

# European Union Grants Advisor Sweden

## Swedish SMEs are Improving Business Strategies and Paving the Way for a Better Future

Equality and social growth are important aspects of the Swedish society. Participation at all company levels is encouraged and seen as an important part of working life. But in 2003, 19 per cent of all Swedish enterprises with more than 10 employees stated that a lack of information technology (IT) skills among staff was a significant hindrance to them making more advanced use of information communication technology (ICT).

In 2004, the member states of the European Union (EU) made a commitment to become the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010. The Swedish government is working hard to achieve this goal. It offers a number of funding schemes to support economic growth and employment. The Swedish European Social Fund (ESF) offers funds to national projects that foster economic and social growth.

Microsoft recognises the importance of IT training and innovation in the European and worldwide economy. It works with a number of organisations to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) access government funds—like those made available by the ESF—to grow business and progress the knowledge economy.

Specifically, Microsoft is working in partnership with technology companies, banks, consulting agencies, and other organisations to help more SMEs obtain government funding through its European Union Grants Advisor (EUGA) programme. Through this programme, SMEs and local and regional governments can increase its

awareness and understanding of EU funds, as well as take advantage of a facilitated application process should they wish to apply for funds that they are eligible for.

A December 2005 campaign run in Sweden by Microsoft and its consortium partners is a good example of EUGA in action. They contacted 80 small-to-medium IT partners for the Microsoft Dynamics business management solution in Sweden and encouraged them to access available government funds to improve their businesses. It proposed the companies band together to make a group application to the ESF Objective 3 programme.

Among other goals, this ESF programme encourages businesses to analyse and improve management skills and to boost the overall IT literacy of employees. Of the original e-mail recipients, 22 companies partnered together to apply for the funds. The project was called MEGA Dynamics. Microsoft was the project owner, taking responsibility of the administration and management of the project, such as channelling the granted funds that are allocated to the partners, arranging activities and hiring consultancy services. This allowed the partners to concentrate on the actual analysis and developing its company's business skills.



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Agneta Hollander, **Desk Officer, ESF Council**



Johanna Björkström, EUGA Programme Coordinator, Microsoft Sweden, says: "We have a need in Sweden to strengthen the business value of our companies. The MEGA Dynamics project wants to encourage them to continue to do that. We want to help companies improve management skills, and help employees to understand their role in company strategy."

Excellent System is one of the partners involved in the MEGA Dynamics project. Since partnering with Microsoft and its consortium partners it has been able to improve its business management, boost its employees' IT literacy skills, and increase its competitiveness.

Elisabeth Blomgren, Excellent System, says: "We first became aware of the grants through a EUGA e-mail campaign. We were very interested to find out how we could improve our business to keep up-to-date with the global market trends. EUGA helped us to analyse our business needs and gave us excellent advice on how best to approach the application process. We are very grateful for all the help."

The MEGA Dynamics project has several phases. The first step was for each company to meet with external consultants provided by Microsoft and its consortium partners. The consultant analysed each of the companies' current business situations and set objectives. After the analysis, each company made an individual action plan, and also agreed on a group action plan. The initial application was submitted in February 2006, and granted in March. A second group application will be made for a development grant at the end of June and training is expected to be conducted through to August 2007.

The project is playing a part in helping SMEs in Sweden progress to a competitive knowledge-based economy and meet the goals of the EU's Lisbon Agenda, which promotes better policies for the information society, and research and development, and encourages structural reform for competitiveness and innovation. The EU recognises that a powerful way to achieve this is to fund IT awareness and training schemes at the grassroots level.

Agneta Hollander, Desk Officer, ESF Council, says: "There is a mutual interest for ESF and EUGA to work together. In the beginning it was difficult for ESF to reach out to small companies. Many small companies can't or don't want to spare the administration time to apply, or to find out what support is available. Through EUGA, the ESF can reach out to other types of companies that normally don't know about the funds available in Sweden and in the EU."

## Contact:

For more information please contact Microsoft Corporate Affairs, or visit the Web site: [www.microsoft.com/emea/euga](http://www.microsoft.com/emea/euga)

## Fast Facts

### URL

[www.microsoft.com/sverige/smb/euga](http://www.microsoft.com/sverige/smb/euga)  
[www.microsoft.com/dynamics](http://www.microsoft.com/dynamics)

### Country

Sweden

### Profile

Located in Northern Europe between Finland and Norway, Sweden is home to more than nine million people. In September 2003, Swedish voters turned down entry into the European monetary system, concerned about the impact on democracy and sovereignty.

### Situation

For a number of reasons, only 45 per cent of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe are aware of the funds that are available and only four per cent actually apply for funding. In Sweden, the local office for the European Social Fund (ESF) at first found it difficult to reach small companies, so it welcomed the assistance of the European Union Grants Advisor (EUGA) programme in reaching SMEs.

### Solution

In December 2005, Microsoft and its consortium partners in EUGA conducted an e-mail campaign, contacting 80 Microsoft partner IT companies in Sweden and encouraging them to access available funds. It proposed the companies join together to make a group application to the ESF Objective 3 Programme. Of the original e-mail recipients, 22 companies partnered together to apply for the funds. The project was called MEGA Dynamics. Microsoft was the project owner, taking responsibility of the administration and management of the project. In doing so it allowed the 22 MEGA Dynamics partners to concentrate on developing its company's business skills.

### Benefits

- Swedish SMEs gain assistance in realising their economic potential using IT solutions that help achieve business goals more efficiently.
- SMEs drive increased growth in local economies, establishing a solid foundation for future prosperity countrywide.