

Summary:

The Regional Organisation of Road Safety Work in Norway - Summary report

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 National 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 summary report of the empirical material and findings in TØI-report 831/2006. In the main report, the organisation of road safety work in the regional offices is studied. The aims of the study are 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.

Main conclusions

- There are considerable differences in how the regions perform in road traffic safety and what kinds of measures they prioritise. Three regions do not give sufficient priority of road safety measures to fulfil their assigned estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries. One region prioritises road safety measures that give a greater estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries than their

assigned share. Some regions achieve considerable traffic safety improvements by prioritising measures aimed at road users and vehicles as well as measures within the road and traffic system. Two regions seem to direct their efforts towards measures aimed at road users and vehicles in their traffic safety work, while a third region clearly places measures aimed at road users and vehicles low down in its priorities. One region places great emphasis on developing human resources on traffic safety.

- There are considerable differences with respect to how the regions have organised their road safety work. Two regions emphasise coordination between units at the regional office as well as in the interaction between the regional office and the districts. One region seems to assign higher priority to specialisation than to coordination between units. Yet another region appears to try to make organisational arrangements for coordination between units as well as for specialisation, but do not emerge as being either particularly specialised or strongly coordinated compared to the other regions. The fifth region does not seem to emphasise either strong specialisation or strong coordination between units.
- We have also found that there are differences with respect to how road safety considerations are integrated in the organisation. Three concepts are used analysing the integration of road safety considerations. *Virus* is used as a positive term, implying that traffic safety considerations are well integrated in the entire approach and working methods of the organisation. *Translation* refer to a situation where the region applies a somewhat narrow definition of the concept of road traffic safety. Road safety considerations are *decoupled* if the unit working with road safety is isolated from the work performed in other units of the organisation.
- The differences in formal organisational structure are not the main explanation of the regional differences in performance. However, the regions that have integrated road safety considerations in the entire organisation and apply a broad definition of road traffic safety work achieve high scores at the indicators of good traffic safety work applied in this study.

Method and data

Since the regional offices are different in how they have organised their road safety work as well as in how they perform road safety work, a traditional comparative analysis approach is not applicable in this study. We have however tried to compare regions that have a specific organisational trait in common, considering whether these regions also perform a similar road safety work. The analyses do not systematically control for other variables, such as personal characteristics of key actors in the regional road safety work or distinguishing marks of the region.

The data of the main report are documents and interviews. In total, 14 qualitative, semi-structured interviews have been carried out. In addition, a group meeting was held with the traffic safety coordinators from all five regions.

Road safety work dissimilarities

We compare the road safety work carried out by each regional office. Three indicators are studied:

1. How the regions refer to road safety. Each region is responsible for preparing a Regional Action Programme. The programmes are part of the National Transportation Plan process, aiming to considerably reduce the number of killed and seriously injured. We studied the Regional Action Programmes, analysing how the regions referred to traffic safety compared to other goals.
2. What kinds of road safety measures each region prioritises, and whether the regions succeed in fulfilling their assigned estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries. In the process of preparing the Regional Action Programmes, each region was assigned a figure for the estimated reduction in fatalities and serious injuries from the NPRA. Each road safety measure carried out has a certain estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injures, adding up to the total estimated reduction in each region.
3. Road safety initiatives, such as human resource development, research and development (R&D) projects and campaign activities .

There are not considerable differences in how the regions refer to road safety in their Regional Action Programmes.

There are however substantial differences concerning how the regions actually prioritise road traffic safety, what measures they prioritise, and whether they succeed in fulfilling their assigned estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries. There are also considerable differences concerning how the regions prioritise human resource development and R&D projects.

Regions with a low estimated reduction in fatalities and serious injuries

The *Northern Region* gains the lowest estimated reduction in fatalities and serious injuries of the five regions. The region does not achieve sufficient estimated traffic safety improvements through investments within the road and traffic system. The Northern Region does not seem to prioritise developing human resources on traffic safety either, but has developed a number of traffic safety campaigns and seem to prioritise traffic safety related R&D.

The *Central Region* gains the second lowest estimated reduction in fatalities and serious injuries. Like the Northern Region, The Central Region achieves low estimated traffic safety improvements through investments within the road and traffic system, and gains its greatest traffic safety improvements through measures aimed at road users and vehicles. The Central Region does not seem to prioritise developing human resources on traffic safety or traffic safety related R&D.

The *Western Region* is close up to the Central Region in having a poor gaining of estimated reduction in fatalities and serious injuries. This region gains its greatest estimated traffic safety improvements through smaller investments within the road

and traffic system. Like the Central Region, the Western Region does not seem to prioritise developing human resources on traffic safety or traffic safety related R&D.

Regions with a high estimated reduction in fatalities and serious injuries

The *Southern Region* assigns priority to road safety measures that gives the second greatest estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries. The region gains its greatest estimated traffic safety improvements through investments within the road and traffic system, but does not gain sufficient traffic safety improvements through measures aimed at road users and vehicles. The Southern Region also places a particularly strong emphasis on traffic related human resource development.

The *Eastern Region* assigns priority to road safety measures that give the greatest estimated reduction in the number of fatalities and serious injuries, and is the only region prioritising measures that give a greater estimated reduction than their share. The region achieves considerable traffic safety improvements through measures aimed at road users and vehicles as well as measures within the road and traffic system. The Eastern Region also seems to prioritise traffic safety related R&D, but has not worked out traffic related human resource development initiatives.

Organisational dissimilarities

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

- The degree of specialisation.
- Coordination between different units in the regional office.
- Coordination between the regional office and the 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, and did also place much of its traffic safety-related human competence in the districts.

The *Northern* and *Southern* Regions placed great emphasis on coordination between units at the regional office as well as in the interaction between the regional office and the districts.

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 best road safety work.

Regions achieving high scores on 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 did however appear 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.

The organisational integration of road safety considerations

The integration of road safety considerations came in different shapes and forms in every region. One could not claim that road safety considerations were perfectly integrated, like a virus, in one region, and totally decoupled in another. The integration of road safety considerations does nonetheless seem to have a significant effect on the road safety work carried out.

The *Eastern* and *Southern Regions* have integrated road safety considerations in the entire organisation and apply a broad definition of road traffic safety work (*virus*). Both regions achieve high scores at the indicators of good traffic safety work applied in this study, although their organisational characteristics differ.

The *Northern Region* seems to have *translated* road safety considerations to primarily include measures aimed at road users and vehicles. The region does not prioritise investments within the road and traffic system in the traffic safety work carried out.

Traffic safety considerations appear, to some extent, to be *decoupled* in the *Central* and *Western Regions*. The tendency is strongest in the Central Region, and this region does also generally have weaker scores at the indicators of good traffic safety work applied in this study than the Western Region.

These findings suggest that translated or decoupled traffic safety considerations have a negative effect on how the regions perform in road traffic safety, regardless of the formal organisational structure in the region.