

KS-FoU County council as planning expert advisor

Cooperation on well-functioning municipal planning systems.

Recommendations

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Prepared by:	Erik Plathe, Kristin Karlbom Dahle Project manager: Erik Plathe
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Cooperation on well-functioning municipal planning systems

The KS-FoU project "The County Municipality as a Planning Advisor" was carried out in the period 2021-2023 and had the purpose to:

- Clarify and strengthen the county municipality's advisory role according to the Planning and Building Act
- Develop better and more efficient interaction between regional authorities and the municipalities with emphasis on community planning linked to the election periods and financial planning.
- Provide a joint boost for municipal planning and the community part of the municipal plan in the election period 2024-2027.
- Contribute to the development of effective and well-functioning planning systems for the municipalities regardless of municipal size. The project has been divided into three main phases. Phase 1 "0 point" has focused on the municipalities' need for guidance and the county municipality's advisory and coordination role. Phase 2 "Theme" has focused on the sustainability goals and area strategies in the community part, while phase 3 "New election period" has focused on better linking of the community part of the municipal plan to the election periods and the community part as a political management tool for a new municipal council.

The project has been carried out as a process-oriented R&D project with emphasis on innovation through experience exchange, discussion and testing of recommendations from other adjacent KS-R&D projects. In total, 10 workshops have been conducted in all county municipalities in phase 1, 2 national webinars on the sustainability goals in planning and area strategies in the social part in phase 2, and 5 network meetings in phase 3 where also municipalities and state administrators have participated.

Several presentations have been developed through the project that can be used in guidance contexts as needed. Asplan Viak has carried out the project in collaboration with NIBR-OsloMet and Nordlandsforskning, where NIBR-OsloMet has been responsible for the municipal survey and

area strategies in the social part, while Nordlandsforskning has been responsible for the sustainability goals.

The municipalities' social, spatial and economic planning should be a tool for elected governance and task solving in the municipality. In a well-functioning municipal planning system, the social part of the municipal plan is a management tool for the new municipal council in each election period. It gives priority in the form of clear direction and is followed up in the economic plan and other work in the municipal organization.

The spatial part builds on the guidelines in the social part and is revised as needed, while the scope of strategies, theme and sector plans is adapted to the municipality's needs and what is required to follow up on state guidelines. Many municipalities have to adapt to a reality with limited planning resources. This, together with, among other things, a complicated regulation for making changes in the social part, and many and increasing state expectations and requirements for planning, contributes to making it demanding for the municipalities to have a well-functioning planning system.

This makes simplifications and learning important - so that elected officials can exercise the role of social developer through priorities in the social part and provide a better basis for administrative follow-up. Social plans that do not provide management and prioritization have little value. Too extensive planning documents provide unclear management, rigid goal structures, increased reporting requirements and can affect the time and resources for task solving and service provision. Legally binding spatial plans always provide management through the legal effect, even though spatial plans can also be eroded by exemptions. The social part is more about how the municipal organization works.

There are few state requirements for plans, but the state has many expectations. A large part of the social plans in the municipalities within areas such as health and welfare, school, housing, municipal engineering, business, integration and so on follows from the municipality's own need for plans. The processes are set up by the municipality itself. It is an important basis for well-functioning municipal planning systems that the municipalities themselves adapt the need for plans and the scope of the plan.

