

Systems for traffic safety management, safety culture and safety facilitation behaviour

Status for four Norwegian county municipalities in 2023

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Norway has the world's best road safety level and county authorities are fundamental in the Norwegian model for road safety management. However, the Norwegian county authorities' management of road safety has undergone major changes in the last two years. Through the Regional Reform in 2020, 13 counties were merged into six counties. The new county authorities had to establish new departments, systems, and routines. At the same time, the county authorities took over the administrative responsibility for all county roads from the Norwegian Public Roads Administration. Systems for traffic safety management are fundamental to traffic safety in both private and public enterprises. However, previous research shows that the quality of such systems varies considerably in different organizations, and that this has consequences for safety behavior and accident risk. The aims of the study are to: 1) Study whether four county authorities have implemented living systems for traffic safety management three years after the regional reform, which is a comprehensive structural reform (i.e., in 2023), 2) Study factors influencing this, including safety culture, and 3) Study facilitation behavior among county authority employees working with traffic safety and factors that affect this. Safety facilitating behaviour concerns how and to what extent they focus on setting the premises for road safety in their county. The study is based on qualitative interviews (N=42) and a survey (n=392). The results show considerable variation with regards to whether the county authorities have implemented living systems for safety management. This is influenced by the safety culture in the county councils and the extent to which the respondents perceive that the reorganization related to the regional reform has required a lot of time and energy. The respondents' safety facilitating behavior is primarily influenced by the safety culture in their own organization. The study shows that safety culture is fundamental in the county authorities' work with traffic safety, and that the safety culture varies in the studied county authorities.