

Abstract

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The target and action programme for social welfare and health care
- the programme's implementation and effect on local authorities

The target and action programme for social welfare and health care is a four-year programme approved by the Government which specifies development targets, recommended measures and those responsible for implementing them. The programme's primary purpose is to give local authorities guidelines and recommendations concerning the arrangement of social welfare and health care. The first target and action programme was issued in 1999 and covers the period 2000-2003.

The goal of the present audit was to determine how the target and action programme for social welfare and health care, as one tool of information management, guides local authorities in arranging social welfare and health services. The audit also evaluated whether the target and action programme meets set objectives, how well the programme has been administered and whether state administration has implemented recommendations aimed at supporting local authorities. The aim was to produce new information concerning the programme's implementation and effectiveness which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health can take into consideration when it prepares the next target and action programme in 2003.

The audit's main conclusion is that the direct effect of the target and action programme on social welfare and health services arranged by local authorities has been small. Although social welfare and health services have been developed in line with recommendations, the programme's direct effect on positive development has been weak. This can be attributed to the programme's content and implementation.

Local authorities consider the content of the target and action programme to be reasonable and in the right direction. The managers of social welfare and health departments are fairly well acquainted with the programme and regard it as important background material for planning as well as an expression of the direction in which the state wishes for activities to be developed.

From local authorities' viewpoint, the programme's content is extremely broad, however. There are many recommendations aimed at local authorities and these also concern other areas besides social welfare and health care. The programme's broad scope makes it more difficult to handle and use the programme at the local level.

The programme's content is also disjointed. Recommendations grouped under the same target and aimed at different parties seldom form a clear operational whole in which the connections between recommendations are clear and recommendations support one another. The

programme is mainly a collection of individual recommendations and does not support broad development work at the local level.

The systematic handling of the programme in social welfare and health departments and the comparison of recommendations to the situation at the local level have been rare. Social welfare and health boards have only noted the existence of the programme and municipal boards and councils have not handled it at all. The programme has remained an internal programme paper for the social welfare and health department, which is in conflict with the programme's cross-administrative content and recommendations requiring political decisions.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's personnel resources in administering the programme have been small. This has been visible in deficiencies in administering programme funds as well as programme monitoring and information. Funds appropriated to support the implementation of the target and action programme have also been small and local authorities have not received new resources in this way to implement recommendations. State projects designed to support local authorities have seldom been broad enough so that local authorities could obtain significant support for their own work.

The audit report proposes development measures so that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health can improve the programme's effectiveness and implementation.