

The programme

The “Quality in Local Government” programme is making a major contribution to implementing the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development’s vision for local government. The initial plan was that:

- Municipalities will be an actively-democratic arena where people want to participate.
- Municipalities will provide high quality services.
- Municipalities will be dynamic community developers facilitating collaboration between public agencies and voluntary organizations.
- Municipalities will be a good place to work.
- All municipal sector activities will be characterized by high ethical standards.

The programme was implemented from 1.1.2007 in a partnership between the government, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and the labour organisations and contributed to strengthening the reputation of the municipal sector.

The aim of the partnership: To increase the quality and efficiency of municipal services so that local residents notice improvements, to be achieved through constructive interactions between elected representatives, managers and the employees,. Reducing municipal employees absences from work due to illness is a specific goal. The aim is for more than half of the country’s municipalities to participate in the programme, requiring that:

Programme activities should build on ongoing or completed work, and should compliment and strengthen existing, including the bilateral quality agreement between KS and the government.

- A focus is on general care for elderly and disabled people, as well as nursing and education for children and young people.
- Local collaboration must involve employees who come into contact with the public.
- Municipalities drew primarily on their own resources, with support from the project team and resources.
- Local work must be endorsed by elected representatives.
- Participating municipalities must commit to concrete targets for reducing employee absences due to illness.
- The work is carried out within the municipalities’ agreed financial limits.
- The intentions of the Main Agreement (between the Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions) is honoured.

Organisation of the programme

The programme was intended to contribute to implementing the vision of the Government and the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development for an active and effective local government that provides better services in cooperation with local residents who are able to detect improvements in these services. This vision is reflected in the organisation of the programme:

Contact Meetings held 2 or 3 times a year are attended by the leaders of the three collaborating organisations and chaired by the Minister of Local Government and Regional Development. The contact meetings select the participating municipalities.

The Steering Committee includes the senior administrative officials of the partner organisations. This committee plans and monitors progress and holds regular meetings with the Project Manager about once a month.

The Project Committee consists of a small secretariat, currently four special advisers with wide experience and expertise in nursing, care, education, organisational development and leadership, and is chaired by a Project Manager.

Having applied and been accepted, the intake of “quality” municipalities are organised into networks. These networks are motivated and provided with technical information through central and local meetings. Importantly, the most critical training and development of good working practices will always take place within the workplace, in the municipality and in the exchange of information and experience within and between the networks.

Outreach activities are also central to the programme. If the public at large are to gain an impression of new initiatives and quality improvements, there must be systematic awareness raising, including sharing information with local media.