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Green Issue of Nordregio News

This January, Denmark took over the presidency of the EU and in line with the Global Green Growth Forum (3GF) that they had already established, launched Green Growth as one of the focal topics for the coming six months. It is stated in the priorities of the Danish Presidency that *"in the context of the current economic difficulties, new, balanced measures related to energy, climate and the environment can contribute too much needed growth and employment in Europe. Green growth can be encouraged by integrating such efforts across a range of European policies"*. This issue of Nordregio News is dedicated to green growth and the green economy, primarily from a Nordic perspective. Its aim is to promote the understanding of key concepts, how they are implemented and the political aspects of the process.

Negotiations in Durban ended with both success and uncertainty. A renewal of Kyoto was agreed upon, but the issue of legally binding commitments was pushed backwards with a 'letter of intent' to reach a consensus in 2015. At the conference, in relation to a green growth process, the Nordic countries jointly launched two so called "NAMAs" (nationally appropriate mitigation actions) that will focus on capacity building and the transfer of technology to enable a cleaner development process in developing countries.

In the first article of this issue, **Responding to Crisis with Smart and Sustainable Investment**, Ryan Weber helps us to understand the concept of a Green Economy and the critical sectoral, territorial

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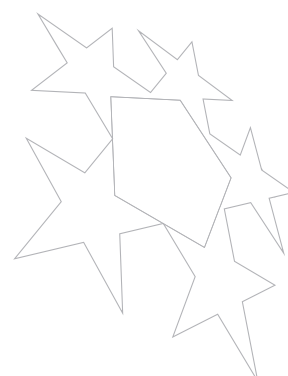
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and temporal dimensions of this transformation. Today, it is widely acknowledged that due to its scale and scope, the economy influences all other activity on earth. As UNEP presents it: "The concept of a green economy does not replace sustainable development, but there is now a growing recognition that achieving sustainability rests almost entirely on getting the economy right". A Green Economy, or Green Growth, builds on the idea of developing cleaner production processes, developing new products and energy solutions and reducing waste.

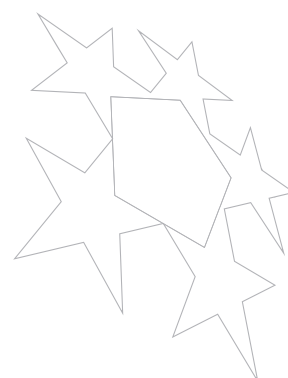
The transformation to a green economy is driven by the need to reduce emissions and resource use, but also by a recognition that there are opportunities for investment and growth in wealth and jobs. Reducing resource-use saves money, and developing clean-tech can create a first mover advantage. In the second article of this issue, **Green Highway - a 450 km Nordic Co-operative Project**, Aslı Tepecik Diş and Kjell I. Stellander introduce a concrete example of new ways of thinking about transport and infrastructure and how this relates to regional development. The example of the green highway illustrates the territorial dimension of a Green Economy.

To really change the way society is planned and functions, and to deal with externalities, suitable policies are often needed to provide incentives and to show the way. In the final article, **Can Iceland Become a Green Land?**, Salvör Jónsdóttir reflects on a policy process in relation to the introduction of a Green Economy policy package on Iceland. She describes the major components of this proposal and the way this process is implemented and adapted to national and regional specificities.

I wish you an interesting read!



Gunnar Lindberg
Senior Research Fellow
and the **Editorial Board of Nordregio News**



Responding to Crisis with Smart and Sustainable Investment

By Ryan Weber

The Europe 2020 Strategy promotes smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and pledges the development of a 'Resource Efficient Europe'. As a result of Europe's headline development strategy, European energy policy has been overhauled and Cohesion Policy is about to enter a new six-year funding period with an emphasis on the importance of climate change and the environment. Quickly responding, The Nordic Prime Ministers have tabbed green growth as a top priority for Nordic cooperation. So the question becomes, what will all of this mean for Europe on the ground? What about Nordic regions? And not least, how can green growth respond to current development challenges by simultaneously delivering growth and inclusiveness?

Beginning in October 2008, the largest global stock indexes experienced a shattering collapse that initiated a global recession. A year later, COP failed to deliver a global climate agreement to enact binding measures to keep climate change at a sustainable level. But at the interface of these global issues, Green Growth has emerged as a main policy discourse in Europe. Since March 2010, Green Growth has been at the heart of Europe 2020 – the EU's growth strategy to exit the economic crisis.

But the reality is that things haven't improved very much. Unilateral wage cuts in excess of 10% have taken place in a number of southern European countries while rising unemployment, spiraling fiscal deficit and low growth plague various nations. We all know the precarious situation Greece faces; and there is concern in Spain, Ireland, the U.K and France. In fact, any country in the EMU is undoubtedly concerned.

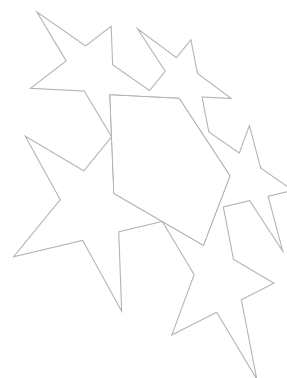
Demographically, we are ageing in Europe, a trend that is especially prevalent in rural areas where traditional engines of growth are being superseded by service-based urban economies. As a result, many of these rural, remote and isolated regions face a double threat of low growth and a perceived lack of opportunity for a return to prosperity. **As shown**, this trend is characteristic of a high share of rural places in the Nordic region. Relatively low employment levels are compounded by outmigration and stagnating growth.

As UNEP highlights in their report **Towards a Green Economy**, a majority of these causes are fundamentally rooted in the same feature:



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the gross misallocation of capital – towards investment in property, structured financial assets with volatile derivatives and fossil fuels. Regarding the latter, it has been clear for decades that current rates of resource consumption are unsustainable, especially regarding energy inputs. Not only are they the largest contributor of human induced climate change, but reserves of oil resources, natural gas and coal are anything but limitless. Yet the brown economy continues to rely on these resources to achieve financial growth; growth that is viewed as sustainable as long as the exploitation of natural resources is replaced by at least an ‘equivalent’ financial return. But what does ‘equivalent’ mean? It’s an impossible question to answer, but it certainly doesn’t include the environmental externalities of its natural resource dependency.

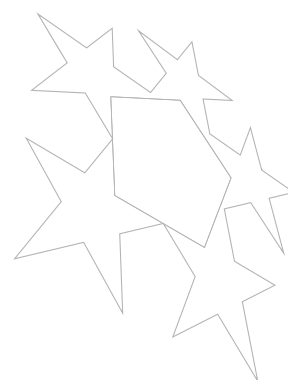
Thus, green growth in Europe, and especially in the Nordic Region, emerges at the intersection of three interrelated perspectives: the volatility of our growth-at-all-costs economic model that leaves us with gaping disconnects between growth prospects for different types of regions; the understanding that this model relies on resources that not only pollute the environment, but are becoming increasingly scarce; and the underlying demographic trends that characterize the disproportionate spatiality of socio-economic growth. Current and future well-being is at risk both in society as a whole and in particular types of regions. In response, green growth aims to use the conditions of our current development crisis as a catalyst for a transition to greener growth.

So then, what is greener growth?

Understanding green growth is first and foremost about recognizing its context; why it is currently being promoted and what conditions make it necessary. In light of this, green growth has to be about more responsible, realistic, well-founded and place-based actions that promote a growth economy that operates within the limits of our natural environment. Although skeptics might argue that we must first deal with our most pressing challenges in the wake of the crisis, it’s not about using these current challenges as an excuse to postpone action. Just the opposite, green growth uses these challenges as opportunities for its own implementation.

The OECD’s pioneering publication **Towards Green Growth** defines green growth as “...*fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies. To do this, it must catalyse investment and innovation which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities.*”

Both the UN and OECD make it clear that green growth is not meant to replace sustainable development. Rather, they recognize that achieving sustainability rests almost entirely on getting the economy



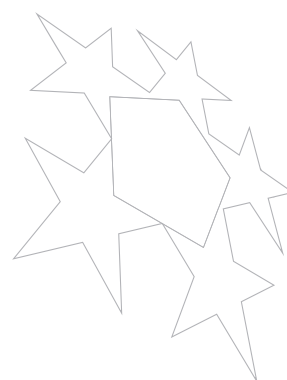
right. Therefore, its aim is principally the same as sustainable development, but green growth focuses on conceptual, policy and monitoring bases that lead to innovation and investment in new, greener sources of economic growth.

And how do we achieve it?

Immeasurable spatial, social, economic and environmental contexts dictate how green growth will evolve. No one-size-fits-all solution will solve the challenges that different areas are facing. Instead, it will rely on territorially relevant and complimentary policy provisions coming from the complete range of institutional scales. These will integrate decision making from all governance spheres; public and private, from the global to the regional, municipal and all the way down to individual citizens. Yet regardless of where, or who, decides what, green growth will rely on a balance of policies to promote existing good practices, phase out counter-productive activities, and place priority on new growth opportunities.

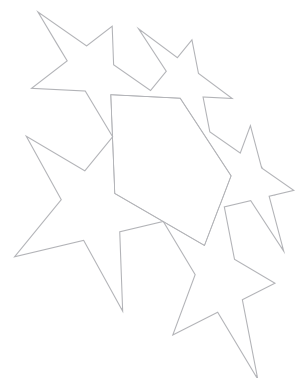
With these aims in mind, a number of core initiatives will spearhead growth through green job creation and the promotion of territorial competitive advantages. Using the Nordic Region as an example, selected 'Keys to Green Growth' help explain the types of issues that will need to be prioritized:

- The Nordic Region needs to build on its existing strengths of green innovation and social responsibility for the environment. But if green growth continues to gain traction in other countries, it will require that the Nordic region expand its green economy to at least an equivalent degree to maintain its position as a global pioneer. With the help of progressive policy incentives, innovation must continue to push the limits of technology. Bold new technologies should be promoted so that the Nordic market is increasingly exposed to potential green solutions at an early stage of their development.
- Long-term policy perspectives promoting capital-intensive investments are needed to provide the infrastructure for prosperity within a greener economy. For instance, the need for a truly connected smart energy grid for the Nordic region is already understood and the technology is currently in place as a demonstration **project on the island of Gotland**. It provides full energy production and consumption flexibility, which promotes small scale renewable energy production alongside increased consumer control over consumption characteristics. It will go hand-in-hand with a liberalization and consolidation of energy markets (a central goal of current EU energy policy). This again highlights the importance of Nordic co-operation to create economies of scale for the development, testing and deployment of green technologies.



- The OECD's **Green Growth Strategy** highlights buildings as one of 11 key sectors that will drive a transition to green growth. Not only are buildings one of the main contributors to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, but due to the fact that 40% of final energy consumption takes place in houses, offices, shops and other buildings, the European Commission's 2011 Energy Efficiency Plan states that buildings provide the greatest energy saving potential. This potential will be accompanied by the availability of an array of jobs that can be transitioned into 'green employment opportunities'. Given the paramount trend of urbanization in the Nordic region, the importance of green building from a cross-sectoral perspective and lifestyle perspective, it is envisioned that overcoming constraints with effective policy and proactive local planning solutions will be critical for achieving green growth in the Nordic region.
- The role of rural areas will be particularly important as they continue their search for economic opportunities in light of current trends. For instance, complementing traditional economic activities such as forestry and agriculture with bioenergy production and the development of wind power could mean the difference for regions at the threshold of economic viability. But a great deal of responsibility rests on local and regional policy makers for activating territorial potentials through proactive accounting and the mobilization of relevant actors for these cross-sectoral opportunities to be mainstreamed in reality. This is a shortfall of current agricultural policy in Europe, which in many cases causes stagnation in rural areas through its lack of vision for new and innovation development opportunities.

These initial examples not only highlight that green growth will involve interventions across a wide range of sectors, but they allude to the need for policy, planning and research to continue to push beyond rigid sectoral perspectives that have largely defined existing policy frameworks. This means that green growth requires better understandings of territorial development potentials and new development synergies. This can only be achieved through place-based planning and policy perspectives that can recognize and account for these evolving local and regional green growth opportunities more efficiently. ●



Green Highway - a 450 km Nordic co-operative project

By Aslı Tepecik Diş

In northern Sweden and Norway, local and regional authorities are co-operating closely with companies and entrepreneurs to create a region where economic growth goes hand in hand with environmental development. They have established the world's first 'green highway', stretching from Trondheim in Norway on the Atlantic Coast, via Östersund, to Sundsvall on the Baltic Sea, along the E6 and E14 motorways. The highway connects a region where green growth is given the highest priority.

'Green Highway' is a registered trademark that refers to a combination of activities with the same goal - a fossil-free green transportation corridor based on local and renewable energy, intended for people who drive eco-friendly vehicles. The project is led by the cities of Sundsvall and Östersund in Sweden and Trondheim in Norway.

One of the unique aspects of the Green Highway project is that it links relatively low-dense, small- and medium-sized towns that have long commuting distances between them. The obvious dependence on private cars in these areas in turn promotes the opportunity of using locally abundant renewable energy to fuel private cars and helps to solve the significant constraint for reducing CO2 emissions in the region. Not only does this provide potential for financial growth, regional development and a more attractive environment, but these could eventually be important components that attract tourists and other local visitors.

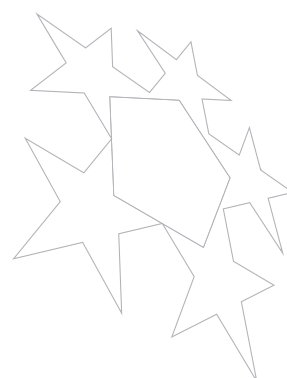
Europe sees clean technologies as the future

The Green Highway project is particularly important with respect to the carbon footprint of the transport sector, which is the second-largest energy consumer and the greatest greenhouse gas emitter after the energy sector. In 2009, it represented 23% of global CO2 emissions, according to the **International Energy Agency**. Road transport, in particular, is responsible for almost three quarters of transport greenhouse gas emissions by EU countries. Transport is also threatened by energy poverty and is vulnerable to price instability, and in spite of considerable reductions in emissions of pollutants, there are still concerns about its effect on air quality. Thus, there is a growing concern about climate change, public health, depletion of natural resources and security of energy supply.



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Accordingly, discussions in the EU focus on a shift from a fossil fuel-dependent economy towards one in which renewable alternatives and new vehicle systems are at the forefront. The EU has set out policy agendas such as the EU Emissions Trading System (EU ETS) for aviation and CO2 emission targets for cars. Through its recent **Roadmap for moving towards a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050**, the European Heads of State and Government have decided to extend their commitment to achieving an ambitious target; reducing domestic emissions by as much as 95% by 2050. It is clear that the EU is placing emphasis on green ways of creating a European economy in which environmentally friendly technologies are to be prioritized. In this context, the Green Highway project illustrates how a green economy may become reality.

A road towards a low-carbon economy and better environment

The three Nordic cities set out to create changes in their region through political commitment, extensive co-operation between public and private partners and their ability to realize projects. In addition, the region has potential for green growth in the form of large reserves of renewable energy such as biomass, wind and hydropower. In the region, there are also many R&D activities, industrial establishments and technological developments connected to transport systems as well as energy production. There are a number of climate-smart transport initiatives, renewable energy sources and efficiency measures in place that provide environmental as well as economic benefits. These provide the cities with unique potential and an advantageous starting point.

The pioneers of the Green Highway project have partnered with other actors who share the cities' ambitions and see the potential future economic growth of their businesses that would result from a focus on climate and environmental issues. The other key regional actors are energy and high-tech companies, Trondheim Airport Værnes, Åre Östersund Airport, the region's colleges and universities as well as local and regional authorities.

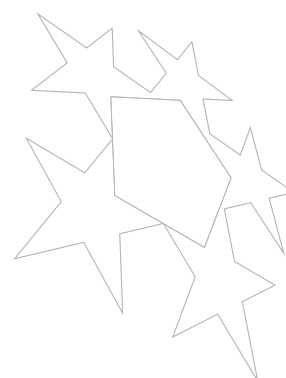
Kjell I. Stellander, Project Manager for the Green Highway project from the City of Trondheim, says *"We call it Green Highway; not necessarily for what it represents today, but for what we are going to create in less than 10 years' time: A fossil-free transport corridor across Mid-Scandinavia by 2020; a corridor and region that will contribute to the creation of business opportunities, sustainable economic growth, reduced greenhouse effects, and be attractive to local people as well as tourists."*

A fossil-free transport system is an ambitious goal. However, the vision for the project reveals that this is a step towards green growth, where environmental gain is strongly connected to economic and



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social development. Initiating such a project creates opportunities for eco-innovation in businesses and gives the region the opportunity both to promote itself in terms of green tourism development and to sell its know-how.

Achievements so far

All activities of the project are well co-ordinated and focus on the main goal of a fossil-free transport corridor in line with the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. So far, the project has achieved the following goals:

- Construction of the world's longest main road system, where people can charge their electric vehicles; there are 94 charging stations and more than 240 charging points (slow charging, 230V/16A) along the 447 km main road system.
- Construction of quick-charging stations for electric vehicles in municipal centres along the Green Highway. The first quick-charging station in Northern Europe was opened on the Green Highway in Östersund in April 2011. The second station opened at Trondheim Airport Værnes in January 2012. Four more quick-charging stations along the Green Highway are already under construction.
- Establishment of a filling infrastructure for biofuels: biogas, biodiesel (RME) and bioethanol.
- Promotion of the use of electric vehicles in fleets as well as by private car owners.

Project facts - Green Highway

Lead partner in Sweden

Östersund municipal authority

Lead partner in Norway

Trondheim municipal authority

Funding

50% of the funding covered by the EU INTERREG IV program

Co-funded by 22 partners

Duration

2011-2014

More information

- www.greenhighway.nu
- www.sundsvall-ostersund-trondheim.com



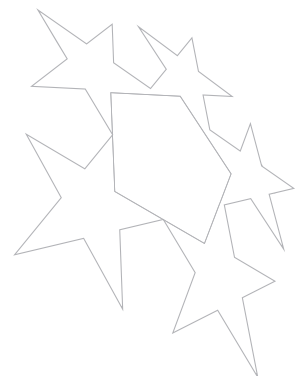
Map showing Green Highway/www.greenhighway.nu

- Performance of a large test program for electric vehicles, including long-term performance testing in the winter climate in Östersund.
- Development of a prototype electric snow scooter. The technology used in the scooter is easily adaptable to other transport platforms, including electric alpine hill piste machines.
- Development of internet-based communication systems through which travellers can plan routes using public transport, including details of the carbon footprint for the different routes.
- Development of a meeting planner that provides optimal meeting locations to minimize time, costs and emissions.
- Publication of a complete 'Buyers Guide for Electric and Plug-in Hybrid Cars', which is updated annually.
- Establishment of a taxi project with electric vehicles in Trondheim.

An overall evaluation of the project regarding total energy is intended for the later stage of the project.



Electric snow-scooter Example of a new technological solution./www.greenhighway.nu



The road to results

An important principle for the Green Highway project is that the development should be based on a range of operations and solutions. Certainly, it is not possible to claim that one specific fuel, means of transport or change in attitude alone is required to achieve the ultimate goal. The truth is rather the opposite - the inclusion of and competition between solutions and technologies will catalyse development, according to the project managers.

Some of the conditions that have made the Green Highway possible are the following.

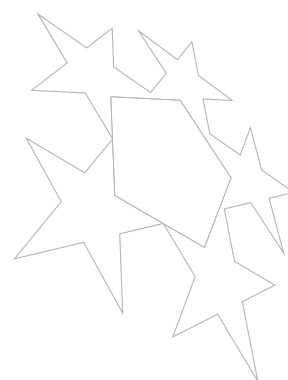
- A high capacity for renewable energy from wind, water and biomass in the region.
- A vast potential for production of renewable energy sources.
- A strong will and interest from local and international investors to invest in the region.
- Two large plants in Östersund and Sundsvall that produce biogas for transport purposes from recycled organic waste. A production facility in Trondheim using raw material from the salmon industry is planned.
- Comprehensive and systematic accumulation of competence in low- and zero-emission transport solutions such as electric and biofuel vehicles.

Close co-ordination and communication between ongoing projects and operations are also of utmost importance. Stellander emphasizes that the Green Highway has proven the strength of cross-border collaboration between cities, municipalities and countries in working towards common goals.

The project management focuses on an action-oriented approach: *“We do not go through long strategy processes and plans; we move quickly into operations and harvest results along the way, which act as fuel and energy for further operations. This has also been proven to attract private partners and collaborators. Thus, organization and methodology is for us the road to success.”*

But is action alone enough? Mr. Stellander says: *“No, evidently it is important to build your actions on sound strategies and plans. However, the duration of the project is only 3 years so we cannot initiate new strategies or plans but we try to build on already existing plans.”*

In conclusion, the three most apparent factors for reaching results in the project have been the region's favourable conditions, the establishment of a joint platform to facilitate close collaboration between



key stakeholders (public authorities, private enterprises and high-tech companies), and the action-oriented approach whereby several projects are initiated by the municipalities and/or partners and collaborators and co-ordinated by the project organization.

The future of the Green Highway

From the project management's point of view, the political dimension is very important. An absence of political commitment to a low-carbon economy endangers the project. Political leadership is seen as essential for the long-term engagement of the cities, and for the development of institutional capacity across national borders. This is especially important for life after the project: What happens once the project is finalized? Will the cities be ready to take the project further by themselves?

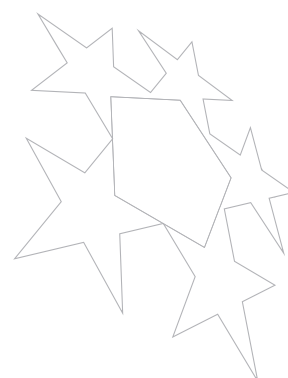
"We want to be a part of the future. To become an integral part of long-term local and regional development plans and strategies we need political commitment to the project and to a low-carbon economy", says Stellerander.

In conclusion, single projects grow when they involve other actors and projects and when they are all well co-ordinated. The platform for the project has boosted interest in involvement from other actors, which has raised the profile of the Green Highway further. Such an expanding platform and network will make faster development possible, with bottleneck effects eliminated through new technology and increasing competence. Inclusion of new participants will therefore create potential for more and faster results.

For the future, the Green Highway project aims to not only generate business opportunities and sustainable growth, but also to reduce the climate impact and further increase the attractiveness of the region for tourists. ●

Zero Rally

The next big step in the project is the 2012 Zero Rally along the Green Highway. The 2012 Zero Rally, from the 14th to 16th of June, is intended to showcase environmentally friendly cars as alternatives to fossil fuel cars. It is also an arena for new technology and new car models, and an exciting meeting place for the most important stakeholders in environmental awareness. The rally runs from Östersund, Sweden to Trondheim, Norway, with special stages and festivities along the Green Highway. The rally is a collaborative effort between Zero (an NGO) and Green Highway.



Can Iceland Become a Green Land?

By Salvör Jónsdóttir

Following the financial collapse in 2008, Icelandic society has undertaken a nationwide self-analysis. New types of debates and discussions, pertaining to both economic policy of the past and the future have been held in the media and the Parliament. However, one thing has not changed; Icelanders still like to present themselves, their country and their energy as clean and green (see example). To continue this image, a proposal is pending in Parliament to further strengthen Iceland's green economy.

Compared with many other countries, Iceland possesses many advantages with regard to environmental conditions and social justice. It has a Nordic-style social welfare system and a natural environment with plentiful supplies of clean water, geothermal heat and strong winds. However, in order to demonstrate that Iceland is taking good care of its ecosystem, as well as its social and economic responsibility, certain policies must be enacted to ensure a sustainable future. This is particularly true as per capita greenhouse gas emissions in Iceland are one of the highest in the world because of a large aluminium industry and ground, air and sea transportation, which rely on imported oil.

Socioeconomic changes in Iceland over the past few years have been significant. Historically, the unemployment rate in Iceland has been low with a rate between 2–3% during the first few years of the new millennium. Following the breakdown of the banking system, several companies went bankrupt and the unemployment rate increased to 7, 6% in 2010. The aftermath of the bank failures left many people without a job, frustrated, pessimistic about the future, and with less confidence in the governing bodies of Iceland.

These were the conditions when a group of 19 Members of the Parliament from every party represented in the Parliament, contributed to a parliamentary resolution on March 30, 2010 that addressed the preparation for expansion of the green economy in Iceland with a primary goal of sustainable development. The enhancement of the green economy would have two desirable effects, including promoting the welfare of future generations through sustainable use of the environment and the creation of new jobs and opportunities during the current recession. The resolution also emphasized the importance of a diverse economy, which is something that Iceland needs to achieve (see Fig.1).



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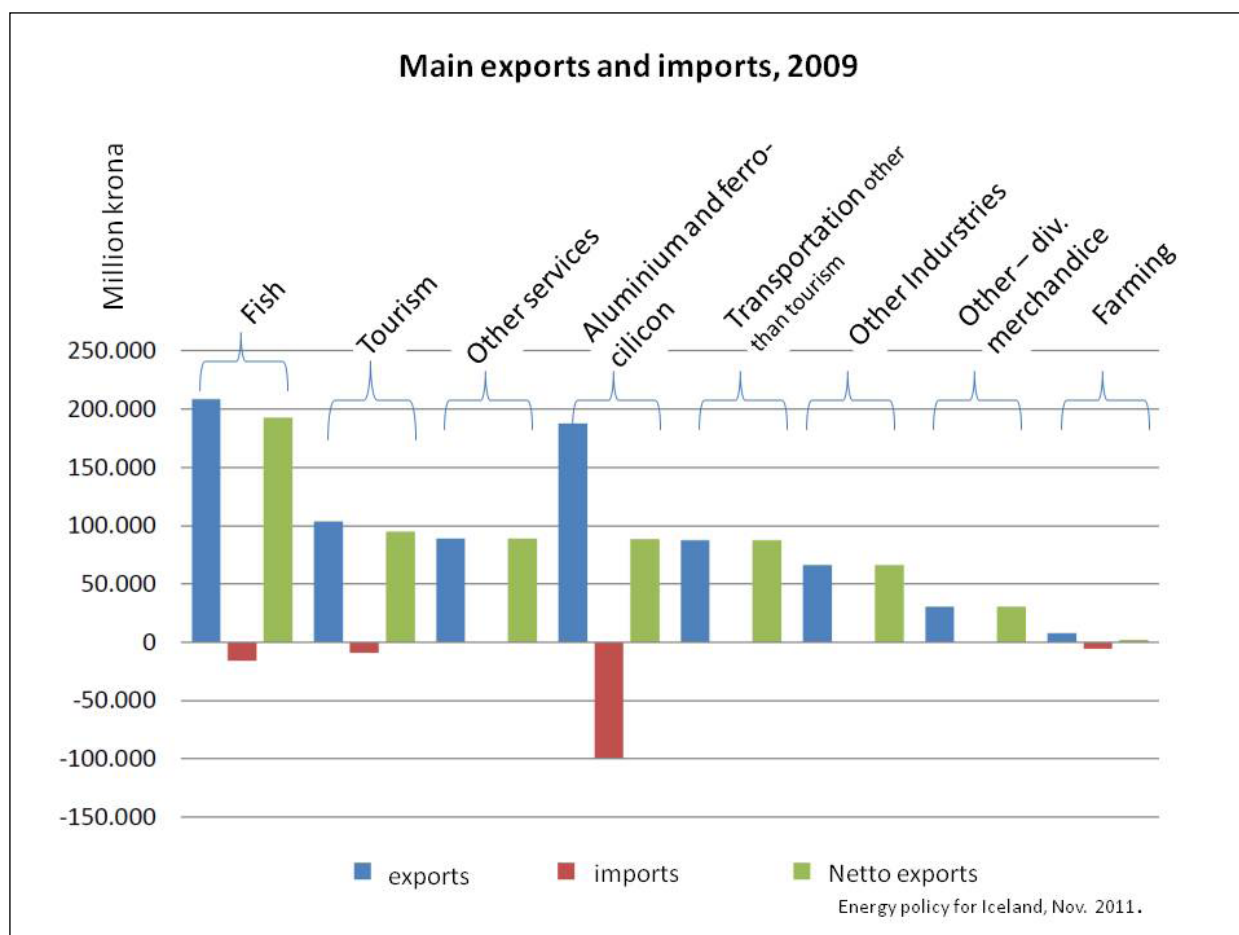


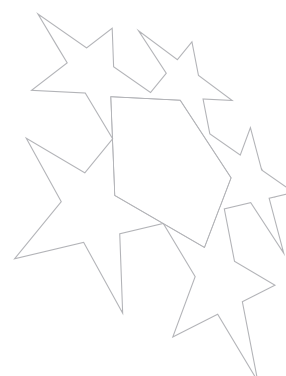
Figure 1 Iceland's main exports and imports, 2009.

The parliamentary resolution was adopted in June 2010. Soon after, in the fall of 2010, Parliament elected a nine-member committee that represented all parties to prepare a proposal for strengthening Iceland's green economy.

A green proposal

The committee completed its proposal in the fall of 2011 after having consulted different stakeholders, including government institutions, private companies and Non-governmental organizations. The committee developed a challenging vision, stating 'That Iceland may become one of the leading nations in the world regarding green economy, focusing on clean natural environment, sustainable use of energy and education towards sustainability'. Based on this vision, the policy for the development of a green economy is outlined in eight strategic points:

- The national government and its institutions will serve as role models and create the conditions for a green economy.
- Economic incentives will be used to promote the green economy.



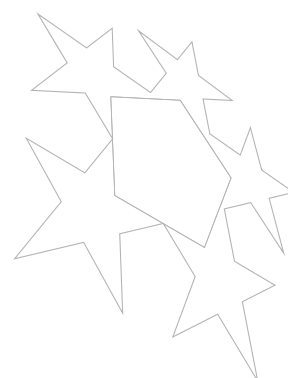
- The ‘polluter pays’ principle will be the basis for determining fees and tariffs.
- The Precautionary Principle should be an integral part of the national fiscal and employment policy.
- The number of green jobs should be increased.
- Emphasis should be placed on promoting environmentally friendly investment.
- Education for sustainable development and environmental issues will be increased.
- The green economy in Iceland should be an underlying theme in official promotions to investors and tourists.

Finally, the committee proposed 48 initiatives that are in accordance with the proposal’s goals and are scheduled to be implemented in the coming years. The initiatives are grouped into eight categories:

- Responsibilities, coordination and implementation
- The public sector as role model
- Support structure for the economy
- The educational system
- Economic stimuli
- Green business
- Environmentally friendly transportation
- Certification and image work

The focus of the proposal was on Iceland as a whole and also made the very important suggestion that the Prime Minister of Iceland should be in charge of the green economy, not the Minister for Finance, Minister for Industry, or the Minister for the Environment. The proposal demonstrates that the green economy should be filtered through the entire society and not be linked to special sectors or issues such as regional development.

One difficult issue the committee considered was how to define green jobs. In the end, **a definition** based on one developed by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics was used. According to that definition, green jobs can be divided into two main categories. One category includes jobs that produce goods or services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources. The other category consists of jobs that make current production processes more environmentally friendly or use fewer natural resources. Any job can be included in the green economy if either category is met.



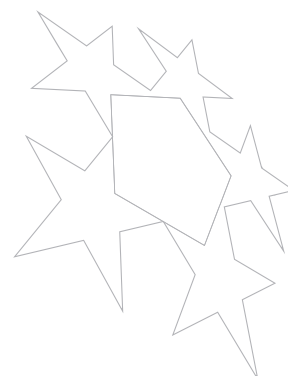
One suggestion that would provide both economic stimuli to businesses as well as increase green jobs is to adopt legislation that would reimburse ship owners for up to 20% of the cost of changing a vessel from fossil fuel combustion to eco-friendly fuel, or increasing the ship's fuel efficiency. Obviously, this change would also decrease Iceland's greenhouse gas emissions.

Although the committee's mandate did not include a focus on regional development, some of its suggestions will definitely impact the rural regions of Iceland, such as organic farming. The committee provided some examples of changes in current policies that would encourage a greener economy. One proposal is to set up a stronger support system for farmers wanting to convert from traditional agriculture to organic farming. This measure would strengthen the economy of rural areas, which have suffered from constant depopulation since the early 1900s and, at the same time, would respond to international demand for more responsible food production.

Furthermore, the substantial contribution of tourism to the Icelandic economy (see Fig.1) needs attention because most tourists come to Iceland to experience the country's relatively pristine nature. One of the group's suggestions is to market Iceland as a green-economy country, to further strengthen the tourism industry, and to provide opportunities in rural areas because green tourism relies on local resources.



Organic vegetables at an Icelandic farm.



Moreover, the group suggests that the current act related to the Icelandic Regional Development Institute should be amended to require adherence to the goals of sustainable development and to incorporate the themes of the green economy into its operations, lending, and other forms of cooperation with respect to development centres.

The way to a greener future

The group worked together in a productive and dynamic manner, however, it should be noted that two members expressed reservations on some of the initiatives. The most significant reservation related to the Precautionary Principle, suggesting that the principle should be used along with social, economic and regional impacts being weighed against it for each time.

The committee's entire proposal was submitted to the Parliament in October 2011 in the form of parliamentary resolution by the chairman of the group, who is also one of the MPs that contributed to the initial resolution. The Parliament passed the proposal on to the Committee on Employment, which then distributed it for comments to several stakeholders. Many comments were returned to the Committee expressing their satisfaction, yet others suggested significant amendments. Some of the most interesting comments were from several stakeholders concerned that making the Precautionary Principle one of the strategic points for the policy towards a green economy in Iceland may not be a wise move. Those stakeholders included representatives from the Confederation of Employers, the Federation of Fishing Vessel Owners, the energy industry and the Agricultural University of Iceland. This shows that some of the fundamental principles that the international community is already using need to be further discussed in Iceland.

One of the more unexpected comments came from the Agricultural University of Iceland, which challenged the proposal's support for an increase in organic farming. The University does not agree with the idea that organic farming may be 'greener' than other forms of farming and also states that all farming in Iceland is, by its very nature, a green activity. All comments on the proposal can be reviewed (in Icelandic) on the [Parliament's website](#).

As of now (February 1st 2012), the proposal has not been returned to the Parliament from the Committee on Employment where it is undergoing the amendment process to accommodate some of the suggested changes. The final outcome has yet to be determined despite the proposal receiving positive press coverage since the time of its release. The fact that the proposal was submitted by members from all parties represented in the Parliament gives hope that not only should we expect a greener future in Iceland, but that governing bodies can work together to build a better future. ●

