



Platform for Dialogue and Collaboration Between the Voluntary and Municipal Sectors in Norway

Purpose

This document constitutes a platform for interaction and collaboration between the voluntary and municipal sectors in Norway. The purpose of the platform is to contribute to preserving and further developing the Nordic tradition of volunteerism, with an independent voluntary sector.

The parties

Frivillighet Norge (Civil Society Norway) represents the voluntary sector. KS represents all municipalities and county authorities. The platform has been negotiated between equal partners.

The voluntary sector in Norway

The voluntary sector includes voluntary organisations across all fields and non-profit actors within the welfare area.¹

The voluntary sector is an independent and autonomous sector in society, on equal footing with the business sector and the public sector.

The voluntary sector contributes significant value to society and plays a community-building and trust-generating role. Voluntary organisations are crucial to democracy by acting as advocates, conveying citizens' interests to the political system between elections, serving as a training ground in democratic participation, and fulfilling a role as an independent critical voice.

Voluntary activity primarily takes place at the local level. A strong and diverse voluntary sector is of fundamental importance to an inclusive, active, and vibrant local community. Voluntary organisations are important for innovation

and sustainable community development in municipalities, through their experience and expertise rooted in their distinctive role and position within the local community.

High levels of participation in voluntary organisations strengthen society's social capital by fostering trust, a sense of belonging, and cohesion through personal interaction. This enhances democratic resilience, in part by allowing room for disagreement and diverse perspectives, which in turn contributes to strengthening the freedom of expression.

Voluntary organisations contribute knowledge, networks, and the capacity to mobilise in emergencies, in collaboration with local authorities and the police.

The parties' recommendations for a voluntary sector policy

Municipalities, county authorities, and the voluntary sector share many arenas of collaboration and common interest and frequently have common interests. Dialogue and interaction on relevant policy areas should be anchored in a broad voluntary sector policy. Examples of such areas include emergency preparedness, culture and sport, resilience, inclusion and integration, health and welfare, children's and young people's living conditions, and participation in leisure activities.

The parties recommend that municipalities and county authorities adopt a local/regional voluntary sector policy that encompasses the full diversity of the sector. The parties recommend that this policy is developed in close collaboration with the

¹ The platform therefore does not cover organised voluntary efforts carried out in parent-teacher associations at schools, housing cooperatives, or similar bodies, nor does it cover unorganised voluntary efforts by neighbours or individual caregivers. The platform does not cover voluntary work organised by municipalities themselves through nursing homes, kindergartens, schools, municipal volunteer centres, etc., or the delivery of public welfare services provided by the non-profit sector.

full range of voluntary organisations, and that it is grounded in this platform.

Overarching principles and roles

1. Municipalities, county authorities, and the voluntary sector have distinct but complementary roles in society.
2. Municipalities and county authorities play an important role as facilitators for the voluntary sector.
3. Collaboration and interaction shall be based on equal partnership and mutual respect for each other's roles.
4. Collaboration and interaction do not relieve municipalities and county authorities of their statutory responsibilities.

Predictable regulatory frameworks

- The regulatory framework for the voluntary sector should be as predictable as possible.
- A diverse voluntary sector is safeguarded through a range of measures tailored to different parts of the sector.
- Financial support should, to the greatest extent possible, be provided in the form of unrestricted funds that voluntary organisations may use in accordance with their own priorities.
- It should be made simple for voluntary organisations to apply for, receive, and report on public funding, also by not imposing more requirements and criteria than strictly necessary.
- Partnership agreements should be established between municipalities and voluntary organisations where appropriate. Funding may be part of such a partnership agreement.

The facilitation role of municipalities and county authorities

- Municipalities and county authorities should employ a range of instruments to promote the voluntary sector. Examples include financial support, infrastructure/premises/meeting places with universal design, overviews of services and activities provided by voluntary organisations in the municipality, and opportunities for contact and information-sharing within the municipality.
- Municipalities and county authorities should consider exercising the discretion available under public procurement regulations to reserve welfare service contracts for non-profit actors.

Dialogue and participation

- Municipalities and county authorities should maintain up-to-date knowledge of the local voluntary sector's challenges, resources, and opportunities for development.
- The voluntary sector should be consulted by municipalities and county authorities on matters affecting the activities, target groups, and objectives of individual organisations.
- Municipalities and county authorities should maintain an arena for ongoing dialogue with the voluntary sector. Such an arena may be a voluntary sector forum or advisory council, to which all voluntary organisations in the municipality are invited to participate.
- The voluntary sector should be involved in decision-making and planning processes on matters affecting the sector's regulatory framework, including voluntary organisations' access to appropriate premises and arenas for activity.

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- Municipalities/county authorities and voluntary organisations should discuss how they together can identify innovative working methods and develop new responses to challenges in the local community.
 - The local voluntary sector should take an active role in the local democracy and contribute to the development of their local communities.

Follow-up of the platform by the parties

Frivillighet Norge and KS shall incorporate joint activities related to the agreement into their respective ordinary plans. Regular contact meetings between the parties shall be held based on the platform, in order to address relevant matters that contribute to promoting the content of the agreement among the parties' members. The responsibility for convening contact meetings shall alternate between the parties.

The platform will remain in effect for four years. The parties will then jointly evaluate and, if necessary, revise the platform.

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