



PRIORITISED BRANCH ISSUES

The service society is characterised by its enormous diversity. This is also reflected in Almega's organisation. Its member companies represent around sixty different branches.

Almega's prioritisation reflects the interests of all these branches. But there are also issues affecting specific sectors, which are being examined individually by the appropriate associations. Nevertheless, these sector-specific issues play an equally important role in the change of perspective of the EU.

In Sweden, staffing companies are an interesting example of how service companies turn long-accepted conceptions on their head. They have made the labour market more flexible, and have made it easier for people, not least youngsters and immigrants, to find jobs. The staffing companies have also transformed insecure jobs with fluctuating demand into secure employment.

IT and communication are a strong force for growth throughout society. IT can also provide a solution for many social problems, not least the climate issue. But if we are not to be overtaken by other countries in the world, a new vision for the IT policy is required.

Private care companies have renewed Swedish care in a way which few believed possible. They have proven that it is possible to provide high-quality care services, in a way which both staff and patients appreciate. At a lower cost. Despite this, the opportunity to release the full power of these care service providers in Sweden as well as in the EU remains blocked by obstacles. Patient choice and flexibility can be utilised to improve quality and create better welfare.

The whole media market is undergoing a structural change. The Internet and various digital aids are fundamentally changing the conditions for publishing newspapers, television, games, films and books, for example. But legislation has failed to keep up. Journalists, authors and photographers must continue to be able to protect their material and receive payment for their work.

Architects, town planners and technical consultants plan cities which house millions of inhabitants. Cities should not only be beautiful – they must also benefit from excellent infrastructure and a sustainable environment. The lifecycle perspective is an essential part of assessing the quality of these complex projects.

Standardised service sectors are no longer standardised. Today, a cleaner is also a person who works in the reception when the regular staff is not available, and who also handles the company's post. A cleaner is, however, still an expert on hygiene issues in public spaces. Swedish companies operating in the surveillance and security sector have changed the market by turning security guards into people who focus as much on providing a great service and a friendly face as they do on carrying out dedicated security-related tasks.

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With sixty branches represented in Almega, there are, of course, many other examples. Those described above are only a small selection, as are some of the following proposals:

- Encourage youngsters to focus on training in the IT area.
- Nursing, care and education are exempt from VAT. This leads to a lack of clarity, sub-optimisation, lack of competitive neutrality and an increased administrative burden for care companies. The negative effects of the VAT rules should be removed.
- Expand the IT infrastructure and create a secure Internet which users can feel they can trust.
- Right of ownership, copyright, patent rights and intellectual property rights must be protected in a way which also works in a digital society.
- Trade organisations and the authorities should work together to discourage unreliable and irresponsible players and to ensure that service sectors continue to carry out quality improvements.
- EU research in the IT area must be world class.
- Procurement of services in every area, from architecture and town planning to IT and technical consultations, must be carried out in a professional manner and generate businesslike conditions for both clients and suppliers.
- In the procurement of services, the focus must move from the lowest price to quality and execution.

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