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Evaluation of Tørn kommune

Learning and Development Program for Better Use of Human Resources





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This report evaluates Tørn, a national learning and development programme run by KS, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities. Tørn supports municipalities in developing and testing new ways of organizing and delivering health and care services. The evaluation draws on four complementary data sources: qualitative interviews in 12 case municipalities; observations of digital network gatherings; document analysis; and a web survey with 464 responses from 80 municipalities.

The evaluation examines Tørn from three complementary perspectives.

As a national policy instrument, Tørn appears highly relevant and well aligned with the long-term challenges facing the municipal health and care sector. It provides a framework for organizational transformation by addressing structural and organizational factors associated with staffing challenges, including part-time work, the use of competence, and service organization. In doing so, it complements traditional policy approaches centred on recruitment and education by focusing on how existing resources are organized and deployed. Approximately 230 municipalities have participated in the programme, contributing to a shift from increasing staffing levels towards making more effective use of the existing workforce. At the same time, the programme depends on municipalities having the capacity and commitment to undertake sustained organizational change. Because such processes require considerable time and resources, broad national impacts are likely to emerge gradually.

As a learning programme, Tørn combines locally driven development work with structured opportunities for shared learning. Municipalities address locally defined challenges between network gatherings, supported by KS advisers and anchored in tripartite cooperation between employers, unions, and employees. Participants consistently identify the network gatherings, peer learning, and tailored guidance as the programme's most valuable components. The technical tools receive more mixed assessments, with many municipalities requesting greater flexibility and more practice-oriented templates. Overall, the programme's greatest strength lies not in the tools themselves, but in the combination of sustained support, tripartite anchoring, and participation in a national learning network.

As a local development initiative, Tørn has contributed to tangible, although uneven, organizational improvements. The most common measures involve new approaches to task allocation, followed by changes in working-time arrangements, service-based staffing, and competence development. Municipalities report reduced reliance on temporary staff, more efficient workflows, stronger working environments, lower sickness absence—although these reductions have not been systematically measured—and improved service quality. Importantly, these improvements have generally been achieved without increasing costs.

The evaluation also shows that successful implementation depends on sustained effort and strong organizational commitment. Municipalities that pursue too many initiatives simultaneously often underestimate the time and resources required. The most significant challenge remains uneven organizational anchoring. While engagement is

generally strong among service managers and frontline staff, support from senior municipal leadership has been more variable, although it has strengthened over time.

Overall, Tørn functions primarily as a catalyst for organizational change. Rather than providing ready-made solutions, it equips municipalities with the methods, learning processes, and collaborative structures needed to develop sustainable improvements adapted to local conditions.

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