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Topic (ii): Economic issues associated with the implementation of modern IT and management of human resources as driving forces to improve timeliness and quality of statistical data

MANAGERIAL ISSUES OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN STATISTICS NORWAY

Submitted by Statistics Norway¹

INVITED PAPER

SUMMARY

1. The paper reports on some experiences in relation to the management of IT resources and technological change in Statistics Norway (SN). Having around 800 employees, SN is responsible for most of the production of official statistics in Norway. SN may, however, differ from some other National Statistical Institutes in two ways, which also may influence the choice of technology and the IT challenges; SN has a relatively large research department and is increasingly dependent on large administrative registers as an input to its production of statistics.

2. Based on the experiences over the last years moving from a mainframe to a UNIX platform and client-server solutions, it is easy to see that technological changes require more time and resources than foreseen, and that there are

¹ Summary prepared by Jan Byfuglien.

several challenges to master the management of IT within a statistical institution:

- Any technological change should be carefully modelled and designed in close co-operation with the producer of statistics in order to meet their requirements (handling of large files requires different platforms and solutions from building sophisticated analytical models);
- In a decentralised organization (which new technology may encourage), good co-ordination is important to achieve synergy and common solutions and working methods;
- Development projects should be well-organized and evaluated on a regular basis;
- Decisions on technological change must be made clear by top management, and followed by information and the necessary resources for implementation;
- New technology introduced should already have been tried out in other similar institutions;
- General commercial solutions should be sought rather than specific in-house development;
- Learning from other NSI's, and possibly concrete co-operation on solutions, is essential;
- Use of external consultants may be necessary, but this requires the corresponding internal resources to ensure follow-up of results;
- SN has a major challenge in maintaining and developing critical IT competence which underlines the need to find "safe" and standardized solutions.