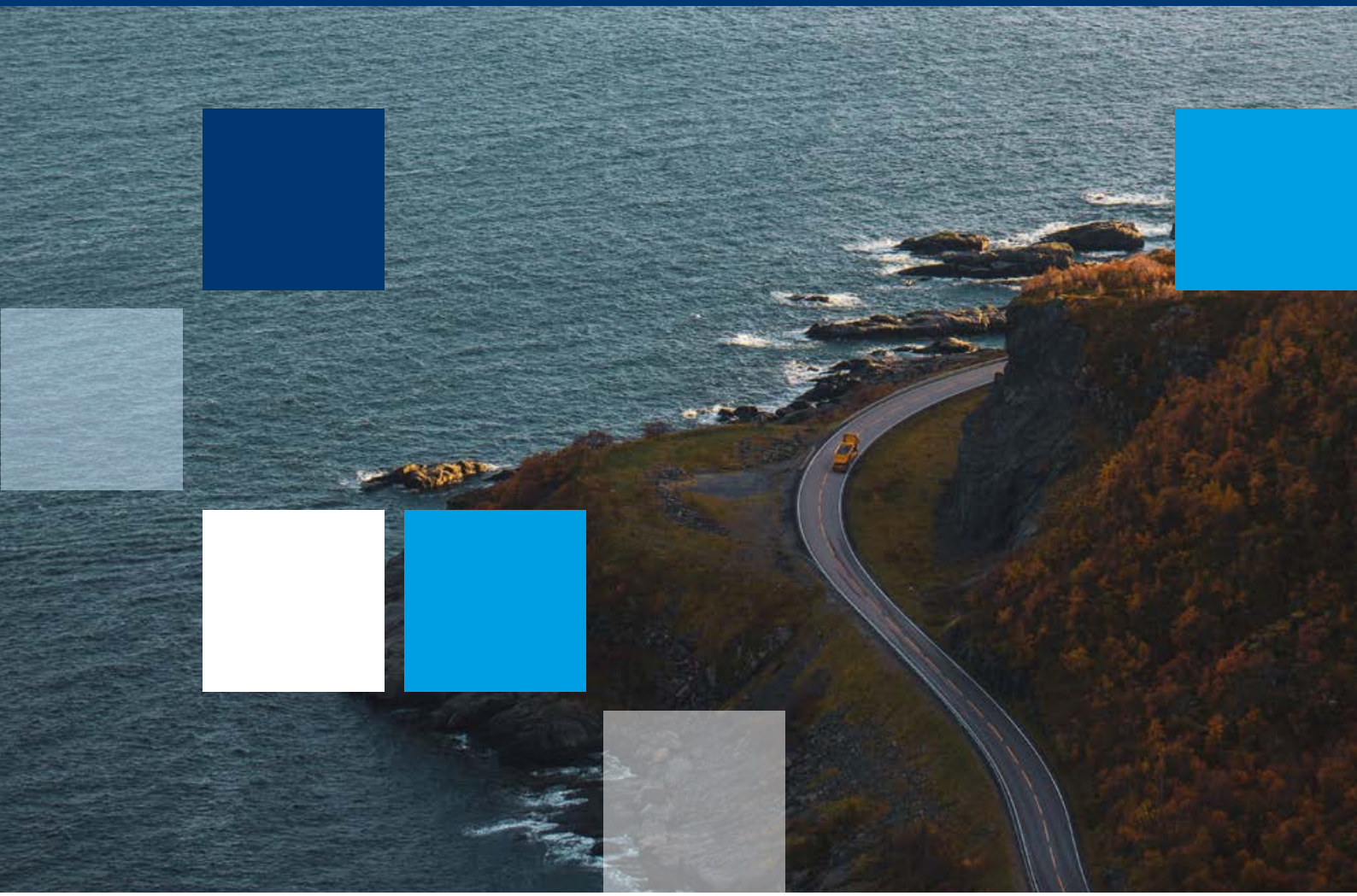
Voluntary Subnational Review – Norway

Implementation of the UNs Sustainable Development Goals in local and regional governments in Norway



KOMMUNESEKTORENS ORGANISASJON
The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities

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KS – the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities – representing all 356 municipalities and 11 regional authorities in the country motivates, supports and encourages its members to develop innovative programmes and services for inclusive communities through applying the SDGs.

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Opening statement

Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is a shared responsibility which requires mobilization of local and regional authorities, civil society, businesses and other local stakeholders – together with national authorities and international partners. Two thirds of the 169 SDG targets can only be achieved through local and regional action. Localizing the SDGs is therefore a crucial factor for the success of Agenda 2030. Today, local and regional authorities in all parts of the world actively contribute to shape strategies, take part in coordination mechanisms and deliver on implementation.

With this Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) KS - the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities - aims to highlight how Norway's 356 municipalities and 11 regional authorities have localized the SDGs and what progress on Agenda 2030 they have made.
Several Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) by KS' members have provided additional insightful cases in the Subnational Review on how municipalities and regional authorities can work to make a sustainable future a reality. Norway's 2021 Voluntary National Review (VNR) will include findings from the subnational study and dedicate a full chapter to local government SDG relevance and efforts. KS has been invited to join Norway's national delegation to the UN's High-Level Political Forum when presenting Norway's 2021 Voluntary National Review.

Local and regional authorities are central to developing the next generation of VNRs, securing granular data to monitor progress on the SDGs. The VLR and VSR process can bring multiple benefits, including more integrated policymaking and coordination within the government, enhanced data collection and increased engagement with the civil society, academia, the private sector and other stakeholders. It can furthermore serve as a communication tool between different levels of government. This collaboration across tiers of government in Norway has demonstrated the increasing recognition of the need for collaboration and joint action. Norwegian local and regional authorities will provide their contribution for a sustainable future.

Norway will provide voluntary review on the national, subnational and local level. I think this is a unique opportunity to demonstrate inter-connectivity between levels of governments. This can strengthen multilevel governance for sustainability.

Bjørn Arild Gram

President –the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities

1 INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Highlights

Key learnings from the review process
This is the first Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) undertaken for Norway. It has been a learning process. The review builds on qualitative and quantitative data, research and dialogue. Focusing on including the voices of local and regional governments has been key throughout the process. Ensuring good representation across the country has also been a concern. The absence of SDG-indicators to measure progress on the goals and targets at local and regional level presents a significant challenge when conducting VSRs.

A key takeaway from the process is the varied maturity in working with the SDGs amongst local and regional governments. Creating adequate support mechanisms that meet the needs of beginners as well as mechanisms that accelerate the efforts of the front runners will be important in the years ahead in the Decade of Action. Although there is varied progress, Norwegian local and regional governments are at the forefront in many respects. Some local and regional governments are using the SDGs as a guiding star in their planning, management and development of local communities. It is unique that many local and regional governments have built new authorities with the SDGs as foundation. Norway was the first country to apply the U4SSC Key Performance Indicators for smart and sustainable cities to an entire cluster of municipalities. There is widespread collaboration and activity across local and regional levels of government.

Progress on the SDGs
Norwegian local and regional authorities are on track to reach many of the goals and targets. They contribute substantially to SDG achievement through their regular service delivery, welfare production, planning and development work. Challenges, however, remain within all three dimensions of sustainability. The municipal sector delivers well on health and education, although school drop-out is still too high. They take active leadership in the transition to a climate- and environmentally friendly society, but the transformative force could be stronger with more wide use of innovation and available technology. Existing collaboration between the business community, academia and the public sector has resulted in robust infrastructure and commercial development. Local and regional authorities should utilize collaboration and procurement as a vehicle for reaching a sustainable future to a larger extent going forward.

Photo: Adobe Stock

Recommendations to local and regional and national authorities

Based on the review of local and regional status, efforts and progress on the SDGs, and the central objective of actionable output, KS has several recommendations to the municipal sector and national authorities.

1. Uphold multilevel governance, policy coherence and multi-stakeholder partnerships
2. Fully consult local and regional authorities at each step of the national decision-making process
3. Maintain and foster political commitment and continue localizing and implementing the SDGs

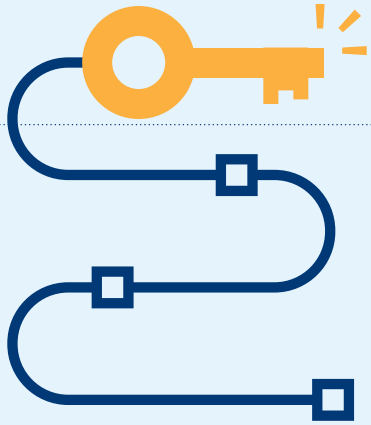
Local governments have taken initiative and responsibility to deliver on the SDGs but need increased freedom of action to be able to deliver. State sectorisation impedes local and regional governments' ability to work holistically with the SDGs. There should be political cohesion across levels of government to foster joint and collective efforts towards the goals. Support mechanisms and guidance, particularly for the regional authorities, should be amplified.

Next steps

KS and the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (KMD) will, following a model devised during the reporting process, collaborate on the development of indicators, increased institutional knowledge and best practice for joint action on SDG implementation across all levels of government.

KS will continue to promote the various co-creation platforms, networks and arenas for localizing SDGs, and advocate internationally for multilevel governance and policy cohesion for a sustainable future.

Main takeaways



Reaching the Sustainable Development Goals largely depends on local and regional authorities' efforts

Political commitment is vital. Political ownership and priority impact the speed and direction of the SDG localization

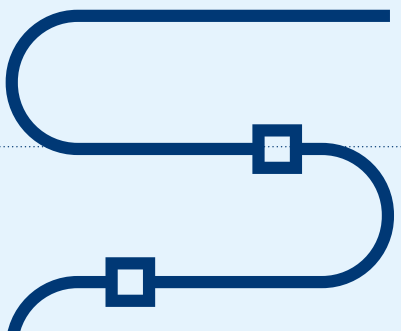
Most municipalities and regional authorities have initiated the work. There is, however, large variation in maturity when it comes to working with the SDGs in the Norwegian municipal sector

Although recently amalgamated, large, central and network-oriented municipalities have come the furthest, being 'big and strong' is not a prerequisite for succeeding

Network, knowledge sharing and collaboration across levels of government plays a huge role, and the synergies between local and regional level are being exploited to a large degree

Most municipalities have incorporated the SDGs in the society plan of the municipal master plan, which indicates that the SDGs are guiding the societal development

The most mature have operationalized and integrated the SDGs in strategic plans and management processes. There are frontrunners that have excelled in this space, which set an example for the remaining municipalities



Insufficient resources and capacity, access to adequate tools and methods, competence and political ownership are the biggest barriers to local governments' work with and towards the SDGs. Regional authorities need adequate support mechanisms and tools to mobilize and engage the municipalities

Although no good benchmarking is available, municipalities and regional authorities contribute substantially to SDG achievement through their regular service delivery, welfare production, planning and development work. Challenges, however, remain within all three dimensions of sustainability

There is inadequate policy cohesion. Municipalities and regional authorities attempt to work holistically with the SDGs and see the goals in connection with their societal mission, but this is impeded by a sectorised state

There is an absence of a common understanding of what implementing the SDG framework in the local and regional context entail

There should be increased focus on increasing institutional knowledge and competence on sustainable development.

Photo: Torbjørn Sandbakk / Unsplash

1.2 Introduction

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) tend to fall short in grasping and showcasing the local and regional experiences, initiatives and progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Yet, achievement of the SDGs depends strongly on the efforts and progress made at the local and regional level. The SDGs concern all aspects of the local government sector's work, and the international community widely recognizes that at least 105 of the 169 targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without local and regional authorities. Local and regional authorities are close to citizens, business and civil society. When Norway reported to the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2016, the local and regional aspects were not included. At this point, the localization of the SDGs amongst local and regional governments were still in its infancy. However, much development has happened since then and the potential for a rich description of effort and status among Norwegian municipalities and regional authorities is significantly strengthened.

Against this backdrop, KS, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, initiated a Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) to demonstrate local and regional governments' capacity, commitments, constraints and success stories concerning SDG localization. The purpose of the review is to further foster SDG localization, share knowledge and inspire the less mature authorities, and demonstrate local and regional governments' devotion to the 2030 Agenda. Conducting the review has in and of itself contributed to these objectives, particularly given the inclusivity of the process. There is great variation in maturity when it comes to localizing and implementing the SDGs amongst the local and regional authorities in Norway. Some can be considered frontrunners both on a national and global scale, whereas others are just getting started. It is therefore an important ambition to use this review to make available and share the success stories, and thereby illustrate that there is a lot of activity and efforts to take inspiration from. It is also important to

showcase that the need for support mechanisms differ greatly across the authorities.

Norway is a unitary state composed of municipalities and regional authorities. From 2020 and following a structural reform consisting of local and regional amalgamations, there are 356 municipalities and 11 regional authorities in Norway. Responsibilities of local authorities include pre- and primary education, health care and social welfare, planning, local infrastructure, utilities and culture. Responsibilities of regional authorities include secondary education and regional development (roads and public transport, business development and cultural heritage). KS represents all local and regional authorities, and KS' primary mission is to be a development partner, promote the sector's needs to central authorities and others, and negotiate with labour organisations on behalf of the employers in the municipal sector.

Effective multilevel governance requires mutual trust. Achieving the SDGs is a shared responsibility; local and regional authorities need to exercise their own powers, to have administrative structures and financial resources, in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government. KS coordinates consultation between the government and local and regional authorities. Formal, structured and regular consultations three times a year for more than two decades has fostered multi-level governance dialogue and common intra-government understanding, reduced the need for national regulations or earmarking in local budgets, provided for stable funding of local and regional authorities, enhanced local discretion securing efficient use of resources, and enabled local democracy.

Main localizing activities in Norway are initiated by local and regional authorities. Localizing has gained momentum and the pace of implementation is considerable. KS encourages and supports its members to strengthen and sustain SDG localization and develop innovative services and communities through applying the SDGs. Through member networks and arenas, KS works to enhance the capacity to accelerate implementation of the SDGs at the local and regional level. Local and regional authorities collaborate extensively, such as in the Network of Excellence on SDG City Transition (Network of Excellence), consisting of municipalities and regions which focus on local SDG initiatives across the country. The network was initiated by several local and regional authorities and organizations, together with KS, United for Smart and Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) and the UN Chartered Center of Excellence in Trondheim. To strengthen the efforts of the Network of Excellence, KS is also working together with The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and other labour organisations to develop a national sustainability pledge to strengthen the progress on fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. Another key initiative is the development of a taxonomy to classify SDG-related indicators, that has been developed by Statistics Norway, in partnership with KS.

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1.3 Methodology and process for preparation of the review

The process for preparation of the Voluntary Subnational Review

KS has initiated and produced the first Norwegian Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR). There has been constant emphasis on ensuring an inclusive and participatory process, and various networks, meeting places and arenas for knowledge sharing among local and regional governments have been utilized in the preparation and development of the review. KS has also contributed through their participation in United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) in workshops to exchange knowledge and experiences with other subnational authorities conducting VSRs.

Methodology

The VSR relies on several data sources. To get a thorough understanding of the efforts and work with the SDGs at the local and regional level, **two surveys were conducted**, one for the municipalities and one for the regional authorities. The surveys were completed in February – March 2021. Thematically, the surveys were based on the 'Policy and Enabling Environment' chapter in the UNDESA's Global Guiding Elements for Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) of SDG implementation, with some adjustment to fit the local and regional context in Norway. The surveys consisted of the following themes; Understanding, ownership and engagement to the SDGs; the SDGs in strategy and management; leaving no one behind; prioritised areas; innovation and partnerships; structural barriers; critical success factors; and the coronavirus pandemic.

All municipalities and regional authorities were invited and encouraged to participate in the surveys. The surveys were directed to the regional and municipal director or whomever in charge of, or near the entity's work on sustainability. In total, 33% of the municipalities (118 out of 356) and 73%[1] of the regional authorities (8 out of 11) responded to the survey. Survey response rates may be partly influenced by municipalities'

In total, 33% of the municipalities (118 out of 356) and 73% of the regional authorities (8 out of 11) responded to the survey.

1. Please note that the capital, Oslo, which is formally both a municipality and a regional authority, only responded as a municipality, to the municipality survey.

How KS prepared the VSR

VSR kick-off with stakeholders; KMD, Statistics Norway, regional authorities, municipalities

Request from government to compliment national reporting (VNR) through VSR – dedicated chapter in VNR

Distribution of test survey to pilot municipalities and regional authorities

Feedback from pilot authorities

Analyses of relevant public data and survey

Cases collected

Invitation to all municipalities and regional authorities to contribute with cases

Distribution of Survey to all municipalities and regional authorities

KS invited to join the Norwegian delegation to HLPF

Sustainability Fridays – monthly webinars for local and regional authorities (used to inform about the VSR)

Peer dialogue with UCLG, CEMR and sister organisations

Joint agreement with government for follow up

Dedicated chapter in VNR presented in Ministerial meeting at HLPF

Presentation of VSR ed at Local Governments Forum at HLPF

KS keynote speech at national SDG conference

Collection of key stakeholders' comments

and regional authorities' maturity in working with the SDG as well as the resource constraints resulting from Covid-19. Some were uncertain of what basing the local work on the SDGs entail in practice and thus refrained from responding out of fear of "greenwashing". This gives reason to suspect that some may have been overly conservative in their responses. Overall, the municipality sample has an adequate spread across geography, size and centrality, although the sample distribution does not directly match the population distribution. Still, the survey data provides a rich foundation that made it possible to analyse variation and make meaningful observations across and within dimensions describing local and regional authority characteristics. The survey was analysed using descriptive analysis. Please see Appendix 1 for more information about the methodology and survey data collected in preparation of the VSR

Indicator reporting is an important aspect of monitoring progress towards Agenda 2030. Unfortunately, SDG indicators are still lacking for regional and local authorities. To objectively assess the status and progress on the goals and targets at the local and regional level, progress was measured using existing data sources. The analysis of the progress on the goals and targets is structured around the municipal sector's six priority policy areas, as committed to in KS' National Congress in 2020. Consequently, Part 3 of the VSR 'Progress on the goals and targets' does not evaluate progress goal by goal. Rather, it measures progress on the political priorities, which are largely based on the SDGs. On commission by KS, the national statistical bureau in Norway, Statistics Norway, is currently developing a taxonomy for SDG indicators. This is an important step for developing and making available indicators with higher data quality that will be useful for future VSRs.

Photo: Adobe Stock

The Municipal Sector's Six Priority Areas

Adolescence and life quality

Climate and environmentally friendly development

Adaptable business community

Attractive places and cities

Diversity and inclusion

Citizens' participation

2

POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

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Over the past couple of years, local and regional governments in Norway have taken significant steps in their efforts to work with and towards the SDGs. All the regional authorities and 95% of the municipalities that responded to the survey conducted as part of the Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR), report that they have started working with the SDGs. However, when asked to evaluate their own progress, municipal responses are more modest and there are clear variations as to who has made significant progress in working with the goals in a local and regional context.

There are large variations in maturity amongst the municipalities

There are large variations in terms of commitment to, and implementation of, the SDGs across the municipalities. Larger municipalities have generally worked longer with the SDGs, and these municipalities seem generally more committed and to have come further in their implementation of the goals. They have also typically come further in leveraging measures to cooperate with both internal and external stakeholders. A similar but less apparent correlation is found for geographical centrality, and additionally, there seems to be higher political priority in more urban areas. Financial resources and capacity can be an enabler, but financial and budgetary constraints do not seem to have influenced the speed and progress of the municipalities' implementation of the goals. Engagement in networks and regional activity on the other hand seems to play a key role, particularly when it comes to commitment, cooperation with stakeholders and implementation in management processes. As such, although being 'big' and 'central' may increase the likelihood of being ahead in working with the SDGs, there are several cases in which municipalities with fewer available resources thrive in this space.

The following chapter will elaborate on these variations and describe the status and progress in working with the SDGs in local and regional governments focusing around five themes; creating ownership of the SDGs; SDGs in local and regional frameworks (including strategy, municipal plans and management processes); the principle of leaving no one behind; innovation and partnerships; barriers and success factors; and effects of Covid-19.

Photo: Adobe Stock

2.1 Creating ownership and commitment to the SDGs

There is large variation in municipalities' efforts to create awareness, ownership, and enthusiasm for working with and towards the SDGs. There has been most focus and efforts towards creating ownership amongst the municipality administration's employees and local politicians. These efforts seem to be paying off, and half the municipalities have administrations that are committed and engaged in working with the goals. Considerably less effort have been targeted towards creating ownership in the local community. Only one fourth report having conducted activities to raise awareness amongst the local inhabitants and one tenth towards local businesses. There seem to be an untapped potential in engaging key stakeholders, particularly given the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration as means for reaching Agenda 2030. Municipalities with longer experience in working with the goals appear to have more engaged administrations and conduct more external activities to raise awareness in the local community. This indicates that there is an important maturity process in working with the SDGs and that more definite output can be expected going forward.

The following section will describe key observations around the level of ownership and enthu-

siasm for working with the SDGs, focusing on citizen involvement, the importance of networks, political ownership and the synergies between local and regional governments.

Municipalities can benefit from more active involvement of citizens

The most common tool to involve citizens in the municipality's work with the SDGs are communication through the municipality's channels, including webpages and social media; public meetings and hearings; and communication through schools and other institutions.

Local citizens are considered a key resource in the New Public Governance logic, yet citizen involvement is not actively pursued. Only one fourth of the municipalities have conducted activities to raise awareness and create ownership for the SDGs amongst the citizens. Some municipalities however stand out with inspiring initiatives for creating local engagement and awareness. Kristiansand municipality has regular awareness raising campaigns such as 'I Drive Green' and Stavanger municipality recently piloted a project for involving their youth citizens. Several municipalities including Tinn, Kristiansand, Bodø, Tromsø and Ålesund have hosted Night Treks, a concept developed by NORAD, in which thousands of people unite and walk together to raise awareness of the SDGs.

There seem to be an untapped potential in engaging key stakeholders, particularly given the importance of cross-sectoral collaboration as means for reaching Agenda 2030

Means to involve citizens

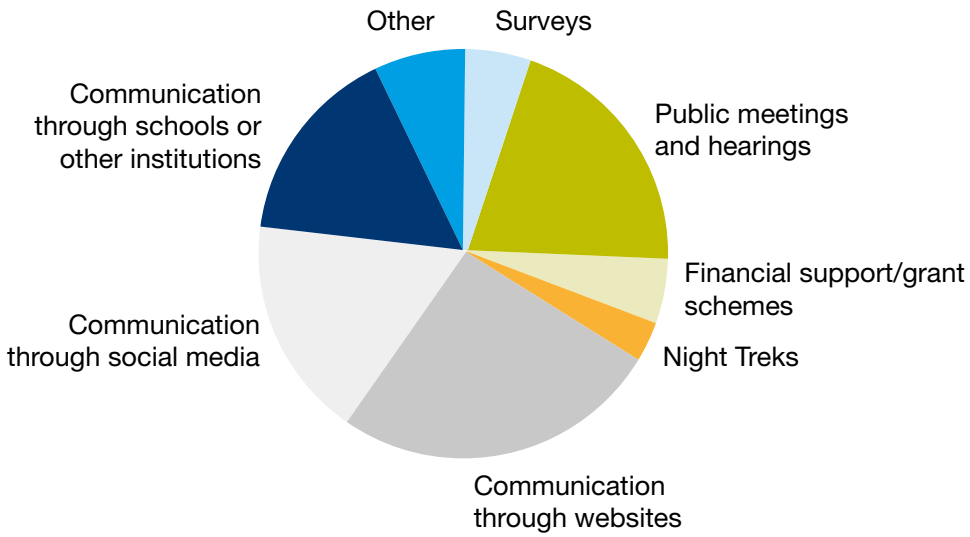


Figure 1: Overview of means used to involve citizens

KRISTIANSAND MUNICIPALITY

Photo: Aptum

Creating awareness and changing attitudes with ‘I Drive Green’

“I Drive Green” is a yearly attitude and awareness campaign carried out by Kristiansand municipality, on behalf of the Area and Transport Plan cooperation in the Kristiansand region. Since its inception in 2010, 14,000 unique participants have participated. The purpose is to contribute to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improve public health and limit local pollution. The campaign consists of an individual competition with registration of green travels, and a business competition in which large and small private and public companies compete to be the best on green travelling. To create awareness and mobilize as many participants as possible, the municipality have teamed up with various ambassadors such as sports profiles and politicians. Points are awarded both per trip taken by foot, bicycle or public transport as well as per car-free day and flight-free month. The points are registered either in the app or on the website and different winners are chosen in different categories at the end of the campaign.

Increasing citizen involvement through open-source platform

Decidim is an open-source platform for participatory democracy and co-creation that allows citizens to digitally track and influence the content of a decision-making process. The Decidim platform has many functions that citizens can use, such as entering their own input, discussing with each other, voting up and down proposals, and so forth. As a pilot, Stavanger municipality has tested the tool on students in middle school to see how the tool works and how it can be used. The aim of the project is to stimulate youth to participate in the development of society. In the pilot, the students get to vote on real measures to be initiated in their local community for a total value of NOK 300,000. Specifically, the youth who go to two youth clubs have been invited to suggest what they need to enjoy hanging out at the club. They come up with suggestions that they put into the tool, which have then been quality assured and voted on. Through the project, the municipality has learned that young people find it somewhat strange to be involved in deciding on such large sums of money, but they like that the process is transparent and easily available on their phone. Through the network "Smart Cities Norway" eleven municipalities are now working together to develop 'Decidim as a service'.

United Nations Association of Norway – SDG Trainings

United Nations Association of Norway's (UN Association) purpose is to spread knowledge and increase awareness of the UN and international issues, including the SDGs. Children, youth, teachers and teacher students are the UN's most important target groups. UN Association's activities in the school system contribute to teachers and teacher students having relevant competence to teach about the UN and the SDGs. The education sector in Norway was among the first to teach about the SDGs. Over the past three years, the UN Association has conducted school visits in all regions and 147 municipalities. Since 2019, the Association has held courses for teachers. SDG 4 concerns quality education, and targets 4.7 shall ensure that pupils receive an education that promotes sustainable development. The Association is pushing for sustainable development and global citizenship to be integrated in teaching in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner, and they collaborate closely with a series of teacher education institutions and universities. Furthermore, the UN Association also gives lectures and arranges workshops for local and regional authorities who is at the early start of integrating the SDGs in the authority's action plans and strategies.

Participation in networks stimulates and inspires action towards achieving the goals and is an important arena for knowledge sharing

Engaging in networks accelerates and eases the implementation of the goals. Participation in the Norwegian Network of Excellence on SDG City Transition (Network of Excellence) has a positive impact on both commitment and engagement, and members have to a larger degree conducted activities to raise awareness amongst local citizens, businesses and politicians. The network has also been successful in making available tools for easing the localization in the municipal context. Municipalities engaging in any SDG-related network or program across administrative levels, be it local, regional, national or international, has better access to tools and methods. Access to guidebooks and tools for implementing the goals is considered important for succeeding in working with the goals, which highlights the importance of network and knowledge sharing. In addition to formal networks, there are several informal open networks and knowledge sharing arenas, some established by KS and the Network of Excellence, such as 'Sustainability Friday', which is a monthly webinar series open for all local and regional governments.

The municipality has access to relevant tools and methods for implementing the goals

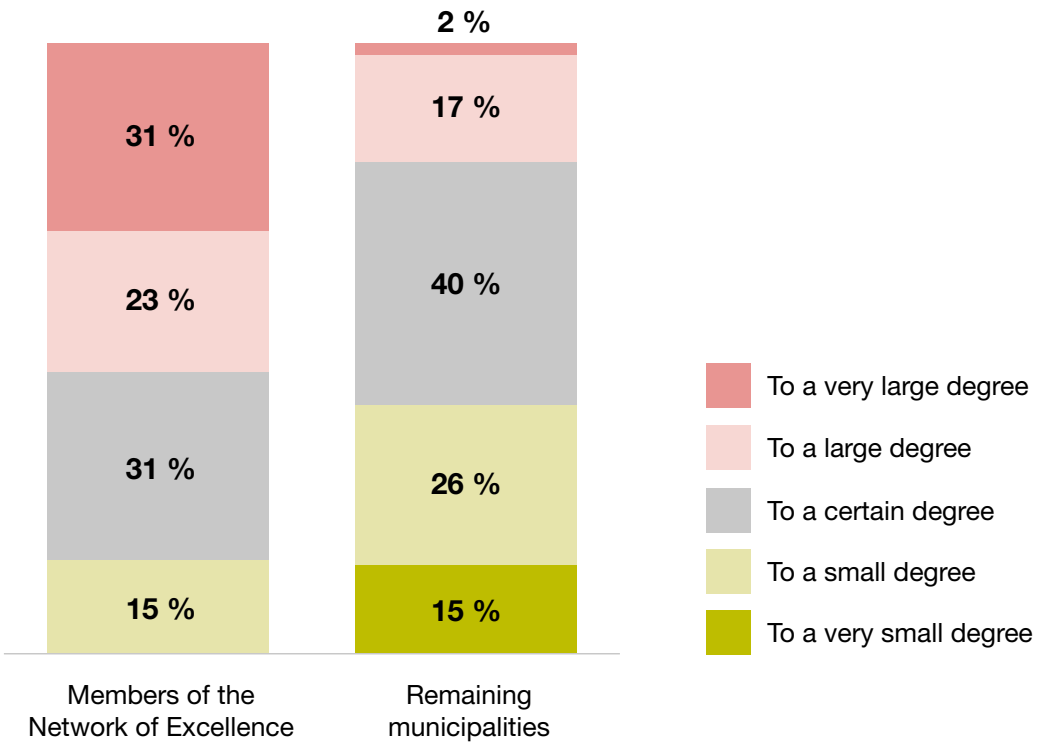


Figure 2: Access to tools and methods

The Norwegian Network of Excellence on SDG City Transition

Several municipalities[2], regional authorities and organizations, together with KS, has formed a network to join forces in localizing the SDGs, demonstrate local adaption and accelerate impact by linking local action to regional, national and international partners for knowledge sharing and funding. The network is an ongoing prototyping of a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach to sustainable development and is collaborating closely with the UN initiative United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC). The network, which is expanding rapidly, builds on the Stavanger Declaration and sets out to

1. Spread knowledge about the status to the community
2. Develop plans for community development that illustrates how to reach the SDGs
3. Mobilize and support citizens, businesses, organizations and academia that contribute to sustainable development
4. Measure and evaluate the effort, through the U4SSC Implementation program and other methods

2. The network consists of the municipalities Trondheim, Asker, Bærum, Rana, Kristiansund, Kristiansand, Ålesund, Stavanger, Molde, Bodø, Narvik, Nærøysund, Karmøy, Haugesund, Voss and Bergen as well as the regional authorities Møre og Romsdal, Trøndelag, Viken and Nordland

Political ownership and commitment is vital

Political commitment is considered vital for succeeding with the goals. The municipalities with political attention to the SDGs have generally come further when it comes to integrating the SDGs in the municipality plans and management processes. This indicates that the political level has the potential to impact the speed and direction of the SDG localization. There are varying degrees of political commitment across the country, but the SDGs seem to have more political weight in large municipalities, urban areas, recently amalgamated municipalities and municipalities that are network oriented. Some municipalities have taken action to foster political priority for the goals. For example, the municipalities Aremark and Bodø as well as Viken regional authority have established a systematic approach for involving the political level in the operationalization of the SDGs by incorporating the SDGs in templates for the treatment and processing of background documents for political decisions. As such, the SDGs becomes an integral part of political governance.

The regional authorities play an important role in mobilizing and supporting the municipalities

There is much collaboration and activity across local and regional governments

Regional authorities are the municipalities' most used collaboration partner on SDG initiatives and most municipalities have participated in some form of regional network, initiative or program on SDG implementation. Similarly, all regional authorities use establishment or participation in networks to involve the municipalities in working with the goals and they complement municipalities in their region for taking initiative.

Political priority and implementation of the SDGs in the municipal planning system

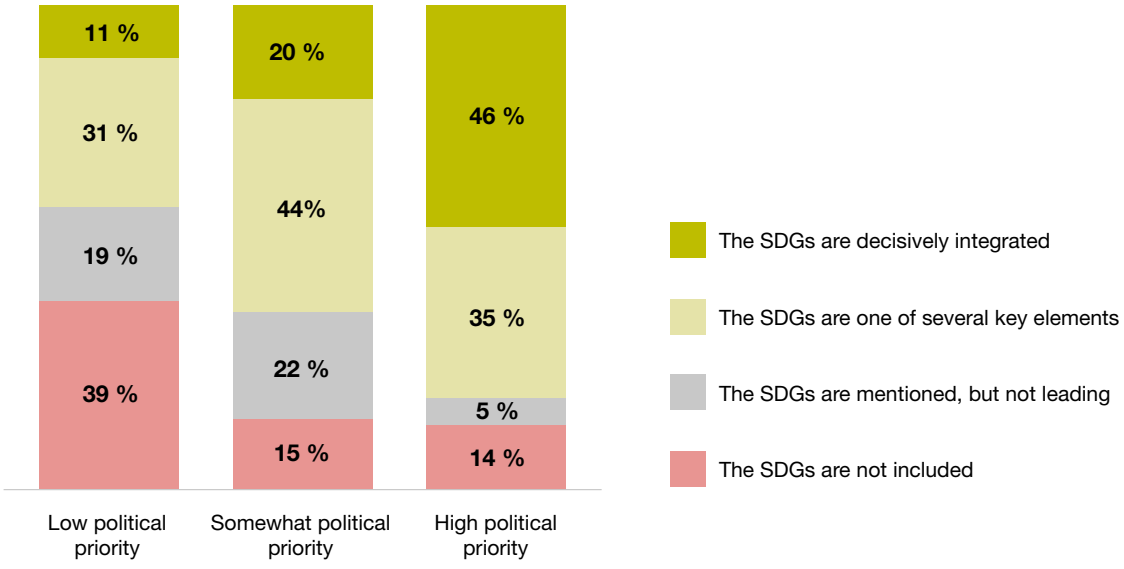


Figure 3: Political priority and implementation of the SDGs in the municipal planning system

SDG-related networks, initiatives or programs the municipalities participate in

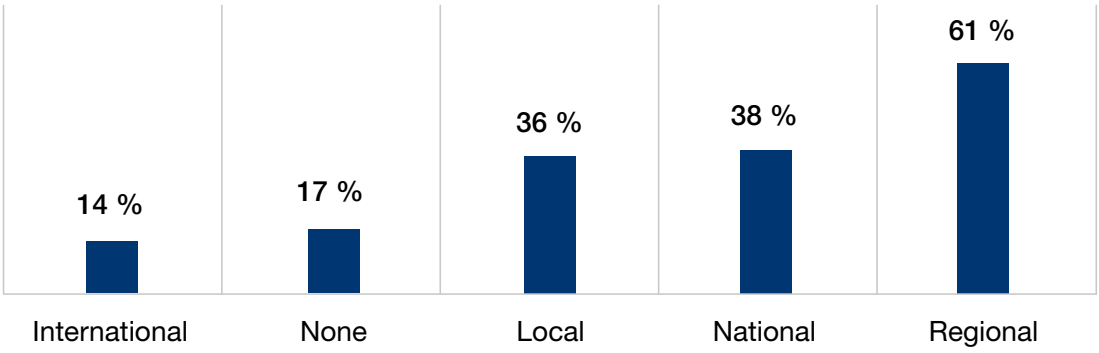


Figure 4: Participation in network, initiatives or programs related to the SDGs

The regional authorities support the municipalities in various ways

Active and collaborative regional authorities contribute with competence, data and knowledge bases, arrange seminars, stimulate knowledge sharing by showcasing practical examples from other municipalities and foster collaboration between the local governments in the region. Some have even established regional SDG networks, and the benefits of being in an active region are substantial. These municipalities have better access to tools and methods, and they are better able to direct their attention outward. They collaborate more with the private sector and NGOs on SDG initiatives, and have to a larger extent participated in local and regional programs. As such, there is much to be gained from leveraging the synergies across local and regional governments.

Although the potential is huge, it has yet to be fully exploited across the country

Not all regional authorities have fully taken on the cooperative and mobilizing role and a few municipalities in the less active regions report that they are somewhat 'left on their own'. They describe the regional authority as lagging behind, and report that they are missing implementation guidance, support, dialogue and interest from their regional authority. On the positive side, bottom-up initiatives across municipalities have been initiated to get started and put pressure on regional authorities to get engaged. This indicates that municipalities are not dependent upon an active regional authority to mobilize and act.

Regional authorities look to national authorities for support

Whereas the local authorities look to the regional authority for support, the regional authorities look to the national authorities for guidance. Most regional authorities see clear national guidelines and support as a key success factor. At the same time, over half the regional authorities report a lack of support and guidelines from the national level as a key barrier in their work with the SDGs, indicating that they are not getting the support or guidance they need to succeed.

The Sustainability Region Møre og Romsdal

Photo: Møre og Romsdal Fylkeskommune

The Sustainability Region Møre og Romsdal is a regional authority initiative to collectively boost the work on sustainability in the region. With this initiative, Møre og Romsdal wants to position themselves as a clear contributor in the development of a sustainable society for the future. The goal is to direct the regions' efforts methodically and coordinated towards achieving the SDGs. To achieve this, on the regional authority's initiative, all the municipalities in the region have collected data and measured performance and progress according to U4SSC's KPIs. This is to ensure that all the municipalities and the regional authority have a common knowledge base for future work. Cooperation with businesses, associations, the voluntary sector, cultural life, and the research community in the region is also central to the Sustainability Region.

Boosting regional sustainability

Several regional authorities are developing regional networks to speed up the needed sustainable societal transition and contribute to achieving the SDGs. The regional networks work closely with The Network of Excellence, state authority, regional business organisations, academia, and civil society. The regional collaborations aim to facilitate joint action, share knowledge and translate potential for smart and sustainable development into opportunities for business development and job creation (e.g. energy system, food system, waste management systems, mobility systems etc.).

2.2 Incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals in local and regional frameworks

Photo: Florencia Viadana / Unsplash

Most municipalities and regional authorities have included the SDGs in their strategy and vision. In terms of implementing the goals in the municipal planning system, municipalities have made varied progress. This is expected to change when local and regional plans are updated by the end of the current council period (2019-2023), to comply with the national planning expectations. The society plan stands out as the most mature planning document. Incorporating the SDGs in core management processes such as budgeting and procurement is still largely work in progress. A similar tendency is found for the regional authorities, where the SDGs play a decisive role in strategy and planning but have a less prominent role in management processes. Fortunately, there are frontrunners in this space that have come far in integrating the goals across strategy, plans and management processes, and consequently lead the way. The most mature local and regional authorities have also measured and reported progress on the goals. As such, there is a still a large potential when it comes to operationalizing the SDGs in both the local and regional context. The following chapter will elaborate on the SDGs' role in strategy and the municipal planning system; management processes; and measurement and reporting.

Prioritising SDGs

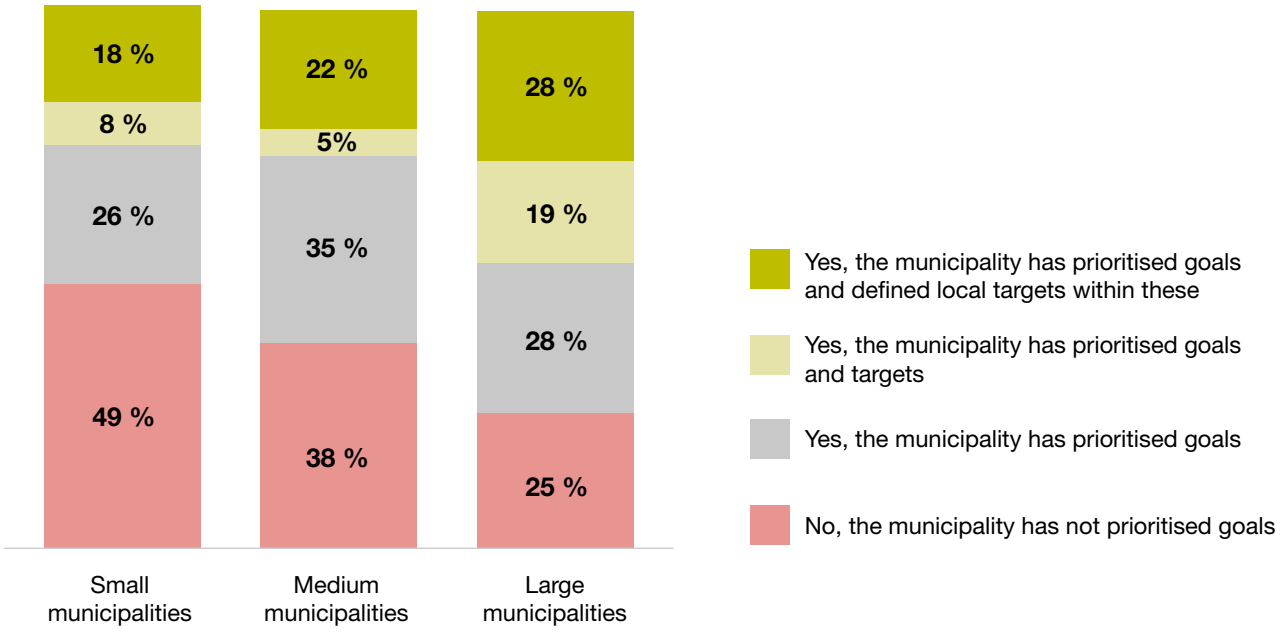


Figure 5: Prioritisation of SDGs across small, medium and large municipalities

The SDGs in strategy and the municipal planning system

Most municipalities and regional authorities have prioritized goals and incorporated the SDGs in their strategy and vision.

A key step to localizing the SDGs is to identify which goals are of particular importance to the community or region. Most municipalities and regional authorities have prioritised goals for the municipality or region. Some have also identified targets, and a few have even articulated own local targets. Larger municipalities have gotten a head start whilst half of the small municipalities have not yet prioritised goals. Furthermore, most municipalities and regional authorities have incorporated the SDGs in their overall strategy and vision to a large extent. Consequently, the SDGs play an important role in setting the strategic direction in both the local and regional context. Bergen for instance officially became a Human Rights City in 2018, and human rights is at the core of everything Bergen does as a service provider, employer, policy maker and democratic arena. This is an important element to how Bergen prioritise its work on the SDGs. Others have identified prioritised SDGs, such as Rana municipality, who has decided to prioritise seven of the goals.

Photo: Jannike Mohn

Arendal municipality's strong focus on SDG 13

Arendal has been recognized as a first mover in working with the 2030 Agenda, at the Nordic level. Since 2008, the Council has been working on CO2 mitigation measures. In 2017, after showing an 80%-reduction in emission over the period 2007-2017, the internal municipal operating system was neutral in accordance with the UN's definition. Arendal focuses strongly on Goal 13 to "take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts". The environmental strategy, Green Strategy for Arendal, is intended to form the basis for a new climate and energy plan. The vision for Arendal is to "be a nationally leading and internationally recognised climate and environmental city, and a learning partner for other local authorities". The Strategy also states that the local authority will stimulate established and new businesses to develop in a greener direction. Furthermore, Arendal's municipal plan is founded firmly on the SDGs.

Berlevåg municipality's commitment to the green shift

Berlevåg has integrated the SDGs into the Society plan, which was recently adopted, with a special focus on climate and the environment. The municipality has taken an active role in the green shift, and Berlevåg's vision is to be green and promote sustainable solutions, including circular economy. This is evident through several projects and ongoing engagements. Berlevåg has come a long way in developing green energy through a project that refines wind power into hydrogen, and further into ammonia. These are future-oriented solutions that can replace fossil fuels at local, national and global levels. As a result of the hydrogen project, the municipality is involved in various regional and national projects for the transition to green energy, including the use of hydrogen in aviation and ferries. The municipality also sets expectations for suppliers to choose green solutions in procurement processes. Berlevåg has also provided input to the regional authority that it should be investigated how hydrogen as an energy carrier can be utilized by the whole region, for instance through a master plan for circular economy. Berlevåg is thus highly proactive and has a strong green vision that extends beyond the municipality's borders.

Photo: Adobe Stock

The SDGs are largely incorporated in the society plan, while implementation in the land-use plan of the municipal master plan lags behind

Most municipalities and all regional authorities have incorporated the goals in the municipal planning system, though to varying degrees. Some municipalities were early adopters, such as Lunner and Arendal who based their municipal plan on the SDGs years ago. The municipal master plan includes a society plan and a land-use plan. The society plan lays out strategic direction for the development of the municipality, while the land-use plan sets out conditions and considerations for new land use and disposing of land. The land-use plan is thus an important tool for ensuring that the municipal land use contributes to achieving the goals adopted in the society plan.

The society plan clearly stands out as the most mature planning document. Almost half of the municipalities have decisively incorporated the SDGs in the society plan. In contrast, around one fifth have incorporated the goals to the same extent in the land-use plan. The maturity in the society plan provides a good starting point for the road ahead, in that the plan has a long-term focus and is central for municipalities' strategic management. The land-use plan is more 'concrete and binding' in its purpose and content and is a natural area to follow up as SDG maturity improves.

There are clear synergies between local and regional planning processes

There are synergies between regional and municipal planning processes, and these become illuminated through the work with the SDGs.

The SDGs in the municipal master plan

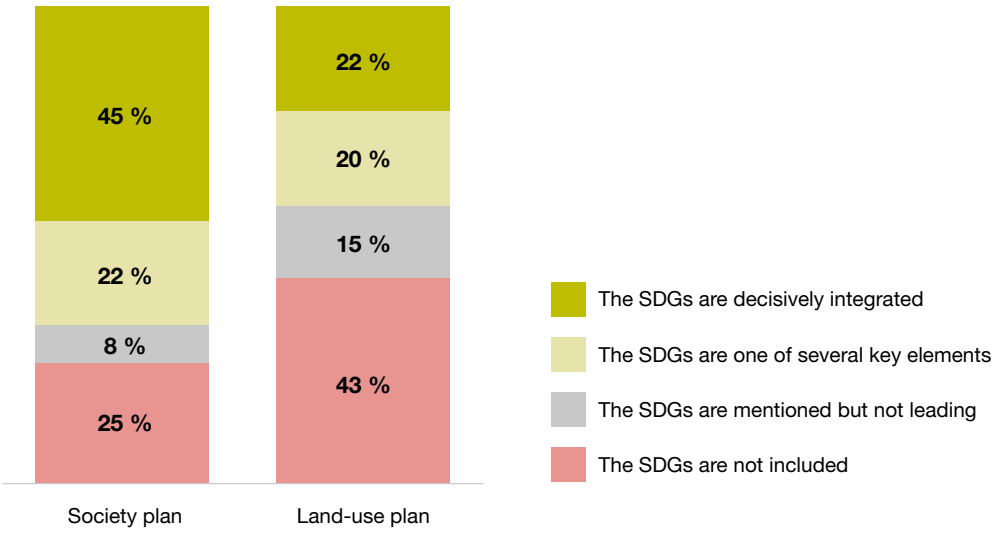


Figure 6: Incorporation of the SDGs in the municipal society plan and land-use plan

Photo: Andreas Dress / Unsplash

The society plan clearly stands out as the most mature planning document. Almost half of the municipalities have decisively incorporated the SDGs in the society plan

Members of the Network of Excellence, larger municipalities and recently amalgamated municipalities have come further in implementing the SDGs across strategy, plans and management systems. Members of the Network of Excellence seem to be amongst the most mature municipalities in implementing the SDGs across strategy, plans and management systems. The same tendency is found for larger municipalities. Similarly, municipalities that have recently amalgamated have clearly come further in implementing the goals. Amalgamation processes serve as a clean slate for developing strategies, plans and management systems, in which the SDGs seem to have stood out as a relevant framework for structuring the work, while providing a common direction and purpose for the new municipality.

Another differentiating factor is the recentness of approval of the municipality plans. For example, municipalities with society plans approved in 2018 or more recently have incorporated the SDGs to a larger extent. This indicates that the municipalities have paid increasing attention to the goals over the past couple of years. The remaining municipality plans are expected to follow suit by the end of the current council period to meet the national planning expectations.

Several municipalities refer to the knowledge base developed by the regional authority for regional planning strategies, which seems to be a useful tool in the municipal planning. Regional planning strategies based upon the SDGs complements local planning, provides support to local priorities, and offers a practical example of SDG implementations, which can be adopted in the local context. Some refer to feedback loops in which both levels of government provide input in the preparation of the other's plans, as well as SDG theme-based planning workshops. These synergies appear particularly helpful for the municipalities in their efforts to integrate the goals in local plans.

ASKER MUNICIPALITY

Photo: Asker municipality/Martin Hafsahl

The use of the SDGs as governing framework in the Norwegian territorial reform

In 2020, following the amalgamation between Hurum, Røyken and Asker, the new Asker municipality came to life. Asker decided to use the SDGs as an overall integral framework for the development of the new municipality. The new municipality wanted to use the SDGs to expand their perspective, steer the municipality in the right direction, and develop good solutions locally that also contribute globally. Specifically, Asker used the goals as a framework for the municipal plan and underlying plans. They wanted to demonstrate that the global goals also have local relevance, and thereby engage citizens, businesses and voluntary organizations and encourage teamwork to reach the goals. Asker's innovative amalgamation process has inspired others, including the new municipalities Nordre Follo, Narvik and Ålesund as well as Viken regional authority, who like Asker, also have built their new authority with the SDGs as a foundation.

NARVIK MUNICIPALITY

Photo: Adobe Stock

Establishing the new Narvik municipality with a focus on SDGs and involvement

The new municipality Narvik took inspiration from other amalgamated municipalities in their use of the SDGs as a framework in their new municipal plans. Narvik wanted to use the goals to create enthusiasm among the citizens, contribute to increased cross-political cooperation and to create a common identity for the new municipality. In the process, Narvik placed special focus on participation and involvement of the local citizens. Narvik wants all the inhabitants to feel ownership to the goals and see the importance and value in taking their share of responsibility with local efforts. To achieve this, Narvik conducted a survey in which they encouraged the inhabitants to share their opinion on which goals the municipality had the greatest opportunity to influence, and thus which goals should be given high priority in the new municipal plan. As such, the municipality invited the inhabitants to participate in the work to help set the direction for the new municipality.

Photo: Adobe Stock

Operationalizing SDGs in processes and decisions

Including the SDGs in budgets and budgeting processes is still work in progress
Incorporating the SDGs in budgets and budgeting processes is largely work in progress. In fact, the SDGs play a fundamental role in less than 20% of the municipalities' budgets and budgeting processes, and around 50% say that the goals are either not included at all or only accounted for in a minor degree. The regional authorities however are somewhat more mature and 3/8 have incorporated the SDGs in their budget to a large degree. However, certain municipalities stand out and have incorporated the SDGs in budgeting and the municipal operations management system. The municipalities Trondheim and Kristiansund are examples of first movers in this area.

KRISTIANSUND MUNICIPALITY

Photo: Adobe Stock

Kristiansund – Incorporating the SDGs in the management system

The SDGs constitute the overall framework for the strategic development of Kristiansund municipality. Kristiansund has reformulated the global goals into 10 tailor made local goals that fit local challenges and opportunities. The goals are grounded in the society plan. To ensure holistic planning and effective management in line with the SDGs, all plans in the municipality must be built with a consistent goal structure. This means that there is a common thread from the overall goals in the municipal plan to targets and initiatives in the underlying plans and activities in the units. The commitment to the goals was formalised in the local authority's 2018 Action Programme, which sets the budget for the year and includes an economic plan for the years 2018–2021. Follow-up takes place in the management system using various management models, data analysis and reporting. The 10 goals and corresponding indicators are built into Kristiansund's management system. As such, the management system shows the connection and the common thread in the municipality's planning, from goal to action and results.

Photo: Glen Musk / Trondheim kommune

Trondheim – SDG budgeting

In order to achieve the SDGs by 2030, cities need to find ways to utilize existing systems to create societal impact and contribute to sustainable value creation, especially to look at the relationship between global goals and access and availability of local resources. Trondheim municipality uses SDG budgeting to integrate the SDGs into local finance structures, based on accounting systems and financial structures that are already in place. Trondheim has designed a data science approach to existing municipal finance systems that connects the 169 UN targets and local accounting standards. Trondheim developed this method in collaboration with the European finance network European Cities for Sustainable Finance (previous CEFG Group) through a series of workshops in 2019 and 2020. The proof of concept is based on KOSTRA (the accounting standard used by Norwegian municipalities) which makes it replicable to other cities in Norway regardless of the local context. The logic has been duplicated and tested in cities like Barcelona and London.

Using this SDG budgeting logic has a strong impact on planning and programming at the local level as it provides a new lens to analyse the way the city plan and use financial resources. Together with the U4SSC KPIs, the budgeting makes for a more direct link between resources and impact and is a good starting point for funnelling resources from where they are to where they should be.

Photo: Adobe Stock

Few municipalities have integrated the goals in purchasing and procurement, but there are frontrunners who use their purchasing power to set an example

Integrating the SDGs in purchasing and procurement processes is also considered work in progress. Few have integrated the goals as a fundamental part of the municipality's procurement processes and almost half have either not integrated the goals or only partly considered them.

However, there are several frontrunners that utilize their purchasing power to contribute to sustainable development. Oslo Municipality has, amongst other things, implemented social requirements in their contractual terms to prevent and combat work-related crime, social dumping and the exploitation of vulnerable labour in their supply chain. Stavanger Municipality has focused on responsible supply chains for several years and Lillestrøm municipality recently launched a strategy for green procurement. These municipalities set an example and illustrate how the goals can be practically integrated in municipal management processes.

Innovative Procurement Program

Public procurement can be a vital instrument to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – if used strategically. The public sector constitutes a major buying force and strategic use of innovative procurements challenge the market to develop smarter, greener and more innovative solutions. There is an acute need for new solutions to meet the challenges we are facing in the areas of demographic development, health care expectancies and the overwhelming consequences of climate change, among others. In Norway, KS has played a key role in assisting municipalities and regions to achieve innovative solutions through procurement. Together with the Confederation of Norwegian Industries (NHO), KS established The National Programme for Supplier Development in 2010. The joint action is a unique collaboration across public and private sectors. The programme provides advice, information and competence to Norwegian public entities that want to use innovative procurement processes to achieve smarter, greener and more efficient solutions to their needs. The programme is also facilitating and brokering several joint procurement initiatives in the areas of health, digitalization and climate change. The programme is coordinating a Nordic collaboration on emission free delivery of goods, they have coordinated the development of environmentally friendly energy sources for express boats, they spurred the national shift from diesel ferries to emission-free battery vessels, and the world's first emission free construction site, among others.

OSLO MUNICIPALITY & STAVANGER MUNICIPALITY

Green procurement in Oslo Municipality

Oslo Municipality is Norway's second largest public purchaser. A large part of this concerns purchases related to construction of buildings and facilities. The municipality uses procurement as a powerful tool in their efforts to accelerate the green shift, achieve ambitious climate goals and implement circular economy mindsets. The starting point for the work is Oslo Municipality's procurement strategy. Through various supplier requirements, Oslo Municipality's procurement shall contribute to recycling, reduce waste, develop more environmentally friendly solutions and reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The supplier requirements include:

- requirements for transport in the municipality's procurements.
- requirements for fossil- and emission-free buildings and construction sites in the municipality's procurements. From 1.1.2025, all the municipality's building and construction sites shall be emission-free, and transport of masses shall be made emission-free or by means of biogas technology. Until 2025, the municipality will use allocation criteria to reward emission-free solutions.

Stavanger's commitment to responsible supply chains

Stavanger Municipality has worked systematically with social responsibility in procurement since 2007. The municipality's procurement strategy provides strategic guidelines for social responsibility which are followed up in an action plan for ethical trade. The action plan contributes to increased quality in procurement, and to procurement taking place in a sustainable, resource-efficient and non-discriminatory manner.

In 2020, Stavanger Municipality participated in a leading group of European public authorities, led by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability and Electronics Watch. Together the group took critical steps towards a fairer electronics supply chain. In the work, the participants used award criteria, conducted market dialogues and sound contract management, to secure a supplier who works systematically to reduce the risk of human rights violations in their supply chain. Stavanger municipality participated with a purchase of Chromebooks for pupils in Stavanger. In the procurement, the municipality set requirements for social responsibility in all parts of the tender basis, i.e. qualification requirements, technical requirements, contract requirements and award criteria.

Integration in daily operations is considered key for succeeding in working with the SDGs
Incorporating the SDGs in the municipalities' everyday operations is one of the most cited factors for succeeding. This involves operationalizing the SDGs to such an extent that the goals are integral to the authority's tasks and responsibilities, including strategy and planning, management processes, service delivery and development, as well as monitoring and reporting. Some municipalities report that working with the SDGs is considered an added task that is subject to prioritisation. They acknowledge that the goals must be implemented in existing structures and operations to ensure that the goals will not be considered 'extra effort' and to ensure consistency in initiatives and activities. Regional authority Viken has taken steps to integrate the SDGs in all functions and across the organisation, by providing an SDG training program to the municipalities' employees. Given the widespread acknowledgement of this need and the existence of frontrunners leading the way, we are likely to see increased efforts in this area going forward.

Measurement and reporting on the SDGs

The most mature authorities have measured and reported progress towards the goals
One fourth of the municipalities and half of the regional authorities have measured progress on the SDGs. However, the majority of those that have not yet conducted monitoring are planning for it, which indicates a positive future development in this field. Several municipalities acknowledge the need for monitoring in order to have a shared understanding of 'what works', prioritize initiatives, gain political traction and defend time and resources spent on new measures.

Municipalities acknowledge the need for monitoring in order to have a shared understanding of 'what works', prioritize initiatives, gain political traction and defend time and resources spent on new measures

For both regional authorities and municipalities participation in The Network of Excellence seem to trigger monitoring. Municipalities in active regions have also to a larger degree conducted monitoring. This is likely because both active regions and the Network focus on the importance of securing a solid data foundation and collaborate closely with United for Smart and Sustainable Cities (U4SSC). It is unique that these authorities have embraced the same framework and thus have comparable data foundations. Additionally, the regional authority Viken has used the OECD indicator set to measure progress and Statistics Norway has on commission from KS, developed a classification of SDG-related indicators that will facilitate a common approach to monitoring. Trondheim municipality is following the footsteps of cities like Los Angeles, London and Amsterdam by developing an open access platform for city data, enriched by references to the Norwegian taxonomy for SDG KPIs, that will give everyone access to information about the potential for value creation in the city. As such, there is much activity in this space, and we will likely see increased monitoring and reporting ahead.

U4SSC SDG performance measurement and reporting

The UN's United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative, coordinated by the ITU along with several UN bodies, provides the guidance necessary to help cities and communities along their smartness and sustainability pathways. U4SSC helps cities and communities measure their performance through the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Smart Sustainable Cities (SSC). These indicators are developed based on an international standard - Recommendation ITU-T Y.4903/L.1603 "Key performance indicators for smart sustainable cities to assess the achievement of sustainable development goals". The U4SSC Implementation Programme (U4SSC-IP) is the implementation arm of U4SSC. The program supports the implementation of projects and establishes partnerships which aim to build smarter and more sustainable cities worldwide. The KPIs have been used globally to assess cities, and almost 40 cities and municipalities in Norway have so far completed or are in the process of completing an evaluation.

Taxonomy for the classification of SDG-related indicators

The UN global SDG framework consists of 17 goals, 169 targets and 231 indicators. Outside of this indicator set, many other indicator sets are available. Today, no global model exists to compare the use and usability of the various indicator sets available, which made KS see the need for better tools to address this. KS is particularly concerned with tools that can be useful for connecting the SDGs to activities and projects at regional and local levels.

As the central statistical bureau and coordinator of the national statistical system in Norway, Statistics Norway became the natural partner in developing such a taxonomy for SDG indicators. The taxonomy is a classification system that can classify and assess either a given indicator or a set of indicators. Applying a common standard taxonomy to all SDG indicators helps to clarify their use and usability, each either on its own or in comparison to others. The taxonomy proposes three dimensions for sorting SDG indicators; Goal, Perspective and Quality. Together, they cover the central properties of any SDG indicator, with respect to its target, use and usability. It should be possible to relate each relevant SDG indicator to one or more sustainable development targets; place it under one or several user perspectives; and assess its usability with respect to a specific well-established statistical quality framework.

VIKEN REGIONAL AUTHORITY

Regional authority Viken's participation in the OECD project 'A Territorial Approach to the SDGs'

Viken has since December 2018 been one out of nine international participants in the OECD project 'A Territorial Approach to the SDGs'. The project's purpose is to support cities and regions that work actively to reach the SDGs. The project report, which was recently launched, emphasises the importance of adapting the work with the SDGs based on local needs and knowledge. At the same time, information about the status on the goals, both nationally and globally is vital. Local and regional authorities should know what consequences their effort has beyond their own borders, to ensure that the work is connected to a larger context. More specifically, the report consists of eight recommendations to how Viken and other actors in Norway can extend their work with the SDGs even further. Overall, the report recommends to:

- Strengthen the multilevel dialogue on the SDGs to develop cross-sectoral solutions
- Utilise a functional approach across administrative boundaries and sectors
- Analyse and understand synergies and trade-offs between goals and dimensions in the 2030 Agenda
- Mobilize both civil society, business and other stakeholders to contribute to the overall work

2.3 The principle of leaving no one behind

The principle of leaving no one behind is central to local and regional governments

The pledge of leaving no one behind represents a commitment to reduce inequalities and vulnerability that leave certain individuals, groups or nations behind. The principle is at the heart of municipalities' purpose through their responsibility for providing good and sound health and social services and securing inhabitants basic welfare benefits such as schooling, kindergarten, social assistance, child welfare, medical care and nursing homes. Less than one percent of municipalities disagree that the principle is central to their operations. The principle of leaving no one behind is marginally less of a focus area for regional authorities, likely because the regional authority has fewer services directly relating to the promise.

The municipalities and regional authorities work actively to live up to the pledge

In terms of translating the vision into practice, almost three fourths of the municipalities work actively to gain insight on vulnerable groups. However, 'only' 58% agree that marginalised groups are being identified in policy making and implementation. As such, there is room for improvement.

The municipalities work in various ways to contribute to equality and inclusion. Some perceive it as an integral part of the municipality's vision and plans. Others highlight specific initiatives or projects that target vulnerable groups or problems, such as preventing child poverty, combatting racism, promoting inclusion of youth in leisure activities, inclusion of refugees, substance abuse prevention, reduction of bullying amongst youth and helping vulnerable people into the housing market. Some mention a focus on improving basic welfare services based on the philosophy that 'what benefits everyone, benefits the vulnerable the most'. Others focus their efforts on understanding causes and consequences, by trying to give vulnerable groups a voice in planning processes and by having a greater focus on the end user in developing the municipality's services. Several also focus their work on prevention, increasing efforts towards kindergarten, school and upbringing. Kristiansand municipality's research project "New patterns, Safe upbringing" is an example of this.

ÅLESUND MUNICIPALITY & KRISTIANSAND MUNICIPALITY

E-teams: E-sports for youth

Ålesund municipality has initiated the project E-teams directed at children and adolescents in school and leisure time. The project's objective is to recognise and include gaming and e-sports as part of society and the children and youth culture. Through E-teams, the municipality wants to create a low-threshold offer where children and adolescents can have a safe physical and digital arena, where adults can take an active part in the children's gaming world on the child and youth's premises. The project focuses on inclusion and is based on children and adolescents' physical and mental needs to be seen, recognized and included. The project will give children and youth the knowledge to master their "digital self" by:

- Experiencing mastery and development
- Learn about strategies for interaction, such as fair play and ethics; how to treat others, positive social participation, and healthy habits through play
- Get tools for conflict management and create friendships regardless of age and gender
- Learn from others, or even teach away
- Meet safe adults, such as nurses and environmental therapists
- Get introduced to physical activity to become better e-sports athletes
- Gain knowledge about how they can protect their «digital self» online to avoid bullying, harassment, identity theft, digital violence, sexual assault, hate crime and extremism.

New Patterns – Safe Upbringing

Kristiansand municipality is the project manager for the research project «New Patterns - safe upbringing». 10 municipalities in Agder and Stavanger municipality participate and almost 200 families are involved. The target group is families with persistently low income, in which the children are at risk of developing health challenges and experience exclusion. The goal of the project is to break the pattern in which challenges are transferred from one generation to the next. The project is testing a new model where the family coordinator organises the efforts around the whole family and sees the needs and challenges of the family as one. Traditionally, there is a distinction between services for children and services for adults. Together, the family and the family coordinator create a «Family plan» for how to work together and how to reach the family's goals. The family coordinator works with the family to ensure acceptable living conditions and a stable upbringing environment for the children, improve the financial situation, ensure that parents have work, and improve the family's health. The impact evaluation and research will provide unique data material and new insight into the life situation of the families in the target group and what effects such an organization and coordination of services can have.

BERGEN MUNICIPALITY & LYNGEN MUNICIPALITY

Health care for undocumented refugees

Norway has been criticized for restricting the paperless refugees' right to health care in violation of the UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 12. Today, Bergen municipality provides financial support to the Church City Mission, which together with the Red Cross, offers health care to undocumented refugees. The health centre has great interdisciplinary expertise and many volunteers with experience from providing health care at home and abroad: nurses, doctors, psychologists, gynaecologists, physiotherapists, interpreters and bridge builders. All health personnel are authorized in Norway and all health care is free. The health personnel have a duty of confidentiality and do not share any information with the police or authorities.

The Lyngen Model

Lyngen municipality has a goal that none of the village's adolescents shall fall on the outskirts of society. Lyngen municipality has understood that there is some truth to the old African saying "It takes a village to raise a child". Today, the municipality cooperates not only across its own sectors, but also with the youth themselves, NAV, the voluntary sector, the police and the private business community to prevent exclusion. One of the great advantages of the Lyngen model is early intervention. It is a low-threshold model, where school or parents can get in touch if the youth are struggling. There are several pioneering initiatives to the model such as Dormitory training. There is no upper secondary school in the municipality, which means that the adolescents must move out when they start upper secondary school. It can be tough for a 16-year-old to cope with life alone, and to make the transition easier, Lyngen started dormitory training. The training cover themes such as financing, cooking and how to structure school and everyday life. The municipality has also hired a staff who arranges meeting points in the municipalities where the youth go to upper secondary school. A so-called "extra-dad". Additionally, the municipality collaborates closely with the private sector through job training. In 'Youth at Work', young people receive 50 hours of work training. After completing the program, you are qualified for a resume reference, which can be useful in later job applications.

Several municipalities are showing interest in the Lyngen model and there are three criteria in particular that have been critical for its success; daring to think new, political ownership and interdisciplinary cooperation around a common goal.

2.4 Innovation and partnerships

There is a huge potential for local and regional authorities to use the SDGs in the context of opportunity – to stimulate innovation, trigger new partnerships and increase involvement of citizens. There is consensus that the goals can foster new partnerships, and vice versa, that new partnerships are important for reaching the goals. There is also widespread agreement that working with the SDGs can contribute to rethinking established ways of working. There is less agreement when it comes to using the goals to stimulate innovation, and the necessity for innovation to reach the goals. These attitudes are mirrored in the municipality's experience in working with the goals, in which the SDGs have contributed to new partnerships and ways of working, and to a lesser degree innovation.

The goals' potential to stimulate innovation is not fully utilized yet

Few municipalities have utilized the goals as a lever for innovation by developing new services, new products or increase quality in existing products or services. The members of the Network of Excellence have to a larger degree entered the space of opportunity in regard to grasping and utilizing the goals' impact on innovation. However, there are several innovative and value-creating projects and initiatives. Many of the SDG partnerships and constellations that have been established are highly innovative or even one of its kind. Such contributions are vital for validating the upside and potential value creation inherent to working with the goals. Still, there is an unlocked potential when it comes to using the goals to develop new products and services within the municipality.

Implementation of the SDGs has contributed to ...

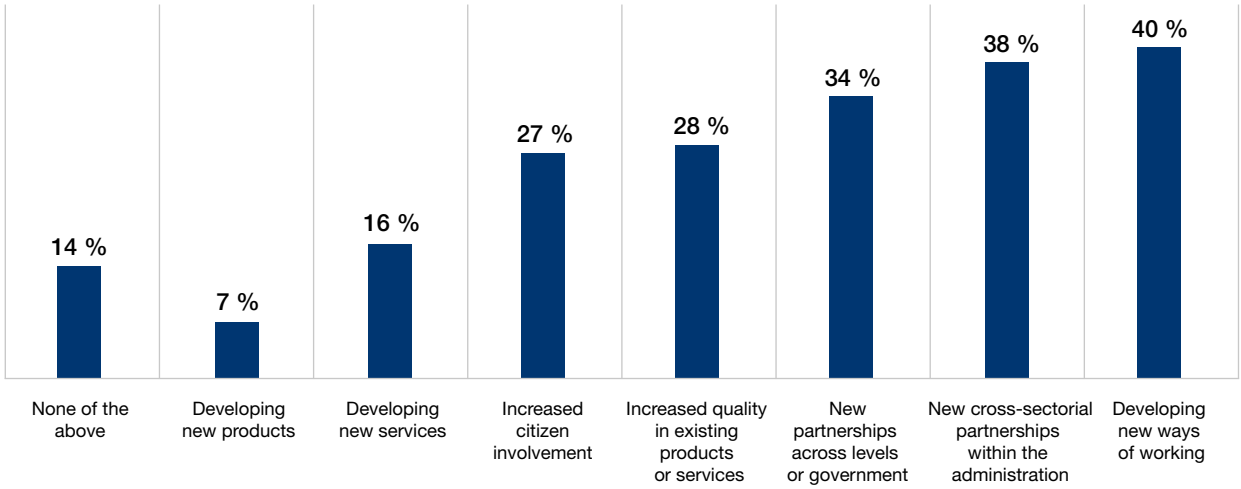


Figure 7: Overview of what working with the SDGs in the municipalities have contributed to, in terms of partnership and innovation

KINN MUNICIPALITY & VESTFOLD OG TELEMARK REGIONAL AUTHORITY

World premiere of super charger for electric boats

Beginning of May 2021, Kinn municipality, in collaboration with municipal and regional enterprises and a startup company, launched the world's first super charger for electric boats. The super charger will be useful for both local citizens, businesses and commercial vehicles. With the first of its kind super charger, it takes just over 20 minutes to charge from 20% to 80% battery capacity. Just enough time to go for an ice cream and a soda in the city! Within short time, similar charging stations will appear in Bergen and Oslo.

Photo: BKK

The Magic Factory

The Magic Factory is a cross sectoral collaboration between Vestfold og Telemark regional authority, several municipalities in the region, academia, and several actors within food production, recycling and agriculture. The fabric has won innovation awards.

The Magic Factory plays an important role in contributing towards a circular economy and green growth, through

- the knowledge and experience centre where children and youth can learn about waste sorting, recycling, climate, food production and renewable energy. Learning takes place using senses, emotions and intellect.
- business development in the region. Among other things, this applies to agriculture, related to investments in storage space for biofertilizer and spreading technology for biofertilizer.
- the collaboration with the greenhouse industry, where a pilot greenhouse is being established - a BBBLS greenhouse. Here, the capture and use of green CO2 and biofertilizer in the greenhouse will contribute to increased local food production.

ASKER MUNICIPALITY & BÆRUM MUNICIPALITY

Asker municipality's innovative reuse and procurement project

Asker municipality and Loopfront found each other at a supplier conference arranged by the National Programme for Supplier Development in the autumn of 2018. Asker was looking for a solution to stimulate re-use in connection with the amalgamation between Asker, Hurum and Røyken. In close collaboration, Asker and Loopfront developed a circular platform for materials, tailored to register all inventory in the new municipality's 28 locations. The pilot project provided structure for the entire circular process. Asker registered the inventory at the 28 locations, while Loopfront was responsible for the development and user-friendliness of the new solution. Materials that could no longer be used for their original purpose were repaired or redesigned. The municipality used local work centres for people with disabilities for everything from repairs and redesign to sewing and painting. In addition, they partnered with the social entrepreneur Circular Ways to design and build larger redesign furniture. The municipality gets access to "live" reports on ongoing savings in waste and CO_2 as well as financial savings. As of March 2021, the economic savings have reached 16 million and the climate savings amounts to over 60 tonnes reduced in waste and 100 tonnes in CO_2 emissions. The municipality has over 7000 used furniture stored in the platform.

Photo: Asker kommune

Bærum Resource Bank

Bærum Resource Bank sets out to contribute to as much reuse, recycling and utilization of surplus masses from construction and infrastructure projects in the region as possible. The resource bank's purpose is to establish a collaborative arena to solve the management of surplus masses in the most sustainable way possible. The Resource Bank has created a common overview of the surplus masses from development projects, including new roads and waterworks, in the region. With sustainable mass handling, the masses are reused, in and between projects, rather than being driven to a landfill. A good example of how masses can be utilized is Kadettangen in the city Sandvika. The area is a filling which mainly consists of surplus material from the previous E16-route. The resource bank has also led to an additional project for real-time measurement of environmental data, where sensors will be developed that measure various environmental parameters for emissions of environmentally harmful substances to air and water. The results from the project have great transfer value to other municipalities, developers and business actors.

Working with the SDGs fosters new partnerships

Most of the regional authorities use the SDGs to create new partnerships with external stakeholders, while the municipalities use the goals to establish new ways of working. Both level of government has used the goals to establish new and effective partnerships within the administration. Using the SDGs as a trigger for new, value driving initiatives is key to leveraging the SDG framework's potential, and it is evident that the regional authorities have unlocked the goals' potential to create new meaningful partnership in their efforts to reach the goals. Some municipalities also show significant progress, however there is a larger potential to be unlocked.

Photo: Adobe Stock

Photo: United Future Lab Norway

United Future Lab in Ålesund municipality

United Future Lab Norway is a collaborative arena and a network of partners from private business, academia, organizations and the public sector. The lab is affiliated with the UN and U4SSC and is the second in the world in addition to Vienna. The main goal of the work in the lab is to stimulate action through projects. Through projects between partners, United Future Lab Norway will ensure smart and sustainable urban, social and business development. The lab opened in November 2019 and was officially in operation from January 1st 2020. An important tool in the work of United Future Lab Norway is technology in general, and in particular the development and use of digital twins in collaboration with Augment City.

United Future Lab Norway is run by Ålesund municipality, and is financed by the municipality, with contributions from the partners, the County Governor of Møre og Romsdal and Møre og Romsdal regional authority. As of May 2021, the lab has 65 partners and 40 projects in the portfolio.

Photo: Glen Musk / Trondheim kommune

The UN Centre of Excellence in Trondheim municipality

In 2019 the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the City of Trondheim agreed to establish a Geneva UN Chartered Centre of Excellence to advance sustainable urban development. This is the sixth Centre to be created by UNECE, and the creation of the Centre is connected to the U4SSC initiative. The scope of the U4SSC program is to evaluate the performance and potential for smart sustainable development in cities and communities and connect local needs to global knowledge hubs, solution providers and funding opportunities. More specifically the Centre in Trondheim supports the UN's work to evaluate cities and report on smart sustainable development at the local level in Norway, developing and testing a City Transition Framework as part of a knowledge-based approach to structuring smart sustainable development at the city or community level. The Centre of Excellence in Trondheim, in collaboration with regional business networks, the regional authority of Trøndelag and the County Governor use the region as a testbed to explore and realise opportunities for sustainable value creation.

Photo: Kent Even Grundstad

Bodø/Glimt – Giving everything for a sustainable future

The football team Bodø/Glimt wants to be more than just a football team. Bodø/Glimt wants to use the club's attention to create awareness around the SDGs and encourage collaboration and sustainable development. In the 2019 season, Bodø/Glimt partnered with various actors and fronted one of the goals or targets in a concrete way at each home game. Additionally, the team, together with Bodø Municipality and other actors, have initiated a business network – 'Giving Everything for A Sustainable Future', as well as their own 'Action Now!' program, which aims to increase knowledge amongst the population and the business community about the UN's sustainability goals, build stronger local communities and encourage action towards the goals. Through their work, Bodø/Glimt has inspired several clubs both at home and abroad to develop their own Action Now program that suits their local conditions. The team has presented Action Now at the World Economic Forum in Davos, and for the UN several times.

Photo: Sverre Jarild

Roadmap for smart and sustainable cities and communities in Norway

Together, Design and Architecture Norway (DOGA), the Norwegian Smart City Network and Nordic Edge has created a framework for smart city initiatives in Norwegian local and regional authorities, describing overriding principles and visions. The roadmap lays out eight principles for smart and sustainable cities and communities that are designed to help local and regional authorities prioritise focal areas and direction for smart city initiatives;

1. Place people in the centre
2. Consider the bigger picture
3. Prioritise climate and environment
4. Promote inclusion and co-creation
5. Focus on next generation business
6. Share and use open data
7. Develop competencies and embrace change
8. Act local, think global

The roadmap is designed to provide building blocks that can be incorporated into existing planning and strategy work. In the next phase, the roadmap will be expanded with recommended measures, tools and best practices.

2.5 Structural barriers and key success factors

Structural barriers limit local and regional authorities' ability and/or capacity to work with the SDGs, while key success factors are enablers the municipalities consider essential for succeeding in their work with the goals. For the municipalities, lack of resource capacity, political priority, competence and access to tools and methods for localising the goals are currently the biggest barriers to working with the goals. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority see political and administrative ownership, capacity and the ability to translate the SDGs to a local setting and implement the goals in ordinary operations as crucial factors for succeeding. For the regional authorities, lack of support from national authorities is considered the biggest barrier, followed by absence of clear national guidelines. These factors are also considered key enablers. Around half also consider resource capacity, knowledge and access to tools, as barriers. These elements should be used to inform supporting mechanisms to ease the burden on the local and regional authorities and foster an enabling environment for implementing and working with the goals.

Few local and regional authorities point to a lack of network, support or initiative from one another or cross sectoral partnerships as a significant barrier. As such, it seems that the focus on establishing networks and partnerships, and foster collaboration to reach the goals have been successful thus far.

Lack of resource capacity

Lack of resource capacity is the most cited critical success factor and structural barrier. This is particularly raised as a concern by smaller municipalities. In fact, 80% of the small municipalities see capacity constrains as a barrier to their work with the goals. Although budgetary constraints do not seem to influence the progress made in implementation across the mu-

The overwhelming majority see political and administrative ownership, capacity and the ability to translate the SDGs to a local setting and implement the goals in ordinary operations as crucial factors for succeeding

nicipalities, small municipalities with few administrative resources may struggle to find room to implement the goals. Capacity constraints are challenging to circumvent. This underpins the importance of demonstrating the value of working with the SDGs and making working with the goals less demanding.

Access to tools and methods, and ability to localize and implement the goals in the municipality's operations

The ability to localise and incorporate the goals into ordinary operations is considered a key success factor. The SDG framework is complex, and some find it challenging to localize the framework and make the meaningful link between global goals and local action. Several municipalities point out that it is challenging to work systematically, strategically, knowledge-based and plan-driven with the SDGs. Around one third find lack of access to relevant tools and methods for implementing the goals a key barrier. Making available tools, methods or guidebooks on how to integrate the goals in existing structures and operations has the potential to meet an urgent need, ease the burden of interpretation and help the most immature municipalities across the starting line. Lack of sufficient competence is also considered a large barrier and a key success factor by most authorities.

Political and administrative ownership and priority

Over 90% of the municipalities say that administrative ownership is vital for succeeding. It is positive that most municipalities have made efforts to create ownership and awareness internally in the administration. Political ownership and priority is considered a key success factor, but also a significant barrier. Given that municipalities with more political attention to the SDGs seem more mature in implementation, the political level can be a potential differentiating factor and an area that deserves attention going forward.

Photo: Adobe Stock

Lack of support from national authorities

Seven out of eight regional authorities say that support from national authorities and clear guidelines is a key success factor to their implementation of the goals. At the same time, over half of the regional authorities find the absence national guidelines and support a significant barrier. It is evident that the regional authorities look to the national authorities for support and guidance and find themselves lacking such support.

Photo: Adobe Stock

2.6 The Covid-19 pandemic and the road ahead

The value of effective multilevel governance has become even more important during the Covid-19 pandemic. Municipalities and regions are key partners of national governments for the restoration of the economy, social life and normal democratic functioning at the local and regional level after the Covid-19 pandemic. As partners in multilevel governance, they must be involved in setting up mechanisms and procedures to tackle future emergency situations. In Norway local and regional authorities have been instrumental in keeping the level of contamination low, through both implementing local measures and undertaking contact tracing and testing, as well as vaccination, in addition to ensuring that citizens are informed and taken care of. KS has acted as contact point and coordinator between the local government sector and national authorities.

A government inquest into Norway's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, found that information to and involvement of local governments had important flaws that prevented local governments from responding fully satisfactorily to many pandemic challenges in care, health, education, public transport and more. The Government commission's report is in line with findings from a KS survey directed to all local governments on their assessment of their own response to the crisis.

Covid-19 has resulted in less capacity to work with the goals

Not surprisingly, over half the municipalities report that they have less capacity to implement the SDGs due to covid-19. Small municipalities seem to have experienced covid-19 as the most capacity-constraining. Although some regional authorities (3/8) point to the same capacity challenges, covid-19 has resulted in more significant capacity constraints for the municipalities.

The Covid-19 pandemic does not seem to have had a significant impact of the authorities' work with the goals, besides giving way to important reflections

Covid-19 has not had any apparent impact on the work with the goals, neither in highlighting the importance of the SDGs, triggering more active work towards the goals, or improving local and regional authorities' holistic perception of the goals. Some authorities however, made remarks about the pandemic making it clearer that there is a potential for working holistically and cross-sectorial with the goals, as well as providing a sense of cooperation and mutual recognition of facing a difficult situation together. This can and should be translated to a broader SDG perspective following the pandemic.

Municipalities and regions are key partners of national governments for the restoration of the economy, social life and normal democratic functioning at the local and regional level after the Covid-19 pandemic. As partners in multi-level governance, they must be involved in setting up mechanisms and procedures to tackle future emergency situations

3

PROGRESS ON THE GOALS AND TARGETS

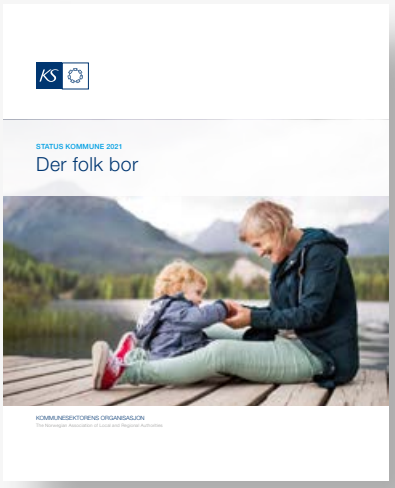
Photo: Timo Stern / Unsplash

3.1 Introduction to the indicators

Municipalities and regional authorities contribute substantially to SDG achievement through their regular service delivery, welfare production, planning and development work. Although the municipal sector in general performs well on many of the goals and targets as compared to international standards, many strive to perform even better.

A dedicated SDG indicator set is still lacking for regional and local authorities, which makes it challenging to monitor local progress on the goals and targets. Many municipalities and regional authorities are working to identify indicator sets and indicators that can be used to monitor progress. This is still work in progress, for instance through KS and Statistics Norway's work on developing an indicator taxonomy for local and regional use.

Progress can also be monitored using existing data sources. More than 30 municipalities have conducted KPI monitoring according to the U4SSC. Norway was the first country to apply the U4SSC Key Performance Indicators for smart and sustainable cities to an entire cluster of municipalities. In addition to the U4SSC KPIs, KS has constructed indicators using aggregated data to measure progress at the local and regional level. This work is mainly based on KS' annual publication 'Status kommune'.



Norway Disc

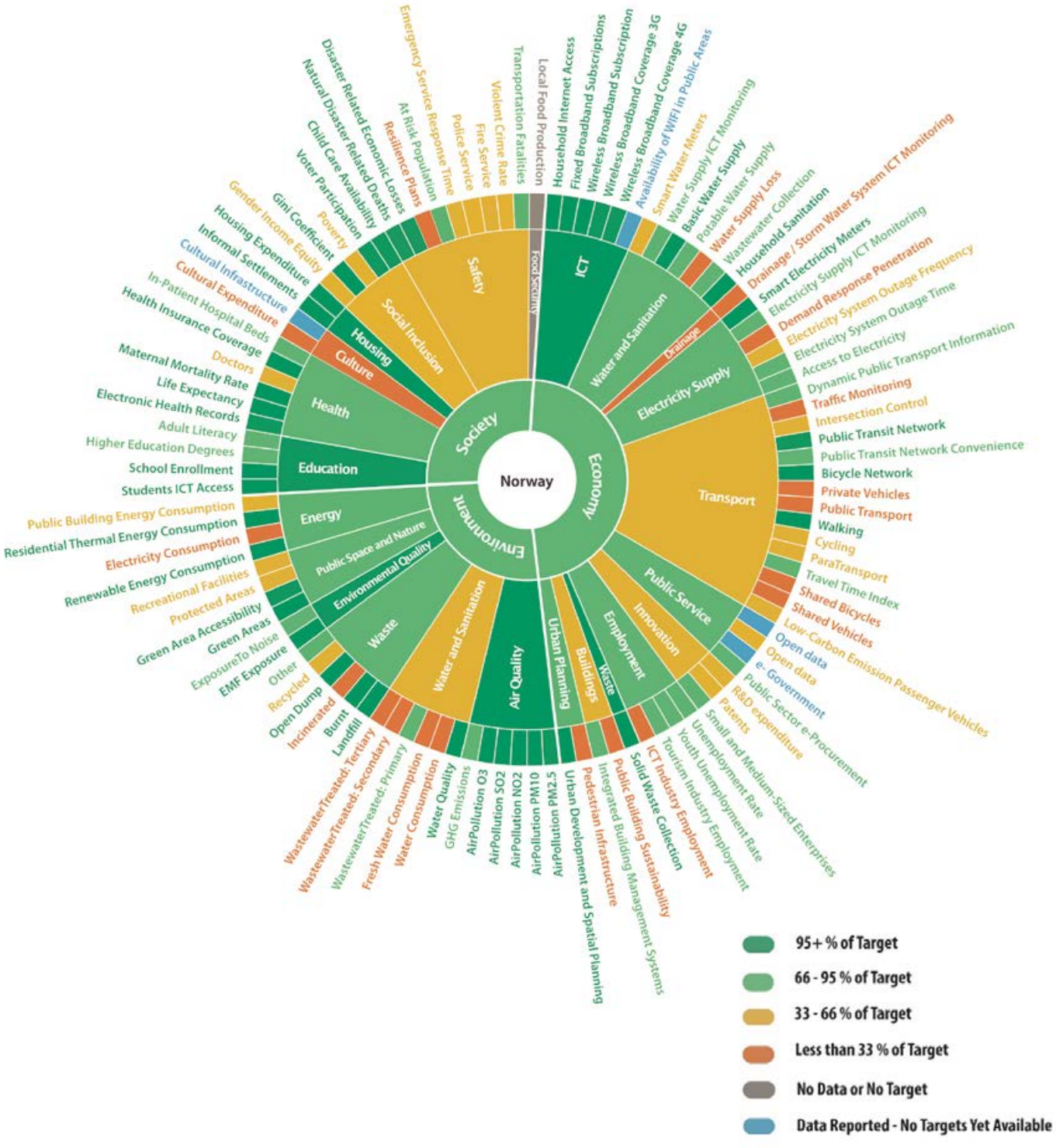


Figure 8: Norway Disc. Source: U4SSC

3.2 Municipal sectors' political priorities

The analysis of the progress on the goals and targets is structured around the municipal sector's six priority policy areas, as committed to in KS' National Congress in 2020. This provides for a holistic approach, which demonstrates the inter-connectivity between the goals and targets. The policy areas are Adolescence and life quality; Climate and environmentally friendly development; Adaptable business community; Attractive places and cities; Diversity and inclusion and Citizens' participation.

Adolescence and life quality

The municipal sector facilitates most of the health services, well-being, attractive centres, good meeting places, inclusion, more people completing secondary education and social equality. The municipal sector's targeted work seeks to provide good conditions for adolescence, local environment, public goods, participation in labour market, activities and social life, and opportunities for quality of life and life management, regardless of age and living conditions.

The municipal sector delivers well, and the U4SSC monitoring shows high performance across the indicators, especially when it comes to education and health. These findings are substantiated by a biannual citizens' satisfaction survey. The examination shows that three out of four citizens are content with their municipalities.

The inhabitant's impression of living in the municipality

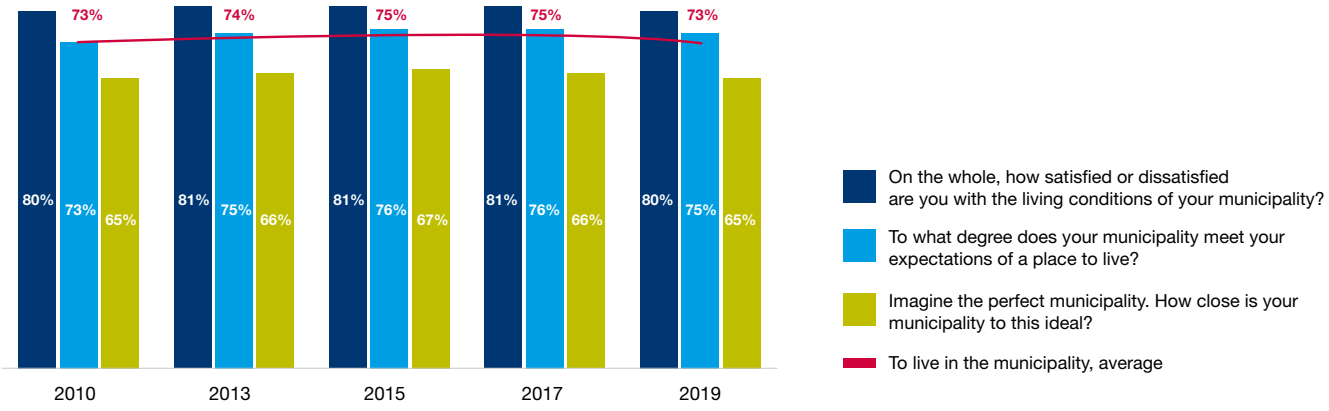


Figure 9: Perception of Municipality. Source: The Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ).

Citizens' impression of municipal services

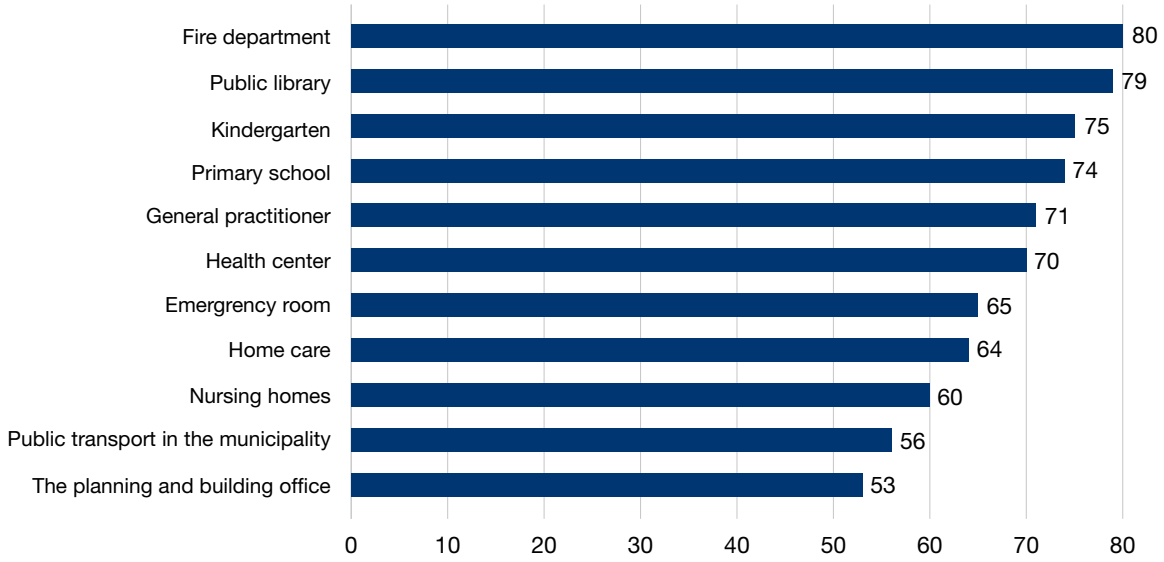


Figure 10: Citizen's perception of public services. Source: The Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ).

The citizen's impression of these municipal services, on the other hand, is rather varied. There is a distinct difference between the impression of those who live in small and large municipalities. For example, the inhabitants of small municipalities are more satisfied with care services compared to those who live in larger municipalities. More specifically, both nursing homes and home health nursing services achieve higher scores among residents in municipalities with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants, compared with larger ones. The same is also found for kindergartens. Residents in larger municipalities are, on the other hand, more satisfied with the fire service and access to culture. The most significant difference, however, is found in the assessment of public transport, in which the inhabitants in larger municipalities are substantially more pleased. More specifically, the inhabitants of the smallest municipalities, with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, are the least satisfied with public transport services.

Youth are less satisfied with their local communities than the rest of the population. Access to creativity and recreation, meeting places and a sense of community can characterise a good local community. Stability over time is important. Over the past years, satisfaction with the local community has decreased amongst youth.

In addition, the proportion of youth that feel lonely has increased, and it is expected to further increase, due to Covid-19 restrictions. This trend can be explained by several factors that must be tracked over time to get a better understanding of youth's quality of life and why they are less content compared to older generations.

Upper secondary school students' satisfaction with their community

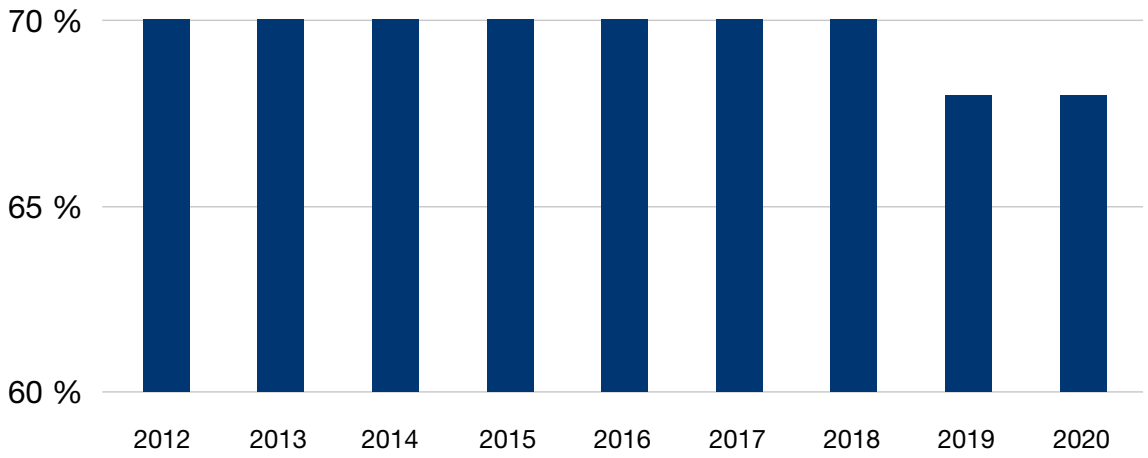


Figure 11: Proportion of upper secondary school students who have answered ”very satisfied” or ”somewhat satisfied” with the community in which they live (per cent).
Source: National Institute of Public Health

Loneliness among youth

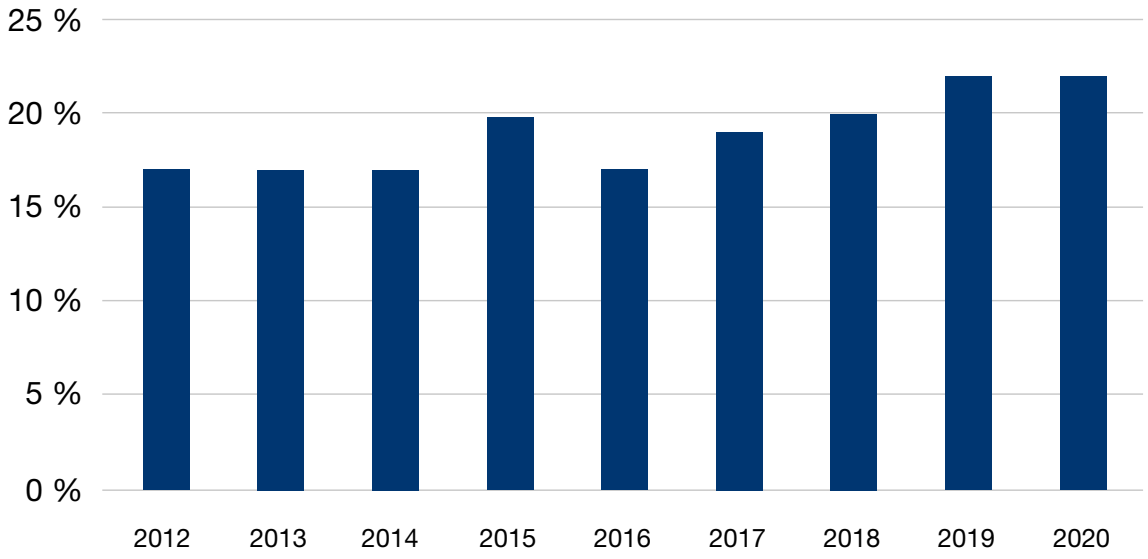


Figure 12: Feeling of loneliness amongst Upper Secondary School Pupils.
Source: Norwegian Institute of Public Health

Climate and environmentally friendly development

The municipal sector is taking active leadership in the transition to a climate and environmentally friendly society. Municipalities and regional authorities have set ambitious climate targets and aim to be forward-looking in the green transition. Many of the targets are far more ambitious than the national goals. The strategies to reach these goals include restructuring into a low emission society, facilitate land use and infrastructure that leads to less emissions and requires less energy, and implement necessary measures to limit the effects of a changing climate.

Regional authorities are phasing in electric transportation. Around one third of the total national ferry fleet is electric and the number of electric buses more than doubled in 2020. Even more electric buses have been contracted for delivery in 2021.

The number of public transport journeys increased by 0,5 % in 2019 to 695 million journeys. Almost 90 % of passengers travel by regional authority transport. Nevertheless, according to the U4SSC monitoring there has been poor utilization of more mobile and innovative modes of transport, as well as systematic use of monitoring data in the municipal sector. For obvious public health reasons, use of public transport has decreased during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is expected that some of the decrease will be permanent due to increased use of home offices and greater awareness of congestion.

According to the U4SSC monitoring, another challenge facing municipalities is water quality, outdated infrastructure and loss of water. Due to low efficiency in often outdated infrastructure, it is estimated that up to 60% of the water is lost before reaching the consumer. Municipalities are well aware of the problem and are increasingly

Million passengers on public transport

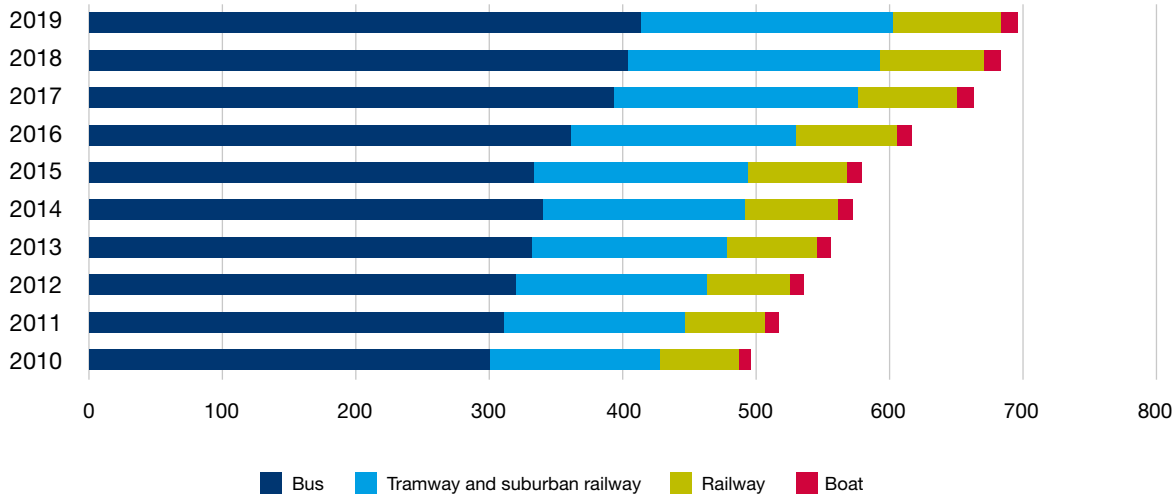


Figure 13: Million passengers on Public Transport from 2010-2019.
Source: Statistics Norway

using ICT monitoring and innovative solutions to monitor water supply and leaks.

Sustainable land management is an important part of the work to preserve biodiversity, secure food production and reduce climate emissions. Land use changes are the main source of loss of biological diversity. Area used for cultivation and area that can be used for cultivation are repurposed to transport infrastructure, home construction, commercial buildings and energy production. This trend has been declining in recent years. Production of electric power has in recent years increased to a total production of 154.2 TWh. Wind power required alone 297 square kilometres by the end of 2020, an area which is rapidly growing. The species database assesses 2000 species and 74 habitat types as endangered today.

Decare of arable land that has been reallocated for other purposes other than agriculture

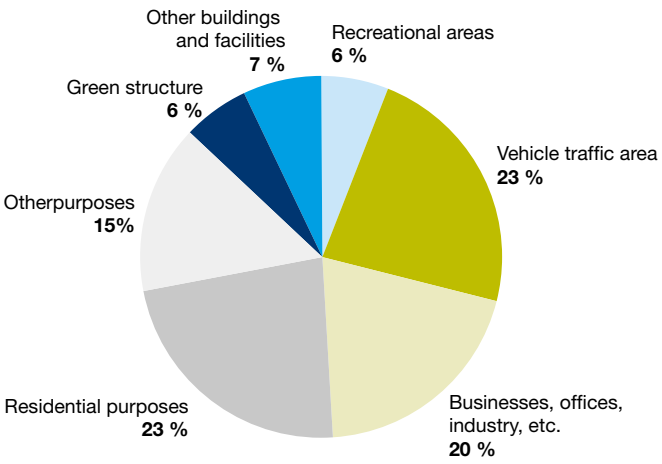


Figure 14: Repurposed land, 2010-2020. Source: Statistics Norway

Decare of arable land that has been reallocated for other purposes other than agriculture 2005–2019

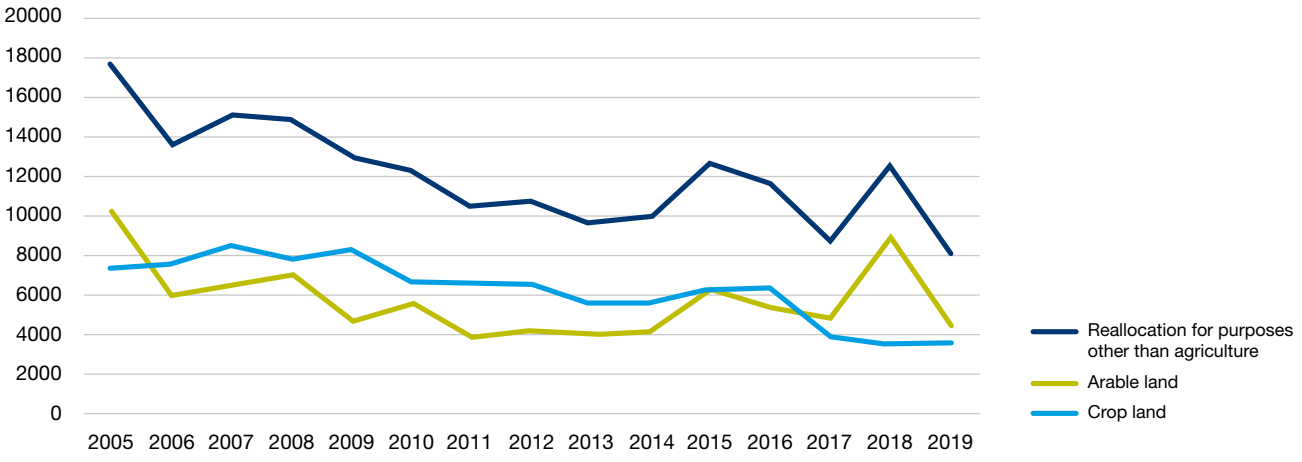


Figure 15: Reallocation of arable land from 2005 to 2019. Source: Statistics Norway

Adaptable business community

As a community developer, the municipalities and regional authorities set out to facilitate sustainable development, innovation and value creation in the private and public sector. New technology and collaboration between the business community, academia and the public sector provide robust infrastructure and commercial opportunities, so that everyone has a good place to live, good welfare services and attractive communities. For businesses, good conditions for green restructuring as well as digital and physical infrastructure are important for maintaining and expanding commercial activity and creating jobs. The development and use of new technologies can help solve major environmental and climate challenges. Municipalities and regional authorities play an important role for the private sector through procurement and investment projects, and the public sector must lead the way to green restructuring, inclusive workplaces and professionalism.

A prerequisite for an adaptable business sector and a digital public sector is that businesses, public agencies and residents in the municipality have access to high-speed internet.
The national goal of 90% of households with at least 100 Mbit / s internet access by 2020, is nearly reached. In 2020 the responsibility for distributing development grants for internet-access was transferred to the regional authorities. The coverage has increased sharply in areas with the lowest coverage. Despite good infrastructure and highly competent businesses and residents who are quick to adopt the technology, the U4SSC monitoring show that the technology is not sufficiently used to innovate and further develop businesses and services.

Procurement is another important mean for the municipal sector to facilitate an adaptive business sector. Recent studies show that 75% of the regional authorities and 59% of the municipalities have a procurement strategy. This is higher than authorities at the national level, where 48% have a procurement strategy. The municipal sector emphasises climate and environment, ethics, wages and working conditions and social responsibility in their procurement strategies. Innovative public procurements still represent a small volume of procurement.

Development of 100 Mbit/s coverage at regional level

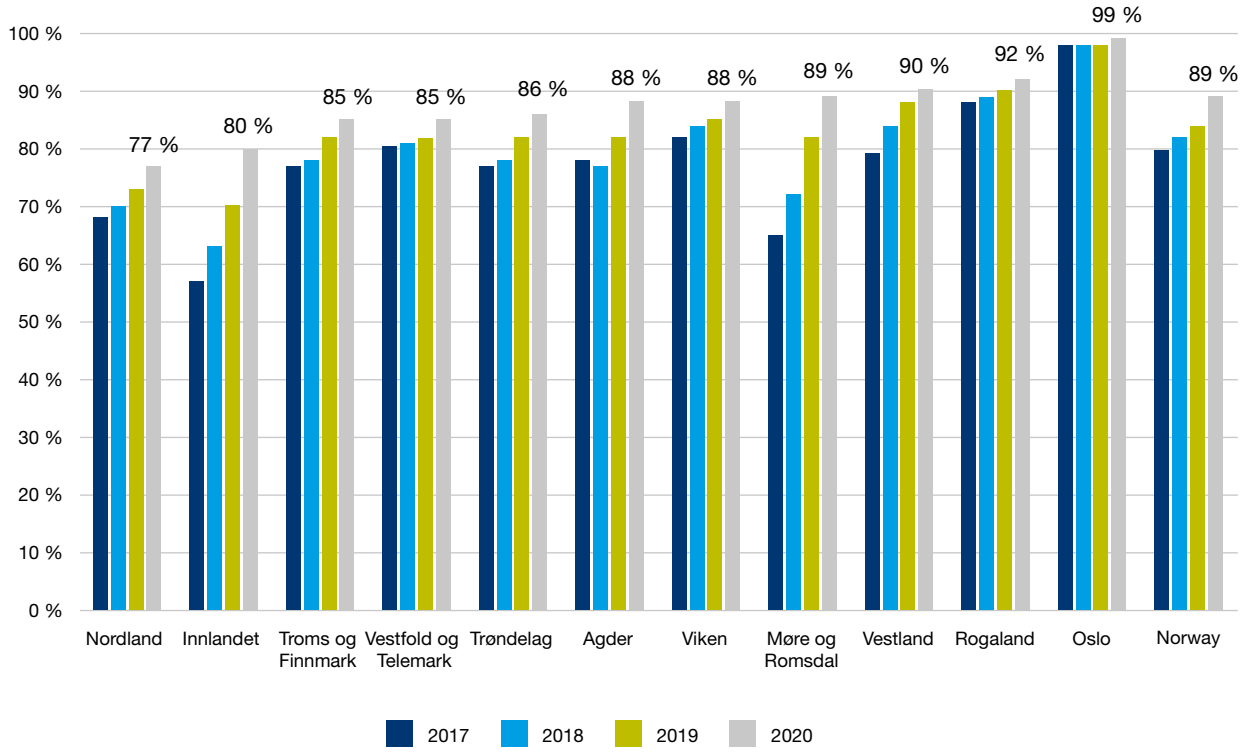


Figure 16: Internet connection. Development of 100 Mbit/s coverage at regional level from 2017 to 2020. Source: Norwegian Communications Authority (Nkom)

Do you have a plan to take climate and environmental considerations into account in public procurement

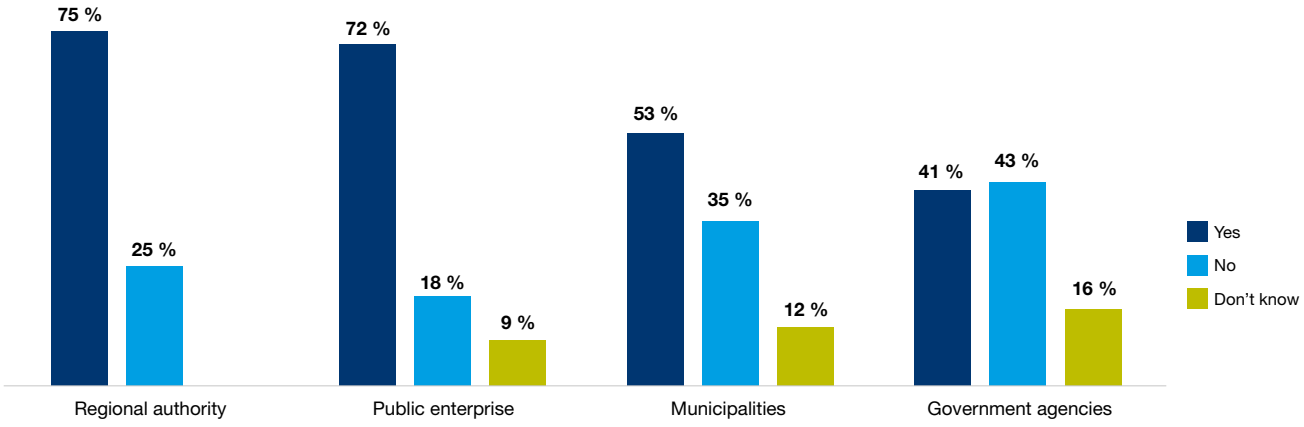


Figure 17: Public Procurement. Source: The Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ).

Attractive places and cities

Developing attractive places is important for climate, living conditions and business. The municipal sector develops vibrant communities with good meeting arenas for people. Through regional plans, the regional authorities work on coordinating housing, land and transport planning. The emphasis on attractive places and cities is partly a reaction to the local city areas over time being tapped for business and activity, and partly due to a desire for positive development and increased quality in these areas.

Many municipalities are working actively for increased attractiveness amongst people and businesses. Important factors are clean air and clean drinking water, absence of noise and short distances to workplaces, public transport and service, leisure and cultural facilities. According to the U4SSC monitoring, the municipalities score highly on important factors such as noise, dust and supply of drinking water. This is further evidenced by a citizens' satisfaction survey, indicating that people have a good perception of waste management, safety, the environment and proximity to primary school. The people's perception of the possibility to engage in activities has weakened somewhat in recent years.

The central areas of the country experience the greatest growth in both jobs and relocation. Increasingly more people live and work in urban areas, which proposes new challenges. A large majority of new homes are built within existing urban areas, near service, leisure and cultural facilities, while only half of commercial and public buildings are located within the same areas. The share of people who walk, cycle and use public transport is also greater in the larger cities.

Drinking water, safety and proximity to schools

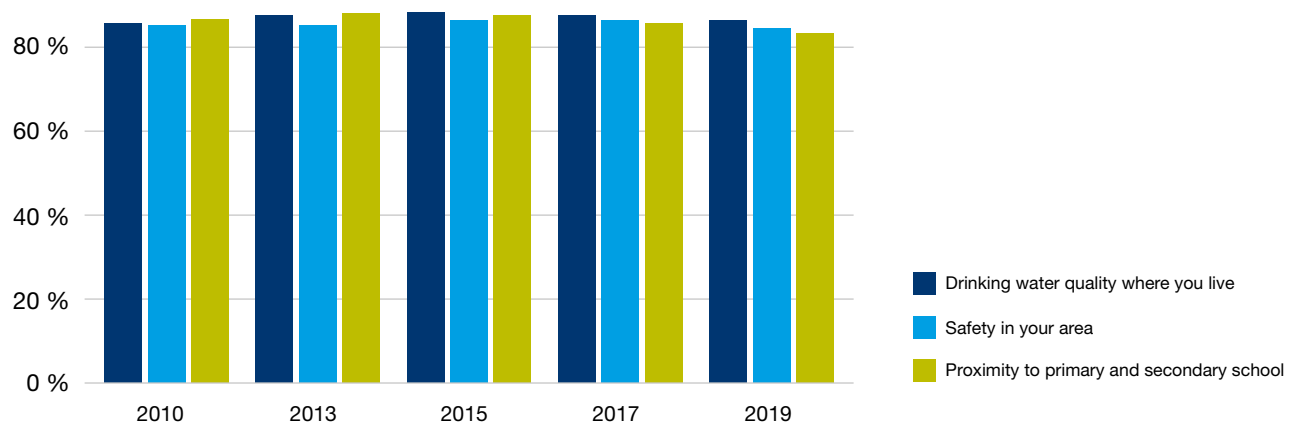


Figure 18: Perception of Public Services. Source: The Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ).

Higher population density increases the stress on water resources and green areas, and only a third of people living in the largest cities have access to local hiking terrain. The last ten years, the growth in housing prices has in several cities been twice that of wages, making it increasingly more difficult for people with normal wages, especially families with children, to afford suitable housing in the most urban areas.

Social dialogue is an integrated part of the Norwegian welfare model and has resulted in both permanent employment and decent pay, good working conditions as well as high productivity and flexibility. There is a close and satisfactory cooperation between the municipal sector and local representatives for the Labour unions. The U4SSC monitoring reveals persistent gender specific income disparities, which social partners can do more to reduce.

Municipalities' assessment of cooperation with union representatives

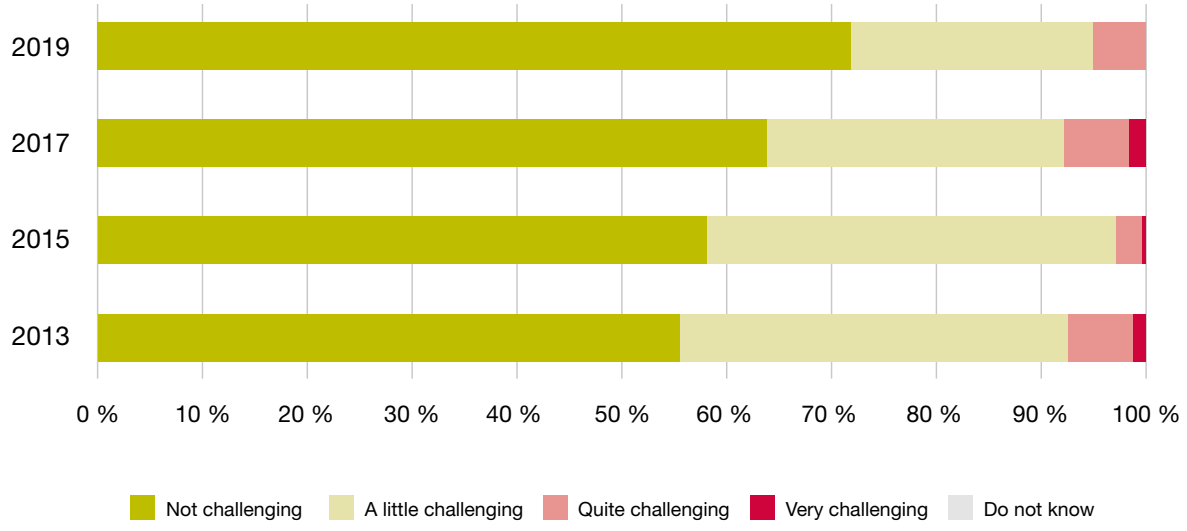


Figure 19: Social Dialogue. Source: KS

Diversity and inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are linked to public health, attractive locations, business, upbringing, and education. Diversity and inclusion require respect for other people, regardless of sexual orientation, beliefs, opinions and cultural expressions. Inclusion is also largely about the inclusion of newcomers and asylum seekers and inclusion in local communities and working life. Society is built from the bottom up.

Norway is a diverse society. Results from the U4SSC monitoring, as well as other statistics, raise concerns about trends in diversity and inclusion, particularly for children and youth. The proportion of children growing up in families with persistently low income has increased. Overcrowding is increasing for those with the lowest incomes and cramped conditions make it difficult to bring friends home and have the necessary space and peace for schoolwork.

Many municipalities address poverty through offering a free pass for leisure activities, “Leisure Card” and centres, where children and youth can access sports equipment for free. 74 municipalities offered some form of leisure card, according to a 2019 survey. This included, amongst others, experience cards for culture and entertainment, and reimbursement of expenses related to leisure activities.

Leaving youth behind is a challenge in the Norwegian society. Although drop-out rates have fallen in recent years, numbers are still high. This is especially true for vocational subjects. Drop-

Household poverty

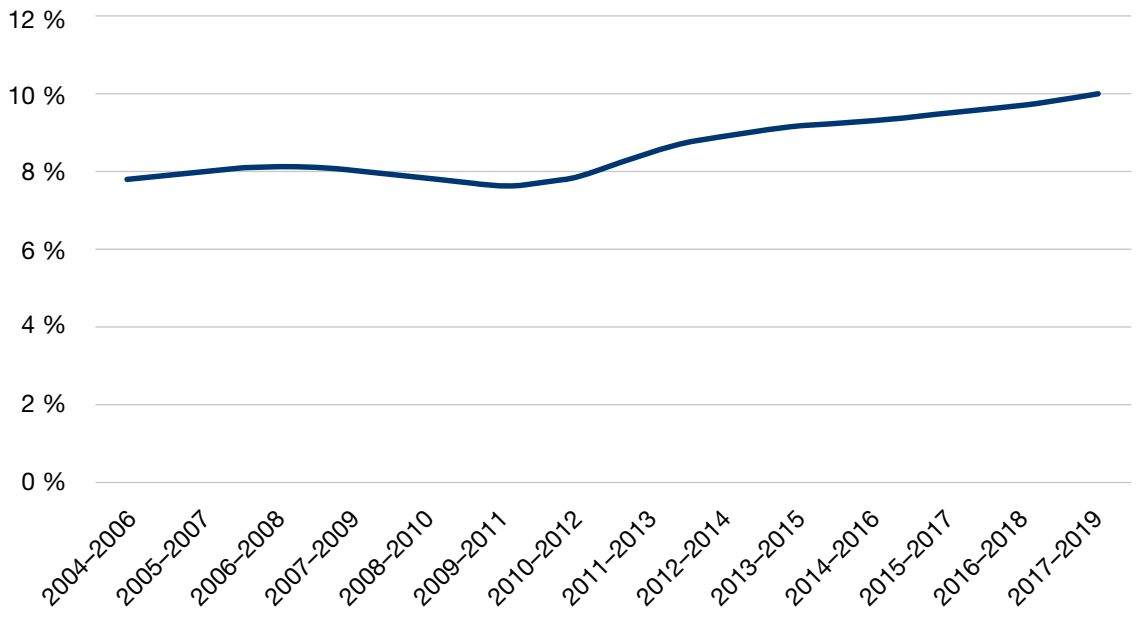


Figure 20: Proportion of persons in households with persistent low income (per cent). EU Scale 60 percent of median, 2004-2019. Source: Statistics Norway

Photo: Adobe Stock

out rates amongst immigrant, especially refugee, children are higher than amongst children in general. The reasons for dropping out are many and complex, but it is partly related to the results achieved in primary school, the students' background and support.

The proportion of working age population who receive disability benefits is high with an increasing rate of young adults. An estimated 120,000 young adults between the ages of 20 and 30 are neither in education, employment nor training. Mental disorders are an important cause of disability among young people and dropouts from education and working life, generating high life span costs.

The Norwegian society is still characterised by gender disparity in income, representation, and employment. However, the development in gender equality have been positive in recent years along these parameters. After the local election in 2019, 35,4% of mayors and 40,0% of the municipal councillors are female. The proportion of female mayors have more than doubled over the past 20 years.

Citizens' participation

The municipal sector is committed to promoting participation in a transparent, vibrant, and engaging local democracy that interacts with the private and the voluntary sector. The municipal sector is committed to provide meeting places and venues, adopt new methods for dialogue, work with clear language and transmit active information and communication. By involving citizens in the political processes, the opportunity for democratic participation and influence increases.

Election turnout increased significantly in 2019, with the largest increase among youth. The citizens prefer elected representatives in their own municipal council as a channel to promote their interests. At the same time, they are not fully satisfied with how politicians involve and listen to citizens' views.

Trust in both national and local institutions and actors has decreased somewhat from 2007 to 2019, more for national than local institutions. However, numbers from 2020 suggest that public trust is increasing.

A majority of the population agrees that the public sector treats all groups fairly, regardless of gender, functional ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or the like, while almost 1/3 disagrees. At the same time, a substantial portion of residents believe that various forms of corruption take place in the Norwegian public sector at both state level and in their own municipality.

Public trust

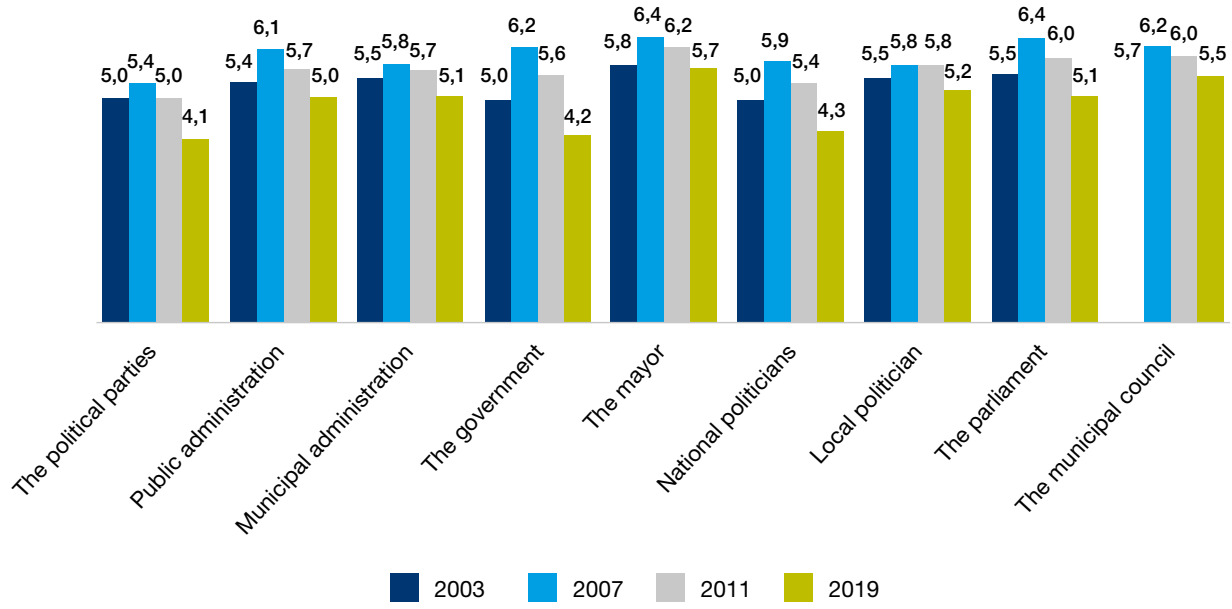


Figure 21: Public Trust, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2019. Source: Institute for Social Research

In KS' survey on local democracy 2018, it appears that many believe that those with good personal connections in the municipality get their interests better taken care of, even though they do not believe that elected representatives abuse their power to their own advantage. Hate speech and threats prevent participation. 40% of local politicians have been exposed to hate speech or specific threats. Younger politicians are more exposed. The large scale of hate speech and concrete threats against local elected representatives is a danger to freedom of expression and democracy.

Citizens' impression of level of corruption

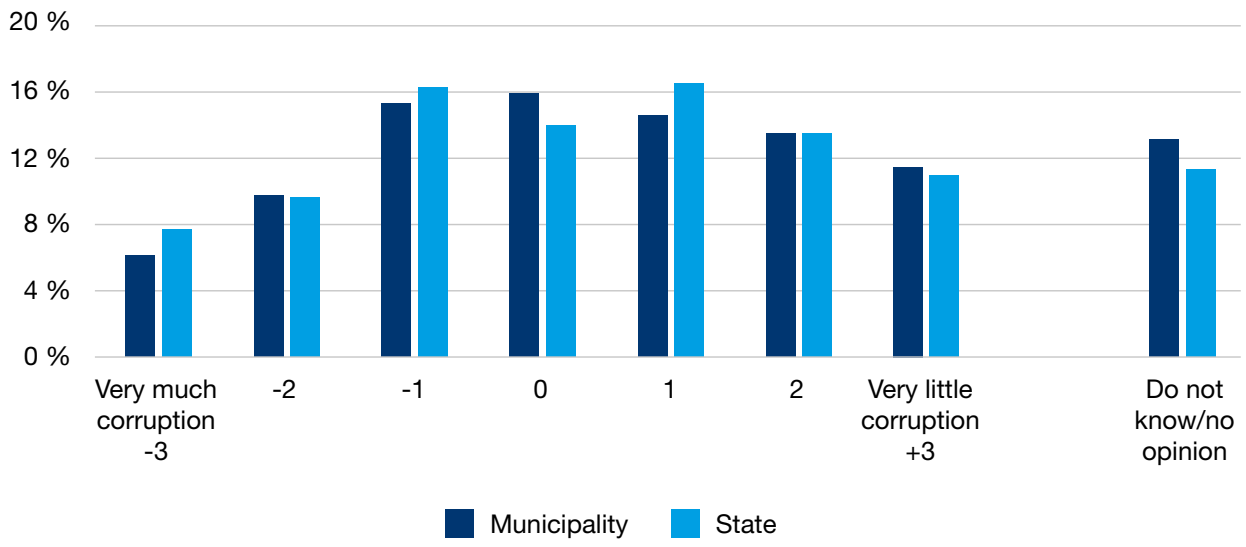
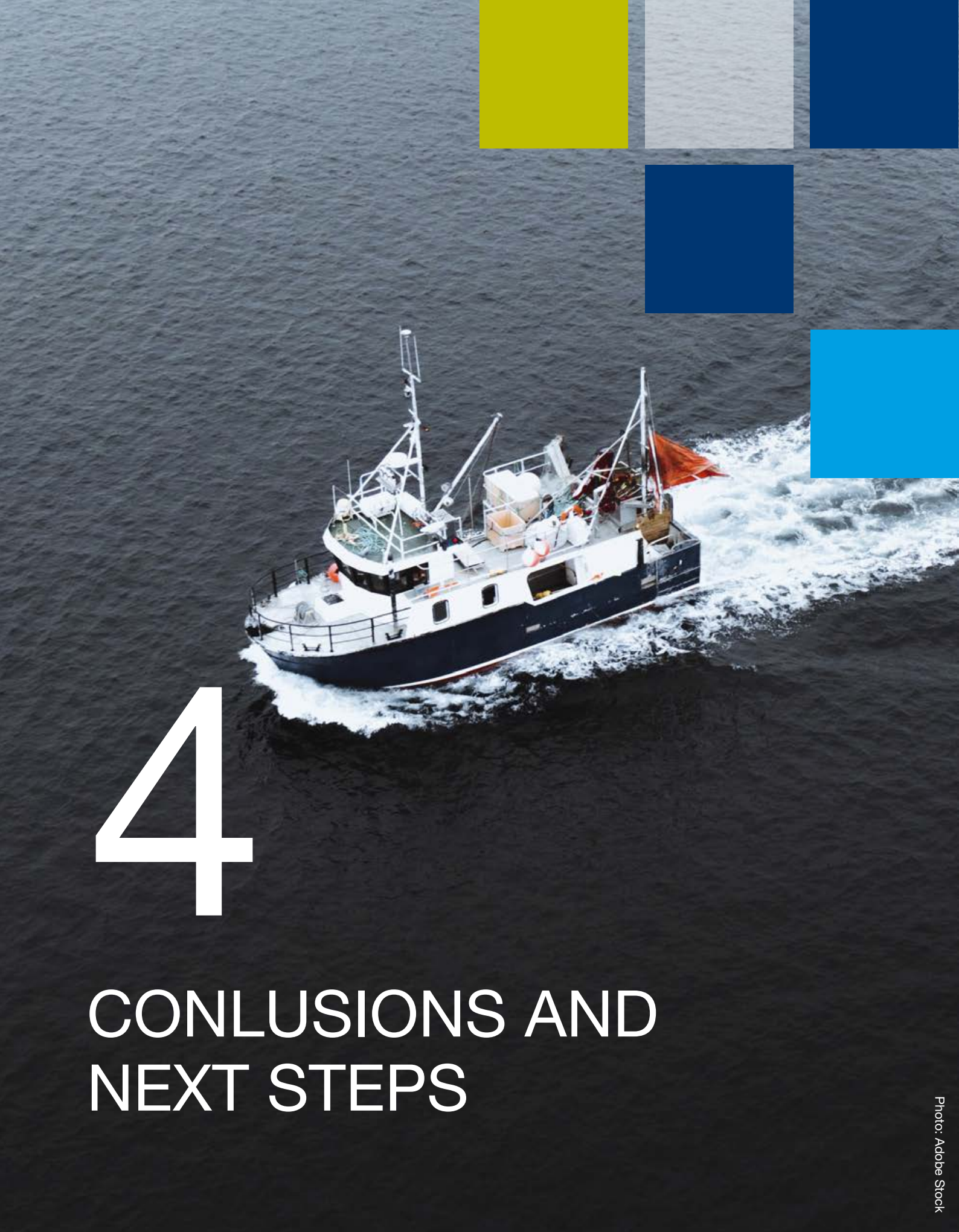


Figure 22: To what extent do the inhabitants believe that various forms of corruption take place in the public sector. Source: DFØ – The Citizens' Survey 2019.



4

CONLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

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4.1 Means of implementation

There are several factors that characterize local and regional authorities' implementation of the SDGs. This section will elaborate on the challenges and needs they have in relation to means of implementation.

National policy cohesion - Local and regional authorities are missing national policy cohesion. The municipalities and regional authorities attempt to work holistically with the SDGs and see the goals in connection with their societal mission, but this is impeded by a sectorised state.

The SDGs are not infused in partisan politics - As the review shows, political engagement and priority is vital. There is a lack of sustainability considerations and pledges in national party manifestos. This indicates a lack of genuine political commitment to the SDGs at the national level, which is concerning. It is vital for the municipal sector that national political parties also have an ambition to reach the goals.

Increased local autonomy – Local and regional governments have the assignment and mandate but need a greater room for manoeuvre to deliver on the SDGs. Regulations, earmarked grants and mandatory minimum staffing reduce local and regional authorities' freedom of action and hinder innovation, which is central for reaching the SDGs. The municipal sector needs increased autonomy to address and prioritise work with the SDGs within their budgets.

Lack of a common understanding of what localising, implementing, and basing the authorities' work on the SDG framework mean – There seems to be absence of a common understanding of what implementing the SDG framework in the local and regional context entail. There is a crucial difference between using the framework as a main governance tool and trying to make the goals 'fit' into existing plans and strategies.

The municipalities and regional authorities attempt to work holistically with the SDGs and see the goals in connection with their societal mission, but this is impeded by a sectorized state

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Building institutional knowledge and competence on sustainable development should be prioritized to a larger extent

Basing local and regional development on the SDGs entail infusing the goals in existing plans and structures and using the framework as a strategic tool to set direction. Some municipalities have not included the SDGs in their local frameworks, but still deliver on their societal welfare mission. Others may have spent considerable time on reformulating local strategies and plans around the SDGs but fails to use the framework as a basis for decisions, priorities and local governance. There is a need to clarify what it means to work according to a framework.

Lack of baseline and reporting – There is a clear need for SDG indicators relevant to the local and regional level. Local and regional authorities need knowledge about status and what works.

Knowledge should be emphasized to a greater extent – Building institutional knowledge and competence on sustainable development should be prioritized to a larger extent. The SDG framework should be incorporated in existing knowledge and leadership programs and additional SDG training programs should be created.

4.2 Conclusion and next steps

The Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) should be a basis for action and further acceleration of the 2030 Agenda. KS will convert the knowledge base and insights into concrete actions, both in terms of promoting the interests of municipalities and in their role as development partner, to address the challenges identified in the review. KS will utilize the insight proactively, both nationally and internationally.

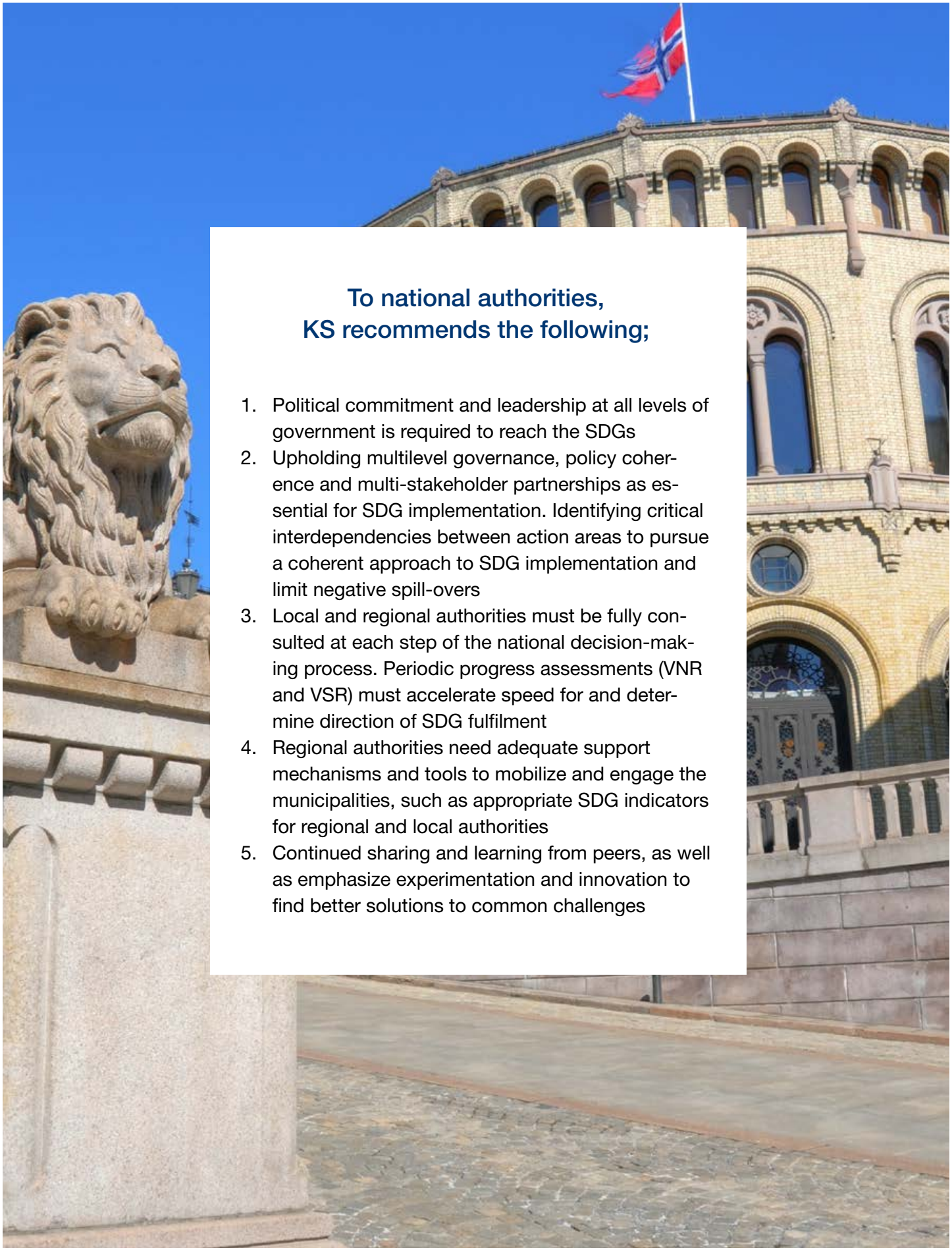
As a first step on this mission, KS will enter into a political agreement with the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (KMD) for increased cooperation between national level and local and regional level on SDG implementation. KMD had coordinating responsibility for the Voluntary National Review (VNR). Key elements of the agreement include continued work with SDGs and innovation. Together, KS and KMD will follow up on the findings in their respective reviews, and collaborate on the development of indicators, knowledge development and best practice. It is essentially a plan for joint action on SDG implementation across administrative levels.

Furthermore, KS will back and promote the regional networks currently being developed by regional authorities for increased regional collaboration on SDG implementation. As the review shows, regional collaboration presents huge benefits for local governments. KS will also integrate the SDGs more broadly, and sustainability matters in the context of municipal freedom of action more specifically, in the various guidelines KS produces for local and regional governments.

KS will also use the knowledge base developed in the VSR to emphasise the importance of multilevel governance internationally, contribute to further development of European guidelines and to the exchange of practices and experiences related to the most important challenges and tasks for local and regional governments. This will primarily be achieved through KS' participation in UCLG and dialogue with UNDESA. KS will also use available Nordic arenas.

Recommendations to local and regional and national authorities

Based on the review of local and regional status, efforts and progress on the SDGs, and the central objective of actionable output, KS has several recommendations to the municipal sector and national authorities.



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To national authorities, KS recommends the following;

1. Political commitment and leadership at all levels of government is required to reach the SDGs
2. Upholding multilevel governance, policy coherence and multi-stakeholder partnerships as essential for SDG implementation. Identifying critical interdependencies between action areas to pursue a coherent approach to SDG implementation and limit negative spill-overs
3. Local and regional authorities must be fully consulted at each step of the national decision-making process. Periodic progress assessments (VNR and VSR) must accelerate speed for and determine direction of SDG fulfilment
4. Regional authorities need adequate support mechanisms and tools to mobilize and engage the municipalities, such as appropriate SDG indicators for regional and local authorities
5. Continued sharing and learning from peers, as well as emphasize experimentation and innovation to find better solutions to common challenges

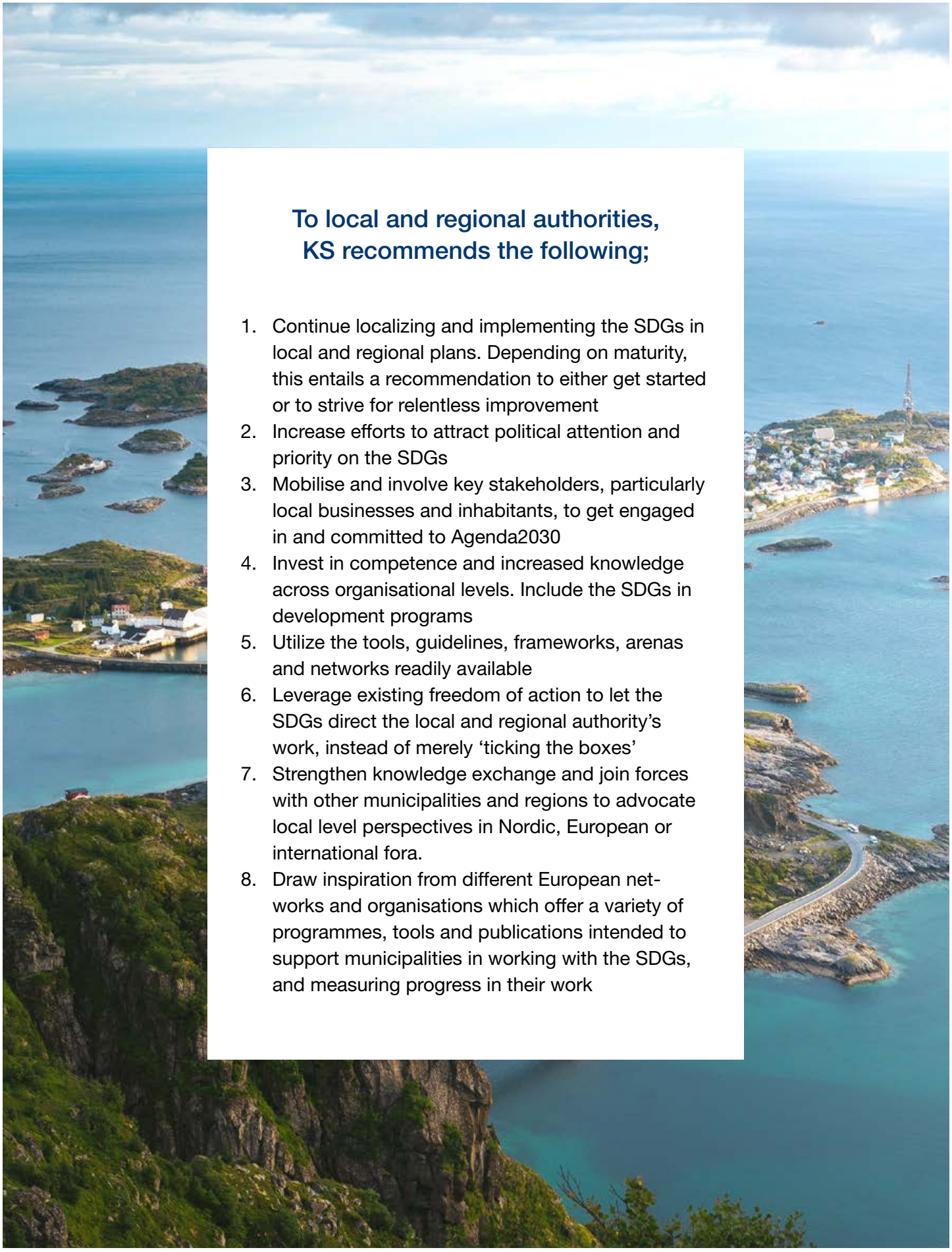

Photo: Valdemaras / Unsplash

To local and regional authorities, KS recommends the following;

1. Continue localizing and implementing the SDGs in local and regional plans. Depending on maturity, this entails a recommendation to either get started or to strive for relentless improvement
2. Increase efforts to attract political attention and priority on the SDGs
3. Mobilise and involve key stakeholders, particularly local businesses and inhabitants, to get engaged in and committed to Agenda2030
4. Invest in competence and increased knowledge across organisational levels. Include the SDGs in development programs
5. Utilize the tools, guidelines, frameworks, arenas and networks readily available
6. Leverage existing freedom of action to let the SDGs direct the local and regional authority's work, instead of merely 'ticking the boxes'
7. Strengthen knowledge exchange and join forces with other municipalities and regions to advocate local level perspectives in Nordic, European or international fora.
8. Draw inspiration from different European networks and organisations which offer a variety of programmes, tools and publications intended to support municipalities in working with the SDGs, and measuring progress in their work

APPENDIX

I: Notes on the survey

Survey

Two separate questionnaires with similar structure were sent out to local and regional authorities to accommodate the two tiers of governments' different tasks. The questionnaires reflected thematically the 'Policy and Enabling Environment' chapter in the UN DESA Global Guiding Elements for Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) of SDG Implementation. Adjustments were made to adapt to the Norwegian municipal and regional context. The survey consisted of the following main themes;

1. Understanding, ownership and engagement with the SDGs
2. SDGs in strategy and management
3. The principle of "leaving no one behind"
4. Prioritised areas
5. Innovation and partnerships
6. Structural barriers and critical success factors
7. The Covid-19 pandemic

All local and regional authorities were invited to take part in the survey and questionnaires were sent to municipal and regional Chief Executive Officers as well as to central e-mail address. Recipients were invited to respond themselves or to forward the questionnaire for completion by managers with designated responsibility for sustainability. This survey distribution model was selected to secure meaningful and valid responses. Respondents' possible shortcomings or knowledge gaps were controlled for during the data analysis in which aggregated data and trends were emphasized over specific observations or smaller data samples.

Response rates

33% of municipalities (118 out of 356) and 73% of regional authorities (8 out of 11) responded giving a representative sample well spread across size, geography and centrality. Oslo, the capital, which is at the same time a municipality and a regional authority responded only once using the questionnaire addressed to municipalities.

8 of Norway's 11 regional authorities responded and the survey thus captured data from a high percentage of the total population. Rogaland and Troms og Finnmark did not respond, but respectively 30% and 21% of the municipalities in those regional authorities responded. These regions are therefore considered well represented although response from the regional tier of government is lacking.

For municipalities there is an adequate spread of response rates across geography, size and centrality. The sample is evenly split between size categories providing a robust data foundation for making comparisons along this dimension. Sample distribution does, however, not match population distribution. Small municipalities are underrepresented while large municipalities are overrepresented. Aggregate responses may therefore be skewed in favour of the perspective of larger municipalities. To control for this tendency the analysis was completed paying less attention to specific, absolute responses with more attention to trends and differences between categories to capture local and regional authorities' direction, speed and progress in working with the SDGs.

Category	Population distribution	Sample distribution
Large	17%	31%
Medium	34%	34%
Small	49%	36%

Table 1: Size distribution in the total population of Norwegian municipalities and in the survey sample

On the dimension of centrality, more geographically central municipalities are somewhat overrepresented while the less central municipalities are somewhat underrepresented.

There is good geographic spread in the sample with municipalities from all regions well represented. Municipalities in the two northern-most regions (Nordland and Troms og Finnmark) are nevertheless somewhat underrepresented while there is slight overrepresentation from Viken and Møre og Romsdal. Variations are minor and do not significantly impact the geographic spread in the sample. But when seen in combination with the lacking response from Troms og Finnmark to the questionnaire for regional authorities, it can be alleged that perspectives from the very north may be underrepresented.

Local and regional authorities' have different experience in working with the SDGs and the survey sought to capture all levels of maturity. It can be assumed that municipalities actively pursuing the SDGs are more likely to participate in a survey on the SDGs, and maturity as such might influence the response rates. Findings give some evidence of this as bigger municipalities, already overrepresented in the sample, on average are more mature in their work towards the SDGs. This tendency may partially have inflated the response numbers, thus indicating

a higher maturity level in working with the goals than what is representative. On the other hand, some respondents have been cautious and conservative because of uncertainty on what local work on the SDGs entail in practice.

The Covid-19 pandemic and its pressure on local governments might represent another factor influencing the response rate. Despite these limitations the data set gives a good picture of how local and regional authorities work towards the SDGs.

Survey analysis

The survey data was analysed using descriptive analysis and trend analysis. Descriptive analysis provided a general understanding of the data set, including the mean and variation in the data. Trend analysis was used to make observations on correlations and systematic differences in the data. Although statistical analysis was not performed, descriptive analysis and trend analysis provided a solid foundation for making meaningful observations from the data set. When using such forms of analysis, it is particularly important that observations are apparent and distinct and underpinned by logical arguments.

Data from the municipality questionnaire was analysed alongside external data describing relevant characteristics of municipalities. This data was used to evidence why responses may differ between different types of municipalities thus providing insight on status, direction and momentum in the municipalities' work with the SDGs. The regional survey was only analysed on an aggregated level as it consisted of only 8 data points. The following dimensions were used to analyse differences in the municipality data:

Dimension	Description	Data set and year	Source
Geography	Regional authority the municipality belongs to	Regional Authority per municipality, 2020	Statistics Norway
Size	Categorization of Small: 0 – 4999 inhabitants Medium: 5000 – 19 999 inhabitants Large: 20 000 inhabitants or more	Population, 2020	Statistics Norway
Centrality	Categorization (1-6) of centrality based on access to workplaces and service functions	Centrality index, 2020	Statistics Norway
Fiscal autonomy	Categorization of high, medium and low disposable income based on percentiles	Adjusted disposable income including property tax, natural resource taxes, income from hosting aquaculture and the benefit of reduced payroll tax, 2020	Regjeringen.no
Amalgamation process	Binary categorisation of recently amalgamated and not recently amalgamated, according to the structural reform	Recently amalgamated municipality, 2020	Regjeringen.no
Recentness of current municipality strategy	Binary categorization of “2018 and after” and “before 2018”	Approval year for current municipality strategy, 2020	Statistics Norway
Share of population receiving disability benefits	Categorization of high, medium and low share of population on disability benefits based on percentiles	Recipients of disability benefits as a percentage of municipality population, Dec 2019	NAV
Membership in Network of Excellence on SDG City Transition	Binary categorization of “Membership” and “no membership” in the Network of Excellence	KS overview, 2021	KS
Active regions	Binary categorization of municipalities located in active sustainability regions (Trøndelag and Møre og Romsdal) and municipalities in all other regions	KS overview, 2021	KS

II: VLR – Viken Regional Authority

III: VLR – Asker Municipality

IV: VLR – Trondheim Municipality

V: VLR – Oslo Municipality

VI: VLR – Bergen Municipality

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