**PRESS INFORMATION**

**INNOVATE LIKE A SWEDE – LAUNCHED IN HANOI**

*Hanoi 23 August 2018:* Millions of hearts around the world beat with the help of a pacemaker. Millions of mobile devices connect with one another via Bluetooth. Many more million use Skype for daily communication. And innumerable lives have been saved with the help of the three-point seatbelt. These are just a few examples of Swedish life-saving and life-changing innovations that have made a difference, stressed organisors at today’s launch *Innovate like a Swede* in Hanoi.

The long list of innovations made by Sweden also include: the zipper, safety matches, dynamite, drinks cartons, ball bearings, the adjustable wrench, the rear-facing child safety seat, the artificial kidney, spotify…etc

 *“Some of the world’s most successful innovators are from Sweden. Let’s discuss the question: What makes Sweden so innovative? I believe Sweden benefits from having many basic components already in place, such as economic stability, an inclusive school system where critical thinking is key, safety and security, openness and access to information. In an environment seeing thing with curiosity, creativity and experimentation, people get the chance to grow, develop their ideas, probe, test, fail and do it again. And to meet others who may be pursuing different approaches”*, said Swedish Ambassador Pereric Högberg.

*Innovate like a Swede* is an annual innovation contest for Vietnamese students with the purpose to encourage creativity and to find innovative solutions for a challenge faced in a local context. The focus SDG for 2018 will be goal no 11: Sustainable cities and communities - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

With the support of Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the contest is organized by the Embassy of Sweden together with Swedish companies on the ground: ABB, AstraZeneca, Electrolux, Ericsson, IKEA, SKF, TetraPak and Uppsala University.

The participants will form teams of two and their contribution will be assessed based on whether the entries are innovative, creative, feasible, sustainable and commercially viable, as well as on what kind of lasting impact they will have. The jury consists of representatives from participating Swedish companies and a Swedish University which provides an amazing opportunity for students to pitch their solutions and innovative ideas to representatives from both the private and public sector in Vietnam. The deadline for submission is 28 October 2018.

The contest’s grand prize is a trip to Sweden and a visit to witness Swedish innovations at Swedish companies’ headquarters and Uppsala university. The runner ups will be given internship opportunities at Swedish companies in Vietnam.

A century ago, Sweden was among the poorest nations in Europe. Sweden has a relatively a small population with 10 million people or 0.14 percent of the global population. Yet today, it is a world leader in innovation. A number of international indexes have been developed in a bid to measure the ability of countries to create environments that encourage innovation. According to them, Sweden is one of the most creative places on the map.

The Innovation Union Scoreboard, an index published by the European Commission, ranks Sweden as the leading country for innovation among EU member states. Reasons for this include a historic tradition of inventors, a commitment to gender equality, and a strong belief in the individual. Close collaboration between research institutes and the private and public sectors is another key factor, setting the foundation for global Swedish companies. Innovation is closely linked to research and development. Sweden is one of the world’s top three spenders in this area, investing over 3 percent of GDP in Research and Development (R&D).

Each year, Harvard Business School compiles the national Innovation Capacity Index, a study of different countries’ innovation potential. In terms of the number of trained engineers per capita, Sweden was ranked second, close behind Japan. The study also notes that in the past 15 years, Sweden has had the second-fastest growth rate in the number of patents per capita.

Sweden introduced elementary schooling for all as early as 1842, and the first University was founded back in 1477 in Uppsala, 15 years before Columbus set sail for America. Along with state-subsidised college training for Swedes and citizens of other EU countries, this has helped ensure high educational standards in the country, among women as well as men. Besides being distinctly antiauthoritarian, Swedish schools and universities also encourage creativity and thinking out of the box . Also, the arts have long been used to motivate and inspire children and young people and to provide a breeding ground for innovation.

Since Sweden is a geographically large country with a scattered population, infrastructure and communications have always been crucial to development. Early action to promote digitalisation has meant that Sweden is now one of the most connected countries in the world with one of the highest rates of computer, internet and mobile penetration. As a result, the country is frequently used as a test market for new services and technology.

Facebook, for instance, has chosen to place its enormous new data centre in Luleå in the north of Sweden. The three buildings of 28,000 square metres (300,000 square feet) each will enjoy the advantages of natural cooling and renewable hydropower.

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*Please see more details about SDG 11 from here* <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg11>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4iGPnF0Wzw> *(video)*

**BACKGROUND NOTE FOR EDITORS**

***(Recent success stories in Sweden)***

**Towards zero waste:** Wouldn’t it be great if no household waste was wasted? If each and every item of refuse was turned into something else – new products, raw materials, gas or at least heat? Sweden is almost there. More than 99 per cent of all household waste is recycled in one way or another. This means that the country has gone through something of a recycling revolution in the last decades, considering that only 38 per cent of household waste was recycled in 1975.

**Recycling matters:** What’s up with Swedes bringing full bags to the store? It’s to get your 'pant' back, a container deposit that you pay for each can or PET bottle. Last year in Sweden, 1.85 billion cans and bottles, or 85% of those sold, were recycled through so-called reverse vending machines.

Today, recycling stations are as a rule no more than 300 metres from any residential area. Most Swedes separate all recyclable waste in their homes and deposit it in special containers in their block of flats or drop it off at a recycling station. Few other nations deposit less in rubbish dumps.

**Investing in green energy:** Sweden boasts the highest share of renewable energy among EU countries – 54% during 2016.

IKEA, the Swedish multinational furniture retailer, adopted a new sustainability strategy in 2012. Its aim is not just to conserve more energy and invest in renewable power such as wind farms, but also to help customers make sustainable choices, such as in their choice of light bulbs or by taking a free IKEA bus to and from the store rather than using a car. In 2014, IKEA’s renewable energy production represented 42 per cent of its total energy use. That year, IKEA also had a 58 per cent increase in sustainable product sales compared with 2013. IKEA aims for renewable self-sufficiency by 2020, https://sweden.se/society/energy-use-in-sweden/ wherever it operates around the world <https://sweden.se/society/energy-use-in-sweden/>

**Stockholm:** In the mid-1990s, Stockholm decided to turn former industrial area Hammarby into a forerunner of sustainable city planning. Sustain¬ability was incorporated into all aspects of the new neighbourhood Hammarby jöstad, from smart electric grids to pub¬lic transport, bike friendliness and waste management. <https://sweden.se/nature/sweden-tackles-climate-change/>

**Uppsala – a strong Innovation System:** The environment for innovation support in the Uppsala region is one of the best in Sweden and competitive on an international arena. The ecosystem surrounding Uppsala is a solid and effective innovation environment that can offer support from the time before an idea is born to full-developed activities. UU Innovation is one of the key players in Uppsala’s Innovation System. Uppsala also holds one of Sweden’s leading business incubators, Uppsala Innovation Centre, ranked as the world’s 4th best business incubator affiliated with university.

<http://www.uuinnovation.uu.se>

**Reinventing public transport**: A good public transport system is a given for any city with sustainable goals. In Sweden, work on making public transport the obvious as well as the cleanest choice has been on the agenda for decades.

In Gothenburg, a collaboration called ElectriCity is underway between industry, government and academia. Electric Volvo buses that are powered entirely from wind and hydro power and are 80 per cent more energy-efficient than a conventional diesel-powered bus now operate one line on the streets of Gothenburg. ElectriCity received the European Solar Prize 2015 in the Transport and Mobility category. The European Solar Prizes are awarded by the European Association for Renewable Energy to projects that promote the transition to sustainable energy usage.

**Redesigning**: Vallastaden is a sustainable neighbourhood in university city Linköping, inaugurated in 2017. The neighbourhood uses the more environmentally friendly timber as structural building material rather than concrete. A pilot four-storey building is featured, designed with the goal of facilitating changes over time – interior walls, even windows and balcony doors can with little effort be moved to any desired location.

**The first road that can charge electric vehicles on the go:** The world’s first road that allows electric vehicles to recharge as they drive has been installed in Sweden. Around 1.2 miles of electric rail has been built into a public road just outside Stockholm, and plans are in place to expand the project throughout other parts of the country and the world.

The electrified road works by transferring energy from the rail through a moveable arm on the bottom of an electric car or truck. The rail is connected to the power grid and divided into sections that are only powered when vehicles move over them.

**Can jeans be more sustainable?**Fashion is one of the top polluting industries in the world. If a garment were to be used three times longer, its climate impact would shrink by a full 65 per cent. Choosing second-hand knocks off a full 70 per cent of a garment’s climate impact. So make sure to hand down, trade, donate and recycle your clothes rather than turning them into rubbish once you are finished with them <http://sharingsweden.se/materials/can-jeans-sustainable/>

**The cashless society**

Ask a Swede when they last paid for something in cash. The probable answer is last month or week. Digital payments via card or mobile apps are so common and trusted that many Swedes no longer carry cash. Eighty per cent of all transactions in Sweden are made by cards. They even let their children pay with cards. <https://sweden.se/business/cashless-society/>