CASE: DANISH NATIONAL LABOUR MARKET AUTHORITY

DATA WAREHOUSE AT THE CENTRE OF SUCCESSFUL DECENTRALISATION AT THE DANISH NATIONAL LABOUR MARKET AUTHORITY

With a new Data Warehouse and targeted use of key figures, the Danish National Labour Market Authority has created an extremely efficient foundation for the new, decentralised management at 77 job centres. Better overview and strong control tools contribute to obtaining maximum benefit from the funding.

- For the employment system, the local government reform in Denmark led to a decentralisation of the entire infrastructure, the distribution of responsibility and the financial control.

- Without Platon we would not have been able to reach our target as far as IT is concerned. Today we have a system which supports the new decentralised structure and creates benefits both locally and centrally. It works quite satisfactorily.

Søren Tingskov, Head of Division
Danish National Labour Market Authority

The above is the clear message from Christian Solgaard. As Special consultant at the Danish National Labour Market Authority, he is very familiar with the aftermath of the local government reform. He is part of a unit which had to define, design and implement a new IT system in the course of a few months in 2006 which would be able to handle the transition from a system with 14 AF regions with local offices to a new, decentralised structure with four regions and a nationwide network of job centres of varying sizes.

On 1 January 2007, the doors opened to 91 new job centres. 14 of these are local authority pilot job centres, whereas the remaining 77 centres have the Danish Labour Market Authority as their superior body. A new task compared with the local AF offices in the old structure is that in addition to the employment efforts, they are also to be in charge of finance control – a responsibility including among other things the welfare to work efforts towards up to 80,000 unemployed people within a budget of DKK 1.4 billion.

FROM IT PATCHWORK TO STREAMLINED DATA WAREHOUSE

It was a huge challenge, not just for the job centre employees, but also for the National Labour Market Authority with the overall responsibility for the job centres.

- The change affected all nooks and crannies, not least on the system side. The employment services were used to a certain level of freedom in connection with the IT support for the finance control. That left us with a mix of systems developed by the centres and customised central systems which were not suited to support the decentralisation and the new distribution of responsibility. Therefore we chose to start from scratch, and after an initial survey of the finance control model, we established a new system in cooperation with Platon based on a central Data Warehouse, says Christian Solgaard.

ACROSS THE FINISHING LINE IN EIGHT MONTHS

The National Labour Market Authority has never regretted this decision. With Platon's assistance, they succeeded in completing the IT infrastructure by 1 January 2007 in spite of a very tight time schedule.

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Søren Tingskov, Head of Division at the National Labour Market Authority, points out that one of the major challenges was the time factor.

- We started our cooperation with Platon in April 2006 and had to complete requirement and design specifications, infrastructure and transfer of data from the source systems within a period of eight months. It seemed an impossible task, but with help from Platon we succeeded, and we have received lots of praise for that.

In spite of the very tight time schedule, the National Labour Market Authority has obtained an extremely well-working system which will also meet future requirements. The Central Data Warehouse collects and analyses financial data from four source systems and translates the data into key figures. The number of data is, according to Christian Solgaard, overwhelming. But by means of a data model which translates the different source data into comparable figures and the Data Warehouse machine, the huge amount of data is translated into 60 key figures.

CENTRAL OVERVIEW

The new system has been named ØKO-AMS and today forms the joint control and reporting platform for the 77 job centres, 4 operating regions, and the National Labour Market Authority.

- The dominant advantage of the system is that we can on an ongoing basis follow up on the consumption of funds both at the job centres and at the regional and the central level. At the National Labour Market Authority, we can very easily get an aggregated overview of the nationwide consumption so that we can intervene if there is a discrepancy between activities and appropriations. That is a classic finance control task, but in a strongly decentralised universe, and the Data Warehouse does the job brilliantly, says Søren Tingsskov.

LOCAL CONTROL

Also locally, ØKO-AMS will have an extremely important role as the day-to-day control tool for the employees at the job centres. The appropriations are distributed among the individual job centres who are responsible for allocating the money and establishing the best possible employment effort. The important thing is to find the right welfare to work initiative for each unemployed person within the financial limits – which is a major challenge, as Christian Solgaard explains,

- In theory it sounds simple, but in reality it is quite complex. Partly because the activity and the costs of the different types of welfare to work efforts are registered in different source systems, partly because the job centres need to know not just the costs paid, but also the costs allocated in connection with for example training courses. The Data Warehouse is a very central part of the puzzle. It also creates financial overview and is the foundation for efficient control in the job centres.

PORTAL FACILITATES RUNNING-IN

The ØKO-AMS system is available in a portal so that all employees, regardless of their location, have access to the same interface with consistent terminology. The portal solution is a deliberate choice on the part of the National Labour Market Authority as a means of making the system as useful and accessible as possible. That has contributed to facilitating the running-in of the system, which is decisive in order to ensure that the new decentralised structure can handle the task.

- Some employees at the job centres are not experienced within IT and control, and it has been decisive for us to make sure that they want to use the system. They need to be confident that it will work, so that we can avoid duplicate book-keeping and additional accounts in the drawers. I am highly satisfied with how far we have come on the existing conditions. We have a strong, future-orientated system which supports the new structure, Søren Tingsskov, Head of Division at the National Labour Market Authority, concludes.

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FACTS

The national employment system's ØKO-AMS system obtains data from four source systems: the IDA system for budget, estimate and allocations, Amanda, Navision Stat and Anden Aktør Disponeringer. The data is translated into 60 key figures which form the basis of 10 permanent reports which partly support the ongoing reporting and partly act as control tools at the local job centres.

The system is installed on two servers at the National Labour Market Authority and on a development server at Platon's office. The system is based on technologies and tools from Microsoft: SQL Server, Integration Services, Analysis Services, Reporting Services and ASP.NET and on Platon's Meta Framework.