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ADMINISTRASJONSDEPARTEMENTET

Ministry of Labour and Government Administration

Strategy

24/7 Public Administration

Strategy and measures



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PREFACE

Norway needs a strong and efficient public administration to maintain and enhance the welfare system for the benefit of the whole population.

A 24/7 public administration should provide tailored services to meet users' demands for a public administration that is easily accessible, well coordinated, and user-oriented. At the same time, it is important to realise the potential for maximising efficiency through the provision of services electronically and the use of so-called one-stop-shops, thus releasing resources that can be used in areas where labour needs are increasing. In order to provide such services it is necessary to carry out a significant restructuring of tasks within the individual agency, and a substantial increase in cross-sectoral collaboration.

A 24/7 public administration will help produce a more open public administration and provide users with up-to-date information on their cases, as well as information on the general functioning of the public administration. Electronic communication will make it easier for users to contact politicians and the administration. This will promote democratic involvement and dialogue.

The purpose of this document on strategy and measures for a 24/7 public administration is to raise awareness of the ideas behind it and the development of new methods of interaction between users and the public administration. This document is primarily intended for those agencies and sectors in the public administration that handle tasks and provide user service within their area of responsibility.

This document aims to outline the most important cross-sectoral problems, to propose measures in order to meet common needs, and to promote greater collaboration. In other words, it is to be the stimulus for achieving a 24/7 public administration. Such an administration will maximise use of resources, and help produce a more holistic and quality-conscious public administration.

Oslo, August 2001.

Jørgen Kosmo
Minister of Labour and Government Administration

1 SUMMARY

This document describes strategies and measures directed at individual agencies, sectors and at cross-sectoral activities, including collaboration between central and local government. The target group is the public administration, particularly those agencies with strategic responsibility for operations and the development of services.

Summary of contents and aims of a 24/7 public administration.

- *The 24/7 public administration is one of nine reforms introduced in the Norwegian government's "Programme for innovation and modernisation of the public sector". The reform deals with interaction between users and the public administration. The intention is that the public administration shall be perceived by users as a holistic system, i.e. a system showing co-ordination between various sectors and levels of administration via a common user interface.*
- *The 24/7 public administration is an administration that is optimised for **user accessibility** and convenience. Its aims are:*
 - *Public information and public services shall be available in electronic form by means of self-service solutions 24 hours a day, seven days a week.*
 - *By means of additional telephone services, users shall be able to make personal contact with public service staff 14–16 hours a day in order to obtain information and guidance, to carry out simpler registration and for the forwarding of matters.*
 - *By means of one-stop-shops in all municipalities, both municipal and central government services in the form of information, guidance, and the simple/general handling of matters shall be made available in one location, eight hours a day, five days a week.*
- *The 24/7 public administration is open and dialogue-oriented. Provision shall be made to grant users access to documents and to **stimulate democratic involvement**. All non-confidential public documents are to be made available electronically. Electronic hearings will be established in connection with public reports and plans. Suggestion boxes and discussion forums will be made available in electronic format. Electronic channels will be used for regular user evaluations of the services.*
- *The 24/7 public administration is an administration that has exploited technology to increase the **efficient use of resources**. This will allow surplus resources to be transferred from administration to the actual provision of services, and from sectors with diminishing needs to sectors with growing needs.*
- *24/7 public administration is the responsibility of the individual agency within its area of activity. The Ministry of Labour and Government Administration will be responsible for co-ordination across sectoral boundaries.*

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The need for modernisation of the public sector

The “Programme for innovation and modernisation of the public sector”¹ describes three major challenges facing the welfare state today:

1. More competent and demanding users,
2. Shortage of labour,
3. Growth in public expenditure.

The following elements and features of the development support these challenges:

- People expect a quicker response and more tailored services from the public sector.
- Individuals and businesses will demand increased quality, productivity, and more effective use of resources in the public administration.
- The population’s support for traditional democratic channels and other arenas of public involvement has declined in recent years.
- Economic and technological development may create new social divisions.
- Technological development increases the need for effective adaptation in the public sector.
- With the advent of internationalisation, there is a growing need for international principles for the solution of tasks in a number of areas, and for the harmonisation and standardisation of technology, and for alternative methods of working in various sectors.²

2.2 New methods of interaction between users and the public administration

The public administration does not choose its “customers”, and customers/users cannot usually choose whether or not to deal with the public administration either. If the public administration is to maintain its legitimacy, it is largely dependent on retaining its users’ confidence in its ability to perform administrative tasks.

The public administration is in a situation requiring adaptation – the same adaptation that the private sector is facing. The development of technology has forced changes in manufacturing processes and customer relations. Examples of this can be seen in the banking and insurance sectors. These sectors are highly service- and information-oriented, i.e. huge quantities of data must be processed quickly and effectively. The rapid spread of the Internet over the last five to six years³ is one of the reasons why these sectors have developed this method of interaction as their most important means of maintaining contact with their customers. There are

¹ “Step by step – Programme for innovation and modernisation of the public sector”

² Ref., inter alia, the IDA programme (Interchange of Data between Administrations) of the EU in which Norway participates.

³ According to Gallup Intertrack, April, 2001, two out of every three people over the age of 13, and more than half the number of households, have access to the Internet. Over 30 per cent of the population accesses the Internet every day.

currently (spring 2001) over one million registered users of electronic banking services who can use the Internet or telephone to pay bills and carry out other banking services.⁴

The public administration has been using IT as an important tool in its work for many years, though primarily in relation to the development of infrastructure and internal applications. Now, however, with the evolution of the Internet, the public sector is under great pressure to provide a more comprehensive range of its services electronically. The development of integrated services via the Internet and other electronic communication channels is thus an important area of focus for the public administration.

2.3 Challenges facing public administration policies

The main challenge facing the public administration is to implement measures designed to meet **users' demands** for more service-oriented and accessible public services, and to increase **the ability of the public administration** to improve flexibility, adaptability and cost-effectiveness. Public services relate here not only to services requested by users, but also to the process of increasing accessibility to the workings of the public administration and to stimulating dialogue and democratic involvement.

The targets and considerations set by the public administration may sometimes appear to conflict. Increasing accessibility and service using traditional, manual solutions may have a negative effect on cost-effectiveness. Cost-effectiveness and increased accessibility may conflict with issues relating to privacy and equality. In practice, therefore, policy is based on finding a middle path that takes a holistic view to reach a balanced solution.

Development of a 24/7 public administration has to do with the **exploitation of technological and organisational opportunities** to ensure that these goals are achieved in the best possible way for all concerned.

⁴ BBS (The Norwegian banks' payments and clearing center ltd.)

3 24/7 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION POLICY REFORM

The Government has chosen to focus on IT issues linking users⁵ and the public administration in what it has termed the **24/7 public administration**. In the work of modernising the public sector, the 24/7 public administration is considered a key administrative reform.

Responsibility for co-ordinating the reform lies with the Ministry of Labour and Government Administration. The 24/7 public administration is also anchored in the “eNorway Plan”.⁶

3.1 What does the 24/7 public administration comprise?

In order to provide increased **accessibility** to public information and services, the 24/7 public administration has two main areas of focus: the development of electronic services and one-stop-shops.

The concept of 24/7 public administration also includes the provision of better opportunities for **increased transparency and access to documents**, and a strengthening of **democratic involvement**. Greater openness by offering several channels is crucial in order to maintain users’ confidence in the public administration and to uphold its legitimacy.

In the long-term, the 24/7 public administration will provide users with better quality and more active methods of relating to the public administration. It will, for example, provide greater flexibility and individually tailored services independent of time and place.

3.2 Better access to public information and services

The development of **electronic services** will play a key role in facilitating the establishment of a 24/7 public administration, since communication and administrative processes will not require staff and may be accessed 24 hours a day. Accessibility both in the form of the one-way communication of information and the two-way or interactive self-service solutions represents a considerable potential for efficiency gains for the public administration, as it will reduce the need for staff to serve the public and will automate much of the internal production process. The greater availability of services will not make any additional demands on employees in the public sector. For users, the gains will be greater flexibility and the efficient resolution of problems.

As more users begin to use electronic services, the quantity of personal enquiries will drop and the need for resources to deal with such enquiries will diminish. This will thus free up resources for use in areas where needs are growing.

⁵ In this context, the term user means both a person in the role as a consumer of public services and in the role as a citizen or participant in democracy, and as well as the media, and industry and organisations.

⁶ See “eNorway”, Ministry of Trade and Industry, 2001.

Not all services can be provided electronically. However, certain important elements of information relating to the services can be provided electronically. Such information can support and improve the efficiency of services provided physically, or manually.

One example of this is a pilot project in the municipality of Alta in which home-care nurses use a mobile broadband service to access patient records, thereby increasing efficiency in administration work, improving response times and providing more time with patients.

The aim to provide all users with greater accessibility also comprises greater flexibility and the availability of alternative channels of communication. The 24/7 public administration reform presupposes that the public administration establish new, and improve existing, channels of communication with its users. In the long-term, it also means increasing the number of electronic communication channels and reducing the scope of the traditional, manual channels. Traditional methods of communication must also be made more efficient for users who wish to continue using them. To this end, the establishment of **One-Stop-Shops** (OSS) will play a key role in increasing the efficiency of the traditional channels.

The one-stop-shops will utilise the potential of both electronic services under development and of improved, traditional services. The co-ordination of municipal and central government services will be of particular benefit to users. Based on the experience of many of the municipal service centres that has been established the last few years, it is estimated that up to 80 per cent of enquiries can be handled by a general clerk/executive officer at these offices.

Skilled employees with the decision-making power to perform certain municipal and central government tasks will staff the one-stop-shops. Users will have access to electronic services, and staff members will be trained in helping the public use these services. Libraries and other public offices with long opening hours may also operate as one-stop-shops by providing computers with Internet access.

3.3 Openness, accessibility and democratic involvement

As far as the general development of the public administration is concerned, the main focus has been on information and services for users as consumers of public services, while the perspective relating to **accessibility and involvement** may be seen as a secondary benefit that is not treated systematically in development strategy. A 24/7 public administration must also focus on the dialogue from user-involvement and democratic perspectives. Such IT-based interaction with the public is often called “e-democracy” or “interactive democracy”.⁷ Young people, for example, represent the group least involved in democratic issues (e.g. in political elections), but which use the Internet and other electronic channels by far the most.

A 24/7 public administration must therefore promote greater openness and accessibility, as well as democratic involvement for organisations and individuals. Just as in the case of

⁷ See “Det interaktive demokratiet – Ikt-støttet samhandling i og med det offentlige styringsverket i lys av demokratiteoretiske perspektiver” (The interactive democracy – ICT-supported interaction within and with the public authorities in the light of perspectives relating to democratic theory) by Roar Samuelsen, IMEDIA – Norsk Regnesentral

electronic services, e-democracy facilitates one-way communication (e.g. for issuing public announcements, providing information and reporting on meetings of public authorities) and two-way communication (e.g. electronic hearings, discussion forums, dialogues with political representatives). For example, the municipality of Løten⁸ has set up a system to facilitate the transfer of audio and video over the Internet from its municipal council meetings. It has also established a “chat” system for communicating with the mayor on the Internet at appointed times.

⁸ <http://www.loten.kommune.no>

4 GOALS AND VISIONS OF THE 24/7 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The government has drawn up the following primary and general goals for a 24/7 public administration.

- Electronic services must constitute the public administration's main channel of communication with its users.
- Electronic administrative procedure must become the norm and be as equally valid as paper-based administrative procedure.
- All municipalities must establish a one-stop-shop with the participation of central and municipal government.

These goals are to be achieved by year-end 2003.

As mentioned above, a 24/7 public administration relates primarily to the goal of providing services to the public. However, the goal of establishing an electronic system for administrative procedure is also important here as the provision of advanced, interactive services depends on it.

Visions for the next two to three years

By 2004, users will be able to access all public information and most public services via the Internet, and possibly also by other electronic channels such as tone telephones. Public information and services will be assembled in one place and will be easily accessible. It will be easy for users to find their way to the services they are looking for. The system will provide general and subject-based public portals. Users will be able to use customary Internet search engines to search all public information. All public agencies will publish their case records on the Internet, and those offices that have developed electronic systems for the handling of administrative procedure will have made the majority of case documents available electronically, provided these documents are not confidential. The public will be able to obtain information and services from public administration offices by telephone 14–16 hours a day, five days a week. This will help users locate public information and services on the Internet and have their enquiries processed further. Every municipality will have at least one one-stop-shop to provide the users with information and guidance, and to deal with simple administrative procedures for municipal and central government agencies.

In all probability, the provision of electronic services and administrative procedure by 2004 does not mean that the entire public administration will have completed the transfer of all potential services to an integrated, electronic system. Many services will still be “half electronic” in that it may be possible to obtain a form electronically and complete it on the Internet, but users will have to print it out and send it in manually. Alternatively, it may be possible to submit the form as an e-mail attachment. Fully automated self-service solutions will often require changes in organisation and closer cross-sectoral collaboration.

“My government”, or “Peer-to-Peer”, are the names given to the concept representing individually tailored solutions and the active provision of services by the public

administration. These services allow individuals and organisations to have tailored web sites that reflect their relationship with the public administration.

Each individual will have electronic access to her “file” and will be able to view the status of any issues she has submitted. The main point is that the user will be authorised in relation to this portal and not in relation to the individual service or task in the portal. The concept also facilitates the application of technology to automate communications between the public administration and users. For example, the water utility of a given municipality could use the address database of the national census office and the GAB Register to inform households automatically (using various electronic channels) in a given area that the water was going to be turned off for repairs.

Visions for the medium-term: “min-forvaltning.no” (*my-government.no*)

Within five to eight years, users will be able to access documents in full text issued by the public administration via the Internet and other electrical devices such as palm-top computers and digital TV, etc. All suitable public services will be integrated and individually adapted. Users will, for example, be able to tailor their websites to interface with the public offices of their choice (a “one-to-one” relationship). In principle, all databases will be accessible electronically. Users will be able to access electronically all cases and case documents relating to them, and any other information that does not infringe privacy and secrecy laws. Companies and organizations will also be able to access public services electronically to meet their specific requirements. They will be able to submit all documents required by public offices electronically. These documents will be protected by security and authentication procedures. The number of forms they need to fill in manually will be minimised as a result of more effective use of IT, and the simplification of procedures and rules. Open meetings of all political bodies will be transmitted via the Internet and local television and radio.

5 ELECTRONIC SERVICES – STATUS AND CHALLENGES

5.1 Status of the 24/7 public administration

The Norwegian public sector has kept abreast of Internet and portal developments as compared to both the private sector and many other countries. The Internet-portal used by the government and ministries to present information provided by central government is called “Odin”. This portal was started as a trial project back in 1995. The municipal sector was also quick to set up its own portal (1996). In January 2000, “norge.no” was established as the joint portal for all public information and services on the Internet.⁹

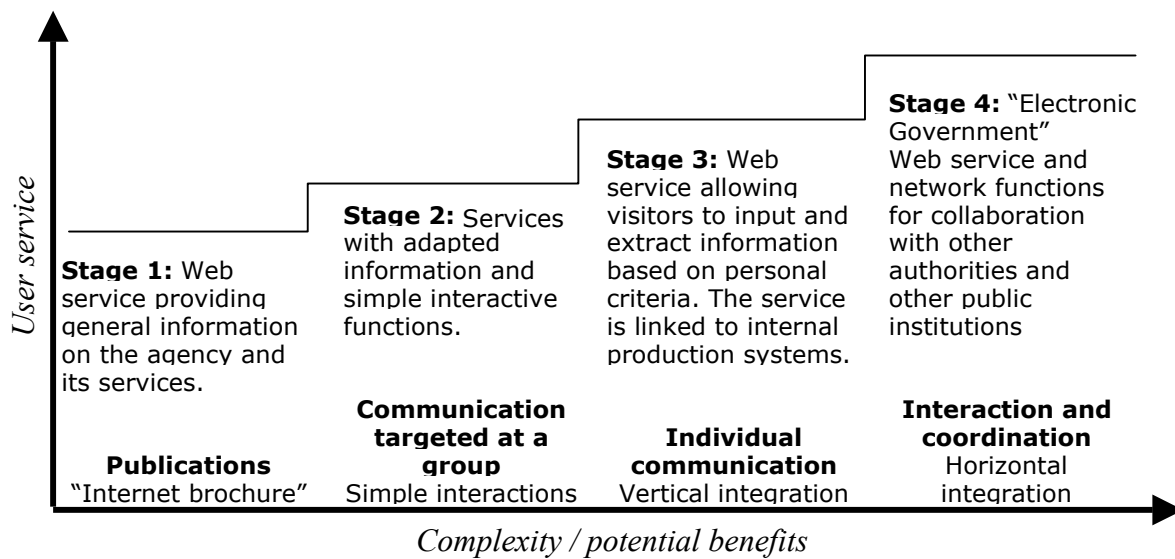
Norway has also come a relatively long way in its policy of horizontal integration, encompassing the exchange and re-use of data in different types of agencies with the aid of reengineered back office systems. The advantages of such an exchange have in recent years led to the simplification of the filing of tax returns. This kind of service benefits from shared access to the country’s most important statistical registers: the Register of Enterprises in Brønnøysund, the National Population Register, the Register of Employers and Employees, and the GAB register (land, addresses and buildings).

Even though there is still a long way to go before we can say that the co-ordination and interaction of these registers are ideal, it is clear that they have significant potential for the development of a good information infrastructure. While respecting privacy and other legal issues, such interaction will allow key service areas to develop highly advanced and integrated services for their users.

5.2 Specific issues relating to the development of electronic services

A classification of web sites has been drawn up based on the advanced nature of the services offered to users. This classification is called the “**development model of electronic services**” (**Figure 1**). As the figure shows, each stage up the model represents a higher level of service and more complex procedures for resolving issues. Potential benefits per enquiry increase as you move to the higher stages, but such benefits can be realised only with better electronic, back-office solutions (e.g. systems for dealing electronically with enquiries) and better exchange of information between agencies. Nevertheless, the benefits for users and the government administration do not necessarily increase the higher you go. Simple services may often prove just as helpful for users and the public administration as complex services used infrequently. The alternatives must be compared when determining the priority of the development of electronic services.

⁹ The pilot project, organised by the Norwegian Central Information Service and Vestlandsforskning (Vestland Research Institute), will be assessed in the autumn of 2001.

Figure 1: Development model of electronic services

As far as the levels of electronic services are concerned, there are differences between central government agencies and the municipal sector. According to 'norge.no's Internet meter, approx. nine out of every ten central government agencies have a web site, while only seven out of every ten municipalities have established one. The disparity is diminishing, however, as the number of municipalities developing web sites is increasing rapidly.

In a survey of the services provided by the public administration via the Internet, carried out by Vestlandsforskning¹⁰ in January and February 2001 and commissioned by the Norwegian Central Information Service, it was revealed that 91 per cent of public administration web pages are on the first stage of the development model. Only 15 per cent of web services were categorised as being on the second stage (this category indicates that the service offers some interaction and that the web site has started to present the information in a target-oriented way). Just two per cent of the services were considered satisfactory in relation to the requirements for the third stage. None of the 454 web services assessed was considered adequate to qualify for the fourth stage. Nine per cent of web services did not meet the requirements for the first stage on the model and were so incomplete as to fail to qualify even as "Internet brochures". These pages displayed only simple information such as the address and telephone number of the respective entity. The survey also showed that there was a significant disparity between central government and municipal web services. Only six per cent of the municipal web services qualified for the second stage, and none qualified for stages three and four. By contrast, 29 per cent of central government web services qualified for stage two and four per cent for stage three. Eighty-four per cent of the 235 central government agencies in the survey had designed their own web site.

Since the survey defined the concept of web services as the web site of each respective entity, the overall picture is rather complex. Many electronic services are highly advanced, and many agencies have progressed well in their work to integrate Internet solutions and internal

¹⁰ Svein Ølnes, Vestland Research Institute: "Survey and categorisation of government administration web services", VF Report, No. 10/2001.

systems. Nonetheless, these results show that they have a long way to go before electronic services become the main solution. It is particularly worrying that nearly one third of the municipalities (which provide the public with more services than any other sector of government administration) do not have their own web site. Therefore, a major effort will be required over the next two to three years to achieve the goals.

5.3 Challenges facing the 24/7 public administration

There are signs indicating that it will not be easy for the public sector to participate in the dynamic “e-business” trend enjoyed by much of the private sector. Such development requires major investment, which in return leads to a simplification of the way services are provided and thus, potentially, to much quicker realisation of gains in efficiency.

This growing difference between comparable, private activities and public sector activities is caused by a number of reasons. The national budget system, for instance, is less versatile in that it does not allow major investments to be made quickly and at the same time facilitate the adaptation of solutions to maximise profit potential.

It is also challenging to follow the international development of the public sector. The EU and many individual countries are ambitious in terms of developing electronic services in the public sector.

5.3.1 Line responsibility and cross-sectoral collaboration

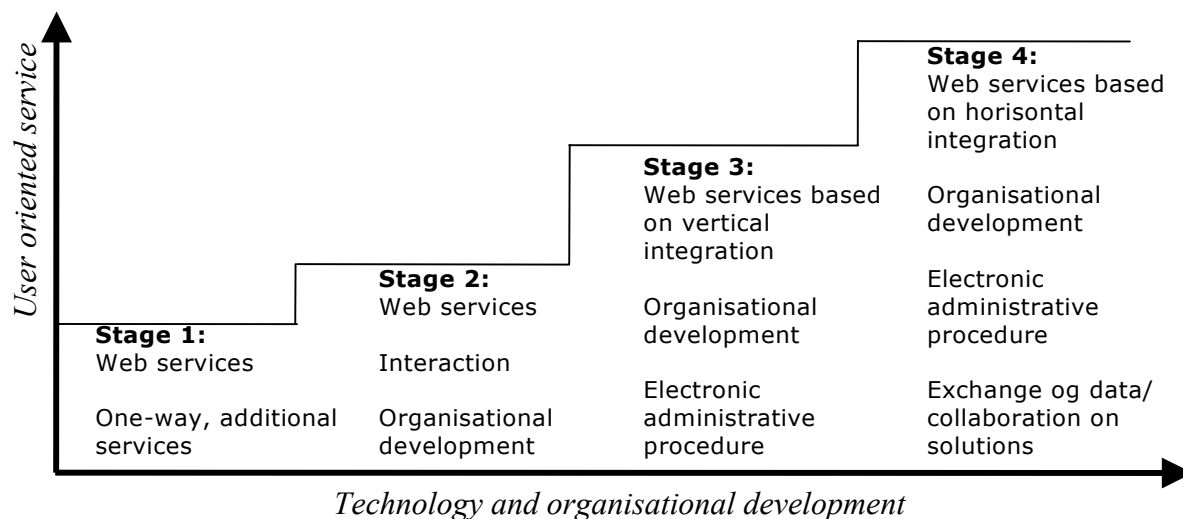
The restructuring of the public sector to a more electronic and 24/7 administration requires greater co-ordination and collaboration between different sectors and levels of the public administration. This will produce a more holistic range of services for users and will maximise cost-effectiveness.

The reform requires that each branch of the public sector and each entity concentrate more on service and modernising their provision of services based on user needs. To do this, the public sector will have to **improve collaboration** between entities in different sectors and manage changing requirements more effectively. This, in turn, will facilitate the handling of reorganisation and investment costs.

Figure 2, below, indicates the challenges facing entities wishing to offer the services on all stages of the development model illustrated in Figure 1.

Most entities wishing to offer the services listed in Stage 1 will need to increase the provision of information on their own activities, but they will not be required to collaborate or exchange data with other public entities. Entities wishing to offer the services given in Stage 4, however, may be required to exchange information with other public service providers. An interactive web site could, for example, be designed by the National Insurance Office to provide the public with information on the child benefit that they could obtain. The site could also be used to register any changes in personal data that affect the calculation of child benefit. For example, if an individual registers that he has become a single parent, notification

Figure 2: Internal requirements for the public administration based on figure 1.



could automatically be generated and sent to the tax authorities to request a transfer to Tax Class 2.

The development and operation of services that integrate information from several entities and/or agencies presupposes that these services are developed in a holistic manner. To do this, most entities will have to change their organisation to resolve issues and distribute responsibility in accordance with new criteria. If we use the above case of child benefit, for instance, the service will need to be connected to internal procedure systems (Stages 3 and 4).

To provide users with advanced services, entities must adapt and find more effective ways of handling issues. This can be termed “vertical integration” and is based on the development of organizations and systems to process issues electronically. They must also collaborate better and be more prepared to exchange data across the boundaries of activity and sector (horizontal integration). Focusing on user access to public services (24/7 public administration) thus leads to a greater focus on a more holistic, electronic administration.

5.3.2 Cross-sectoral challenges

In terms of cross-sectoral responsibilities, the 24/7 public administration entails a more active coordinating role. It will be important to ascertain and handle general development requirements and to promote standardization and joint solutions for services and technical matters. This will then ensure that the services provided are cost-effective. This document is intended to aid such work.

The Ministry of Labour and Government Administration is responsible for Norwegian public administration policy. The Ministry's duty includes responsibility for the «Programme for innovation and modernisation of the public sector» and for co-ordination of IT matters within the public administration. The Ministry is also responsible for promoting a 24/7 public administration, for ascertaining general development requirements, and for encouraging IT collaboration between sectors when such collaboration may advance the aims of administration policy and reform work.

Statskonsult¹¹ has the operative responsibility for administration and information policy, and will have a central role in implementing and carrying out cross-sectoral measures for promoting a 24/7 public administration.

¹¹ On 1st July 2001, the former Norwegian Central Information Service merged with Statskonsult.

6 STRATEGIC AREAS OF FOCUS

Central government and the municipalities need to establish common strategies to promote electronic services and to provide a solid foundation for the strategies of the various economic sectors and entities to interface with. We have identified three main areas that need to be worked on in order to achieve the objectives of a 24/7 public administration.

1. Services for users
2. Access to information and democratic involvement
3. Internal administrative conditions

This chapter describes the strategies and measures in key areas that either have been carried out, or are to be carried out, in order to advance the work of implementing a 24/7 public administration. In some areas, we will need to develop more operative strategies and measures.

6.1 Services for users

6.1.1 Public information and services on the Internet

The Internet will be the primary tool in the development of a 24/7 public administration because it facilitates flexible services that are easily accessible and are tailored to individual requirements. Services are now being developed to meet users' personal requirements; information and services from different suppliers can now be selected and presented as required by the individual. The development of meta-services (i.e. those that point users to other services such as: comparative services, search engines and portals) will be another important trend. The contents of such services can be categorised according to different criteria, e.g. subject, geographical area, or user group.

The development of such services and their use will, however, create a number of challenges for the public administration. This is because the information and services will be "extracted" from their customary decision-making power environment and incorporated into new distribution channels. The development of web sites based on information and services from different suppliers creates a number of new technical and organisational challenges, and raises issues relating to ownership of, and responsibility, for information, and to other legal matters. New forms of collaboration might appear, extending beyond the existing sectoral boundaries and levels of administration, and a mixture of public, semi-public, and private web sites might appear, all competing for the same users. It is a fundamental principle of all public information and services that the entity responsible must be clearly defined. At the same time, the system must promote flexible forms of collaboration.

The organisation of information and services will therefore be an important challenge. Many of the measures described in this chapter are based on the need to develop strategies and measures that facilitate flexible and efficient distribution.

The objective of 24/7 public administration presupposes that public agencies and entities develop plans to improve the quality of their electronic services. The Norwegian Central Information Service has drawn up quality criteria governing web services and these will facilitate the assessment and comparison of quality. Using the “norge.no” portal as a starting-point, public Internet services have been assessed for their quality. This process aims to help users appreciate the quality of the public sector Internet pages and to boost the quality of public electronic services. Quality assessment must continue with a view to providing a more continuous measurement of status and utility value in respect of the position of services on the development model.

Party responsible: Statskonsult.

- Measures: Quality development of public electronic services.

6.1.2 Development of good electronic forms

Various initiatives and projects have been started in this field in the public sector. As the development of integrated electronic services increases, most current paper-based forms will become redundant, or will be integrated into a simplified form through electronic services. During the transitional phase, however, users and the public sector will both benefit from the availability of downloadable forms that can be completed and submitted manually. Joint measures will be required to improve accessibility and the design of such forms. Transactions between users/citizens and the public administration will also be carried out by means of electronic forms in due course.

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration/Statskonsult in collaboration with specific agencies.

- Measures: Investigate problems relating to the co-ordination and development of electronic forms.

6.1.3 Telephone-based services

In addition to the Internet-based services being available 24-hours a day, seven days a week, a more comprehensive telephone service (call centre) will be developed, allowing users to contact the public administration outside normal office hours. This service will be connected to the “norge.no” portal, but will also be accessible through the regular telephone system. The call centre may handle the current information services but will also provide guidance for users when the electronic services are overworked. Consideration should also be given as to whether the call centre can function as a help desk to provide assistance on the use of the electronic services.

Party responsible: County Governor in Sogn og Fjordane (operations), Statskonsult (co-ordination).

- Measures: Central Information Centre transferred to the administration office of “norge.no”.

6.1.4 Development of services at one-stop-shops

The one-stop-shops must tackle two major challenges before they can offer the best possible services. The first relates to the type of services (discussed here) and the second relates to

changes in organisation (which will be discussed later in this chapter). The one-stop-shops are intended to provide the main physical point of contact between the public administration and users.¹² Users will be able to access municipal and central government services at one and the same place. The employees working at the one-stop-shops will have the authority to make decisions and will be skilled in dealing with simple issues relating to these services. In this way, they may help provide a full range of services. It is the municipalities themselves that decide which kind of duties and services can be allocated to each one-stop-shop. The aim is to provide the most asked-after services. The Ministry of Labour and Government Administration has also decided to carry out a model project in the county of Akershus in 2001. This project aims to establish one-stop-shops in the 22 municipalities in the county. The experience acquired through this project will then be used to establish similar one-stop-shops in other municipalities.

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration, Statskonsult, the municipalities and the appurtenant public offices.

- Measures: Public offices are to create an “information package” for one-stop-shops and decide on the jurisdiction that these offices are to have.

Electronic means should also be included in the strategy for one-stop-shops, especially with regard to central government services. We have established a project group consisting of employees from the municipal sector and Statskonsult to prepare services that can be made available through electronic one-stop-shops.

Parties responsible: Statskonsult and the municipalities.

- Measures: Project to develop electronic services for the one-stop-shops.

6.2 Access to information and democratic involvement

One of the most important measures to be taken in this area is to ensure that the establishment of a 24/7 public administration does not detract, but rather enhances, the elements of access to information and democratic involvement that we already have in the public administration. This also covers, of course, those elements currently handled by information policy, open case records, etc. To accomplish this, entities must promote accessibility and user-participation in addition to practical services.

Party responsible: All entities.

- Measures: Entities must prioritise openness, accessibility and democratic involvement as an important condition for achieving the entities’ and the sectors’ strategies relating to a 24/7 public administration.

To promote accessibility and democratic involvement, it is necessary to draw up an information strategy that also encompasses the practice of greater electronic openness and increased transparency. Greater openness often demands more complex solutions in order to safeguard security and privacy. The public administration and the municipal sector must ascertain joint requirements in this area.

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities.

¹² The strategy for organising the one-stop-shops is discussed in Section 6.3.1.3

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- Measures: Start project to define the conditions for, and propose joint measures for promoting, e-democracy in the public administration.

It is an objective of the future to make case records publicly accessible. The work to achieve this must be considered in connection with the introduction of electronic archives and the development of electronic administrative procedures.

Party responsible: The respective entity/Statskonsult.

- Measures: Develop joint measures to encourage entities to publish their case records on the Internet.

Internationally, efforts must be increased, and corresponding projects relating to the OECD in other countries must be monitored and linked to the project, for example: “Strengthening Government-Citizen Connections”, and the project “E-democracy” in the so-called “Government Online Network”.

Party responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration.

- Measures: Communicate and exchange ideas and knowledge by means of international collaboration.

6.3 Internal administrative conditions

The work on implementing a 24/7 public administration presupposes that line responsibility for solving tasks not be undermined but supported and reinforced. This can be done by implementing a number of measures to stimulate entities and by ascertaining joint development requirements.

The measures that follow relate first and foremost to these joint development requirements, and require restructuring processes within organisation, methods of working, skills and technology.

6.3.1 Organisational requirements

6.3.1.1 Strategies and measures for promoting a 24/7 public administration in individual entities

To focus more attention on a 24/7 public administration, the government has resolved that all central government agencies must draw up strategies to develop a 24/7 public administration. The strategies must be included in letters of allocation and in the management dialogue between the agencies and its superior authority.

The municipalities and county municipalities are encouraged to develop strategies and plans for implementing 24/7 public administration. These should be integrated in the plans of individual entities and should be included in the governing dialogue between the entity and its higher authority.

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities is currently working on the development of strategies for implementing electronic administration services in the

municipal sector (“e-Municipality”). Collaboration between central government and the municipal sector in this area must be reinforced.

Parties responsible: Each individual entity and sector.

- Measures: Inclusion of the 24/7 public administration in the strategic planning of entities.

6.3.1.2 Competency and the exchange of experience

The private sector and government agencies that have introduced electronic services are already well aware of many of the problems when establishing electronic services.

Statskonsult and other parties will be compiling information on the experience of the private and public sectors in their efforts to implement electronic services. Such information is useful for carrying out cost-benefit analyses on new services. Statskonsult also provides public agencies with advice. The Ministry of Labour and Government Administration and the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities are to compile models for working out how best to use the advisory resources. They are also considering establishing their own forum for exchanging experiences relating to the development of electronic services.

Party responsible: Statskonsult.

- Measures: Exchange experiences and establish a forum for users.

Producing and updating information on how to establish and run web pages is an important area of focus in cross-sectoral work. Statskonsult has compiled a guide called “The provision of public sector information via the World Wide Web”. The guide explains how to establish and run web sites and electronic services. The guide will be revised in 2001.

Party responsible: Statskonsult.

- Measures: Produce guidelines.

Statskonsult has run various courses for public sector employees on the various aspects of a 24/7 public administration and the development of electronic services. The accessibility of a 24/7 public administration using electronic tools cannot be optimised without the availability of appropriately skilled staff. This caveat relates also to managers, since they have a responsibility to maximise the potential of IT in their respective areas. The Ministry of Labour and Government Administration has compiled an action plan for ICT expertise in central government to help achieve the goal of 24/7 public administration. Statskonsult will continue with its courses and will focus on 24/7 public administration based on user requirements.

Party responsible: Statskonsult.

- Measures: Compile courses as required.

6.3.1.3 One-stop-shops

The municipalities have not been instructed to set up one-stop-shops by legal decree or in any other way. The strategy is rather to motivate the municipalities to establish one-stop-shops and to prepare the ground for central government involvement. The Ministry of Labour and Government Administration also provided funds in 2000 and 2001 to support the establishment of one-stop-shops, but the strategy dictates that the municipalities must bear the majority of costs associated with their establishment.

The central government agencies that interact most with the public (Aetat – the Directorate of Labour, the National Insurance office, and the Norwegian Tax Administration) have been instructed to collaborate with the municipalities to develop services for one-stop-shops at the time the municipalities should so choose. The county governor's office has been allocated the duty of ensuring that the above offices collaborate with the municipalities in this respect.

These agencies will be given financial support in proportion to the scale of their participation. Parties responsible: Statskonsult, municipalities and respective agencies.

- Measures: Continue promoting the establishment of one-stop-shops.

6.3.2 Technological requirements

6.3.2.1 Selection of different technological solutions

The Internet will be the main tool for electronic interaction with users in the foreseeable future (five to ten years). Other electronic channels will be supplemented to support the electronic interaction. It will be important to capitalise on the development of personal digital assistants (PDAs), mobile services, new generations of mobile phones with high-speed (approaching broadband speed) capacity, etc. The advent of digital TV also offers some interesting options, not least the potential for the two-way exchange of information using traditional one-way broadcasting channels. Statskonsult will monitor this technology and, where applicable, implement pilot projects to apply public services.

Party responsible: Statskonsult.

- Measures: Pursue Statskonsult's monitoring of technological developments.

6.3.2.2 Integration of services

A strategy to integrate services will be drawn up which will identify the various needs for standardisation and choice of communication channels. The problems relating to interoperability in this strategy must also be clarified (functional collaboration). At the service level, recommendations and guidelines must be drawn up to indicate how to develop information and service resources. Such integration makes it vital to bear in mind certain legal considerations, e.g. the protection of privacy. One must also ensure that the specification requirements in the frame agreements of the public administration network provide sufficient guidelines on the procurement of services and solutions.

Party responsible: Statskonsult.

- Measures: Develop integrated electronic services.

6.3.2.3 Better collaboration on public information resources.

As mentioned above, the Norwegian public administration has come a long way in its development and use of central databases, etc. The continued development of collaboration on data that is based on solutions meeting security, privacy and authenticity requirements will offer a considerable potential for more user-friendly services that are tailored to individual needs. They may also become more cost-effective for government administration.

Collaboration will be implemented with the agencies handling the central databases to produce a report on any obstacles to this project, and measures will be proposed to increase collaboration on, and use of, the data.

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration and Statskonsult.

- Measures: Produce a report with the agencies handling the central databases to increase collaboration on the data.

Common formatting languages are now used for exchanging both structured and unstructured information and publishing web pages on the Internet. XML, in particular, seems to have become the industry standard. We need to identify the needs and potential benefits of classifying data according to common criteria.¹³

Party responsible: Statskonsult.

- Measures: Co-ordinate public information structures, interaction and the flow of data.

Services relating to “life situations” (e.g. setting up a company, moving to a new municipality) create new challenges. These services are based on a combination of public information and legislation, etc., from a number of different areas. It must be ensured that the lines of responsibility are well defined in order to safeguard the quality of the services. There is a need to design models to find out how to safeguard the lines of responsibility and the quality of electronic services, so that these services are at least as good as the former traditional services.

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration / Statskonsult.

- Measures: Design models outlining responsibilities relating to cross-sectoral services.

A broadly ranging work group handles public contact information. This group is intended to simplify access to the information, to improve the quality of it, and to increase the efficiency of its production. The names of public entities, addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, names of contacts, etc. have become important information in today’s society. Such information is stored in a variety of registers and databases, in the private sector and the public sector. The preliminary report of the work group indicates there is significant potential to improve the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of public contact information. The group suggests that a “contact register” be established, containing contact information on all public entities and civil servants whose area of work involves public relations. This register would be based on the information of a variety of existing registers. The Register of Enterprises would play an important role in such work. With the aid of Internet portals such as “norge.no”, announcements and the recycling of public contact information will be facilitated, all based on the data in the contact register. Efforts should be made to ensure that other Internet portals, private and public, have links to the public sector contact information. The work group’s report is currently at the hearing stage (August 2001).

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration and Statskonsult.

- Measures: Follow up proposals for better collaboration on public contact information and establish a contact register.

¹³ We refer here to the use of “meta-tagging”, providing “information on information”.

6.3.2.4 Public search engines

Good search engines are an important tool for helping users access public electronic services. However, they are expensive and it would be a waste of money to obtain a number of publicly-owned search engines. As long as strict guidelines are drawn up on how such tools can be used by more than one sector of the public administration, many sectors could use the same search engine. "Norge.no" currently has a search engine that could be developed to allow a public office, or portal, to use it in a flexible way, and still providing full functionality. However, any strategy for joint use of search engines must take into consideration the arrival of new services, such as searches in public case records on different web sites.

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration and Statskonsult.

- Measures: Create shared search functions for public Internet services.

6.3.2.5 Digital signatures and public key infrastructures

The Ministry of Labour and Government Administration has overall responsibility for following up the work of the committee that has drawn up a report on the use of digital signatures in electronic communications with, and in, the public administration.¹⁴ The main challenge here is to establish a public key infrastructure, and to build up a sufficiently critical mass for the use of digital signatures, to ensure that public services can be carried out and information exchanged reliably and confidently, while all the time safeguarding privacy. We are currently working on establishing a new, permanent **co-ordination committee** that will cover the whole of the public administration, including regional and local administration. We will also be implementing other measures based on the conclusions of the report hearing. These conclusions will be drawn some time during the summer, 2001.

Parties responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and others.

- Measures: Follow up the PKI report and announce use of digital signatures.

6.3.2.6 Electronic administration procedure

Statskonsult has for many years had operational responsibility for a programme designed to promote electronic administration procedure in the public administration. This programme will be evaluated following its completion some time in 2001. Based on this evaluation and other current pilot projects and measures relating to electronic administrative procedure, an assessment of needs for subsequent work in the area must be carried out.

Party responsible: Ministry of Labour and Government Administration.

- Measures: Assess the need for collaboration on, and measures for, the promotion of fully electronic administrative procedures.

¹⁴ NOU 2001: 10 Without pen and ink.

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