's work is based especially on the Planning and Building Act, the Environmental Code and the Law on Technical Requirements for Construction Works. Based on these laws Boverket is empowered to issue mandatory provisions and general recommendations, such as Building Regulations (BBR), and Design Regulations (BKR). Provisions are in the form of functional requirements, referring to standards when applicable. The Parliament has set a number of Environmental Objectives to be reached within one generation. Boverket is responsible for the Environmental Quality Objective A Good Built Environment:

Cities, towns and other built-up areas must provide a good, healthy living environment and contribute to a good regional and global environment. Natural and cultural assets must be protected and developed. Buildings and amenities must be located and designed in accordance with sound environmental principles and in such a way as to promote sustainable management of land, water and other resources.

In more detail the objective outlines a long list of qualities to be reached, ranging from architectural qualities and cultural heritage preservation to a sustainable urban structure in terms of resource conservation, freedom from noise, healthy local climate, good quality public transport, waste recycling and unspoilt nature.

Sweden in brief

- Area: 450,000 km² (174,000 sq. mi.), third largest country in Western Europe
 Forests: 53 %
 Mountains: 11 %
 Cultivated land: 8 %
 Lakes and rivers: 9 %
 Longest north-south distance: 1,574 km (978 mi.)
 Longest east-west distance: 499 km (310 mi.)
- Capital: Stockholm
- Population: 9 million
- Languages: Swedish; recognized minority languages: Sami (Lapp), Finnish, Meänkieli (Tornedalen Finnish), Yiddish, Romani Chib (a Gypsy language).
- Form of government: Constitutional monarchy, parliamentary democracy.
- Parliament: The Riksdag, with 349 members in one chamber.
- Religion: 80 % belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- Average life expectancy: men 78 years, women 82 years.
- Most important export goods: Electrical and

telecom equipment, machinery, passenger cars, paper, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel.

- Most important imported goods: Electrical and telecom equipment, machinery, foodstuffs, crude oil, textile products, footwear, passenger cars.

Average temperatures January and July

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Malmö | -0.2° C (+31.6° F) | + 16.8° C (62.2° F) |
| Stockholm | -2.8° C (+27.0° F) | +17.2° C (63.0° F) |
| Luleå | -16.0° C (+3.2° F) | +12.8° C (55.0° F) |

Daylight January 1 and July 1

| | | |
|-----------|---------|----------|
| Malmö | 7 hours | 17 hours |
| Stockholm | 6 hours | 18 hours |
| Luleå | 3 hours | 23 hours |



Further Information

Please contact us by sending an e-mail to registraturen@boverket.se. In Sweden, all correspondence to and from governmental agencies are treated as public documents. Please also visit Boverket's web site, www.boverket.se/english, for downloads and further information.



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