

# Agenda 2030.

## How to reach the goals and measure success at the local level

NORDREGIO REPORT 2021:8



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# 1. Introduction

In September 2015, leaders from 150 countries adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit. Since then, governments and public authorities as well as businesses, civil society associations and other stakeholders have begun to implement the SDGs. Local and regional authorities are particularly important actors in this process. According to a widely cited study by Misselwitz and Salcedo Villanueva<sup>1</sup>, up to 65% of the SDGs may not be achieved if local stakeholders are not proactively involved in their implementation. Consequently, supporting subnational actors in localising the SDGs must be a priority in the Nordic countries and elsewhere.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has supported local authorities' work with the 2030 Agenda via research projects and stakeholder events since the adoption of the 'Generation 2030' programme in 2017.<sup>2</sup> As part of this programme, Nordregio published the report "Global goals for local priorities: The 2030 Agenda at local level" in 2018. The report identified 27 municipalities in the Nordic countries that were frontrunners in working with the SDGs, and described their work, lessons learned and challenges in working with the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

Three years have passed since the publication of the report, and many more municipalities have joined the 27 frontrunners in localising the SDGs. In the winter of 2020/2021, Nordregio hosted a webinar series on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers to offer some of these municipalities a platform to share their experiences. The webinars also intended to foster dialogue and exchange between local and regional authorities and other actors working with the localisation of the SDGs. The webinar sessions focused on selected SDGs. Participants discussed how to link the global goals to ongoing or planned work in areas such as climate action, digitalisation, consumption and production, inclusion, gender equality and city planning. A final webinar focused on how to measure progress in working with the SDGs.

This report, *Agenda 2030. How to reach the goals and measure success at the local level*, summarises the main insights and lessons learned from the webinar series. The report is structured as follows: the first section provides background information on the webinar series, the topics that were addressed, as well as the participants that registered for the series. A map then shows the municipalities and regions that were in the focus of the webinar series. The main part of the report consists of six sections, one for each webinar. In each of the six sections, we highlight the main lessons and good practices that our keynote speakers shared with us. The texts also highlight challenges in the work with the SDGs and describe how they were addressed by the municipalities and regions. Each good practice example is described in a free-standing short text. Due to this structure, the report does not have to be read from front to back. Readers may choose the stories that are most relevant to their work with different SDGs. In most sections, we also highlight relevant research findings and interesting Nordic activities from networks and NGOs. These are presented under the heading 'Nordic collaboration and more examples'. Several Nordic associations of local authorities and regions supported the webinar series by providing valuable input and feedback, and by presenting their work with the SDGs during the webinars. A final section of this report describes how these associations support regions and municipalities in localising the SDGs. The concluding section summarises key lessons from the webinar series, as well as remaining challenges.

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1. Misselwitz, P., & Salcedo Villanueva, J. (2015). The urban dimension of the SDGs: Implications for the New Urban Agenda. In Sustainable Development Goals and Habitat III: Opportunities for a successful New Urban Agenda (pp. 13–22). Brussels: Cities Alliance.
  2. Nordic Programme for Agenda 2030. Programme description 2017-2020: Generation 2030, Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers. Examples of relevant publications and events that were funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers include: Beyersdorff, S. and Lanthén, E. (2018): Baltic 2030: Bumps on the Road. How the Baltic Sea States are performing on the SDGs, Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers; Gíslason, S. and Hallfreðsdóttir, S. (2020): Roadmap for sustainable consumption and production in Nordic small communities, Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers; Halonen, M. et al. (2017): Sustainable development action – the Nordic way: Implementation of the Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Nordic Cooperation, Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers; Knowledge-sharing event 'Agenda 2030 at the local level: What's next?' 28. October 2019, Stockholm.

Throughout this report, we will not only state how different good practices from Nordic regions and municipalities relate to the SDGs, but also how they contribute to reach the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision "Our Vision 2030". This key steering document was adopted by the Nordic prime ministers in August 2019 and sets the ambitious goal to make the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. To reach this vision, the Nordic countries priorities three strategic goals during the period 2021 to 2024: a green Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region and a socially sustainable Nordic Region. Our Vision 2030 is also linked to the 2030 Agenda and constitutes part of the Nordic countries' contribution to reaching the SDGs.

The period between 2020 and 2030 is often described as the 'decade of action' to accelerate the work on the SDGs. We hope that this report can inspire even more municipalities and regions in the Nordic countries and autonomous regions to work with the 2030 Agenda and increase efforts to reach social, economic, and environmental sustainability in the coming years.

**Stockholm, April 2021**

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## 2. The webinar series, Dec 2020 – Feb 2021

In recent years, Nordregio has conducted many interviews with officials from local authorities in the Nordic countries. When asked how the Nordic Council of Ministers could support their work with the localisation of the SDGs, respondents often asked for more opportunities to share knowledge and exchange experiences with other local authorities. Interview partners also frequently mentioned that they would appreciate information on how to measure progress in the work with the SDGs. This webinar series aimed at addressing both requests. All six webinars provided a forum for sharing of good practices across the Nordic Region, discussing challenges and networking. In addition, the last webinar in the series focused on indicators and how to evaluate progress in local work with the SDGs. The webinar series included the following topics:



### **Climate mitigation and adaptation:**

Examples of Nordic climate action (SDG 13)

2 December 2020

### **Digital solutions to increase access to public services (SDG 10)**

9 December 2020

### **Planning for equal rights:**

Integrating gender and youth perspectives in SDG work (SDG 5, SDG 10)

13 January 2021

### **Sustainable consumption and production:**

Procurements for a green and just transition of markets (SDG 12)

27 January 2021

### **Planning for sustainable housing and green cities:**

Can physical structures change behaviours? (SDG 11)

10 February 2021

### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

How to measure progress in the work with the SDGs? (all SDGs)

17 February 2021

The six webinar topics were chosen after dialogues with several Nordic municipal associations, which highlighted policy areas and questions that are currently of particular interest to the members in their networks. Based on a survey that was completed by all registered webinar participants, the topic on monitoring and evaluation gained most interest (Figure 1).

The webinar series had a wide reach. Almost 400 people registered for the webinars, and the webpage which provided information on the webinars was one of Nordregio's most visited websites during 2020/21. The series was targeted at elected politicians and officials working in regional and local authorities, and around 40% of the audience belonged to this group. Nonetheless, the webinar series also attracted attention among national authorities, NGOs, researchers, students, consultancies, and other actors (Figure 2).

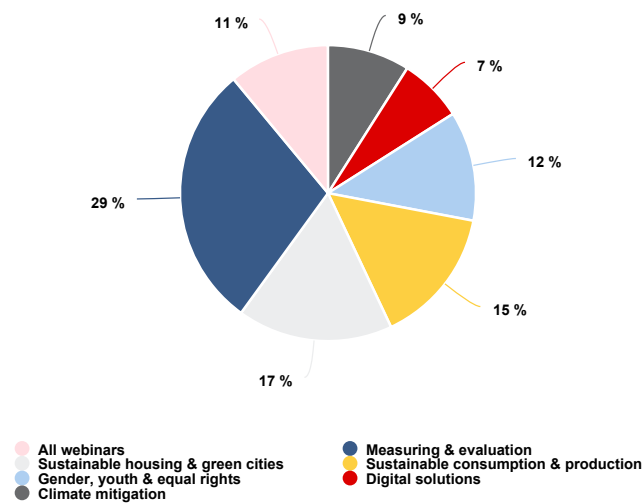


Figure 1. Interest per webinar topic.

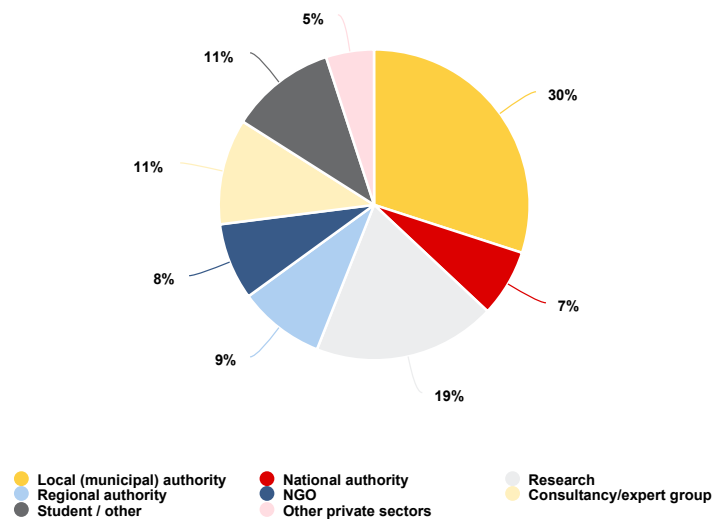


Figure 2. Background of participants.

Among the webinar participants representing local and regional authorities, one third answered that they were at an advanced stage in working with the 2030 Agenda, while another third did not yet work with the SDGs or were just getting started. Other participants from local and regional authorities had worked with the 2030 Agenda for a while, but progress had been slow. Some could not provide information on their work status. It was the goal of the webinar series to offer information and input for all these different groups – to provide inspiration for public authorities at the beginner stage, to showcase tried and tested best practices to those who had lost momentum in their work, and to highlight ideas on how to define and evaluate even more ambitious targets for frontrunners. To achieve this goal, participants were asked to answer a few questions about their work with the SDGs upon registration to the webinar series. The webinars were tailored as far as possible to meet the stated interests and questions raised by the participants.

[All webinars were recorded and can be watched online at Nordregio's Youtube channel.](#)



### 3. Climate mitigation and adaptation: Examples of Nordic climate action



The first webinar in the series focused on SDG 13 on Climate Action. This SDG urges the global community to take action to combat climate change and its impacts. Five targets are defined for SDG 13, amongst them the goal to 'integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning' (target 13.2) and to 'improve [...] institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning' (target 13.3). In this broad context, Nordregio's webinar focused on how regional and local authorities can contribute to climate mitigation. Speakers and participants discussed strategies to reduce emissions at a local level, and how to measure progress in this area.

By working on these goals, Nordic municipalities do not only contribute to reach SDG 13, but also the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision "**Our Vision 2030**". This key document defines the priority area 'A green Nordic Region' with the goals to increase the use of renewable energy sources and achieve carbon neutrality until 2030.

[Watch the webinar on Nordregio's Youtube channel.](#)



Ii, Finland.

Photo: Municipality of Ii.

### 3.1. How can greenhouse gas emissions be reduced in a municipal context?

#### Ii (FI) – ca. 9,900 inhabitants

Ii is a small Finnish municipality in the Region of North Ostrobothnia (Finnish: Pohjois-Pohjanmaa) by the Bothnian Bay. The municipality has defined ambitious climate and sustainability goals. By 2050, Ii aims to produce no greenhouse gas emissions and no waste anymore and to stop overconsumption. To achieve these goals, Ii has shifted to renewable energy sources and low-carbon solutions. The municipality is also moving towards a circular economy approach in which all materials and values circulate and inhabitants live an environmentally friendly lifestyle. These goals are not specific for Ii but are shared by all municipalities that are part of the **Network of Finnish Sustainable Communities (FISU)**.

Ii defined its first climate target in 2012 to decrease carbon emissions by 80% until 2020, as compared to 2007. The municipality has almost reached its goal: The most recently available data from 2018 shows that carbon reductions amounted to 68%, as compared to 2007. Ii has implemented many different projects to reduce their emissions, including a change from fossil fuel to clean energy production for heating and energy supply. Private companies in Ii are now producing ten times more hydro, wind and solar energy than is used in the municipality, and wood chips are used for heating. Ii also improved the energy efficiency in municipal facilities.

**The low-density challenge:** Ii's local authority has also decided to influence mobility patterns. Population density in Ii is low, which creates challenges around the organisation of public transport. Nonetheless, the municipal authority created a new town plan to boost sustainable mobility options such as walking, cycling and public transport usage. The local authority uses electric cars for their staff, and the residents can rent these cars on evenings and weekends. The local authority has also invested in charging points for electric vehicles to encourage private citizens to buy electric rather than fossil-fuel cars. Further focus areas are food management and education. The municipality encourages citizens to choose locally produced products and prioritises sustainably produced food to be served in schools and kindergartens. All schools in the municipality include climate change and sustainability topics in their curricula.

One of the key conclusions drawn from the municipality's climate work is that a reduction of emissions can lead to savings, rather than costs. It can increase income for local companies, land

and forest owners, and create jobs and business opportunities. To achieve such effects, political leadership is essential. Based on li's experience, the best results can be achieved when grassroots movements from the population, business interests and political leadership are combined to reduce emissions and implement more sustainable solutions. li has gained international recognition for its inclusive and successful approach to minimise greenhouse gas emissions. Amongst others, the municipality won the **European RegioStars Award** in 2017 and the **Innovation in Politics Award** in 2019.

Further reading:

<https://www.li.fi/en>



Oslo, Norway.

Photo: Anne Sofie Bjørge.

## 3.2. How can climate budgets be used to achieve climate goals?

### Oslo (NO) – ca. 697,000 inhabitants

Oslo has one of the most ambitious climate targets of any capital city in the world. When it comes to climate mitigation, Oslo aims to reduce its emissions by 95% until 2030, compared to 2009. In practice, Oslo will thereby reach a zero-emission status within the next 10 years. To reach this goal, Oslo started to work with climate budgets in 2017. It was one of the first cities in the world to do so. **The climate budget** is a tool to operationalise the cities' climate goals and climate strategy. It is fully integrated in the cities' annual financial budget.

The first step to create a climate budget consists of defining the boundaries of the system. This can be done in several ways. One option is to develop a climate budget for the local administration. Another option is to create a climate budget for the municipality as a geographical unit, as it is done in Oslo. The choice depends on data availability, resources, and available knowledge. Oslo's climate budget focuses on direct emissions generated within the municipality. This includes, for instance, emissions from road transport, stationary fuel combustion and waste that is generated and disposed in the city.

As a second step, data and knowledge on historical levels of greenhouse gas emissions in the municipality have to be identified. Such data are then used to create a baseline for emissions in the reference year (here: 2009) and a projection of emissions against which progress can be compared. Based on this knowledge, the municipality can set goals and define the extent to which it wants to cut emissions, and over which period of time.

Thirdly, measures need to be implemented to reach the emission goals. Oslo's measures and instruments are identified in the annual climate budget. Where possible, the emission impact of each measure is estimated. The budget also clearly states which department or unit in the local administration is responsible for its implementation. The climate budget defines what needs to be done, how, when and at what cost, making it an efficient governance tool. The overview of planned measures and their impact on emissions can also show decision-makers if enough is being done to lower emissions towards the desired target level. It is important to note that not all measures can be quantified, and their effect cannot always be isolated. Oslo's climate budget currently includes 14 quantified measures and a larger number of non-quantified measures.

**The implementation challenge:** Within the public administration of the city of Oslo, the climate budget is managed by the Department of Finance in close collaboration with the Department of Environment and Transport. All other departments are encouraged to propose measures to the budget. They may also be responsible for implementing different measures. In this case, the departments report on their progress using result indicators three times a year. In this way, the local political leadership and administration can follow up on all measures and intervene if some do not deliver the expected emission reductions. As a public communication tool, the city also publishes a **climate barometer** consisting of 17 indicators that track the reduction of emissions in the city. The city of Oslo has furthermore established a **local climate agency** in order to provide the city government and agencies with technical support and policy advice on climate measures. The climate agency is collaborating with the private sector, research institutions and NGOs.

The city of Oslo suggests that transparency, communication, and collaboration are key to reach climate goals. To share knowledge with others, Oslo, Hamar and Trondheim have developed a guideline for local and regional authorities on how to create and develop climate budgets. At the same time, the city is continuously improving its methodology, adapting to new experiences and knowledge gained.

#### Further reading:

- [www.klimaoslo.no](http://www.klimaoslo.no)
- <https://www.klimaoslo.no/wp-content/uploads/sites/88/2021/02/Climate-Budget-2021-Oslo.pdf>

## 4. Digital solutions to increase access to public services



SDG 10 sets the goal to reduce inequalities both within and between countries. Nordregio's second webinar focused on the first of these aspects. Discussions during the webinar revolved around inequalities in access to public services between rural and urban areas in the Nordic Region. Keynote speakers and participants discussed how digital tools and solutions may contribute towards reducing some of the existing gaps, for instance, by increasing access to healthcare and improving mobility. Challenges in the digitalisation process were identified, such as a lack of digital infrastructure, and possible steps forward with digital solutions were highlighted. Reducing inequalities is not only a core goal of the 2030 Agenda but is also a key element of 'Our Vision 2030'. One of the priority areas in this key document is to achieve a socially sustainable Nordic Region that is equal and interconnected.

[Watch the webinar on Nordregio's Youtube channel.](#)



Region Västerbotten, Sweden.

Photo: Sofia Berggren/Region Västerbotten.

## 4.1. How can digital solutions improve access to healthcare services in sparsely populated areas?

### Region Västerbotten (SE) – ca. 273,000 inhabitants

In Sweden, regions and municipalities share responsibility to provide healthcare and social care services to the population. While the 21 regions are responsible for general healthcare planning and organisation, the municipalities provide elderly care and care for people with disabilities. In the region of Västerbotten, the regional and local authorities are collaborating closely to improve access to healthcare services in small and sparsely populated communities. The **Centre for Rural Medicine**, founded in 2014, is a part of this collaboration. The Centre is a research and development unit within Region Västerbotten and is located in the municipality of Storuman. Its work focuses on promoting good quality health and social care in rural areas. The Centre also focuses on health care services directed to the Sami population, as well as education and recruitment of healthcare staff.

Many projects conducted by the Centre for Rural Medicine are done in collaboration with local authorities, universities and private companies, and deal with how to bridge long distances using different types of digital tools and telemedicine. This topic is of particular relevance for the region of Västerbotten, since it is one of the most sparsely populated areas in Europe and experiences challenges in upholding physical healthcare facilities across the region.

**The distance challenge:** One example of how digital tools are used to provide healthcare in Västerbotten is the introduction of **virtual health rooms**. Such rooms allow patients to book remote consultations with healthcare specialists that are located elsewhere in the region or in other parts of Sweden. The virtual rooms are also equipped with digital tools that make it possible to measure blood pressure, blood glucose levels and similar health indicators. The results of these measurements can directly be stored in a database which is monitored by a doctor or nurse. The first virtual health room was opened in the village of Slussfors within Storuman municipality and is located 60 km from to the closest healthcare centre. Overall, the virtual health room combines two advantages: it brings healthcare closer to people in sparsely populated communities and reduces the need to travel.

The Centre for Rural Medicine has also recently participated in a Nordic research project on healthcare and care through distance-spanning solutions. One of the goals of this project was to map good solutions and practices in the Nordic countries and support regions and municipalities in implementing them. Amongst others, the project identified a **roadmap** that has frequently been used in Norway. The roadmap describes how to successfully implement distance-spanning health and social care solutions in six steps. It is now used in several municipalities in Västerbotten to implement digital solutions, such as home monitoring devices in elderly care.

Further reading:

- [www.regionvasterbotten.se/gmc](http://www.regionvasterbotten.se/gmc)
- <https://nordicwelfare.org/publikationer/distance-solutions/>
- [www.healthcareatdistance.com](http://www.healthcareatdistance.com)



Vejle, Denmark.

Photo: Unsplash.com

## 4.2. How can digital solutions enhance mobility in rural areas?

### Vejle (DK) – ca. 117,000 inhabitants

Around half of the municipality's population live in the town of Vejle, and the rest reside in the more rural surroundings of the town. As in many other sparsely populated areas in the Nordic Region, public transport options in the rural parts of Vejle municipality are limited and difficult to uphold. In 2017, the municipality decided to address this challenge and enhance mobility options in its rural areas through digital solutions. Vejle therefore became a part of the European **MAMBA project** (Maximised Mobility and Accessibility of Services in Regions Affected by Demographic Change, October 2017-September 2020). The project focused on maximising

mobility and accessibility of services in rural regions. It was funded by the European Union Baltic Sea Region Programme and included 15 partners from six countries located around the Baltic Sea. As part of the MAMBA project, Vejle received funding for a pilot project in the village of Smidstrup-Skærup.

The pilot project co-financed the development of the app **NaboGO** in a collaboration between Vejle municipality, the mobility start-up NaboGO and the transport company Sydtrafik. The NaboGO app is a carpooling service. The goal behind the app is to encourage people to share car rides if they drive from rural areas to nearby towns and cities. Car owners can register in the app if they plan trips or regular commutes to nearby urban areas such as Kolding or Odense and are willing to offer other people in their community a ride. People who do not own a car can use the app to search for rides to their destination of choice. Drivers can pick up passengers at meeting places that are located around the village area of Smidstrup-Skærup and in the nearby cities. The NaboGO app does not only connect drivers and potential fellow passengers, it also allows people to see how their shared car ride can be combined with other public transport options such as bus or train rides. As a result, people can plan their entire trip from home to their final destination, combining different modes of transportation. Drivers get a small compensation for sharing their car ride, based on a fixed rate per kilometre, and payments are made through the app.

**The challenge to attract users:** After a first successful pilot project in Smidstrup-Skærup, the app is now available in 25 municipalities in Denmark and Sweden, with plans to introduce it in other Nordic countries and the Benelux countries. NaboGO depends on people's willingness to sign in on the app and share their rides. To anchor the app in local contexts and achieve widespread use, NaboGO always establishes close partnerships with municipal and regional authorities, public transport providers, the educational sector, as well as village communities and companies. These partners help to inform the population about the new opportunity to commute and travel together.

The long-term goal of NaboGO is to create better mobility offers in rural areas, make it more attractive to live there and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from car use. NaboGO also aims to reduce traffic congestion in urban areas and to supplement public transport.

#### Further reading:

- [www.nabogo.com](http://www.nabogo.com)
- [www.mambaproject.eu](http://www.mambaproject.eu)

### **4.3. Nordic collaboration and more examples**

## **Nordic research on the role of digital solutions in reducing inequalities**

Senior Research Advisor Linda Randall is one of Nordregio's experts on digitalisation. When considering the role of digital technology in reducing inequalities, her research has led to two main conclusions:

1. It is important to recognise that, despite the Nordic countries' position as digital frontrunners, digital capital remains unequally distributed in the region. Digital capital is here understood as a combination of digital access (i.e., tools, equipment and connectivity), and digital competence (i.e. the knowledge and confidence to use available digital tools). For instance, young people tend

to be more familiar with digital solutions than older people, cities often have better access to fast broadband than rural areas, and ICT specialists who develop digital tools are often men.

2. When introducing digital solutions in rural or urban communities, it is important to identify which people in the target group have less digital capital than others. Specific efforts should then be targeted towards these groups to reduce inequalities. Activities that support the development of digital capital may include providing access to infrastructure and digital tools, as well as capacity building activities. If such support is not given, people with less digital capital may be excluded from the available opportunities. To ensure that digital solutions reduce territorial inequalities in access to services and information, all population groups have to be actively enabled to use them.

Further reading:

- <https://nordregio.org/publications/governing-the-digital-transition-in-nordic-regions-the-human-element/>
- <https://nordregio.org/publications/rural-perspectives-on-digital-innovation-experiences-from-small-enterprises-in-the-nordic-countries-and-latvia/>

## ***Digital solutions and opportunities for rural communities***

- **Hela Sverige ska leva** (English name: Rural Sweden, short form: Hela Sverige) is a Swedish national civil society organisation for rural development that represents 5.000 local community groups and 40 organisations, such as NGOs. Hela Sverige advocates for the development of good living conditions across Sweden, and for a greater balance in opportunities and access to services between rural and urban areas. The organisation considers that digital solutions may offer many opportunities for rural communities. More people will, for instance, be attracted to move to rural areas as possibilities to work and study long-distance improve, and more people that currently live and work in rural areas will be able to stay. Digital tools may also improve access to healthcare and other types of public services in more sparsely populated areas.

A remaining challenge is access to very fast broadband, which is not available in all parts of Sweden. Around half of all rural areas currently do not have access to ultra-fast broadband with speeds above 100 Mbps. Hela Sverige advocates that a focus should be set on providing this type of fast broadband to all municipalities in rural areas, so they can take full advantage of the opportunities that digital solutions offer.

Further reading:

<https://helasverige.se/>

## 5. Planning for equal rights: Integrating gender and youth perspectives in SDG work



The Nordics are global champions when it comes to gender equality and equal rights. Nonetheless, further efforts are needed to integrate immigrants into communities, make the labour market less gender segregated, stop sexual harassment and gender-based violence, and engage children and youth in decision-making processes. Speakers of the third webinar shared some of their best practices in this context and explained how they work with gender equality as a steppingstone for a more inclusive urban development (SDG 5). They also outlined how they promote the inclusion of all population groups in local planning processes (SDG 10).

The best practice examples presented during this webinar also contribute to creating a socially sustainable Nordic Region as defined in the Nordic Council of Ministers' 'Our Vision 2030'. This strategy document places emphasis on reducing gender segregation on the Nordic labour markets, improving immigrants' integration and combatting social exclusion.

[Watch the webinar on Nordregio's Youtube channel.](#)



Arendal, Norway.

Photo: 'Med Hjerter For Arendal'.

## 5.1. How can "silent voices" be involved in city development and planning?

### Arendal (NO) – ca. 45,000 inhabitants

The municipal authority of Arendal has a long tradition of striving to involve all groups of society in making the city a more attractive, safe and inclusive place to live in, particularly those groups that are not used to participating in public meetings and consultations. The local authority considers that the knowledge and experience of all inhabitants can contribute to the development of the municipality and offers arenas for everyone – especially newcomers – to share their diverse knowledge and experiences. The SDGs are an important tool in this work as most people can relate to the goals and contribute to their achievement at the local level.

One important goal of the local authority is to ensure that the citizens of Arendal can contribute to the public debate with their own ideas, initiatives, and solutions. City officials are often present in public spaces, taking up contact with people to ask them about their needs and wishes. In order to reach population groups that are less visible, Arendal has employed a range of tailor-made approaches: the municipal authority organised focus groups in prisons to reach inmates and contacted interest organisations of blind or disabled people. They also established links to recently arrived newcomers by asking longer-established immigrants from the same countries of origin for help with translating their input to the overall societal plan for the city. Through this range of activities and approaches, Arendal seeks to ensure that public participation in city developing and planning is as broad as possible.

The citizens of Arendal are not only invited to share their expectations and ideas with the city administration but are also encouraged to take ownership and responsibility for new initiatives. For instance, a group of young people in Arendal, among them many with a migrant background, co-created the programme "**Urban Young**" (Urban Ung). As part of the programme, young people were hired by the city administration to arrange activities on public places during the Covid-summer of 2020 and to keep these places safe. As a result, criminality rates declined. Volunteers in Arendal also arrange '**people meet people**' events, where citizens of Arendal can come together in an informal setting to get to know new people, establish connections and build trust.

**The funding challenge:** In order to implement its vast range of citizen-driven initiatives, Arendal relies on the participation of voluntary organisations. In addition, the local authority trains its staff and partners on how to successfully apply for national and EU project funding. Such funding has been used to build a new meeting place for young people in the city – **the House for Culture** ("Kulturkammeret"). Here, cultural activities, projects and courses are offered for different target groups, including a specific project for girls with a refugee status.

Further reading:

- <http://medhjerteforarendal.no/>
- <https://www.arendal.kommune.no/politikk-og-organisasjon/kommuneplan-planer-og-styringsdokumenter/kommuneplan-2020-2030/>



Kópavogur, Iceland.

Photo: Vilhelm Gunnarsson.

## 5.2. How can children and youth be involved in urban planning and policy making?

### Kópavogur (IS) – ca. 38,000 inhabitants

The municipality of Kópavogur is implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and aspires to obtain the status as a **"Child Friendly City"** as defined by a UNICEF-led initiative with the same name. The UNICEF initiative supports local authorities in realising the rights of children at local level and provides a network of actors who wish to make cities and communities more child-friendly. One of the key goals of the local authority of Kópavogur is to increase children's and young people's influence on municipal affairs, especially those that affect them most. Kópavogur's work in this area is closely related to achieving SDG 5 (Gender quality) and SDG 10

(Reduced inequalities).

As part of their work to become more child friendly, the local authority has hosted several "World Café"-style meetings with children aged 9 to 15 years in two schools. One of the meetings was specifically directed at children with an immigrant background. In addition, the city administration conducted individual interviews with children with special needs. During the meetings and interviews, children were asked how they could be better involved in decision-making within the municipality. The children offered a range of ideas, including to place idea boxes in schools where children can leave their ideas or concerns; to undertake surveys on questions that concern children via social media; to organise regular meetings at schools between children and politicians; and to facilitate regular communication between the municipality council and the children via youth centres. In addition, the interviewees with special needs contributed with suggestions on how to make processes more inclusive and public spaces more accessible.

**The challenge to achieve long-term impact:** Based on the results of this consultation process, the municipality of Kópavogur is now working to organise two meetings per year in each school to discuss issues related to children. In addition, the municipality will organise an annual conference where children's representatives discuss ideas related to school life and their opportunities or obstacles in the municipality. All children will have the opportunity to comment online on the results of the conference. The municipal council will then strive to implement the suggestions and ideas from the children. The municipality has also created and installed different apps on school iPads, which children can use to directly get in touch with city authorities. A remaining challenge for future work is how to ensure that all children can be reached, including those from marginalised groups and younger children.

Further reading:

- <https://www.kopavogur.is/sdg>
- <https://childfriendlycities.org/>
- <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- <https://pub.norden.org/nord2020-012/>



Umeå, Sweden.

Photo: Peter Steggo.

### 5.3. How can gender equality be promoted in urban planning and development?

#### Umeå (SE) – ca. 130,000 inhabitants

The city of Umeå has a long experience in promoting gender equality in urban planning and development. In 2019, the city celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its gender equality work. As part of the celebration, the local administration published a book entitled **"Gender, power and politics: Thirty years of gender equality work in Umeå municipality"** (original title: "Kön, makt & politik: Trettio år av jämställdhetsarbete i Umeå kommun"). This book summarises the experiences and knowledge around gender mainstreaming that was gained in Umeå during the last three decades. The goal is to ensure that this knowledge does not get lost and may inspire actors outside the municipality.

Umeå follows a holistic approach to gender equality. The city aims to create equal living conditions for men and women, and to ensure that all inhabitants of the municipality have equal power and influence to shape society, as well as their own lives. All sectors and departments of the local administration contribute to reach this vision.

Gender equality is not only seen as a goal in its own right but is also considered a tool to reach other local goals. For instance, Umeå promotes gender equality as a means to reduce child poverty. Immigrant women, especially those with low levels of education, face challenges in finding employment. Women's employment is crucial, since it is one of the factors that can reduce children's risk of growing up in poverty. The municipal authority of Umeå has, therefore, offered adult education courses to immigrant women in order to boost their employment levels and reduce poverty risks. The courses focus on improving physical and mental health, Swedish language and work skills, as well as increasing knowledge about gender equality.

Umeå also uses gender equality as a tool for urban planning, thereby linking SDG 5 (Gender equality) and SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities). In a recent project called **"Free zone"**, the local administration recruited a diverse group of young women and engaged them in redesigning a public square in the city. The young women expressed the wish to have a meeting place where they could meet and spend time without having to pay or being asked to leave. Together with the city administration, the group designed such a meeting place specifically

adjusted to their ideas and wishes. According to the local authority of Umeå, this project has been a success – not only in promoting gender equality in public spaces, but also in involving a group of citizens (young women) into planning processes whose voices are not usually heard in such contexts.

**The challenge to measure progress:** In order to follow up progress in its work with the SDGs, different departments in the local authority collaborate with Umeå's statistical office. Indicators and data related to gender equality for instance show that fathers in Umeå take more parental leave days to take care of their children than their peers in other parts of Sweden, and that boys and girls are equally likely to participate in sports.

Further reading:

- <https://www.umea.se/jamstalldhet>
- <https://genderedlandscape.umea.se/>

#### **5.4. Nordic collaboration and more examples**

### **Nordic collaboration for gender equality and inclusion**

The organisation NIKK (Nordic information on gender) is a Nordic cooperation body under the Nordic Council of Ministers. **NIKK** collects and disseminates knowledge and research on gender-related topics in the Nordic countries. It also administers the Nordic Gender Equality Fund. This fund supports collaborative projects that generate new knowledge on gender issues or facilitate exchanges of experience. Municipal and regional authorities, NGOs, research institutes and SMEs are eligible to apply for funding during annual calls for proposals. Previously funded projects have analysed questions such as how to enhance labour market opportunities for immigrant women, and how to prevent sexual harassment in the healthcare sector.

Further reading (on the Nordic Gender Equality Fund as well as a new Nordic LGBTI-fund):  
<http://www.nikk.no>

### **The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life**

The region of **Ostrobothnia** in Finland (in Finnish: Pohjanmaa, in Swedish: Österbotten) supports its municipalities in promoting gender equality through an ambitious programme. Amongst other activities, the regional authority encourages and supports all municipalities in adopting the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. All but three municipalities have already signed the charter as of March 2021. The regional authority has also launched a campaign to reduce gender segregation on the labour market by awarding the title “**Equality company of the year**” to private companies. Finally, the region collaborates with schools and teachers to include gender aspects in curricula and to ensure that career advice given to students is free from gender stereotypes.

Further reading:

- <https://www.obotnia.fi/samarbete-och-intressebevakning/jamstalldhetsgruppen>
- <https://www.ccre.org/en/activites/view/11>

## 6. Sustainable consumption and production: Procurements for a green and just transition of markets



The Nordic populations enjoy high standards of living, but also stand out in global rankings as over-consumers of natural resources.<sup>3</sup> In order to effectively implement the SDGs in the Nordics, production and consumption patterns will have to change from a linear to a more circular and carbon-neutral standard. In Nordregio's fourth seminar, keynote speakers shared experiences on how local authorities can contribute to this process, both internally within their own organisation, and externally by cooperating with businesses, the educational sector, citizens, and other stakeholders. The goal to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns is also a key element of the Nordic Council of Ministers' 'Our Vision 2030'. The priority area 'A green Nordic Region' defines the goals, amongst others, to reduce the material footprint of inhabitants and increase local recycling rates. The speakers in this webinar series discussed how to achieve both goals.

[Watch the webinar on Nordregio's Youtube channel.](#)

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3. Beyersdorff, S. and Lanthén, E. (2018): Baltic 2030 Bumps on the Road. How the Baltic Sea States are performing on the SDGs. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, available at: <http://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1209827/FULLTEXT02.pdf>.



Lund, Sweden.

Photo: Unsplash.com

## 6.1. How can municipal authorities contribute to more sustainable consumption and production patterns?

### Lund (SE) – ca. 126,000 inhabitants

Lund is a pioneer city in working with sustainable development and climate change. The municipality adopted an environmental policy already in 1990, as one of the first cities in Sweden. More recently, Lund initiated the network '**The climate municipalities**' (in Swedish: 'Klimatkommunerna') which brings together cities, towns and regions that strive to be frontrunners in achieving a fossil-free future.

Lund's current sustainability policy is defined in two programmes - one focusing on social sustainability (2020-2030) and another focusing on ecological sustainability (2021-2030). These programmes clarify the municipality's approach to the 2030 Agenda and focus on several areas of priority. One of these areas is sustainable consumption and production. The municipality has defined six goals in this area that shall be reached by 2030. These include the aim to reduce annual consumption-based emissions of greenhouse gases to five tonnes per inhabitant; to set high and innovative sustainability requirements for all procurements; to ensure that all food served by municipal actors will have the least possible negative impact on the environment; and to reduce the amount of waste by 35% per inhabitant.

To achieve these goals, the municipal authority is implementing a range of activities. For instance, already 84% of the food that the city procures is organic and all school canteens offer vegetarian meals every day. The municipality also continuously reduces the amount of meat and milk products that are served and in autumn 2021 it will test the concept '**One planet plates**'. This concept was developed by the WWF and stipulates that a meal (dinner/lunch) should have a maximum climate impact of 0.5 kg CO<sub>2</sub>. Lund is also moving towards a more circular economy by hosting a so-called **leisure bank** where people can rent skis, skates and other sports equipment. In addition, local busses are driven by biogas.

While Lund has taken large strides towards meeting its goals, some challenges remain. Reducing consumption-based greenhouse gases and household waste still requires plenty of efforts. In

addition, none of the surface waters in Lund currently reaches the chemical and ecological status required by the EU Water Framework Directive and the amounts of pesticides detected in ground water are rising.

**The challenge to ensure regular external evaluation:** Lund measures progress towards achieving its goals by using indicators and annual reports. The city has also installed a **climate policy council** consisting of scientists from Lund University and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. The council monitors the local work, assessing if local policies are compatible with the Paris Agreement and giving advice on how to move forward.

Further reading:

[https://www.lund.se/bygga-bo--miljo/hallbara\\_lund/](https://www.lund.se/bygga-bo--miljo/hallbara_lund/)



Åland.

Photo: Therese Andersson (Visit Åland).

## 6.2. How can diverse actors be involved in the work with sustainable consumption and production?

### Åland (AX): ca. 30,000 inhabitants

SDG 12 cannot be achieved by public actors and organisations alone. Instead, contributions from all parts of society are required to change production and consumption towards more sustainable patterns. In its work with SDG 12, Åland has put a strong emphasis on engaging

diverse stakeholders. This work started in 2014 when Åland's parliament (Ålands Lagting) and government chose to implement a strategy towards total sustainable development until 2051. Total sustainable development here refers to a science-based definition according to which nature should no longer be subject to systematically increasing amounts of substances extracted from the Earth's crust (e.g. fossil fuels) or produced by society (e.g. synthetic substances). Degradation of nature should stop and all consumption and production in Åland should remain within the limits of these core principles.

In order to increase chances of success, the Bärkraft network was founded in 2015. It is a network bringing together all municipalities in Åland, as well as key businesses, NGOs, academia and private citizens. In a bottom-up process, and with contributions from several hundred people, Bärkraft developed a **Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland**. This agenda is the region's contribution to achieving the SDGs. Åland's agenda consists of seven goals, one of which is closely linked to SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production.

**The challenge to change behaviours:** The Bärkraft network identified a number of challenges that may restrict efforts to reach more sustainable consumption and production patterns in Åland. These include a lack of resources and tools, a culture in which high consumption has become a status symbol, a lack of a coherent political plan and support in moving the sustainability agenda forward. In order to address these challenges and achieve more sustainable consumption and production, the Bärkraft network puts a particular emphasis on changing values and behaviours. The network developed guiding principles that inform all companies, government institutions, municipalities, and other organisations on how to implement more sustainable behaviours and practices. In addition to focusing on public and private organisations and businesses, the Bärkraft network also addresses individual citizens and spreads information and knowledge on how to change cultures, values, and behaviours towards more sustainable lifestyles. The Bärkraft network establishes links between actors representing retail, wholesale, and consumers to encourage dialogue around sustainable production methods and consumption behaviours. The twenty largest companies in Åland have agreed to climate commitments.

A **council on sustainability and development**, consisting of 13 influential citizens from different sectors in Åland, is connected to the Bärkraft network. The council regularly follows up on progress towards Åland's sustainability goals. While much needs to be done, a strong asset is the ongoing effort to engage actors from all parts of society in a continuous dialogue and collaboration. It ensures that change is promoted through different projects in parallel and driven by heterogeneous actors, which increases the chances of a successful outcome. In 2019, the Bärkraft network won the **European sustainability award** in recognition for their efforts to achieve broad societal participation in their move towards sustainability.

Further reading:

[www.barkraft.ax](http://www.barkraft.ax)



Øyer, Norway

Photo: Henning Holmbakken.

### 6.3. How can public procurement accelerate the development of innovative solutions for a circular economy?

#### Øyer (NO) – ca 5,100 inhabitants

Øyer is a small municipality around 200 km north of Oslo. It includes the village of Hafjell, an alpine tourist destination that is particularly popular for downhill and cross-country skiing in winter, as well as downhill cycling and nature-based activities in the summer. Øyer and Hafjell host around 3.300 second homes. As a tourist destination, there is an extensive need for transportation to, from and within the area. At the moment, most of the transportation is done by car. However, several pilot projects have shown that locals and visitors would be open to changing towards more sustainable transportation modes if such offers were available.

**The challenge to promote innovative solutions:** To achieve a transition towards smarter and greener mobility solutions, Øyer takes part in a project entitled '**Innovative Procurements**'. In this project, public actors communicate their needs and ideas to the market and ask for innovative solutions. Within the project, Øyer has asked for competitive proposals on how to move towards more sustainable mobility in municipalities that are characterised by tourism and second homes. The project is currently ongoing, and the overall aim is to develop a comprehensive solution with different shared mobility options that are easily accessible for visitors and reduce or eliminate the need for private cars in the area. Importantly, these solutions shall be transferrable to other municipalities in the Nordic Region with similar characteristics and needs.

#### Further reading:

- [www.hafjell.no](http://www.hafjell.no)
- Sirkulær mobilitet i hyttekommuner – Innovative anskaffelser

## Nordic collaboration to implement SDG 12

**SUSTAINORDIC** is a Nordic platform and network composed of six design and architecture institutions and financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The initiators and project owners of SUSTAINORDIC are ArkDes and Form/Design Center. The network collects Nordic best-practice examples of sustainable consumption and production which they spread across the Nordics and internationally. It aims at stimulating the development of national policies to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. SUSTAINORDIC also aims to increase awareness of sustainable lifestyle choices among the population, since SDG 12 is one of the most challenging for the Nordic countries. SUSTAINORDIC interviewed 50 people from the public sector, academia, business and civil society and gathered their opinions on what needs to be done to improve Nordic performance on SDG 12. SUSTAINORDIC also identified around 150 innovative initiatives on sustainable consumption and production from around the Nordic Region. These initiatives and interviews are showcased in three Nordic Reports which can be downloaded free of charge at SUSTAINORDIC's website. **A manifesto for action** on SDG 12 is also available.

Further reading:

[www.sustainordic.com](http://www.sustainordic.com)

## 7. Planning for sustainable housing and green cities: Can physical structures change behaviours?



SDG 11 focuses on sustainable cities and communities and defines the goal to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'. This SDG includes diverse targets, for example to expand public transport (target 11.2), provide universal access to green and public spaces (target 11.7), enhance capacity for participatory human settlement planning (target 11.3), and reduce adverse environmental impacts of cities (target 11.6). Several of these goals overlap with the Nordic Council of Ministers' 'Our Vision 2030'. For example, the priority area "A competitive Nordic Region" includes the goals to increase public usage of busses and trains and to increase open space in cities that is accessible for all citizens. Nordregio's fifth webinar revolved around the questions of how Nordic cities and towns can support innovation for greener cities, how to promote sustainable urban mobility, and how to activate citizens in this process.

[Watch the webinar on Nordregio's Youtube channel.](#)



Lahti, Finland.

Photo: Unsplash.com

## 7.1. How can sustainable innovations and behaviours reduce the carbon footprint of cities?

### Lahti (FI): ca. 120,000 inhabitants

Lahti has been appointed as the **European Green Capital in 2021**. The municipality won a competition held by the European Commission in which different cities were judged according to their performance on twelve environmental goals. These include efforts in climate change mitigation, sustainable urban mobility, sustainable land use, green growth, waste management and energy performance. While Lahti's performance in some areas can still be improved, including sustainable land use, the municipality convinced the jury with its successful work in areas such as waste management and green growth.

Like many other Nordic towns and cities, Lahti can build on a long tradition in working with sustainability issues. In the 1980s, the municipality started to work with water management questions, and efforts were placed on restoring water quality in the badly polluted lake Vesijärvi. Since then, Lahti has improved sustainability in other areas like waste management and energy supply. Today, 97% of local waste is utilised in the circular economy and the municipality has fully phased out coal for city heating. Lahti aims to be carbon neutral by 2025, and 70% of its emissions have already been cut as compared to 1990. These cuts have mostly been achieved by working with energy solutions and local mobility.

Lahti also wants to promote innovation processes. One current focus area is the construction sector. The market for low-carbon construction is booming, and Lahti wants to support this development by collecting and spreading emerging knowledge and expertise. To that end, the municipality is building a **Carbon Neutral Construction Development Centre**. This Centre will gather information on carbon-neutral buildings and produce guidelines related to carbon-neutral construction. The Centre shall also create links between research and industry by organising funding and coordination, supporting development projects with pilot buildings in Lahti, and enabling new products to enter the market. Finally, the Centre will prioritise communication and education by sharing information, providing advice, and organising training on carbon neutral constructions.

**The challenge to engage citizens:** An additional priority area in Lahti is sustainable urban mobility. The municipality is implementing the so-called **CitiCAP-project** (Citizens' cap-and-trade co-created), which wants to change citizens' attitudes and behaviours towards mobility and promote the shift from private car use to sustainable mobility. As part of the CitiCAP project, Lahti has built a 2.5 km-long smart bicycle highway. Different smart solutions are tested there to increase sustainability and the safety of cyclists, including new solutions for energy saving lightning, safe bicycle racks and info screens for bikers along the highway. As part of the CitiCAP project, Lahti has also developed **the world's first personal app** for measuring and reducing citizens' emissions from transportation. People can download and use the app to measure the carbon footprint of their mobility choices. The app recognises whether people move by bike, car, bus or walk and shows the emissions coming from these different mobility modes. Users can then challenge themselves and earn credits by actively lowering their emissions through changed mobility and transport behaviours.

As a reward, people can exchange their earned credits for small services and products such as free bus tickets, free swim hall tickets or sustainable coffee. Local businesses from Lahti are involved in the project by providing such benefits. They profit from the collaboration by broadening their customer base. In 2020, Lahti tested the app in a pilot phase. 3,000 people downloaded the app, and 40% of the users cut down their mobility emissions during the pilot period. Lahti is now engaging in collaboration with other local authorities who are interested in introducing the app in their own municipalities. Throughout the year 2021, Lahti also engages in a large range of other activities, events and collaborations in the framework of its year as the European Green Capital. The dedicated website on "Green Lahti" mentioned below provides further information.

Further reading:

- <https://greenlahti.fi/en>
- <https://www.lahti.fi/en/>
- <https://www.lahti.fi/en/housing-and-environment/transportation-and-streets/citicap/>



**Aarhus, Denmark. Before and After.**

Photos: Google Streetview.

## 7.2. How can sustainable mobility be promoted in an urban environment?

### Aarhus (DK): ca. 353,000 inhabitants

Aarhus has ambitious sustainability goals. Amongst others, the municipality plans to reach carbon neutrality by 2030. A shift towards more sustainable mobility patterns is one of the components to achieve this goal. This includes making public space more attractive for walking, biking and public transport usage.

Aarhus implements different strategies and activities to influence mobility behaviours of the population and support more sustainable options. For example, the local authority is using the concept of the **"15-minute city"** as its guiding principle. This concept aims to have as many services and recreational facilities as possible within 15 minutes walking distance from people's homes.

**The challenge to reclaim public space from vehicles:** Aarhus has also increasingly reclaimed and remodelled public space that was previously reserved for car use. The Aarhus river, for instance, used to be paved over in large parts of the city to create space for roads and parking areas. Since the 1990s, the municipality has removed the pavement and made the river visible again. Space around the river is now used for cafés, seating areas, greenery or temporary installations.

The local authority is also working with street design to reduce public space for cars and free up areas for cyclists and pedestrians. A successful project in this area is Aarhus' work with remodelling street corners. In different areas of the city, sidewalks on the corners of streets have been expanded, narrowing the space available for driving. Street corners have been remodelled for three reasons: First, to reduce the turning speed of vehicles and increase safety; second, to reduce crossing distances for pedestrians, especially close to schools; and third, to gain road space that can be used for other purposes, such as greenery, benches, bike parking or containers for waste disposal. Citizens and businesses were strongly involved in planning the design of street corners via design workshops.

Further reading:

<https://www.aarhus.dk/media/7839/mobilitetsplan-aarhus-midtby.pdf>

## Research on walking environments and public transport

Associate professor Helge Hillnhütter from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology conducts research on walking environments and public transport. Amongst other questions, his research investigates how our urban environments should be designed to improve pedestrians' access to public transport. Three key findings have emerged from his research:

First, research shows that most people walk to public transport stops and spend close to 50% of the total travel time as pedestrians. Hence, to increase the number of public transport users, municipalities need to consider walking routes to and from public transport stops.

Second, walking environments influence pedestrians' emotions and perception of time. If people's walk towards a bus or train stop is experienced as stimulating and pleasant, they will be willing to walk longer and leave the car at home more often. If the walk to public transport stops is experienced as stressful, unsafe or boring, people will be more reluctant to choose public transport options.

Third, municipalities should therefore focus on creating stimulating walking environments that people experience as pleasant. Four environmental factors can promote public transport-related walking and walking in general. 1. Environments that are visually varied and pleasant. 2. Shops and services along walking routes that enable pedestrians to cater additional needs on their way to and from public transport. 3. Effective and soft street crossings without long waiting times. 4. Fine meshed pedestrian networks and obstacle free public spaces to enable direct access without having to walk detours.

Overall, municipalities can support public transport useage by improving urban environments for pedestrians. Combining strategies to support walking and public transport at the same time are more effective than focusing on walking and public transport separately.

### Further reading:

- <https://uis.brage.unit.no/uis-xmlui/handle/11250/2422928>
- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/23998083211002839>

## 8. Monitoring and evaluation: How to measure progress in the work with the SDGs?



The examples presented in this report show that local and regional authorities in the Nordic countries are active drivers in implementing the 2030 Agenda. Their work is of great importance, as it is estimated that up to 65% of the goals cannot be reached without the involvement of subnational actors.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, measuring progress in the work with the SDGs remains a challenge, since indicators and data are not always available at the local level. During the last years, many new initiatives and projects have emerged at national, Nordic and European level to support municipalities and regions in measuring progress and identifying areas of weakness and strength in the local work with the SDGs. In Nordregio's last webinar, keynote speakers discussed current challenges and some available solutions. They also shared their experiences and best practices in measuring progress with the SDGs.

[Watch the webinar on Nordregio's Youtube channel.](#)

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4. Misselwitz, P. & Salcedo Villanueva, J. (2015). The urban dimension of the SDGs: Implications for the New Urban Agenda. In Sustainable Development Goals and Habitat III: Opportunities for a successful New Urban Agenda (pp. 13–22). Brussels: Cities Alliance.



Kristiansund, Norway.  
Photo: Odd-Arild Bugge.

## 8.1. How can progress in implementing the SDGs be measured within an existing local governance system?

### Kristiansund (NO): ca. 24,000 inhabitants

Kristiansund started to work with the 2030 Agenda in 2016, and the city became a frontrunner in Norway in including the SDGs into key steering documents. The local authority currently works with 11 of the 17 SDGs and has added two local goals to the set. In their work with the SDGs, the local authority has placed a strong emphasis on measuring progress and evaluating the impact of different activities and programmes. The so-called **DIKAR model**, which was developed in India in the 1990s, guides Kristiansund's work in measuring impact and progress. The letters in the model name stand for *data – information – knowledge – activity – results*. Kristiansund uses the model in reverse.

First, when the local political leadership decides to emphasise work in a specific local competence area, expected *results* are defined. The local authority then identifies key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure progress towards achieving these results. Kristiansund uses two main sources to choose KPIs for the local work: key steering documents and taxonomies. Key steering documents and plans, such as regional area plans, city plans, and professional plans, define a number of goals and targets for the municipality. All of these plans are assessed by Kristiansund's development unit which challenges the plan builders to define measurable units for all defined goals and targets. Thanks to this effort, all plans that are used in Kristiansund have measurable goals. In addition to steering documents and plans, Kristiansund also uses taxonomy models to choose KPIs for their local context. Such taxonomies include, most notably, the SDGs with their targets and indicators. Kristiansund is also part of the **United 4 Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) network**. U4SSC is a UN initiative to achieve SDG 11 on sustainable cities and communities. This network has developed a set of 92 KPIs to measure

social, economic, and environmental sustainability in a city context. Finally, Kristiansund uses national indicators that are provided by Statistics Norway, the national statistical institute. Both sources – local plans and existing taxonomy models – provide Kristiansund with a core set of KPIs that are used to measure progress in the local work.

The local authority then decides on the *activities* or programmes that shall be implemented to move the KPI in the desired direction. In order to decide which activities and programmes will have the desired effects, the local municipality builds on existing *knowledge* from its own organisation, which may consist of qualitative *information* or quantitative *data*. Surveys, workshops and interviews may be conducted to fill potential data and information gaps. This process – building knowledge based on data and information, and defining activities, expected results and KPIs – is implemented for every goal and target that the city aims to achieve. It helps to visualise how each local programme and activity influences the progress towards reaching Kristiansund's local goals and the SDGs.

**The challenge to maintain motivation:** Kristiansund uses a corporate governance system, **Stratsys**, to implement these different steps and follow up progress in their work. In Stratsys, Kristiansund's local targets and SDG-related goals are treated like financials. Each goal is connected to a budget. Expenses, activities, and outcomes are reported and followed up on a monthly basis. Local politicians also receive monthly updates on how the municipality is progressing towards its goals. Stratsys allows every employee in the local authority to visualise and quantify how their personal effort has contributed towards reaching individual local targets or SDGs. This helps the local administration to keep focus and motivation.

Further reading:

[https://www.kristiansund.kommune.no/\\_f/p1/ia1a003e3-d813-428f-b848-cbe8ede21601/Kommuneplanens%20samfunnsdel%202018%20-%202030%20-%20h%C3%B8ringsversjon.pdf](https://www.kristiansund.kommune.no/_f/p1/ia1a003e3-d813-428f-b848-cbe8ede21601/Kommuneplanens%20samfunnsdel%202018%20-%202030%20-%20h%C3%B8ringsversjon.pdf)



Turku, Finland.

Photo: City of Turku.

## 8.2. How can a Voluntary Local Review be organised?

### Turku (FI): ca. 194,000 inhabitants

Turku is one of the first cities in Europe that have carried out a **Voluntary Local Review (VLR)** to evaluate their work towards achieving the SDGs on a local level. VLRs are the subnational equivalent to Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and can be used by local authorities to evaluate their work towards achieving the SDGs. Turku's work on their VLR started in 2019 after the inspiring examples of New York City and Helsinki.

Turku has an ambitious city strategy, entitled '**Turku 2029**', which is the year when the city will celebrate its 800-year anniversary. With its strategy, Turku has committed to act in line with the SDGs in all its activities. The city aims to reform and grow in ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable ways, thus creating comprehensive and sustainable welfare for its residents. For example, Turku aims to be carbon neutral by 2029 and wants to be a pioneer in socially sustainable urban and regional development.

The VLR has been an important tool to benchmark Turku's progress against the city strategy targets, to showcase local actions towards greater sustainability and to share their experience, nationally and internationally, in working with the SDGs. The review process has also helped with communicating the goals and measures of sustainable development both inside the local authority and to different interest groups. One of the goals of the VLR has been to increase cooperation and competence inside the local authority and to create a common vision for the city of Turku for sustainable development. Involving and engaging city residents and interest groups into working together to create sustainable future solutions has been of great importance in this process.

**The challenge to secure engagement from the entire local administration:** The Project Development Unit of Turku's local administration was responsible for compiling the report (VLR-team). Specialists from the whole city organisation, from spearhead projects and from different local entities participated in writing and drafting the VLR. The Mayor was the owner of the

process. This commitment helped to secure resources and engagement from all sectors of the administration. The Mayor's management group, consisting of all local authorities' division directors and directors of the groups and areas of responsibility, acted as the project steering group. Turku's city council approved the principal messages and highlighted goals for the first VLR report in March 2020 and the whole report at its meeting in June 2020. Overall, 150 experts were engaged in the VLR process.

**The VLR process took one year to complete and had four major phases:**

1. *Starting Phase:* The process started when the Mayor of Turku decided to take part in the VLR process and to report the results to the **United Nations' High Level Political Forum (HLPF)**. During the starting phase, the VLR-team familiarised itself with the few already existing VLRs from other cities and with guidelines and handbooks on how such a review can be organised. Each division in the local administration appointed one reference person to support the VLR work. This provided the VLR-team with a strong mandate and facilitated the compilation of the report.
2. *Planning Phase:* During this phase, the purpose and scope of the VLR was defined. The city of Turku decided to address all 17 SDGs in its review. It was also decided that the review would evaluate the **city strategy 'Turku 2029'** against the SDGs. In addition, a few key strategic projects and the work of two strategic companies were evaluated in the review. During the planning phase, Turku also identified the key target groups for its VLR which included Turku's citizens, organisations, businesses and international stakeholders such as other cities and the UN institutions. Finally, the budget, project duration and working steps of the VLR process were planned. This included decisions about which stakeholders were to be involved during the different stages of the project. The VLR-team planned the structure and layout of the report which provided good insights into how much material would have to be compiled for different sections of the review.
3. *Collecting and Analysing Data Phase:* During the third stage, the VLR-team analysed the degree to which different SDGs and targets are visible in the city strategy and assessed which SDG targets can be reviewed at local level. The team also identified indicators that could be used to measure city operations and progress towards the SDGs. After these preparatory steps, the VLR-team collected information and data in cooperation with experts from the city organisation. Questionnaires, workshops and interviews with leading officials in the administration and experts were also used to obtain missing pieces of information and to complement the available quantitative data. Finally, the collected data and information were analysed and areas of local strength and weakness with respect to the SDGs could be identified.
4. *Finalisation Phase:* During the last phase, the VLR-team, with help of the experts, drafted the text of the VLR report and visualised key data and trends. The VLR-team also planned how to communicate the review and its results and how to continue the work in the future. The city is planning to publish VLRs on an ongoing basis, with the next report planned for 2022.

Further reading:

- [www.turku.fi/en/sustainabledevelopment](http://www.turku.fi/en/sustainabledevelopment)
- [A Voluntary Local Review 2020 Turku](#)

## **Nordic data at regional and local level**

Nordregio maintains a large database with municipal and regional data that is updated on a continuous basis. Available indicators are collected from statistical offices. The database consists of long time series of data, which often extend back to the year 1990. In 2016, parts of the database were made publicly available through the Nordic web-mapping platform **NordMap**. **Nordregio** developed this platform on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, and with financing from the Nordic Thematic Group for Rural Development.

NordMap contains indicators related to demography, labour market, and economy. While these indicators are not explicitly linked to the 2030 Agenda, they can nonetheless implicitly be connected to individual SDGs. Data is available at regional and local levels for the Nordic Region and can be customised and visualised in map format. The data is regularly updated and continuously adjusted to reflect municipal or regional mergers and boundary changes in the Nordic countries. Data and customised maps can be shared online or copied from the platform. Overall, NordMap offers many opportunities for comparisons between municipalities and regions on a Nordic level, including in relation to the SDGs.

For more information:

[www.nordmap.org](http://www.nordmap.org)

## 9. How do associations of local authorities and regions work with the 2030 Agenda?

The idea and concept of the webinar series was developed during the spring of 2020 through a collaboration between Nordregio and the associations of local authorities and regions from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The five associations provided valuable input on possible topics and questions for the webinars and advertised the webinar series within their networks. Four associations (from Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) also actively contributed to the webinars. Representatives from these associations gave presentations in which they described how they support their member municipalities and regions in the work with the SDGs, which priorities they set and which projects they are working with. The following subchapters provide a short overview of each association's work with the 2030 Agenda.

### 9.1. Local Government Denmark (Kommunernes Landsforening)

KL is an association and interest organisation for the 98 municipalities of Denmark. KL represents their interests at national and EU level, supports them with consultancy services and ensures that local authorities are provided with information and up-to-date knowledge that is relevant to their work. As part of its mandate, KL also collaborates with the national and regional governments to achieve the SDGs and coordinate national, regional and local SDG initiatives.

KL engages in several projects to support their member municipalities with local SDG implementation. On its webpage, the association for instance collects and describes best-practice examples on how to work with the SDGs in a local Danish context. The case study reports from different municipalities are grouped into four categories – social sustainability, environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and partnership for the global goals. In combination, these local examples and success stories are intended to provide ideas and inspiration to all Danish municipalities.

In the spring of 2021, KL also hosts a webinar series on the 2030 Agenda which shall provide information on how to work with the SDGs in a local context. During four webinars, speakers will take stock of how Danish municipalities currently work with the SDGs. Individual webinars will also focus on Denmark's new action plan for the 2030 Agenda and on how to achieve citizen and business engagement.

#### Further reading:

- <https://tilmeld.kl.dk/verdensmaal-webinarraekke>
- <https://www.kl.dk/tema/verdensmaal/inspirationskatalog/>

## 9.2. Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities (Kuntaliitto)

AFLRA represents all 309 cities and municipalities in Finland and works with regional councils, hospital districts, as well as limited companies that are under local government control. The Association represents its members' interests and engages in co-development strategies to address challenges faced by the local government sector. In addition, AFLRA provides expert advice to its members. Around 200 experts work at AFLRA with topics such as healthcare and social care, democracy, environmental questions, digitalisation, education and culture.

One focus of AFLRA's work lies on climate questions. The Association has a long tradition in working with this topic. Already in 1993, the global network ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) started the so-called 'Cities for Climate Protection Campaign'. In 1997, AFLRA established its first local climate programme in response to ICLEI's campaign. Many Finnish municipalities have an equally long tradition of working on climate issues. The Helsinki metropolitan area published its first programme to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in 1995. In 2002, the Helsinki Local Agenda 21 was approved, which included actions on climate change mitigation. Today, almost 50% of the Finnish population live in a municipality with the goal to be carbon neutral by 2030 at the latest.

During the last twenty years, Finnish municipalities have become engaged in an increasing number of regional, national and international networks that deal with climate issues. This includes the HINKU forum with 75 Finnish municipalities that are committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% between 2007 and 2030. Another example is the European network Eurocities that brings together 190 cities from 39 European countries. Finnish cities are, amongst others, active in Eurocities' Environment Forum. Overall, Finnish municipalities are very active in collaborating and sharing information through networks.

Given the high level of activity and collaboration on climate questions among Finnish municipalities, AFLRA has so far seen no need to create its own climate network. Instead, the Association supports communication and information sharing across the different existing networks. In addition, there are also Finnish municipalities that are not yet part of any climate network. AFLRA provides a platform for exchange and discussion for these municipalities as well.

A guiding principle for AFLRA is to focus on questions and topics that are not yet covered elsewhere. Currently, carbon sinks and climate compensation mechanisms are two evolving topics that receive a lot of interest from Finnish municipalities, but where little information and expertise is available. AFLRA organises events with municipalities, researchers, and other experts on these topics to facilitate knowledge exchange and discussions. In addition to climate compensation mechanisms and carbon sinks, AFLRA also advocates for climate adaptation since none of the existing climate networks focuses on this topic. Here, the Association conducted a survey among the status of local adaptation among its member municipalities and published a guide to help local authorities prepare for the impacts of climate change. AFLRA will continue to work with climate adaptation as long as no other network prioritises this topic.

Finally, AFLRA also offers a climate leadership training for municipalities starting in 2021. The purpose of the training is to help locally elected politicians and senior staff from local authorities implement carbon neutrality goals. The coaching will be organised in cooperation with the city of Lahti and is linked to Lahti's appointment as the European Green Capital in 2021. Going further, Finnish municipalities have expressed an interest to exchange knowledge more extensively with Nordic municipalities outside of Finland and AFLRA plans to host a Nordic seminar on local climate leadership, if funding and the conditions of the pandemic will permit this.

### Further reading:

<https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/yhdyskunnat-ja-ymparisto/ymparisto/ilmastonmuutos/ilmastokunnat/ilmava>

### 9.3. The Icelandic Association of Local Authorities (Samband)

Samband represents the interests of the local authorities in Iceland and provides a forum for their cooperation. At the moment there are 69 municipalities in Iceland but in many areas, discussions are ongoing on merging several of the smaller municipalities. In recent years, Samband has supported the municipalities in localising the SDGs. Many local authorities in Iceland have a long tradition in promoting sustainable solutions and practices in their municipalities and in streamlining sustainability consideration into local plans and strategies. An increasing number of municipalities now use the SDGs to develop the ongoing work on sustainability even further.

Samband supports the localisation of the SDGs in Iceland through different activities. The association recently established a platform in which the majority of the Icelandic municipalities participate. This platform shall facilitate discussion and knowledge exchange around the SDGs. As a first step, Samband provided the participating local authorities with general information on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Platform meetings have also been used to facilitate mutual learning. Some local authorities are frontrunners in working with the SDGs, including the city of Kópavogur with around 38.000 inhabitants and Skaftárhreppur municipality with only around 620 inhabitants. The front-running local authorities share good practices, experiences and recommendations with other municipalities during the platform meetings.

The national government of Iceland recently established a second platform that brings together representatives of the local level, the national level and the Statistical Office of Iceland. The platform is chaired by the Prime Minister's Office and facilitates cooperation and dialogue around the implementation for the 2030 Agenda in Iceland. Samband participates in the platform meetings and represents the interests of the local authorities.

In addition to facilitating knowledge exchange and cooperation, Samband currently develops tools to support its members in measuring progress towards the SDGs. During the first meetings with the local level platform mentioned above, local authorities expressed an interest to receive input and support from Samband on this matter. Questions revolve around where the Icelandic municipalities stand in their work with the SDGs and how to measure progress over time. Samband now aims at creating a core set of indicators that all local authorities can ideally commit to. A second, more extensive set of indicators could also be made available for municipalities that are particularly ambitious in their SDG work. The core and the extended indicator sets shall cover all 17 SDGs, but not necessarily all targets that are defined for each SDG. Samband is currently screening available data sources and statistics to identify which indicators are available and useful to integrate into the core and extended SDG indicator set. If gaps exist in the available data, Samband may in a second step develop plans to create additional indicators and datasets to measure progress on individual SDGs.

Further reading:

<https://www.samband.is/english/>

### 9.4. The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)

All 356 municipalities and 11 regions in Norway are members of KS. The Association represents members' interests when consulting with national authorities and other actors; takes part in bargaining collective labour agreements on behalf of its members; and provides services to its members.

KS emphasises the 2030 Agenda and the need to localise the SDGs in its strategies and plans. Support for members includes different areas: First, KS assists Norwegian municipalities and

regions in adapting the global goals to the local or regional context. KS has recently commissioned Deloitte to carry out a survey, use indicators and perform analyses to map Agenda 2030-relevant action at the local and regional levels in Norway. Findings from this mapping constitute a Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) which will supplement Norway's 2021 National Voluntary Review (NVR) to the United Nations' High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The VSR portrays good Norwegian SDG localisation practices and will provide evidence for the important contribution of local and regional authorities in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, Norway's 2021 VNR will include a full chapter on local government SDG relevance and contribution which will be extracted from findings in the VSR. KS will, furthermore, be part of Norway's national delegation to the HLPF when it presents the VNR.

Second, KS facilitates arenas where local governments can share experience for SDG localisation, and supported the establishment of the Norwegian Network of Excellence on SDG City Transitions. This network brings together Norwegian frontrunners in working with sustainability questions and the SDGs. KS disseminates network learnings to other municipalities and regional authorities, including the use of the SDGs in planning, policy formulation and citizen participation activities.

Finally, KS has developed a taxonomy together with Statistics Norway to sort and classify indicators to measure local and regional progress on the SDGs. This taxonomy is also available in English.

#### Further reading:

- <https://www.ks.no/om-ks/ks-in-english/implementing-the-sdgs-at-local-and-regional-level--examples-from-norway/>
- <https://www.ks.no/fagomrader/samfunnsutvikling/barekraft/>
- [https://www.ssb.no/en/natur-og-miljo/artikler-og-publikasjoner/\\_attachment/448340?\\_ts=1782570f8c0](https://www.ssb.no/en/natur-og-miljo/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/448340?_ts=1782570f8c0)

## **9.5. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKR)**

Salar represents all 290 municipalities and 21 regions in Sweden. As part of its mandate, the association supports its members in their work towards implementing the SDGs. Salar aims, amongst other goals, to increase knowledge about the SDGs, provide indicators to measure progress in the local work, and offer expert advice on a range of sustainability topics such as public procurement.

Salar and the UN Association of Sweden collaborate in the project 'Glokala Sverige' (Glocal Sweden). The goal of this project is to offer courses and communication materials to increase knowledge and engagement around the 2030 Agenda in Sweden's municipalities and regions. Courses are tailor-made to match the interests and context of different municipalities and regions. Those who take part in the programme can also attend a yearly conference and have a fixed contact person at Glokala Sverige who supports the local work on a continuous basis.

In addition to increasing knowledge about the SDGs at local level, Salar supports municipal and regional authorities in measuring progress in their work. The Council of Municipal Analysis (Rådet för främjande av kommunala analyser), of which Salar is one of the owners, hosts the Kolada database. This database includes five thousand key performance indicators which allow Swedish regions and municipalities to compare themselves with their peers. One section of the database focuses on indicators that measure local progress towards reaching the SDGs. The indicators can also be used to identify local areas of strength and weakness. Based on the indicators included in the Kolada database, Salar has published a report on open comparisons ('öppna jämförelser') which analyses progress towards the SDGs at regional and local level in Sweden.

A further focus of Salar's work is on assisting municipalities and regions in their public procurement processes to ensure that they are increasingly sustainable. Salar wants to support

municipalities in coordinating demands for innovative, new or circular solutions. The Association is currently also participating in the project 'Re:Source', which builds on experiences gained in the Netherlands. Eleven Swedish pilot cases test different pre-defined strategies of circular procurement. Implementing these strategies will lead to a reduction of the total amount of materials used and maximise the reusability of products and components.

Salar works with all 17 SDGs internally within its own organisation and externally with the municipalities and regions through its different projects and activities. The Association has published a systematic overview across all 17 SDGs which highlights the different contributions.

Further reading:

- <https://fn.se/vi-gor/utveckling-och-fattigdomsbekampning/agenda-2030/glokala-sverige/>
- [www.kolada.se](http://www.kolada.se)
- <https://resource-sip.se/testas-cirkular-upphandling/>
- <https://skr.se/tjanster/omskr/agenda2030/skrsarbetsombidrarartillde17globalamalen.20572.html>

## 10. Conclusion

In all six webinars that Nordregio hosted during the winter of 2020/21, speakers stressed the importance of collaborating across Nordic municipalities and regions and learning from each other. We hope that the webinars contributed to such knowledge exchange and provided the participants with new ideas and inspiration for their work. With this report, we hope to have an even wider reach and provide information, inspiration and ideas to readers who work with the SDGs in a local and regional context in the Nordic Region and beyond.

During the webinar series, speakers shared inspiring stories on topics such as how to lower greenhouse gas emissions and measure progress, how to contribute towards sustainable consumption behaviours, and how to make Nordic cities and towns greener and more liveable. We also learned that all municipalities and regions can contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda, no matter how big or small. Among the best practice examples represented in this report are the small Norwegian municipality of Øyer with just over 5,000 inhabitants and the capital city of Oslo with a population of almost 700,000. The region of Västerbotten was also represented, which is one of the most sparsely populated areas in Europe, as well as the island region Åland. All of these regions and municipalities have developed their own innovative ideas on how to become more sustainable within their own context, using available resources.

Nonetheless, obstacles remain. When asked to identify areas of difficulty in working with the SDGs, webinar participants highlighted the challenges "to make the global goals local" and to "integrate the work internally". This suggests that opportunities to exchange stories of both success and failure in working with the SDGs, to build networks and develop joint solutions will remain in high demand during this 'decade of action'. Nordic best practices in working with the SDGs will not only help to reach the 2030 Agenda but will also be instrumental to reach the Nordic Council of Ministers' 'Our Vision 2030' and its goal to make the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by the end of the decade.

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# About this publication

## Agenda 2030. How to reach the goals and measure success at the local level

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