

Summary:

The Regional Organisation of Road Safety Work

The Norwegian Public Roads Administration (NPRA) is responsible for the planning, construction and operation of the national and county road networks, vehicle inspection and requirements, driver training and licensing. The NPRA was reorganised in 2003, and the 19 previous county offices were merged into five regional offices. These are referred to as the Northern Region, the Central Region, the Western Region, the Southern Region, and the Eastern Region, respectively. A number of responsibilities within the region, such as strategic planning, coordination and budget allocation, were delegated from the Directorate of Public Roads to the regional offices. Each regional office consists of four to seven districts. The districts carry out operative tasks.

In the process of reorganisation, the Directorate of Public Roads established a set of principles for the organisational structure of the regional offices. Hence, all regional offices are divided into four departments and one advisory staff unit. Within the main structure of departments, however, the regions were free to establish sections, units or groups. As a result, the regions are organised differently.

This report is a study of the organisation of road safety work in the regional offices. The aims of the study have been to:

1. Identify similarities and dissimilarities in how the regions carry out road safety work.
2. Identify similarities and dissimilarities in how the regions have chosen to organise their road safety work.
3. Determine whether organisational dissimilarities have implications for the road safety work carried out.

We found that there are, indeed, considerable differences in how the regions carry out road safety work as well as in how they organise their work. Using a comparative analytical approach, we tried to determine whether organisational features have implications for the execution of road safety work.

Road safety work dissimilarities

We compared the road safety work carried out by each regional office. Three different aspects were studied:

- How the regions prioritise road safety compared to other goals.

- What kinds of road safety measures each region prioritises.
- Road safety initiatives, such as human resource development, research and development (R&D) projects and campaign activities .

We found that there were considerable differences in how the regions carry out road safety work. Compared to the other regions, the Eastern Region assigned higher priority to road safety measures that gave the greatest estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries. The Southern Region was the one placing the strongest emphasis on human resource development.

Organisational dissimilarities

We compared how the regions had chosen to organise their road safety work. Four aspects of organisation were studied:

- The degree of specialisation.
- Coordination between different units in the regional office.
- How the regional offices govern their districts.
- Whether human competence in road safety is placed primarily at the regional office or in the districts.

We found that there were considerable differences in how the regions had chosen to organise their road safety work. The *Eastern* Region seemed to place great emphasis on specialisation, while the *Northern* and *Southern* Region placed greater emphasis on coordination between units. The *Western* Region tried to combine a high degree of specialisation with a high degree of coordination. The *Central* Region appeared to be neither highly specialised nor having a high degree of coordination between units.

Do organisational traits have implications for the road safety work carried out?

Using a comparative analytical approach, we tried to determine whether organisational features have implications for the execution of road safety work. We did not find one specific organisational model that appeared to generate the better road safety work.

Regions achieving high scores at the indicators of good traffic safety work applied in this study seemed to have chosen either strong specialisation (Eastern Region) or strong coordination between units (Southern Region). Combining these organisational traits appeared to be somewhat difficult (Western Region). However, we found that the Northern Region, despite its strong coordination between units, prioritised those road safety measures that gave the poorest estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries. This region did not place a strong emphasis on Human Resource development either.

These findings suggest that the formal organisational features studied do not have any considerable effect on the road safety work carried out.

On the other hand we found that in some regions road safety considerations appeared to be strongly integrated in the entire approach and working methods of the organisation, while other regions applied a somewhat narrow definition of the concept. The regions that applied the broader definition also carried out better road safety work. This tendency was visible regardless of the formal organisational structure in the region.

Based on the empirical material in this report, the Institute of Transport Economics has made a summary report (TØI- report 832/2006), containing a more comprehensive English summary.