

## **Sweden: Varmland Region**

### **REGIONAL CO-ORDINATOR**

- Name: Mr. Per **FREDRIKSSON** (Director)
- Address: Karlstads universitet 651 88 Karlstad
- Tel: +46 54 700 2221
- Email : per.fredriksson@kau.se

### **1. A Brief Description of Regional Characteristics**

The region Varmland is located in the western part of Sweden along the Norwegian-Swedish border. Some basic facts:

- Geographical size: 19,370 km<sup>2</sup>; of which 17,586 km<sup>2</sup> is land
- Inhabitants: 273,563 (Sweden: 8,976,000), at the end of year 2003. The number of the above 60's are growing faster than the number of younger people.
- Labour force (i.e. population age 20-64): 155,613(-3.0 % since 1993; Sweden: +4.6 %)
- Working frequency (in year 2002): 73.5 % (Sweden 75.9%), Employment: 115,723 (Sweden 4,436,000)
- Unemployment rate (in year 2004): 7.0% (of which open unemployment is 4.0 %) (Sweden 7.1%, of which open unemployment is 5.0%). Within the region there is a significant difference in the unemployment rate from 4.5% in Eda municipality to above 9.0 % in Filipstads municipality.

The Paper Province is a unique cluster of forest-industry companies spread across the counties of Varmland and Dalsland. Predominantly an area of pulp and paper manufacturing, the region consists of small and medium-sized companies as well as international giants. There are 10.000 employees in 170 companies. Key research and development features strongly in this internationally unique cluster. CompareIT is a cluster of industrial information technology companies consisting of appr. 100 companies with 5.000 employees. The engineering and steel industry employs about 11.000 people. Most companies work in the engineering sector and a few represent the steel industry.

The number of self-employed people in the county is substantial with the highest concentration in the west of the region. Several organizations are in place to help new entrepreneurs and small businesses establish themselves in the business environment. Physical infrastructure is an important prerequisite for growth. Varmland is situated in the strategically attractive corridor of growth between the two capital cities of Stockholm and Oslo, and is therefore included in the European transport network.

### **2. Characteristics of the HEIs in the Region**

Karlstad University is the only HEI in the region founded in 1999 building on the previous institution, the university college of Karlstad. In the fall of Sep. 2004, around 10.000 students are enrolled at the university at different levels, from bachelors to doctoral studies. The main emphasis of Karlstad University lies in the areas of technology and economics. The fields of chemical engineering , with a focus on packaging and surface treatment, and economics, with an emphasis on service management, are central. Collaboration with the surrounding society is extensive on regional, national, and international level.

Karlstad University collaborates in a network with the university college in Dalarna and the university colleges in eastern Norway within the framework of UNISKA: the University Alliance of Inner Scandinavia. The UNISKA collaboration has been a well-functioning network alliance since 1998 and can report favourable results as well as much experience in a positive and driving collaboration for a fruitful regional development, higher education on the master's level, and research. In addition to this, since many years, there is an established interregional collaboration between the Varmland region and the Norwegian border counties Ostfold, Akershus, and Hedmark.

Furthermore, Karlstad University also has a highly active research group conducting research on regional development, CERUT. The CERUT group is led by Professor Sune Berger, and has developed extensive research collaboration with research institutions in eastern Norway. A special emphasis of the CERUT project is to study how higher education and research can promote the innovation system.

### **3. A Brief History of HEIs' Engagement in the Regional Development;**

The patterns of collaboration with the regional authorities are comprehensive and effective. The regional growth programmes, RTP, developed in recent years represent good examples of how HEIs in the region, together with the regional partnership, have identified growth-driving areas of development with universities and university colleges as partners playing vital roles. Karlstad University has participated actively in the development of the regional growth programme, and has particularly pushed for efforts concerning the development of the so-called E18 corridor; an area that aims toward deepening the co-operation between Norway and Sweden along the east-western axis of the Nordic triangle.

In recent years, Karlstad University has developed a model for supporting the innovation system on a regional level, which has attracted much attention as an exemplary model of regional and national co-operation. A good example of this multidisciplinary industrial collaboration is the regional and university-based work with "The Packaging Arena." The ambition of the arena is to change the image of Varmland as a forest county to Varmland as the most dynamic region in the world for development and production of attractive packaging.

### **4. The Scope and Level of Involvement of Regional Stakeholders in the Project**

Karlstad University, the County Administration Board, and Region Varmland (A municipality alliance) will participate in the project and are supported in this ambition by the Swedish government.

### **5. Resources for Further Information on the Region** (i.e. web-site, published report etc)

"Sustainable Growth in Värmland" an English summary of the Regional Growth Programme for Värmland 2004 – 2007:

<http://home.informationdesign.se/tillvaxt/index.asp?id=868&typ>

Invest in Värmland: [www.investinvarmland.com](http://www.investinvarmland.com)

County administrative Board of Värmland: [www.s.lst.se](http://www.s.lst.se)

Region Värmland: [www.regionvarmland.se](http://www.regionvarmland.se)

Karlstad university: [www.kau.se](http://www.kau.se)