

## *Summary in english*

A-2 Norway, in cooperation with Agenda Kaupang and Føyen Torkildsen, has conducted a study on “The future organization of the coordination of digitization in municipalities and county administrations”, as the current KommIT program is ending this year. The method has been a review of existing documentation, evaluation of the deliveries from the KommIT program, and semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders.

The KommIT program has achieved a lot, even though in many informants' eyes it is a meager beginning. The informants have predominantly a positive attitude to the establishment of the program in 2012, but there are also those who are disappointed because they had bigger expectations. Almost everyone agree on the need for further coordination and central measures in the digitization efforts in this part of the public sector. We note also that many share the view that it is increasingly important to find national solutions, in close cooperation with the government. A key part of this is that the municipal sector's interests and digital agendas should influence on the different governmental sectors' many digitization initiatives – and vice versa. The municipalities and county administrations need a central actor with the relevant expertise, legitimacy and not at least capacity, to orchestrate such a cooperation at the national level.

Our informants want a central unit also in the future. However, there is a consensus that the efforts must be substantially greater than the present KommIT program. They also seem to be willing to pay for this. Further, the priorities and activities in the central unit must most importantly be well rooted in the municipalities and counties. However, several informants point out that the distinction between the KommIT program and KS' efforts in the area of digitization policies and positions has been somewhat confusing.

KommIT has developed KS SvarUT as a shared messaging service, and KS Learning as a shared platform for content management and sharing in the municipal sector. Moreover, KommIT has established an overarching ICT architecture, some specifications of interfaces, templates, tools, guidelines etc. In the area of planning and building matters, KommIT and the relevant national authorities have specified requirements and standards that municipalities can use in their tender documents. Our informants point out that there must be put a lot of effort in managing and developing the services and deliveries KommIT already have in place. Further, there are many more service areas to be digitized in municipalities and counties. In the health and care service areas, for instance, there is a lot of coordination to be done between municipalities and between the local (municipalities) and the central level (hospitals, health government bodies). Within the education sector, there are significant needs, as well. In some areas, the central government digitization plans entail a substantial level of activity in the municipal sector for the years to come.

From smaller municipalities, we note an expectation of a central body with operational capacity and availability. Yet, our findings indicate that local and regional authorities are primarily in need of a central strategic actor and to a lesser extent an operational unit

that could assist in procurement and ICT implementation matters. The role of a strategic oriented unit includes the development of standards and ICT architecture. This kind of work is hardly considered to be directly useful (especially for small municipalities) – even if it is indeed crucial for interoperability, data flow, user-centric services, scalability and the long-term development of an ICT industry efficiently able to underpin the digitization of public sector.

The central unit must orchestrate the coordination efforts in the sector, and be able to cooperate with the national government - on behalf of, and in partnership with, local and regional authorities. In addition, the unit must be able to manage common knowledge, standards, specifications and guidelines that are developed. Regarding the management of shared ICT services and components, it is of great importance that the arrangement imply as few operational responsibilities as possible for the central unit, avoiding tying up resources. Whenever possible, the sector should arrange for national government bodies to take the responsibility for the ownership and management of nationally shared ICT services and components. Alternatively, individual municipalities and county administrations should take a governance role on behalf of the entire municipal sector. At the national level, the governance model should include the portfolio management of shared services, components and solutions, governing the prioritization between new initiatives, the maintenance and further development of existing shared services and solutions, and the cooperation with relevant national government agencies on ICT architecture, common shared services, standards and interface specifications.

We have considered several alternatives for the organization of a central entity. We recommend the establishment of a new, large department (Digitization area) in KS, led by a vice president. The department will be included in KS' ordinary operations and management structure. Thus, objectives, strategies and plans for the department will be defined in a political and holistic context, and well adapted to other areas in KS. To further anchor the work of the department, and to strengthen the involvement and commitment of local and regional authorities, we propose the establishment of a strategic advisory board – which can support the ongoing priorities on a short-term basis.

The establishment of the new department will lay the ground for a more unified and better-positioned effort in the area of digitization. It will provide a good starting point for discharging KS' role as a strategic partner and a counterpart to the government. This includes a targeted cooperation with Difi and other key governmental bodies, being an efficient coordinator of digitization of municipals and county administrations, and setting the agenda for the relevant market players.

The costs for running the coordination unit will be approximately 30 mill. NOK per year, and should be considered financed through an increase in KS' membership contingent. The amount corresponds to an increase in the contingent of about 3 NOK per inhabitant. We suggest that both local and regional authorities contribute to the funding, but do not consider any specific distribution of the costs between them. The same goes for whether or not there should be any differentiation between small and large municipalities.

Assuming the role and nature of the specific tasks, we see no significant legal challenges related to the new unit.

Our recommendation also includes some advice to the government:

- As a central government agency in the actual field, Difi should strengthen its role, taking greater responsibility for the coordination of digitization initiatives in the different governmental sectors.
- SKATE and the roadmap for public shared ICT services and components should take into account the municipal sector's needs, even more than today.
- Relevant guidelines, instructions and legal instruments regulating reforms and other extensive governmental initiatives should more explicitly address the concerns for municipalities' and counties' digitization and possible integration and interoperability challenges following the reforms and initiatives.
- In relevant quality assurance schemes for government digitization projects and proposals of such projects, the methodology should explicitly include the evaluation of the implications for the digitization in the municipal sector.