**Impact assessment of introducing standard data format - accounting**

**Tax Administration**

The tax authority receives already today the accounts from companies on data connected with auditing and VAT-control. Since there is no requirement to the format the information can be delivered, the Tax Administration must use auditors with special competence to perform mapping of the IT environment and conversion of the accounting files for further import to the Tax Administration's programs. Auditors without this special competence usually carry out the further work on the control.

An introduction of a standard data format where it is clearly defined which information that must be included in the individual field in the accounting file, would give both the sender and the recipient of the accounting files a common understanding of what kind of information the data fields in the accounting file contains. This will contribute to a simplification of the dialogue between the taxpayer and the auditor, and misunderstandings can be avoided.

Importing of accounting files to the Tax Administration's analysis program may be automated, and in most cases, the auditor may do this without the assistance of others with the special competence as mentioned above. This will reduce the time spent on receiving and preparing accounting files., and may also reduce the risk of misunderstanding as there will be no intermediary between the taxpayer and the auditor receiving the accounting information.

Introduction of a standard data format may enable further development of tools for accounting analysis, and it will be possible to develop and introduce standard analyzes tools t. This may reduce the auditor's time spent during the control, and provide increased quality through analyzes of larger parts of the background. The business world

**Industry**

The consequences of the introduction of SAF-T may be different for the different parties of the business community. The consequences for the persons liable to bookkeeping may be other than the consequences for the business sector's assistants, such as accountants and auditors. The system vendors that will facilitate accounting systems will also be affected directly in a different way than the rest of the business community. The chapter provides an overview of the consequences for the various parties in the business sector.

**Impact on the Accountants**

For businesses who keep the accounts electronic, there is already a requirement for electronic reporting today. In practice, this applies to most businesses. SAF-T will mean that the delivery will take place in a standardised data format. For business and industry, possible benefits of this can be increased efficiency and reduced use of resources in reporting and control. This could contribute to controls that are more accurate and reduced processing time. Standardisation may also contribute to enhanced internal control. Overall, this could contribute to reduced costs for reporting and ongoing updating.

**Impact on the accounting industry**

There are clear expectations from the accounting industry that the IT-systems are talking together. Streamlining the value chains in the accounting industry is a continuous process to ensure good profitability. The systems and data flow must not become an obstacle to efficiency improvement, implementing a standard format will contribute to a more efficient dataflow between systems.

The accounting industry's use of accounting data for processing and analysis for the benefit of SME customers is relatively low. Good analyses can make better decisions for the customers of the agency. Better decisions will strengthen the companies' profitability. However, the functionality of the system depends on the developer of the accounting system; thus, SAF-T may motivate an increased use and development of new systems for the accounting industry that converts information into insight to drive more profitably and efficiently. It becomes easier to retrieve data from the accounting systems to analysis tools for further processing.

It will cost little money to move data from an old version of the accounting system to an updated version, or to a new system. Low costs will help to move and choose the right system for the agency.

Implementing SAF-T may contribute to more competition in the accounting industry. It will be easier to switch accountants at the same time as the customer maintains the history of accounting and management data.

Implementing a standard format will also make it easier to export requested data to the control unit, i.e. the accountants can more effectively transfer data to control authorities on behalf of their clients. This will also result in lower costs for customers.

There may be lower storage costs for the accounting firm, and thus, the business sector. The accounting agency does not have to maintain a reading license on the old accounting system to retrieve old accounting data, as SAF-T will be compatible backwards in time and help achieve the requirement that accounting data be readable throughout the retention period.

**Impact for the auditor**

Internationally developments are moving towards more and more use of data analyses. As it is today, importing the data into analysis tools is both costly and time consuming. The introduction of a standard data format will help increase the use of data analysis.

When auditing companies with a certain transaction volume, some of the audit procedures are sample-based. The use of data analysis will serve as the basis for easier stratification of the population and provide a more risk-based selection.

**Impact for system developers**

Challenges in Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems differ in size, complexity and technological platform.

Large systems are often adapted to the customer, and these systems may require tailored scoping when developing SAF-T exports. Smaller systems are more standardised and a standard export of SAF-T can be developed to all customers.

Systems based on old technology can face technical challenges in the development of exports. The solution for these can be to develop an independent module for export based on a more modern technology.

The system vendors with standardised solutions based on modern technology should not have any challenges in implementing these exports.

Today, the ERP providers must develop and maintain a larger number of export and import routines against different systems. For new providers, this can be a major obstacle to establishment. Such routines are both time consuming and costly to develop and maintain, by using a standard format, this will be cost saving for all parties.

Today, it is difficult to move data between ERP systems, and many users have problems with switching systems. A standard format will make it easier to migrate from one ERP system to another.

The format will be a Norwegian format and not an international format. However, this should not constitute a major disadvantage. An international format would anyway have to adapt to Norwegian circumstances. There should be small challenges for an ERP provider to maintain a conversion from a Norwegian format to an international format, if necessary.