

SWEDEN

Improve the
quality of life in
rural areas

Location

Bräcke

Programming period

2007 - 2013

Axis / Priority

Axis 3 – Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy

Measure

M321 - Basic services for the economy and rural population

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 985 898

EAFRD 394 359

National/Regional 98 590

Private 492 949

Project duration

2013 – 2015

Project promoter

Östra Bräcke fiber

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In Sweden, local non-profit associations, encouraged and supported by the public sector, are carrying out the building of broadband infrastructure in the countryside.

Summary

Bräcke municipality is situated in north-western Sweden. It is relatively far from big cities, and had insufficient digital infrastructure. Since neither the public nor private sector has any interest in or capacity for building broadband networks in the countryside, the development of the such infrastructures is undertaken by volunteer-run village groups.



11 village groups were formed in 2013 to carry out the development of a broadband network in the municipality of Bräcke. One of these groups, in the village of Östra Bräcke, coordinated the installation of a 150 km broadband cable to the east of Bräcke municipality and also organised meetings, adverts and big signs all over the area to inform the inhabitants.

Results

The project led to 272 connections to the broadband net.

In 2012 only 0,033 % of the municipality had access to the broadband net. In 2017, 90 % of the households will be connected.

Around 500 volunteers were engaged in the village group.

Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Good cooperation with the other village groups was very important to overcome the similar challenges they all faced. The municipality's Umbrella organisation played a critical role in helping to coordinate this effort. b

Context

Local non-profit associations all over Sweden have taken charge of building broadband infrastructures in the countryside. They are encouraged and supported by the public sector in what is commonly called “the Swedish model”. This is also the case in the municipality of Bräcke. Situated in north-western Sweden, Bräcke is relatively far from bigger cities and therefore a digital infrastructure is a very important means for creating job opportunities and providing access to services.

Since neither the public nor private sector has any interest in or capacity for building a broadband fibre network that reaches households in the countryside, the development of the such infrastructures is undertaken by volunteer-run village groups. In 2013 in the municipality of Bräcke, 11 village broadband development groups were formed. One of these was the group in Östra Bräcke.

Objectives

The objective of this project was to provide broadband internet access for the rural inhabitants of the municipality of Bräcke, with all the advantages that it provides.

Activities

According to the Swedish model, associations are formed to carry out the expansion of the broadband network in an area. The association’s board drives the process and major issues are addressed at general meetings where all members of the association may be involved. These associations often employ subcontractors to make a first design of the network and calculate costs. Once their plan gets the go ahead, the association can then apply for grants at the County Administrative Board

Many associations opt to hire contractors to dig and install the network. Association members also contribute with work, for example, to map out and prepare for digging. The association also decides how the network should be operated and managed. They either sign an operation agreement, or they sell the rights to an operator after all the contributions have been repaid. Usually, several neighbouring association find a common solution.

In the case of Östra Bräcke, the group’s activities included digging and preparing for the installation of a 150 km broadband cable to the east of Bräcke municipality, over

land and under lakes. The municipality cooperated with other associations through the umbrella organisation “Bräcke Fiber”. Information and promotional activities were also carried out (local meetings, adverts and signage), targeting all the households in the area that could be connected to the new network.



Main results

The project led to 272 broadband internet connections.

Around 500 volunteers were engaged in the village group.

In 2012 only 0,033 % of the municipality had internet access. In 2017 90 % of the households will be connected, meaning that all the inhabitants that wanted to will have access to the net.

The village projects in Bräcke are a good example of local action according to the national platform for Broadband development “Bredbandforum”. The village groups have become a source of inspiration for other broadband development projects all over the country. The development of broadband networks run by village groups according to the Swedish model will be continued in the 2014-2020 programming period through the LEADER method.

Key lessons

The stony terrain in the area turned out to be a challenge for the project: “Our villages are rich – in stones that is”, is how one of the other village groups put it, and the village group in Östra Bräcke could agree with that. However, good cooperation with the other village groups in the municipality proved to be very helpful, since they were all facing similar challenges. The Umbrella organisation helped to coordinate collaboration and exchange of ideas between the different village groups.

Additional sources of information

www.ltz.se/jamtland/bracke/snart-ar-hela-bracke-kommun-uppkopplad-det-basta-med-fiber-ar-att-det-sammanfor-byar