The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) of Norway's Performance Audit of ICT Government Administration in the Justice Chain

The presentations are based on the performance audit rapport, Document 3:12 (2011–2012) The Office of the Auditor General's investigation of the management of ICT in the criminal justice chain was submitted to the Storting (the Norwegian parliament) on 31 May 2012.

Background and Objectives for the Audit

The justice chain administrates and uses a large amount of information. Information and communication technology (ICT) are therefore an important instrument to accomplish knowledge based judicial policy and administration.

The police, the courts of justice and the Correctional Services make sure that criminality are investigated, prosecuted, convicted and sentenced. Efficient electronic interaction between these organizations in the judicial chain has been a goal to receive better information flow and collaboration across the sub-sectors.

Previous audits from the OAG have shown that the police have had extensive challenges with their ICT systems and that the lack of overall ICT management has, among other things, weakened coordination in the criminal justice chain.[1] Previous The Storting has stipulated that efforts to improve ICT systems must be strengthened.

The audit objective was to assess how the Ministry of Justice and Public Security has discharged its responsibility for efficient case processing through developing and applying ICT in the criminal justice chain. The periods of time reviewed are 2009–2011.

The following topics will be discussed in this paper:

1. Conditions for efficient electronic interaction between the actors in the justice chain; the police, the courts and the Correctional Services.
2. Police Services: Measurement of time usage related to administrative tasks with a view to assess potential productivity gains in the police.

[1] Document 3:10 (2009–2010) *The Office of the Auditor General's investigation into police efforts against organised crime*. Document nr. 3:13 (2007–2008) *The Office of the Auditor General's follow-up investigation into effectiveness in the criminal justice chain*. Document nr. 3:5 (1998–99) *The Office of the Auditor General's investigation of the management and co-ordination of IT activities in the justice sector*. Document 1 (2009–2010) and Document 1 (2010–2011).

Conditions for Efficient Electronic Interaction between the Actors in the Justice Chain; the Police, the Courts and the Correctional Services

Methodology

The report is based on documents received from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the police, the courts and the correctional services. Data was collected via post, verified interviews and police statistics. In addition, a time tracking survey was conducted in eight selected police districts.

To answer how the Ministry of Justice ensures their responsibility for a more efficient use of ict in the justice chain, various documents was investigated;

- *Supplementary letter of allocation* to the sub-sectors from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the National Police Directorate
- *Annual reports* from the sub-sectors
- *Dialog documents* between the Ministry of Justice and The National Police Directorate, The Norwegian Courts Administration and The Norwegian Correctional Services
- *Reports* about ict-administration in the sub-sectors

Further there were several interviews with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the sub-sectors in the justice chain to explain the ict-challenge in the sector.

Results

The three sub-sectors use a lot of the same information, and the OAG concludes that better information flow and collaboration across the sectors will contribute to more efficient administrative procedures. The audit shows that few concrete steps have been taken to reach the goal of electronic coordination.

There are almost no interactions between the sub-sectors ict-systems. Common for all systems are that they are old and are developed in a way that they can't interact with each other without adjustment. In 2003, a pilot project (Stifinnerløsningen) was started to gain knowledge with electronic interaction between the sub-sectors. Further development on the system stopped, and the interaction has not been improved between the sub-sectors. Nine years later, in 2012, most of the official documents are sent between the sub-sectors in paper versions.

The sub-sectors have perceived the management signals from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security as unclear. No overall plan for development and operation of ICT management has been prepared. The OAG recommends that the Ministry's manage ICT work with more clarity, and develop a common overall rolling action plan based on the ICT strategy for the justice sector. The OAG is pleased to see that the agencies were given clear requirements in this regard in the allocation letters for 2012.

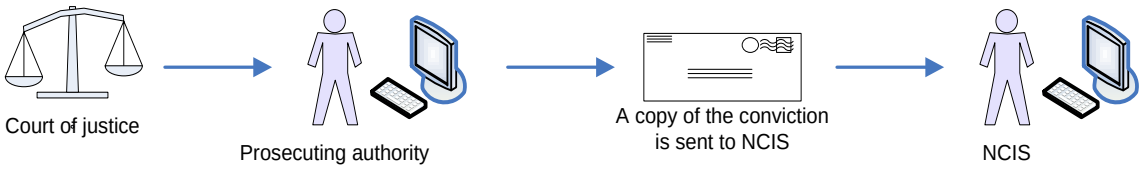
One explanation for the standstill in the development is that the sub-sectors prioritize their own needs. The sub-sectors depend on much of the same information, and it is important that the development of a new criminal justice system by the police takes the other sub-sectors' need for electronic coordination into account.

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security has created several fora for ICT cooperation in the justice sector. The ICT board has existed for more than ten years without a mandate. While extensive research has been done, none of the foras have taken steps to achieve the objectives of electronic coordination. The OAG recommends that the Ministry provide the ICT boards with mandates that clarify their responsibilities and powers.

For example, it is unsatisfactory that the *Norwegian Criminal Code of 2005* and *the Police Register Act of 2010* have not entered into force because a comprehensive adaptation of the police case processing system must be carried out first.

It is encouraging that the Ministry adopted a new ICT strategy in 2011, and that the police have started to upgrade their IT infrastructure and overhaul their criminal justice systems.

An example of a procedure that could have been done electronic is the registration of convictions in the national register of sanctioned persons (SSP).



1. The court of justice sends the convictions to the prosecuting authority
2. The prosecuting authority register the convictions in the police administration system
3. A paper copy of the conviction is sent to NCIS (National Criminal Investigation Service) for quality assurance and registration in the national register of sanctioned persons

NCIS informs that they annually use 2.7 FTE (full-time equivalent) to register this information, which could be directly transferred electronic from the court of justice into the national register. The quality assurance showed in 2008 that the registration of 1,500 convictions contained errors. Electronic transmission would limit the possibility of this kind of errors.

If the court of justice had registered the conviction themselves, the information could have been available to the rest of the judicial chain.

Police Services: Measurement of time usage related to Administrative Tasks with a view to assess potential Productivity Gains in the Police

Methodology

Ahead of the time tracking study of time police in the there were meetings with users of the polices ICT administration system, with the National Police Directorate which owns the system and National Police Computing and Material Service which supports and develops the system. Ahead of the study, the methodology was presented to The Justice department, who gave useful input. Relevant statistics for the years 2010 and 2011 were received from National Police Directorate, and were used in the analysis afterwards.

Eight police districts were selected to participate in the time tracking study. The selection was based on size of the police districts and the number of offences for profit in the period 2006–2011. All police districts use the same ICT administration system. In the time tracking study the largest police districts were asked to register more cases than the smallest.

Five tasks - that was identical executed in the police districts - were selected. The selected tasks only represents parts of the hole criminal proceeding process - but the results indicates the resources the police can save with better ICT systems. The five tasks were identified in cooperation with the National Police Directorate, National Police Computing and Material Service and users in Oslo Police District.

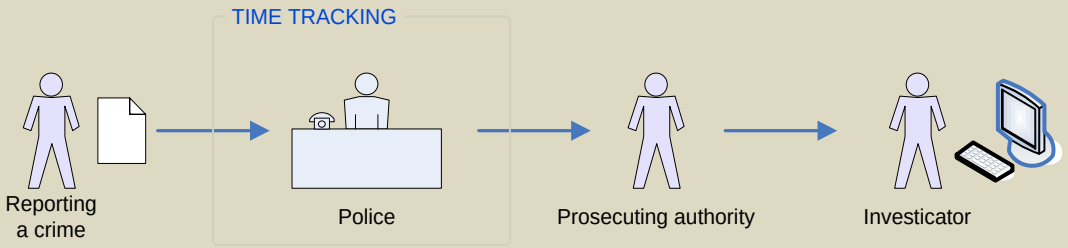
Tracing time spend on

1. Registering the reporting of a crime, after the police has received the report in the police reception
2. Registration time by the police after receiving of a report
3. via the internet
4. Registering the decision not to prosecute
5. Retyping information due to the fact that the data connection between two ICT systems (BL and STRASAK) is broken
6. Copying documents before they are sent to the main proceedings

A spreadsheet (Excel) with a time recording function was sent to 75 officers, and the time used in the work processes were continuously recorder over a two weeks period in the summer 2011. To calculate the average time form Task 1, Task 2 and Task 3, it was required nearly 400 registrations per task. The study was extended by two weeks to acquire sufficient data to analyse the numbers.

Results

Example: Personally reporting a crime at the police station (Task 1)



- The public reports minor crimes (daylight robbery) personally by filling out a paper form at the police station.
- The police then scan the paper form to make it electronically readable. Information from the form is then manually typed into the police administration system (BL).
- The cases are then distributed to the investigators by the prosecution authority

In the study, the police tracked the time they used to scan the form and type the information into the ICT system. In the time tracking study, 410 cases were registered for this task.

The calculations were then limited to daylight robbery. In Task 1 there were 329 registrations of type. Average time in minutes was converted to hours. Then hours were multiplied by the number of minor crimes in 2010 and 2011 to get the number of full-time equivalents (FTE). The calculation used 1360 hours working year. Time used to meetings, travel, further education etc. are deducted.

Table 1 Calculation of time for Task 1, Task 2 and Task 3

	Number of registration	Average time in minutes and seconds	Number of cases		Time used (hours)		Time used (FTE)	
			2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Task 1	329	7,24	100 229	93 670	12 288	11 484	9,0	8,4
Task 2	386	6,42	25 437	33 134	2 839	3 698	2,1	2,7
Task 3	438	0,50	142 491	137 628	2 003	1 935	1,5	1,4
Sum							**12,6**	**12,5**

If the police hypothetically could save five minutes For Task 5 (Copying documents), then the calculation showed that the police could save nearly 4 FTE in 2011. For most registrations, the time used to copying documents was more than five minutes, so probably the police could save more time.

The accounts of the Norwegian Police Directorate and the National Police Computing and Material Service show that the police spent much of their ICT development funds on consulting services in the period from 2009 to September 2011. The OAG recommends that the Ministry considers measures that ensure transfer of expertise in the ICT area to the Police Directorate.

A time tracking study of the amount of time police spent on recording reports and decisions not to prosecute in their case processing system shows a potential gain of 13 to 16 FTEs for these actions alone.

An examination of how long the police use to record reports and decisions not to prosecute shows that improved ICT systems can reduce the amount of time spent by 13 to 16 FTE. New ICT systems are expected to provide significant resource savings in the criminal justice process. The OAG indicates that a time saving of 3-5 minutes in 50 work processes in 150,000 cases could equal between 280 and 460 FTEs.

While there is great uncertainty regarding this estimate, it nevertheless shows that improved ICT systems can free up a lot of time for the police. And there is reason to believe that the courts and correctional services could also reap great benefits.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security

- Develop a common overall rolling action plan based on ICT strategy for the justice sector
- Follow up the action plan in the annual supplementary letter of allocations with specific performance measurement and demands for more performance-oriented reporting by the sub-sectors.
- Consider developing incentives so that the sub-sectors will prioritize electronic interaction higher
- Consider measures to ensure transfer of expertise in the ICT area to the Police Directorate and the National Police Computing and Material Service
- Ensuring that the development of the new ICT police system take into account other sub-sectors need for electronic interaction, including extensive re-use of information
- The Ministry should also determine the starting time for the introduction of the new ICT police system

The Minister of Justices reply

- The Minister of Justices argues in her reply that she seriously consider the comments that the OAG has to ICT management in the judicial chain
- The Minister of Justices is concerned that the justice sector shall achieve the aim for more electronic interaction in the judicial chain
- ICT is important for the organizations in the judicial chain to be able to solve the tasks safely and effectively

The Standing Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs

The Innst 46 S (20012-2013) The Office of the Auditor General's investigation of the management of ICT in the criminal justice chain comment the document

The Standing Committee on Scrutiny and Constitutional Affairs finds that the Ministry of Justice and Public Security carefully notes the recommendations provided and takes these into their future work with ICT.