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Topic II: Secure communications and data confidentiality

ELECTRONIC DATA REPORTING FROM MUNICIPALITIES AND BUSINESSES.

SOME EXPERIENCES FROM TWO PROJECTS IN NORWAY

Contributed paper

Submitted by Statistics Norway ¹

Summary

1. Statistics Norway has two major projects in progress involving electronic data reporting from external agencies and companies. These two projects are called KOSTRA and IDUN. With these two projects, we have been able to offer our respondents the opportunity to deliver questionnaire forms electronically, by using the Internet or by sending it by e-mail.

2. By replacing the existing paper-based forms with electronic forms, Statistics Norway hopes to achieve the following benefits:

- ?? Enhancing the quality and consistency of data and statistics on the use of resources in local government administrations in Norway, and to improve comparability between information from different local administrations;
- ?? Collecting, compiling and disseminating statistical information in this field with fewer resources in terms of money and manpower;
- ?? Improving the quality and speed of the exchange of information with business companies in order to reduce businesses workload, both real and emotional.

¹ Prepared by Magne Hopland.

3. Statistics Norway also wants to give each respondent:
 - ?? Feed-back on their own statistical information;
 - ?? Possibility for simple statistical analysis of their own data;
 - ?? Links to relevant statistics or market information;
 - ?? Basic information about their own enterprise or business in the Enterprise and Business Register, and an opportunity to update information located there.

4. These two projects address electronic data reporting in two different ways: in KOSTRA, which offers electronic data reporting for all municipalities and counties in Norway, the respondents fill out their forms offline and send it to Statistics Norway by email as an attachment. IDUN, on the other hand, offers electronic data reporting to businesses and commerce, and the respondents log on to a web site at Statistics Norway where they fill in their questionnaire forms online.

5. The handling of security issues in these two projects are different, partly due to the fact that one project is based on offline reporting while the other is based on online reporting. Furthermore, there are differences related to the sensitivity of the information provided.

6. In KOSTRA some forms may contain private information. These forms must be treated with strict confidentiality, and must not come into the hands of unauthorized persons. The Data Inspectorate therefore has demanded that these sensitive forms must be encrypted at the respondent's side and that the encryption process take place in the respondent's secure network. Once they have encrypted the files they can send them as attachments to an email to Statistics Norway. When it comes to encryption strength the Data Inspectorate has demanded minimum 56-bit encryption, but Statistics Norway uses 128-bit encryption for these sensitive questionnaire forms.

7. On the other hand, IDUN has no forms containing what we call private information, and Statistics Norway has therefore no obligation to encrypt the information received in this process. However, since some of the information can be considered to contain information that may be of interest for rival businesses and for people that deal with the stock market, Statistics Norway has decided to apply encryption of the information. This procedure will also ensure that the businesses using this service feel safer using electronic data reporting. The encryption used for IDUN is a 128-bit SSL connection between the respondent and Statistics Norway. This connection encrypts the traffic between both sides, and the respondent can authenticate Statistics Norway's server so that they know that they are communicating with Statistics Norway and not someone pretending to be.

8. This paper will give a short description of the two different projects, before taking a closer look at IDUN and KOSTRA's reporting chain and the handling of security.