



Riksrevisjonen

Office of the Auditor General of Norway

The Office of the Auditor General's investigation of the authorities' efforts to ensure good air quality in urban areas

Document 3:3 (2015-2016)

Delivered to the Storting 11/24/2015

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The document is in Norwegian

Summary

Background and objective of the audit

Air pollution is harmful to health, and according to the Norwegian Institute of Public Health, the pollution levels that normally occur in Norwegian cities and towns have a negative impact on health. Road traffic is the predominant source.

Norway has had national air quality targets since 1999, with 1 January 2010 as a deadline. It has been an objective since 2001 that transport policy shall contribute to achieving the objectives.

The aim of this audit was to assess the authorities' efforts to ensure good air quality. The audit sheds light on the development and status in 14 Norwegian municipalities and urban areas that have such high concentration levels of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide that they are required to monitor pollution. The audit covers the period from 2005 to 2014.

Findings and recommendations

Local air quality is not in accordance with established targets

- Eleven of the 14 municipalities that monitor particulate matter levels are still far off the national target for particulate matter.
- The nitrogen dioxide level in Bergen, Drammen, Oslo, Trondheim and Stavanger has repeatedly exceeded the regulatory limit since 2010.
- The target structure in the area provides various targets of variable status and are only partially comparable. Dealing with the target structure is complex and challenging for municipalities.

The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) recommends that the Ministry of Climate and Environment simplify the target structure.

The municipalities' compliance and the Norwegian Environment Agency's monitoring of the Pollution Regulations are inadequate for reaching air quality targets

- In the period until 2014, several municipalities had not prepared assessments of possible measures in line with requirements.
- Thanks to the Norwegian Environment Agency's follow-up of municipalities after 2013, more municipalities have prepared such reports.

The OAG recommends that the Ministry of Climate and Environment ensure that the Norwegian Environment Agency steps up its guidance and follow-up of municipalities in their capacity as pollution authorities.

Central government transport policy instruments can contribute to good air quality to a greater degree

As a result of the methods for pricing air quality and environmentally-friendly means of transport, concept and feasibility studies largely fail to capture the impacts on air quality.

Distribution of responsibilities and tasks across sectors and levels of government make it difficult to achieve local air quality targets

- The Ministry of Climate and Environment has few instruments of its own in this field, and is dependent on the facilitation of local policy instruments by the Ministry of Transport and Communications, and that local authorities implement them. The municipalities can experience that they have limited opportunities to direct the Norwegian Public Roads Administration to implement measures. The Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Public Roads Administration can claim that some municipalities fail to adopt available instruments due to local political controversy.
- The OAG believes that the current division of responsibility between sectors and levels of government can give rise to pulverisation of responsibility and an inability to decide on and implement effective measures.

The OAG recommends that

- In cooperation with the Ministry of Transport and Public Roads Administration, the Ministry of Climate and Environment makes it clearer to municipalities which measures are available and implementable, and what effect they will have on local air quality.
- The Ministry of Climate and Environment and the Ministry of Transport and Communications review the division of tasks and responsibilities between relevant sectors and levels of government with a view to more efficient use of policies and goal achievement.

Ministry/ministries:

- Ministry of Climate and Environment