



The Office of the Auditor General's investigation of digitisation of municipal services

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Summary

Background and objective of the audit

The purpose of digitisation is to increase the quality and efficiency of public services. It is a goal to make online services the norm for public administration's communication with citizens and the private sector. The municipal sector is a significant provider of public services, and digitisation of municipal services is therefore essential for achieving this goal.

The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation has overall responsibility for coordinating ICT policy.

The audit surveyed the status, assessed the significance of and possible obstacles to digitisation of municipal services. The audit examined how the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation's use of policy instruments contributes to digitisation. The audit covers the period 2011–2015.

Findings and recommendations

Municipalities have not digitised their services to any extent

- Municipalities do not offer public digital services to citizens and the private sector in line with the objectives of the Storting.
- A survey of 19 services in 261 municipalities shows that digital services are the first choice for 27 per cent of services in the areas of early childhood and education, health and welfare, and planning, building and geodata.
- Fourteen per cent of the municipalities do not have a digital first choice for any of these services.
- Fewer small than large municipalities have started digitising services. Twenty-three per cent of small municipalities have no digital services in the areas that were examined.

Work on digitisation of municipal services faces significant obstacles

- Many municipalities do not have sufficient expertise to digitise their services.
- Many municipalities claim the cost of digitisation is too high to warrant priority.
- A majority of the municipalities report that they do not work systematically to realize benefits of digitisation.

The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation's policy instruments are not sufficiently adapted to goals and obstacles in this area: National common components are not facilitated well enough for use in the municipalities.

Initiated measures are not sufficient for achieving the objectives of integrated and complete digital services

- The common components, such as the population register and the ID portal, are owned by four agencies under three ministries. There are significant differences in how they are made available to the municipalities – which make limited use of them.
- While steps have been initiated in key areas, knowledge, skills, capacity and state coordination are lacking. There is a need for stronger national, coordinated efforts.

The OAG recommends

that the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation take greater national responsibility for coordinating ICT policy in the public sector so that citizens and the private sector can utilise integrated public digital services.

The Ministry should attach particular importance to

- considering the possibility of a more binding cooperation with local government, possibly through the use of economic incentives, to improve the progress of digitisation of municipal services
- motivating the municipal sector to stronger cooperation to develop expertise and exchange experiences and technical solutions to better enable municipalities to develop and take advantage of digital services
- reinforcing the interaction of ministries and directorates, so that coordination between the municipalities and the state can be improved by digitisation of public services
- increasing municipalities' use of the national common components and ICT standards to streamline the digitisation of municipal services

Ministry/ministries:

- Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

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