

Virtual Storytelling: 7-year-olds make new friends while listening to stories via LifeSize HD Video Conferencing

A newly retired teacher tells exiting stories to over 200 children in 17 different locations via LifeSize.

Troms County, Norway

The 'virtual storyteller,' Åse Kristiansen, made an impact that will not soon be forgotten for the children present for her session. This is just one of many great examples of how local communities are using video communications. These digital centers across Norway are now being used for town meetings, education and lectures.

Norway has a relatively advanced telecommunications structure. The municipalities of Troms together and funded a company together named Bredbåndsfyltet Troms (The broadband county Troms) in order to produce a well developed broadband infrastructure. As a result, local LifeSize partner, Avikom, has been able to install many of these digital centers in these northern Norwegian rural areas, typically located in the city municipalities, libraries or schools. The creation of Bredbåndsfylket Troms resulted in one of the best developed broadband structures in the country, as well as creating the possibility to install these centers in all municipalities. The result -- fully equipped LifeSize HD video conference rooms that are easy to use and accessible to anyone.

In brief, Norway is divided into 19 first-level administrative regions called fylker (counties) and 430 second-level regions called kommuner (municipalities). The fylke is the intermediate administration between state and municipality. The municipalities are responsible for primary education, outpatient health services, senior citizen services, unemployment and other social services and economic development. In 1930 there were 747 municipalities in Norway. Today, there are 430, and there is great political pressure for even further mergers. Troms, with a population of 155,000 people is a forward-thinking community with a growing understanding of how utilizing video communications allows people to communicate without having to travel as often.

Avikom delivers these video solutions along with access to meeting hosts who set up the technology for the participants on both sides, as well as pedagogic training in using the equipment. This allows participants to remain in their rural areas of Troms but still meet with people all around the world -- opening up an entirely new world of businesses, even in remote districts. Some families are able to see one another daily because travel isn't as much of a necessity. Others can connect with their professors and actually get a degree from where they are located, without having to constantly travel into the city.

