



## SUMMARY

In a KS-funded research project, Asplan Analyse has examined the following questions:

1. Why do living conditions in post-industrial municipalities tend to be relatively worse than in other municipalities?
2. How can municipalities develop measures to improve living conditions?

This is a summary of the main findings as outlined in the report: "How can the municipalities develop measures to enhance the living conditions in their municipality?"

### The main features in the post-industrial municipalities

There are 27 post-industrial municipalities in Norway, their main features being:

- Growing numbers of inhabitants.
- A relatively low level of education among the inhabitants.
- The fastest growing sectors of employment being retail trade, services and public sector administration.

### Main structural features explaining low living conditions

The industrial structure, its history of mainly labor based employees and low level of education among its inhabitants seems to be the main explanations for the relatively low living conditions in the post-industrial municipalities,

The transformation from industrial to post-industrial structure also gave an unstable situation in the labour market, contributing to challenges regarding the living conditions.

### How can municipalities develop measures to enhance their inhabitants living conditions?

The municipalities have to look into all the main elements contributing to enhanced living conditions. There is a need for a comprehensive policy for development of welfare and employment. The municipalities` main task would be to *facilitate* development in industry, trade and business through planning, regulations and recourses. It should also act to prevent decreasing living conditions among its inhabitants through its welfare policy.



## How can municipalities develop measures to improve living conditions?

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But the municipalities are not able to improve the living conditions on their own. There has to be a comprehensive and shared approach to the challenges from a wide range of stakeholders. Local and regional industry, business and private sector, the County Councils, other municipalities and research institutions are the main contributors to development in industry, trade and business. When it comes to living conditions the other main stakeholders will be public sector institutions who are responsible for welfare issues, such as NAV (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration).

In our research project we have focused on the municipalities` role as facilitator contributing to development and growth of employment and growth in industry, trade and business.

The municipalities and local/regional industry can enhance the living conditions through a strategy of restructuring who will contribute to growth and development. We have identified the main features of this strategy in the regions studied.

### *Cooperation and a common understanding*

Restructuring and development requires coordination between the municipality, industry, research institutions and other important contributors to development and growth. It`s necessary to find a sustainable division of task and responsibility between the different actors. A common understanding of the objectives is to be sorted out.

The cooperation should be extended to nearby municipalities. A comprehensive and regional approach to industry-, trade- and business development should be applied. There has to be a focus on shared interests and advantages in the region, downplaying disagreements and differences between the municipalities.

### *Local and competitive advantages*

In order to achieve development and growth there has to be a comprehensive strategy focusing on objectives and means in a long term perspective. The strategy has to be based on a thorough analysis of the existing structural advantages in the municipalities and region. It is advisable to make some priorities and identify a limited number of objectives based on the analysis. They have to choose between bringing in mainly new industry and business, or to build upon existing industry. And they have to choose between a broad perspective, bringing in a whole range of different sectors and branches, or narrowing it down to a few types of industry and branches.

### *Improving the level of education*

A relatively low level of education among the inhabitants is one of the main features of the post-industrial municipalities/regions. In a long term perspective improving the level of education among its inhabitants will be an important contributor to improved living conditions. The



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comprehensive strategy of growth and development has to be met with means that facilitate the development of competence and skills among the municipalities` employees needed to fulfil the strategy. This could be achieved through qualifying current inhabitants and employees, or through means that attracts new groups of employees.