

The Nordic Region and the 2030 Agenda:

Governance and engagement (2021-2022)

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NORDREGIO REPORT 2023:4



Nordregio

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Introduction

This year marks the midpoint of the Nordic countries' adaptation of the framework for the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and the seven years that are left until the targets are to be reached in 2030.

"The philosophy of sustainability calls upon us to see our common challenges as new opportunities."

(Greenland's national SDG mapping, 2021)

The Nordic countries have continuously ranked at the top of international assessments with regards to SDG implementation. This does not mean, however, that sustainable development in the Nordic Region has been fully achieved. Each country continues to face numerous challenges, including unsustainable consumption and production patterns, the effects of a changing climate, as well as rebalancing our societies after multiple crises marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing recovery, energy supply shortages in Europe and the war in Ukraine. According to the [European Sustainable Development Report for 2022](#), the world is currently not on track to achieving most of the SDGs, underscoring the importance of the Nordic Region's ability and need to reverse this trend and enhance progress on multiple fronts. As Greenland stated in its SDG report, "The philosophy of sustainability calls upon us to see our common challenges as new opportunities."

Bearing this in mind, what exactly is happening in the Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland when it comes to action at national level on the 2030 Agenda? This report follows the report [The Nordic Region and the 2030 Agenda](#) from 2021, which looked at the ways in which national structures, action

plans, monitoring and reporting along with international efforts for the SDGs took place across the region. Since the nature of this work changes in the respective countries from year to year, the purpose of this edition is to update and compile an overview of the 2030 Agenda efforts in the Nordic Region with relevant and accessible information. It describes central policy decisions, actors and national structures in ongoing SDG work, and highlights inspiring examples of national networks and societal participation. Where information about more recent action has not been available, other supplementary aspects have been added, hence overlaps in the national chapters occur. New to this edition are the sections on regional and local activities, work which lies at the core of accomplishing the global goals and targets, while also strengthening the Nordic countries' leadership and grassroots involvement, leaving no one behind.

The primary target group for this report are actors working with the 2030 Agenda in the Nordic Region, and the aim is to improve knowledge sharing and mutual exchanges between the countries.

This second version of the Nordic Agenda 2030 report was drawn up by Nordregio in December 2022. The Nordic Council of Ministers will update it on a needs basis.



Photo: Vaida Ražaitytė, Nordregio

SDG achievements in the Nordics – state of play

The Nordic welfare states have long been pioneers of sustainable development, working systematically with related policies, strategies and action plans which have laid a robust foundation for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This trajectory enables the region creating even more sustainable, green, and socially responsible societies today. In 2022, the global Sustainable Development Report (formerly known as the SDG Index and Dashboards) was again topped by Nordic countries, with Finland, Denmark and Sweden forming the top three.

However, the Nordic countries still have some way to go in order to reach the SDGs by 2030. Figure 1 shows that while the countries are performing positively on many SDGs, progress has stagnated somewhat compared to previous years. SDGs 1 – No poverty, and 7 – Clean energy, are areas where all the countries are performing well. Interestingly, when it comes to SDG 13 – Climate action, none of the countries show any noticeable progress; the same also applies to unsustainable consumption and production trends related to SDG 12. Major or significant challenges also remain when it comes to SDG 2, Zero hunger (linked to obesity and extensive agriculture), 15 Life on land, and 14 Life below water (both linked to biodiversity loss from extensive fishing, forestry and other factors). Even when it comes to promoting just, peaceful, and inclusive societies and strong partnerships that form part of SDGs 16 and 17, overcoming barriers is an ongoing challenge.

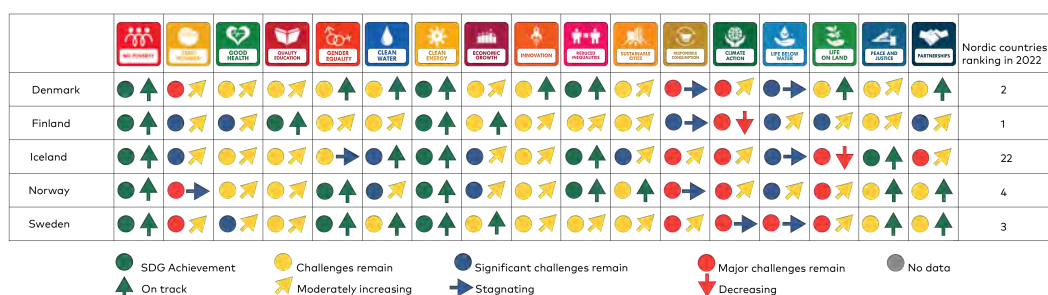


Figure 1. Overview of the Nordic countries' SDGs status reflecting that while countries are making progress, some stagnation can be observed in relation to several goals compared to previous years. Adapted from Sustainable Development Report 2022.

Finland tops the global index and continues to take the lead in action on sustainable development, reflecting a consistent national commitment that take environmental considerations into account. Finland is on track to achieve five SDGs (including SDG 1, 4, and 7) but significant or major challenges for seven others (including the most challenging ones, SDG 12 and 13). The country also performs better than most of its Nordic neighbours on the spillover score^[1] at 73.63/100, reflecting that Finland's actions have more positive effects on other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs than negative ones.

In 2022, **Denmark** ranked second in the global Sustainable Development Report and has spillover score at 66.23/100. The country is on track to achieving eight SDGs, but significant or major challenges remain for four goals (including Goal 12 and Goal 13). Plans to accelerate action is reflected in Denmark's second action plan that was presented in 2021 and updated with 15 new SDG policy initiatives.

Sweden also continues to be a leading implementer of the 2030 Agenda with its increased efforts on internal revision and progress reporting in close collaboration with the EU, in addition to having appointed a national Agenda 2030 co-ordinator until 2024. The country ranks third in the Sustainable Development Report in 2022 but also contributes to considerable negative spillover effects with a score of 65.7/100.

Norway ranks fourth globally and has more recently been stepping up its multi-stakeholder engagement, which includes the establishment of an Executive Forum on the SDGs. The country is currently on track to achieving six goals (including SDG 1, 5 and 17). Major obstacles are evident across seven SDGs, and like its Nordic counterparts, considerable action must be taken with regards to SDGs 12 and 13. Norway's spillover score is at 61.7/100 points, suggesting that the country has even more negative spillover effects than Sweden.

1. Countries are ranked by their spillover score. Each country's actions can have positive or negative effects on other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs. The Spillover Index assesses such spillovers along three dimensions: environmental & social impacts embodied into trade, economy & finance, and security. A higher score means that a country causes more positive and fewer negative spillover effects. (Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings/spillovers>)

Iceland will be the only Nordic country to submit a voluntary national review to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2023. In conjunction with this, the country has recently introduced several structural changes and appointed a new Sustainability Council and platform called Sustainable Iceland. The country is ranked 22nd in the Sustainable Development Report, a position that may be tied to its spillover score at 51.4/100 points, indicating that the country has the most negative environmental and social impacts on other countries of all the Nordics. Iceland is on track to achieving five SDGs, including SDG 1, 10, 16, but in addition to the major challenges tied to SDG 12 and 13, SDG 15 – Life on Land, is also an area the country will have to address.

"Looking to the Nordic countries, there is much to be learned from campaigns on the SDGs and broad initiatives to convey these issues to the general public."

(Greenland SDG national mapping, 2021)

The autonomous regions of **the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland** are not part of the international comparisons in the Sustainable Development Reports, but nevertheless continue to accelerate Agenda 2030 efforts, demonstrating that Nordic goals, ambitions, and accomplishments will require context-specific measures and commitment from all communities and stakeholders involved. Åland has consistently reported on its seven-pronged sustainability strategy and now focuses efforts on international outreach and sharing good practice. Greenland published a comprehensive national mapping in 2021 of all the SDG work done to date, in addition to having hosted a large international youth conference in the capital, Nuuk, in August 2022, which focused on developing SDG solutions for the Arctic context.

Overall, much work remains to be done by all countries in the coming seven years to keep the Nordic Region on track toward a sustainable future. Yet, what remains evident is that cooperation will strengthen Nordic efforts. This was also pointed out in Greenland's SDG reporting, reminding us that "Looking to the Nordic countries, there is much to be learned from campaigns on the SDGs and broad initiatives to convey these issues to the general public." The most recent voluntary national reviews and related action plans nevertheless reflect an ongoing commitment to the 2030 Agenda. In the following chapters, we will learn more about the national efforts that are behind the statistics and index scores.



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Denmark

Overview and targets

Denmark played a key international role in the initial development of the 2030 Agenda and submitted its first voluntary national review (VNR) in 2016. Since the country's adoption of the 2030 Agenda, Denmark has remained strongly committed to the SDGs. In 2021, Denmark presented 15 new SDG policy initiatives in its [National Action Plan for Agenda 2030](#).

In its [second VNR](#), also submitted in 2021, Denmark emphasised the need for further commitment to the green transition by assuming greater global responsibility and working on long-term sustainable solutions along with other countries. The review also presented a broadened stakeholder engagement. Assessments of the progress towards each individual SDG were provided by both government officials and civil society actors. In addition, several chapters were written by private sector contributors, organisations, academic institutions, municipalities, and regions. The review also builds on newly established institutional mechanisms and research, including a peer review process along with Norway.

While the 2030 Agenda has received increasing attention, Denmark acknowledges that much work remains to be done to reach the SDG targets. Priorities continue to include actively improving labour market conditions for vulnerable groups, due diligence and strengthening the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, as well as a focus on children and young people.^[2]

2. An example of the latter is the "Children First" initiative, which seeks to ensure better conditions for equal opportunities in childhood.

Governance and multilevel coordination

The parliament and government steer Denmark's Agenda 2030 efforts. The Ministry of Finance oversees the overall co-ordination, working closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Environment and a cross-ministerial working group. These responsibilities also include preparing the ground for the VNR process with ministries and other Danish stakeholders.

The Ministry of Finance has allocated responsibility for specific SDGs and relevant targets to each of the ministries in the areas covered by their remits. The so-called distribution of the Danish global goals is available on Statistics Denmark's [website](#), which also includes selected data on the progress made toward specific targets. Responsibility for the actual implementation of the targets lies with the ministries, but the Ministry of Finance is, for instance, responsible for SDG 17.13 which aims to improve macroeconomic stability. The Ministry of Finance is also part of the [European Working Group on Agenda 2030](#) (WP2030), which includes preparing the General Council conclusions on sustainable development. The WP2030 group meets when needed, although at least once a year, to discuss the status and progress of Denmark's work on the 2030 Agenda.^[3]

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

A new National Action Plan for implementing the 2030 Agenda was published in 2021.^[4] The report includes an assessment of the SDGs and related targets, which was also included in the 2021 VNR. The action plan outlines concrete initiatives placing emphasis on the areas where Denmark is furthest away from reaching the targets, while highlighting the need to pay particular attention to climate action, as well as sustainable consumption and production. The 15 new SDG policy initiatives presented in the action plan included the development of a new climate model that can project Danish consumers' global climate footprint when consuming goods produced abroad (spillover effects), an accelerator programme for Danish small and medium-sized companies and sustainable public procurement processes, as well as strengthening the secretariat for the 2030 Panel, stimulating green and environmentally friendly product export in collaboration with business and industry organisations, and enhancing public awareness and initiatives related to the SDGs in education.

The Danish government continues to integrate sustainability into political initiatives, where engaging stakeholders at all levels is also a consistent aim. One example, reflected in the country's VNR statement submitted to the UN, is the decision to conduct a screening process of all legislative proposals to assess their impact in terms of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

3. <https://fm.dk/arbejdsomraader/verdensmaal/%20https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/denmark/policy-efforts>

4. https://fm.dk/media/24855/handlingsplan-for-fns-verdensmaal_web_a.pdf

Regional and local level implementation

In Denmark, the country's five regional authorities are represented by Danish Regions while Local Government Denmark (KL) represents the 98 municipalities. KL supports Danish municipalities in their work with the SDGs by communicating the municipalities' concerns and needs back to the national level. KL also participates in partnerships to strengthen focus on the SDGs across Danish society, including collecting, sharing knowledge and best practices between municipalities, encouraging the use of the SDG indicators, conducting surveys and supporting SDG research, and facilitating conferences via physical and digital platforms. An example of this engagement was a webinar held in the spring of 2022.^[5]

As reported in the chapter written by the regions and municipalities in the 2021 VNR, approximately 9 out of 10 Danish municipalities are actively working with the SDGs in their strategies and plans or have appointed political committees to specifically address Agenda 2030. This reflects a notable increase in local action and commitment since 2018. The municipality of [Gladsaxe](#) has additionally submitted a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) in 2021. Most municipalities prioritise the sustainability targets related to climate action, sustainable cities and communities, and positive health and well-being. These are areas where innovative and concrete Danish solutions could also inspire other (Nordic) countries' work with the SDGs.

Today, the regions primarily work within the national framework of the Danish health system, striving to fulfil many of the targets related to SDG 3. When it comes to climate action, the regions have set themselves an ambitious goal of reducing carbon emissions from hospital operations by 75% by 2030, which is higher than the national target of 70%. In recent years, SDG implementation has been on a voluntary basis in each region, building on existing sustainability efforts. All five regions retain a broad focus on enhancing sustainable development through their ongoing operations and tasks. Some regions formulate explicit and targeted SDG action plans, while others have chosen to integrate the SDGs into existing development strategies. Overall, the SDGs are taken into account in all decision-making and procurement strategies, despite the challenges of balancing political and economic goals.

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

The SDGs have proven to be a solid framework for dialogue, encouraging individual citizens, companies, civil society, and public agencies to join forces in integrating the global goals in core strategies so that these meet the ambitions shared by local communities. Indeed, partnerships and broad societal commitment are vital to achieving the SDGs, and most Danish municipalities have formed partnerships with companies and civil society organisations in local and regional partnerships.

5. <https://www.kl.dk/nyheder/center-for-klima-og-erhverv/...>

Annual Spotlight reports compiled by civil society networks address Denmark's challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs.^[6] The most recent Spotlight report was published in June 2021 by the two NGO networks, Global Focus and the 92 group, which co-ordinate Danish civil society's SDG initiatives. The report summarised the member organisations' political recommendations to ensure sustainable development both in Denmark and globally. Civil society's assessment was that not enough progress had been made since 2017. Although much has been achieved in the areas of health and gender equality, Denmark has experienced stagnation in several other areas, in line with broader global trends. The country's official SDG website, [Verdensmål](#), sheds light on relevant SDG campaigns, publishes news and raises awareness of Agenda 2030. It also accounts for activities in Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

Additionally, there is an advisory body established in 2017 called the 2030 Panel. This was set up by the Danish Parliament's Cross-party Coalition for the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Panel consists of 25 diverse stakeholders designated by the 2030 Network as representatives of key changemakers in Danish society. Global Focus and the 92 group are part of the 2030 Panel. The aim of it is to support the political work of the 2030 Network by contributing analyses, sparring, discussions, knowledge sharing. The 2030 Panel's activities included the project [Our Goals](#), working with Statistics Denmark, which through an inclusive process reviewed [Denmark's baseline position](#) and suggested possible indicators for subsequent work on the 2030 Agenda.^[7]

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

Denmark's national progress on the 2030 Agenda implementation is monitored through a set of national indicators that were developed in 2018 by the national statistics agency, Statistics Denmark.^[8] An annual statistical report is published whereby the 2021 version supplemented the 2021 VNR as an appendix. According to the assessment of the government's SDG efforts, Denmark is well-positioned to realise many aims and objectives, especially in terms of health and well-being, education, sustainable energy, peace, justice, and strong institutions. The key remaining challenges relate to responsible consumption and production as well as climate action, and further attention is also needed to improve conditions for marine life and the environment.

In 2022, Denmark ranked second in the global Sustainable Development Report. In this assessment, the country is on track to achieving eight SDGs (see Figure 1), but challenges still remain for nine other goals, with significant or major challenges for four goals, including SDG 12 related to responsible consumption and production as well as SDG 13 on climate action.

6. [SPOTLIGHT-Report 2021.pdf \(globaltfokus.dk\)](#)

7. See the 2020 report, "Gør Verdensmål til Vores Mål - 197 danske målepunkter for en mere bæredygtig verden" a comprehensive report that presented 197 suggestions for Danish "measuring points" for the 17 SDGs. The measurement points supplement the UN's indicators for the global goals and are intended as a contribution to the monitoring of the status of the 2030 Agenda in Denmark.

8. <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/temaer/SDG>



Photo: Vaida Ražaitytė, Nordregio

Faroe Islands

Overview and targets

The 2030 Agenda and other international agreements on sustainable development form an integral part of Faroe Islands' national and international policies. Among the priority areas, safeguarding the marine environment and utilising its resources are top of the Faroese sustainability agenda.

In the context of UN reporting, the Faroe Islands are covered by Denmark as part of bilateral treaty agreements.^[9]

Governance and multilevel coordination

The Faroese government, Føroya Landsstýri, has the overarching responsibility for Agenda 2030 implementation, and the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for co-ordinating national work on sustainable development. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Culture is responsible for co-operation on international development. The parliament is involved through the normal political processes around legislative proposals and budget allocations, as well as in monitoring and evaluation. The Faroe Islands also participates in the Arctic Circle Assembly, the largest network of international dialogue and co-operation on the future of the Arctic, and is a member of the Arctic Council, which coordinates regional sustainability and environmental collaboration.

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The Faroe Islands' implementation of the 2030 Agenda is integrated in the ordinary political processes and policy areas. More recently, data has been compiled to measure progress on 2030 Agenda implementation. It is important

9. This does not include the Danish VNR in 2021.

for the Faroe Islands to build on already existing capacities in order to address the challenges related to the remote location of the region, its vulnerability to climate change, and its high level of dependency on the sea and marine resources.

Several inter-sectoral sustainability issues have also been identified as part of national policy. These include the provision of high-quality education, health issues, sustainable use of marine resources, sustainable energy systems, and other related issues that are especially critical for small island communities. The Faroe Islands also reports to the global Destination Sustainability Movement which provides an [SDG implementation score](#) based on performance in waste management and the number of sustainability certifications issued.

In 2019, Visit Faroe Islands presented a new sustainable tourism development strategy called [Join the Preservolution](#). The Faroe Islands have also previously participated in the UN's High-Level Dialogue Series, [SDG in the Arctic](#).

Regional and local level implementation

The Faroe Islands are divided into 30 municipalities with a population of ca. 51,000 people. The population is scattered across 17 of the islands, although 40% live in the capital, Tórshavn.

Active participation in all aspects of local community life is an important feature of life in the Faroe Islands which contributes to social cohesion. The Faroe Islands have a highly developed infrastructure that has leveraged sustainable transitions locally; telecommunications and high-speed internet coupled with a comprehensive road network with tunnel and ferry connections all provide an important foundation for maintaining the economic, social and cultural viability of communities all over the country.

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

In 2021, twelve Faroese businesses entered an agreement to prioritise sustainability for a period of three years. The initiative is called "[Burðardýgt Vinnulív](#)" (also referred to as the Faroese Sustainable Business Initiative), and aims to advance sustainable business practice and contribute towards climate action, ocean health and biodiversity mitigation specifically, and the SDGs in general.

Visit Faroe Islands has a [sustainability policy](#) and guidelines on public procurement. These include a target of 70% of companies involved in the tourism industry having sustainability policies by 2025, and 90% by 2030.

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

The Faroe Islands are not included as a separate country in the global Sustainable Development Report indices or other major international comparisons.

In 2022, Statistics Faroe Islands, Hagstova, published its [national indicators](#) for

the Sustainable Development Goals, which involved a process of compiling data on selected targets that was two years in the making.^[10] The national indicators show available metadata from Statistics Faroe Islands that are closest to the corresponding global SDG indicator. It relied on data from [Open SDG](#), a free open-source platform for managing and publishing SDG data and statistics.

10. Hagstova (2022). Our data for Sustainable Development Goal indicators. Available at: <https://sdg.hagstova.fo/sdg-site/en/>



Photo: Julius Jansson, Unsplash.com

Finland

Overview and targets

Finland has continued to actively implement the 2030 Agenda in recent years, setting even more ambitious climate targets at national and local levels. The country was among the first to submit a voluntary national review (VNR), and Helsinki was the second city in the world to submit a voluntary local review (VLR) in 2018, following the example of New York City at the time. Finland submitted its second VNR in 2020 and is committed to reporting to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) every four to five years.

Under the [current government](#) the aim is to transform Finland into a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society by 2030. To amplify SDG efforts, a new Sustainability Roadmap was launched in 2021 both to describe the current status and to identify new policy measures to meet national targets. Based on the roadmap, [the National Commission](#) on Sustainable Development renewed its [strategy from 2022–2030](#): A prosperous and globally responsible Finland that protects the carrying capacity of nature.^[11] The Finnish Prime Minister's Office co-ordinates the Agenda 2030 work, while responsibility for implementation lies with the government.

Governance and multilevel coordination

Finland's SDG organisation is built on a holistic inclusion of government and society, where all administrative sectors have a shared responsibility for implementing Agenda 2030 and the 17 SDGs. Major structural leaps have been

11. Strategy of the National Commission on Sustainable Development 2022–2030: A prosperous and globally responsible Finland that protects the carrying capacity of nature, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164157/VNK_2022_12.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y

taken since 2016, when there were no mechanisms to maintain the sustainability dialogue between the government and the Parliament. These have now been well established.

The most important forums for the inter-administrative SDG implementation are the meetings of the Permanent Secretaries, the Sustainable Development Coordination Network, the National Sustainable Development Monitoring Network, and the Advisory Staff Network. Other networks include The Development Policy Committee and the Committee for the Future, the latter of which is responsible for the Agenda 2030 issues in Parliament.

All the ministries are represented in these networks and submit annual reports to the Parliament on policies and measures regarding the SDGs in their respective areas. In addition, the National Commission on Sustainable Development, which is led by the Prime Minister, brings together actors from all sectors to review Agenda 2030 implementation.

The Sustainable Development Co-ordination Network makes sure that sectoral policy on sustainable development is co-ordinated by the Prime Minister's Office, while the Sustainable Development Monitoring Network has been tasked with reporting on the work.^[12] The monitoring network and framework for Finland's sustainable development strategy are due to be reformed in 2023.

Finland also has an Expert Panel on Sustainable Development, which consists of multidisciplinary researchers that assist the co-ordination network and the commission and provide independent input on SDG implementation. The institutional position of the Expert Panel was enhanced in December 2022, when it started working more closely with the National Commission yet maintaining its scientific independence. The Commission's work is supported and challenged by the Expert Panel and the 2030 Agenda Youth Group.^[13] The Youth Group has become an established practice and young people are represented in all main institutional structures.

Other recent structural reforms include the revised auditing programmes which now follow the same framework set out by the National Audit Office.

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Finland is implementing Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development goals through a Sustainability Roadmap, which details concrete actions the country needs to take to achieve the goals. Other guiding documents include the government programme, which is based on the SDGs and the country's two VNRs.

12. Voluntary National Review 2020 Finland: Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development p. 21, available at <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162268>

13. In 2020, a special Round Table for Climate Policy was established in connection with the Commission for Sustainable Development. The Climate Policy Roundtable does not make decisions; instead, through its work it supports the national processes to prepare and implement climate policy, see e.g. <https://ym.fi/en/climate-policy-round-table>

The [Sustainability Roadmap](#) sets out six areas in which change is needed (see Figure 2). Two of the areas call for major social change. They are firstly the economy and work promoting wellbeing and sustainable consumption, and secondly, education, competence and sustainable lifestyles. Another area – wellbeing, health and social inclusion – primarily involves a shift in the focus of activities. Two other areas deal with ongoing technological and behavioural change and include: sustainable energy systems, and food systems that promote wellbeing. The area referred to as forest, water and land use promoting biodiversity and carbon neutrality involves measures that will help safeguard diversity but will also require comprehensive change in social behaviour.^[14]

For each area of change, the Roadmap includes a vision exceeding Agenda 2030 targets, a set of objectives that translate the visions into concrete terms, and a description of the key measures that will affect different sectors of society and play a key role in bringing about change. The Roadmap also discusses how Finland can support SDG implementation globally.



Figure 2: The [six areas of change](#) defined by the National Commission on Sustainable Development (p. 13)

14. The 2030 Agenda Roadmap of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development p. 8–9, https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164200/VNK_2022_17.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y

Regional and local level implementation

The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Kuntaliitto, represents Finnish municipalities and cities. Through [Commitment2050](#), the Association pledges to support municipalities in drawing up their own sustainable development commitments. This includes providing tools, education, networks and support at local level.^[15]

Over the years, new sustainability approaches have evolved and become an integrated part of municipal planning. Finnish municipalities have a wide range of responsibilities and thus numerous possibilities to influence sustainable development. Ambitious targets have been set for climate action and resource-efficient strategies and play a strong strategic role in many Finnish municipalities. As a result, 45% of the Finnish population lives in a municipality committed to carbon neutrality by 2030. The local strengths in Finland are due to the high educational levels and know-how, as well as strong local democracies and opportunities for participation. The largest sustainable development challenges are related to climate change and social inequality.

Kuntaliitto also supports the municipalities in their development efforts, facilitates networks, and acts as a partner at national level. The key network is [SDG46](#), a network of the six largest cities in Finland which includes Helsinki, Espoo, Tampere, Vantaa, Turku, and Oulu. All the cities in the SDG46 network, except Oulu, have reported voluntary local reviews as of 2022. Another important contributor is [USO6](#), the organisation for small and medium-sized municipalities across Finland.

While municipalities in Finland are undoubtedly making progress, the dialogue between the national and local levels is not seamless, which the association pointed out in its dedicated VNR chapter in 2020. They noted a need for support and clearer co-ordination from the national level, as well as improved synchronisation of the monitoring tools, which primarily comprise indicators designed for national level reporting.^[16]

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

Engaging civil society and other stakeholders has long been part of Finland's sustainable development work. This is embedded in the national initiative, called Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development.^[17] This Commitment draws upon stakeholders from different sectors of society to commit to promoting sustainable development in their work through concrete actions. Since its inception, nearly 3,000 different commitments from individuals and organisations and Green Deals between the Government and industry sectors have been agreed.

15. <https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/kehittaminen-ja-digitalisaatio/kestava-kehitys>

16. Voluntary National Review 2020 Finland: Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development p. 42. Available at <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/162268>

17. <https://sitoumus2050.fi/en/web/sitoumus2050/home#>

It is also worth noting that Finland's Agenda 2030 Youth Group was set up as early as 2017 to better integrate the voice of children and young people in the implementation and the National Commission's work. Minority groups including the indigenous Sámi people and the Swedish-speaking population from Åland are also members of the National Commission.

The most recent VNR reporting process is a clear demonstration of Finland's engagement with civil society and stakeholders (see Figure 3). The VNR is based on an inclusive process in which civil society has been widely heard, and an independent evaluation of the SDG progress was conducted by civil society representatives.

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

Finland monitors Agenda 2030 progress through the UN indicators for sustainable development and its [National Indicators on Sustainable Development](#). The state of sustainable development in Finland is monitored by the National Sustainable Development Monitoring Network while Statistics Finland is responsible for following up on the indicators (reporting once per term to the Parliament). This monitoring framework is currently being reformed to match the new sustainable development strategy as part of which Citizens' Panels on Sustainable Development enable ordinary people to participate in the assessments.^[18] In the international context, the Development Policy Committee presents an evaluation of the government's work on Agenda 2030 every other year to guide the development work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.^[19]

The National Audit Office of Finland evaluated Finland's implementation and governance of the Agenda 2030 work in 2019. The project, titled [Path2030](#), concluded that Finland's policy on sustainable development has succeeded in being inclusive. A new evaluation of Finland's Agenda 2030 implementation is planned for 2023.

Globally, Finland is ranked first and well on track to achieve five SDGs (including Goal 1, No Poverty, Goal 4, Quality Education, and Goal 7, Affordable and Clean Energy), but challenges remain for seven other goals, and significant or major challenges for seven others (see Figure 1).^[20]

18. <https://kestavakehitys.fi/en/monitoring>

19. [Press-release-Finland-needs-to-catch-up.pdf \(kehityspoliittinentoimikunta.fi\)](#)

20. <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings>



Figure 3: Finland's VNR reporting process which saw comprehensive engagement by the main stakeholders (VNR, 2020, p. 15).^[21]

21. Voluntary National Review 2020 Finland: Report on the implementation of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development p. 15 available at <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/...>



Photo: Justine Ramage, Nordregio

Greenland

Overview and targets

In Greenland, sustainable development is integrated into various strategies and programmes and has become an essential element in many new projects and partnerships, as the SDGs become a central tool to assess sustainability trajectories.

The Greenlandic government, Naalakkersuisut, presented a [comprehensive mapping in 2021](#) of national sustainable development initiatives.^[22] While the mapping does not constitute a plan of action or a new strategy for Agenda 2030 implementation, the report outlined many possibilities for future action, follow-ups and reporting on the SDGs in Greenland.

Governance and multilevel coordination

The Greenlandic Government has the overarching responsibility for the economic, social, and environmental perspectives of sustainable development in Greenland. The Ministry for Finance and Domestic Affairs, and specifically the Department for Spatial Planning under this ministry, has responsibility for co-ordinating and collecting data relating to sustainability and following up the national work. Statistics Greenland is responsible for developing and applying indicators.

While Greenland has not yet formally committed to Agenda 2030, Denmark endorsed the SDGs in 2015, which include Greenland as part of bilateral agreements. As such, the ministries also have varying ambitions when it comes to sustainable development in policy and strategies (see Figure 4). A common

22. Naalakkersuisut (2021) National Mapping of the SDG 2030 Agenda. Available at: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/9c5c8505-53ad-4210-8040-35e8ce0bd83e>

framework for addressing intersectoral priorities across ministries and other national bodies will, therefore, become increasingly important for Greenland in the years to come.

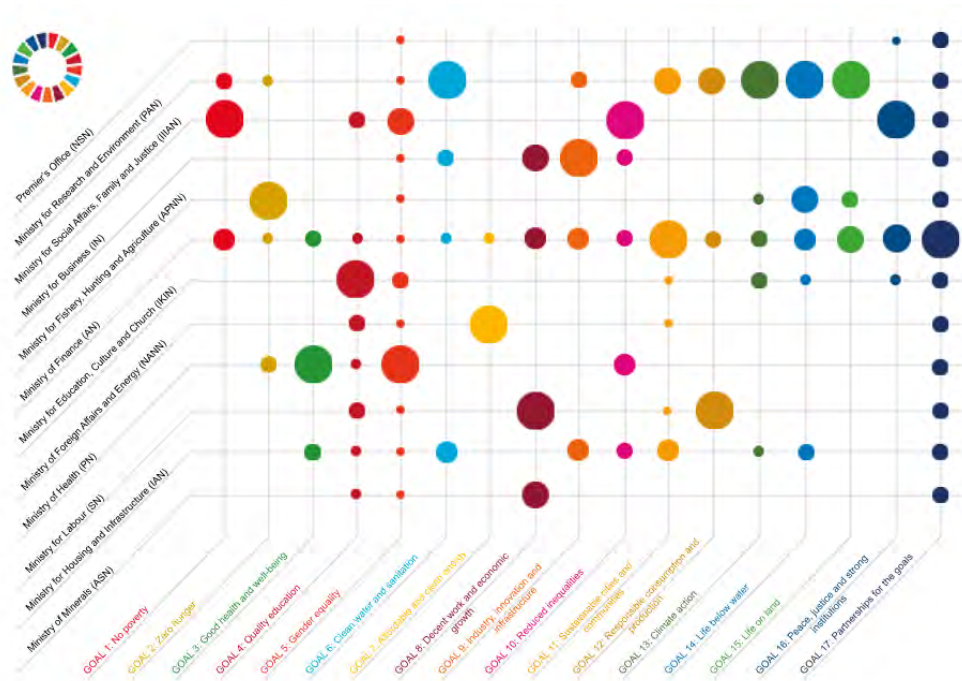


Figure 4: Greenland's distribution of SDG work and responsibilities according to ministry (figure's text is in Danish).

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

In August 2022, Greenland welcomed young people from around the world, including 42 young Greenlanders, to the [UNLEASH Regional Innovation Lab](#) which took place in Nuuk. The purpose of this conference was to share ideas, create networks and [develop sustainable solutions](#) for the Arctic-Nordic region, but also to develop durable and positive results that will benefit young people and society in Greenland more specifically. The event was the first of its kind in Greenland: UNLEASH is a non-profit organisation in which young people share ideas and create solutions to aid progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals.

At an operational level, the Greenlandic government recognises that national sector planning can contribute to the work on the SDGs and consequently that the SDG framework must become an integral part of templates used to draw up sectoral plans, such as in land use and urban planning. The national mapping report states that there are many benefits to integrating sustainable development into physical planning and the planning system in general. The Planning Act establishes a single coherent national system from an overall strategic level right down to individual land allocation or building permits within the municipality. This approach ensures that sustainable development plays a key role in all sectoral plans and serves as a link between national and global initiatives. Other policy plans documenting progress toward achieving the SDGs are available at www.anguniakkavut.gl.

Greenland's Sustainability and Growth Plan from 2016 also connects the objectives of sustainable social development and economic growth to the work on Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The aim of that plan was to develop society in a sustainable direction using four main reform paths designed to raise the level of education, promote growth and diversify the economy, modernise the public sector and strengthen and secure the welfare state, both now and in the future.

Greenland has through its involvement in both Arctic and Nordic cooperative bodies, expressed a desire to work toward implementing the relevant SDGs, for example, by signing the Fairbanks Declaration in Alaska in May 2017 and at the Nordic Prime Ministers' Meeting in Reykjavik in August 2019.

As part of ongoing implementation efforts, both Greenland and the Faroe Islands have initiated a dialogue with Denmark to ensure a clear framework for their work on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including future progress reporting to the UN.

Regional and local level implementation

The [2021 mapping report](#) states that municipalities in Greenland play an important role in ensuring concrete implementation of sustainability measures. This could be in the form of local plans or granting approval of specific construction projects, for example.

As part of the 2009 structural reform, Greenland's 18 districts were consolidated into four large administrative areas (although Qaasuitsup Kommunia was later split in two, so there are now five districts, commonly referred to in Greenland as "municipalities"). The five municipalities have all embraced sustainability to a greater or lesser degree. Some municipalities have openly endorsed the SDGs, while others are working more indirectly through initiatives that focus on a broad interpretation of sustainability.

One example is in Avannaata, which in 2021 allocated resources for local SDG initiatives.^[23] Another is Kommuneqarfi Sermersooq, which includes the capital, Nuuk, where a strategy for working on Agenda 2030 was adopted in early 2019.

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

The UNLEASH Regional Innovation Lab in Nuuk engaged several Greenlandic stakeholders and youth representatives. The outcomes of the Lab will hopefully accelerate the social and environmental sustainability of future activities by civil society organisations and local communities. Indeed, the participants in the Lab proposed several SDG solutions for Greenland. These included: "The Arctic Food Cooperative", a proposal for providing young people in Greenland with enhanced knowledge of Arctic food and to alleviate loneliness, the "SDG Storytelling Park" to create narratives around the SDGs through the lens of the local community, and a "Translation Application" to support people during medical consultations.

23. <https://www.anguniakkavut.gl/nyheder/baeredygtig-udviklingspulje-avannaata>

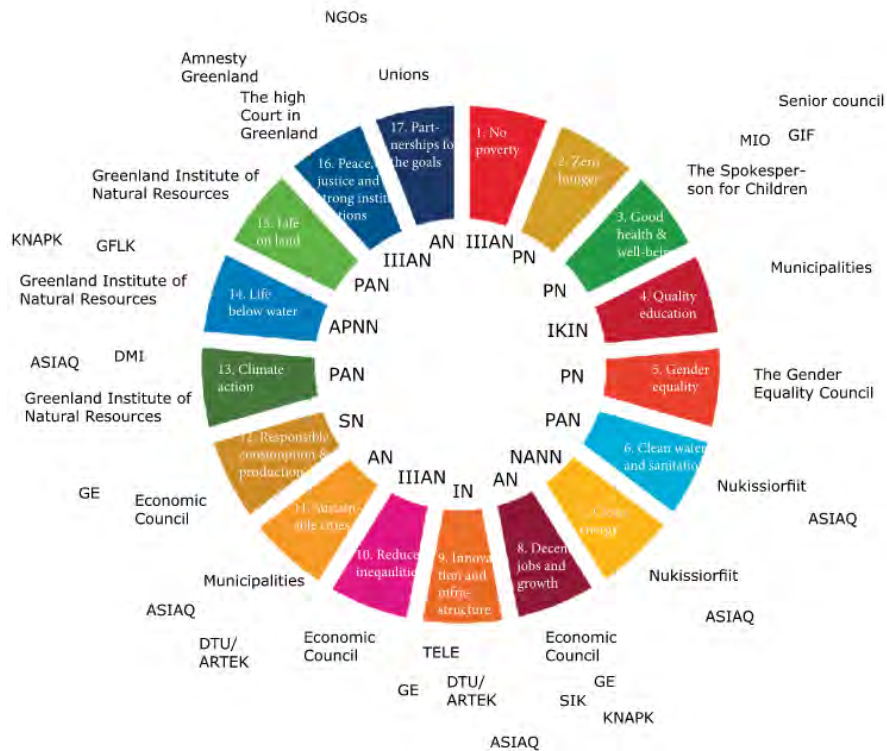


Figure 5. Overview of all the stakeholders involved in Greenland's Agenda 2030 efforts (National mapping report, p. 19)^[24]

Figure 5 provides an overview of all the stakeholders involved in Greenland's Agenda 2030 efforts. One important private sector stakeholder is [CSR Greenland](#), an organisation founded in 2010 the primary purpose of which is to bring together entrepreneurs and established companies and encourage them to do business in a socially responsible manner. CSR Greenland was one of the first organisations to embrace the SDGs as a core element of their work. More and more member companies have now gained a greater awareness of the active role that they play in sustainable development through their efforts to implement the SDGs. CSR Greenland has successfully run introductory courses, a major SDG accelerator course and a more in-depth training course on the SDGs, CSR and sustainability that has attracted a wide range of companies and organisations.

24. NSN: Naalakkersuisut Siulittaasuata Naalakkersuisoqarfia / Premier's Office
 PAN: Ilisimatusarnermut Avatangiisinullu Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry for Research and Environment
 IIIAN: Isumaginninnermut, Illoqutariinnermut, Inatsisinillu Atuutsitsinnermut Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry for Social Affairs, Family and Justice
 IN: Inuussutissarsiornermut Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry for Business
 APNN: Aalisarnermut, Piniarnermut Nunalerinermullu Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry for Fishery, Hunting and Agriculture
 AN: Aningaasaqarnermut Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry of Finance
 IKIN: Ilinniartitaanermit, Kultureqarnermut, Ilageeqarnermut Nunanullu Allanut Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry for Education, Culture and Church
 NANN: Nunanut Allanut Nukissiuuteqarnermullu Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Energy
 PN: Peqqissutsimut Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry of Health
 SN: Suliffeqarnermullu Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry for Labour
 IAN: Ineqarnermut Attaveqaqatigiinnermullu Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry for Housing and Infrastructure
 ASN: Aatsitassanut Naalakkersuisoqarfik / Ministry of Minerals

For an overview of ongoing SDG activities and news, www.anguniakkavut.gl is the national digital communication portal raising public awareness of Agenda 2030 and sustainable development in Greenland. The portal has been developed and edited by the Department of National Planning under the Ministry of Finance and provides recent updates on activities and initiatives under the auspices of public agencies, businesses, as well as civil society and voluntary organisations, and is intended to be accessible for everyone in Greenland wanting to learn more, and to inspire action locally and nationally. The portal also contains a section with the most relevant indicators for each target. more, and to inspire action locally and nationally. The portal also contains a section with the most relevant indicators for each target.

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

According to the national mapping report, Greenlandic initiatives related to the SDGs are currently being implemented by the Ministry of Finance, which will play a co-ordinating role for the time being, since the work on sustainable development is closely linked to the government budget (and other economic planning factors) as well as physical planning.

Naalakkersuisut has selected indicators for the official portal from the list of SDG indicators available on Statistics Greenland's website, www.stat.gl. When indicators are downloaded from the website, reference can be made to their descriptions of sources and methods. In addition, it is often possible to search for more detailed information on the website, where an indicator can, for example, be broken down by location, gender or age group.

Greenland is not included as a separate country in the Sustainable Development Report Index or other large international comparison sites, but since 2017, work has continued to engage the ministries in mapping the areas of focus across Greenland's central government bodies and agencies. Addressing each of the targets and indicators in the 2030 Agenda has proven to be an extensive process. However, Statistics Denmark received a four-year grant under the Danish national budget to support statistical monitoring and development of indicators for Greenland and the Faroe Islands. Statistics Denmark has seen its budget increase by DKK 1 million annually from 2019 to 2022 to facilitate working with Statistics Greenland to monitor progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Photo: Vaida Ražaitytė, Nordregio

Iceland

Overview and targets

Iceland submitted [its first voluntary national review](#) (VNR) to the UN High-level Political Forum in 2019 and the country's second VNR is slated to be presented in 2023.^[25] However, Iceland's first National Strategy for Sustainable Development was launched in 2002 and comprised a framework for the nation's policies on sustainable development until 2020. The most recent VNR presented some of the main challenges facing Iceland for each of the 17 SDGs. Particular attention was paid to climate change, responsible production and consumption, the inclusion of children and young people, as well as identifying marginalised groups, such as immigrants and people with disabilities, ensuring that no groups or individuals are left behind.

Iceland has not drawn up a separate national action plan for the 2030 Agenda. Instead, the country actively uses the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an umbrella platform for several national strategies and policy documents. A co-operation platform called Sustainable Iceland has also been established and work has begun on a new policy design for sustainable development in Iceland. At local level, Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga (Samband), the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities actively engages its members in SDGs implementation.

Governance and multilevel coordination

In December 2022, the Prime Minister officially kick started a co-operation platform called Sustainable Iceland and a [Sustainability Council](#). The aim of Sustainable Iceland is to accelerate the process of achieving the SDGs and the

25. https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/23408VNR_Iceland_2019_web_final.pdf

government's well-being priorities. The platform is also tasked with redesigning Iceland's policy for sustainable development to guide a just and fair green transition across all areas of society. The Prime Minister chairs the Sustainability Council, which includes other ministers, municipal representatives, employer associations, trade unions, parliamentary parties and NGOs. Work on Agenda 2030 and the SDGs will continue under the auspices of Sustainable Iceland.

Prior to this, an inter-ministerial working group led by the Prime Minister's Office in close co-operation with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has since 2017 managed the analysis, implementation and promotion of the SDGs. This group also included representatives from the Parliament, Samband, and Statistics Iceland, as well as observers from the [Youth Council for the SDGs](#) and the UN Association in Iceland.



Picture: Sustainable Iceland kick-off meeting 1. December 2022. Photo credit: <https://www.stjornarradid.is>

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

In addition to the establishment of the sustainable co-operation platform and council, the SDGs have also been taken into account in the Policy for Development Cooperation, a new education and innovation policy, and the Climate Action Plan. The latter is guided by the SDG framework and the Paris Agreement and came into effect in April 2019. It affirms that public institutions and state-owned companies should be forerunners in implementing and monitoring climate and emission targets. Other key activities include the publication of an individual environmental policy with indicators and targets for each SDG, jointly authored by 68 of 199 governmental agencies and state-owned companies, in June 2022. In November, 174 governmental agencies participated in the [Green Steps Program](#), an SDGs inspired initiative overseen by the

Environment Agency of Iceland. Participation in the programme requires certain sustainability initiatives, including Green Accounting.

Regional and local level implementation

Collaboration between local regional authorities and municipalities has been an important element for SDG localisation in Iceland. The Icelandic Association of Local Authorities, [Samband](#), has played a key role in co-ordinating this work and has been directly involved in the national sustainability efforts from the beginning. Samband also participates actively in Agenda 2030 implementation co-ordination with its Nordic counterparts. SDG co-operation between the government and Icelandic municipalities now falls directly under the auspices of Sustainable Iceland.

Samband continues to support other Agenda 2030 efforts, and in its newly adopted strategy for the current election period 2022-2026, it states that the SDGs will be a 'guiding light' in the implementation of Samband's policy during the current electoral period, as well as contributing to Agenda 2030's strategic localisation work across Icelandic municipalities. Samband goes on to say that it is committed to supporting the municipalities in their SDG work and will continue to co-operate with the Prime Minister's Office on an SDG toolbox and the development of relevant indicators. It has also emphasised the importance of strengthening advocacy and awareness of the SDGs across municipalities, as well as actively communicating information and advice on Agenda 2030 implementation.^[26]

Following OECD recommendations, a special [SDG co-operation committee](#) was established in January 2021 involving the government and Samband to strengthen support for local authorities, as well as promoting closer co-ordination and support from national level to the local level. The committee was led by the chair of the SDG inter-ministerial working group and joined by the Ministry of Local Government and the Statistical Bureau of Iceland. Through the committee, Samband received a grant from the Municipal Equalisation Fund to create an [SDG toolbox](#) for the municipalities. The aim of the project was to increase SDG uptake among municipalities and encourage co-operation and peer-to-peer learning at local level. Participating municipalities were divided into two groups based on progress toward SDG implementation. Samband was responsible for arranging meetings, events and seminars to target specific SDGs efforts, providing support and promoting knowledge sharing between municipalities. The SDG co-operation committee has also worked on developing indicators for the Icelandic municipalities.

In its SDG initiatives Samband has emphasised the importance of linking local policies and planning to the SDGs. The second biggest municipality in Iceland, [Kópavogur](#), has been at the forefront of these efforts (see Figure 6). It was the first Icelandic municipality to formally adopt the SDGs and was [one of the pilot areas in the OECD programme](#), 'A Territorial Approach to the

26. [Loftslagsmál og heimsmarkmið Sameinuðu þjóðanna - Samband íslenskra sveitarfélaga](#)

SDGs'.^[27] The municipality has constructed a [special SDG index of indicators](#), with 15 dimensions covering 36 priority targets to monitor the implementation progress. The municipality has also acquired an ISO 37120 certification for Sustainable Cities through the [World Council on City Data](#) (WCCD). Kópavogur is currently developing a Child Friendly City Index in co-operation with UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs.



Figure 6. Kópavogur's method of selecting prioritised SDGs and targets based on global and national priorities. Photo credit: <https://www.kopavogur.is/sdg#sustainable-development-goal-17-partnerships-for-the-goals>

In 2021, the capital city, Reykjavík, adopted the WCCD Standards ISO 37120, ISO 37122 and ISO 37123, and its strategic plan, the 2030 [Reykjavík Green Deal](#), is guided by the SDGs. The Green Deal is measured against the three ISO standards, each standard consisting of metrics and categories linked to the sub-goals of Agenda 2030. The [co-operation platform](#) for the implementation of the SDGs in the Reykjanes peninsula is another noteworthy Agenda 2030 project. It involves four municipalities joining forces with important industrial actors in the region, including Isavia, Iceland's ANSP and the operator of Keflavík international airport, the largest employer on the peninsula to work together on the SDGs and the circular economy.^[28]

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

The Icelandic Government recognises that implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires the combined efforts of many different stakeholders and is, therefore, working actively to include national and international stakeholders. The Prime Minister's Office has conducted five surveys on awareness of the SDGs in Iceland. The surveys report a clear increase in awareness in recent years, from 46.6% at the start of 2018 to 79.4% in 2020.

27. [A territorial approach to the Sustainable Development Goals in Kópavogur, Iceland | OECD Regional Development Working Papers | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

28. [Innleiðingu hringrásarhagkerfis hraðað á Suðurnesjum | Isavia](#)

To support and encourage this positive trend, in December 2022 the Sustainability Council's remit was broadened to include representatives from a wide range of [civil society organisations and NGOs](#), including the Icelandic Older People's Organisation, The National Queer Organisation of Iceland and The Icelandic Disability Alliance. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also established a [Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Fund](#) to encourage Icelandic businesses to support and promote value-creation in developing countries in line with the SDGs.

Prior to these initiatives, the government's working group had initiated a co-operation agreement with the national umbrella organisation for civil society representatives, Almannaheill and UNA Iceland in 2021.^[29] The aim of this agreement is to promote Agenda 2030 and the SDGs among the population at large. In 2022, the government's working group and Almannaheill signed another agreement to support NGOs and public organisations in Iceland to pursue the SDGs in their work.^[30] Member organisations currently implementing Agenda 2030 programmes include the Icelandic Scout Movement, which in 2021 published a booklet on 19 project ideas for scout troops, based on the SDGs, and the [Young Reporters for the Environment in Iceland](#) (YRE). The YRE includes the SDGs in their training programmes and clear SDGs links to all [communications material](#).

In 2021 the Icelandic State Broadcaster RÚV also produced [HM30 – a series of short video films produced about the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs](#). Each episode was dedicated to a particular goal, and aired on RÚV. The production was a co-operation between RÚV, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As part of the initiative, educational material and exercises for primary and secondary schools on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs were published and distributed to schools and libraries.^[31]

Iceland's [Youth Council for the SDGs](#), which is internationally recognised, is led by Iceland's Children's Ombudsman, and consists of 12 members from each Icelandic region. The Council holds several in person meetings per year, online meetings, and one joint meeting with the Cabinet at which it has the opportunity to present its priorities to the government.^[32] The government also works closely with other national youth organisations and has included a youth representative on the national delegation to the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Iceland's official [Agenda 2030 portal](#) has been active since 2019. The portal offers an opportunity for individuals, NGOs, companies, institutions, municipalities, and other stakeholders to present projects and ideas that will help promote the SDGs and serves as an open public forum. The portal features an [online dashboard](#) that shows the current status of each goal and target in Iceland.

29. [Samkomulag um kynningu á heimsmarkmiðunum – Almannaheill](#)

30. [Heimsmarkmiðin – Almannaheill](#)

31. [Heimsmarkmið Sameinuðu þjóðanna um sjálfbæra þróun | Félag Sameinuðu þjóðanna á Íslandi, Útgefið efni; Menntamálastofnun \(mms.is\)](#)

32. [Heimsmarkmið | Ungmennaráð \(heimsmarkmidin.is\)](#)

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

Statistics Iceland is responsible for collecting data and monitoring the country's SDG indicators. Based on an in-depth methodological study, data has been collected for Iceland's progress on the 169 of the 247 global indicators for sustainable development. [Statistics Iceland](#) is currently working on an additional three indicators while exploring data sources for the remaining 75. Statistics Iceland has a website that publishes updates on the status of the SDGs in Iceland.

[Iceland ranks](#) 22nd globally in the international SDG comparison. Iceland is on track to achieving five goals (including Goal 1, Goal 10, and Goal 16), but challenges remain for four goals, with significant or major challenges for nine. Iceland's index score for achieving the SDGs is 78.9/100 points, but the spillover effects of Iceland score^[33] 51.4/100 points, which suggests that its sustainability efforts are compromising progress elsewhere in the world.

33. Countries are ranked by their spillover score. Each country's actions can have positive or negative effects on other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs. The Spillover Index assesses such spillovers along three dimensions: environmental & social impacts embodied into trade, economy & finance, and security. A higher score means that a country causes more positive and fewer negative spillover effects. (Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings/spillovers>)



Photo: Samuel Han, Unsplash.com

Norway

Overview and targets

Norway's [second voluntary national review](#) (VNR) in 2021 describes the country's ongoing efforts towards sustainable development, including an assessment of the progress made between 2016 and 2021. There was considerable momentum leading up to the 2021 VNR, much of which was spurred by [an audit](#) completed in 2020 by the Office of the Auditor General of Norway that observed, among other things, that a National Action plan for Sustainability with national targets was not yet in place, but this has since been published.

Overall, in recent years, challenges for Norway have included, (but are not limited to), increasing socioeconomic inequality, a noticeable rise in incidences of gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a disproportionate rate of male students dropping out of higher education. As in many other industrialised countries, high levels of domestic consumption also generate spillover effects in other countries.

Norway has, parallel to national efforts, also prioritised playing an active role in follow-up work on the goals internationally. This is reflected in the government's development policy priorities, which are anchored in the 2030 agenda and complement longstanding foreign and development policy revolving around peace, security, human rights and gender equality. ^[34] Like the other Nordic countries, Norway seeks to provide financial and political support to a diverse civil society around the world, supporting strong and independent civil society organisations that capable of promoting democracy, safeguarding human rights and reducing poverty. Norway seeks to increase awareness of discriminatory

34. <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/217f38f99edf45c498befc04b7ef1f7e/en-gb/pdfs/stm201620170024000engpdfs.pdf>

practices, reduce inequalities and promote inclusion around the globe. This work has included co-chairing the Sustainable Development Goals Advocacy Group along with Ghana. In addition to the peer-review process with Denmark in the VNR, the Government of Indonesia also provided feedback and recommendations when Norway was drawing up its VNR.

Governance and multilevel coordination

Since 2020, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development has overseen the national co-ordination of the 2030 Agenda, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has overseen international efforts. The two ministries draw up the voluntary national review with input from the Office of the Prime Minister as well as the other ministries, government agencies and stakeholders. Like Denmark, the SDGs and related targets are allocated to different ministries, which are also responsible for selecting suitable indicators for progress reporting and co-ordination with relevant stakeholders.

According to involved officials, the 2021 VNR reporting process increased cross-sectoral co-operation and promoted a more holistic approach to sustainable development work in Norway. This is reflected in the dedicated chapter on local and regional level implementation which was written by Kommunesektorens organisasjon (KS), the Norwegian Association for Local and Regional Authorities, together with other local stakeholders.

The Government has a dedicated national Agenda 2030 webpage: <https://berekraft.regjeringen.no>. The webpage also includes a platform showcasing sustainability initiatives across the public, private and civil society sectors.

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

The Parliament approved Norway's first national action plan for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in 2021. The [action plan](#), called "*Mål med mening*" ("Goals with Meaning"), seeks to translate the global goals into a Norwegian context and provide possible supplementary national indicators that Norwegian businesses, organisations and public authorities can use as tools in their work with the SDGs. The Ministry of Finance reports that in 2023 Norway will introduce a national taxonomy for sustainable economic activities based on the framework outlined by the European Union.^[35] The EU taxonomy is a regulatory classification system that will support the financial markets' transition to a low-carbon, resilient and resource-efficient economy through sustainable activities and project investments.

The annual state budgets used to include coverage of policy coherence and allocation for sustainable development, but this practice ended in 2021. This work is now covered in the VNR report, in the Executive Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals, and in reports to the OECD.

35. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/okonomi-og-budsjett/finansmarkedene/taksonomien-for-barekraftig-okonomisk-aktivitet/id2924859/>

In 2022, measures introduced to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated structural issues already present before the pandemic. While the SDGs were not addressed specifically in the national recovery plan, the pandemic did accelerate several ongoing processes, such as the digitalisation of public services to reach as many people as possible across the country.

Regional and local level implementation

Local level implementation of Agenda 2030 has been gaining momentum in municipalities and regional authorities since 2016. More and more municipalities, county councils, organisations and private companies have begun to both implement and report their findings on the sustainability goals.

To gain greater insight into SDG localisation in the municipalities and larger regions, a partnership agreement between the national government and KS was established. In addition to the VNR chapter in 2021, regional and local level authorities submitted the country's first [voluntary sub-national review \(VSR\)](#) the same year. The experiences of cities that have been at the forefront of incorporating the SDGs into their local plans and strategies, reported in the VSR, indicate that there is a significant political commitment to providing leadership and momentum. Implementation at local level also demonstrates that knowledge-sharing and collaboration at different levels of government can also foster success. In Norway, [Asker municipality](#) has submitted a voluntary local review.

KS has offered wide-ranging support to its members regarding Agenda 2030 uptake and localisation actions both prior to, and following, the VNR and VSR reporting. Activities include establishing a national sustainability network among municipalities called [Bærekraftsnettverket](#). This network hosts several knowledge-sharing webinars and events each year. KS is also working with the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) on a sustainability pledge ("Bærekraftsløftet") to speed up progress on fulfilling the 2030 Agenda. In 2022, KS also published [an online SDG course for Norwegian municipalities](#).

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

In 2021, The Norwegian [Forum for Development and Environment](#) (ForUM) co-ordinated feedback on Norway's Agenda 2030 progress from their network of 50 civil society organisations working on development issues, the environment, peace and human rights. The civil society input to the VNR contributed to a better national policy discussion and to the High-Level Political Forum. The process demonstrated that the government can include a broad range of stakeholders in work on the SDGs.

An [Executive Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals](#) (Topplederforum for bærekraftsmålene) was set up and its first meeting held in June 2022. Drawing on experience from Finland and Germany, the country's first national multi-stakeholder forum for the 2030 Agenda aims to develop and co-ordinate the

national sustainability work along with business and industry, civil society, municipal authorities and academia, including UN Global Compact Norway and SDG Norway. The [first meeting](#) focused on the links between climate, nature and a competitive energy supply. Other areas include the labour market, competence, inclusion and responsible consumption.

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

Together with Statistics Norway, KS has developed a [taxonomy for the SDGs](#) (see Figure 7) in recent years which is intended to provide municipalities, regional authorities and other stakeholders with an accessible tool to monitor their individual 2030 Agenda implementation efforts. The taxonomy builds on existing indicators for measuring sustainability and has been catalogued according to a model created by Statistics Norway. The taxonomy is specifically tailored for local level, but it is also well suited as a starting point for other areas at larger geographical and governance levels.^[36]

Complementing the development of the quantitative monitoring framework, the Government has reported on the [SDGs](#) and on [national emissions](#) to Parliament through the budget process in 2022.

Norway [ranks fourth](#) globally in the Sustainable Development Report 2022. According to the global index, Norway is on track to achieving six goals (including Goal 1, No Poverty, Goal 5, Gender Equality, and Goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals), but challenges remain for five goals, with significant or major challenges for seven, notably SDGs 12, 13 and 15. Norway's index score for achievement of the SDGs is 82.3/100 points, but the negative spillover effects caused outside of Norway gives a spillover score^[37] at 61.7/100 points, which is better than Iceland but worse than the other Nordic countries.

36. https://www.ssb.no/en/natur-og-miljo/artikler-og-publikasjoner/_attachment/448340?_ts=1807042d9d8

37. Countries are ranked by their spillover score. Each country's actions can have positive or negative effects on other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs. The Spillover Index assesses such spillovers along three dimensions: environmental & social impacts embodied into trade, economy & finance, and security. A higher score means that a country causes more positive and fewer negative spillover effects. (Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings/spillovers>)

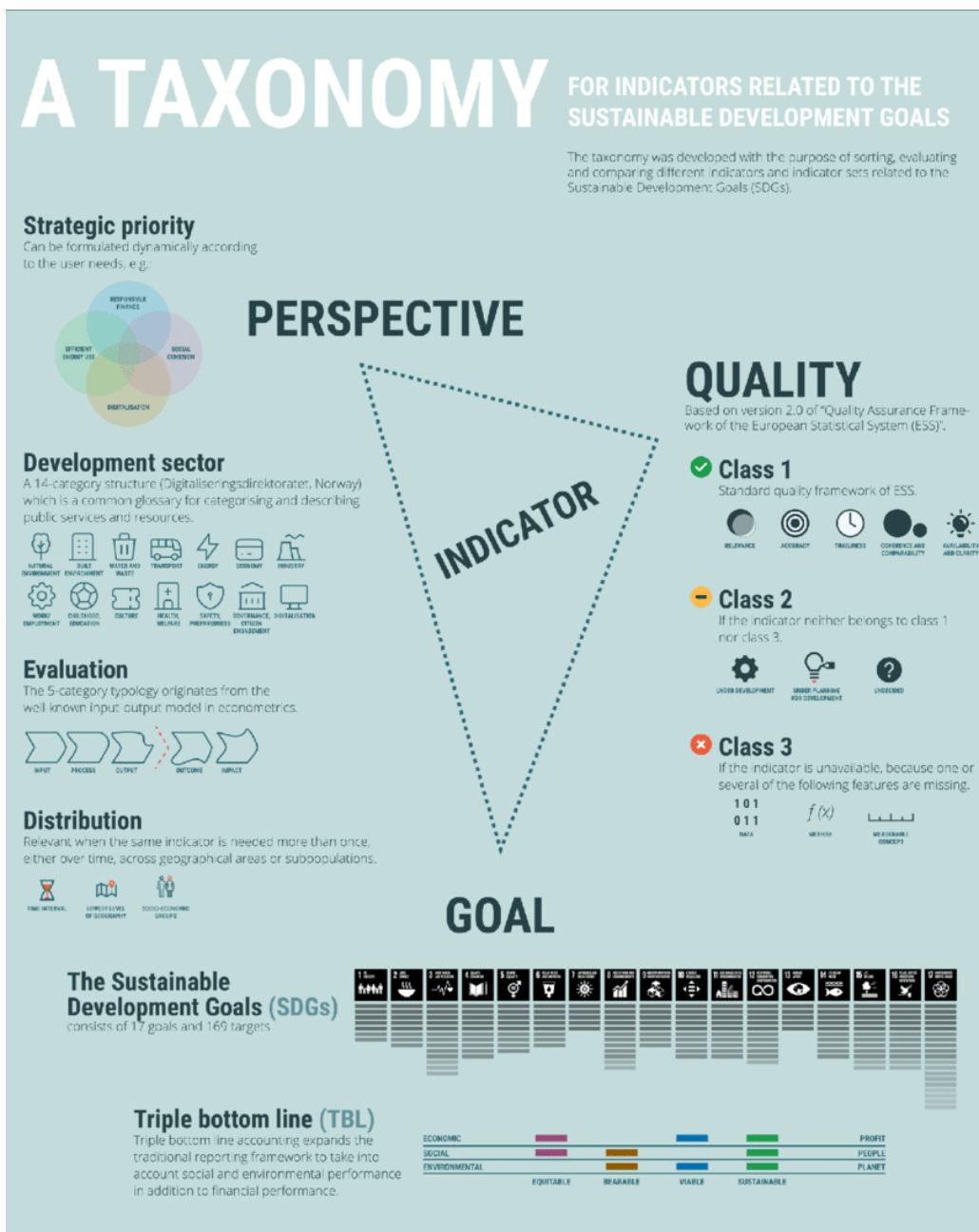


Figure 7. Taxonomy for the SDGs in Norway where the central properties and characteristics of an indicator or an indicator set have been identified to establish SDG relevance across three dimensions: goal, perspective, and quality.



Photo: Artūras Zelenkauskas

Sweden

Overview and targets

In 2020, the Swedish parliament (Riksdag) passed [a government bill](#) on Sweden's implementation of the 2030 Agenda that consolidates and clarifies Sweden's commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The overarching goal of the legislation is that: "Sweden will implement the 2030 Agenda to achieve economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development through coherent policy nationally and internationally. Implementation will be guided by the Agenda's 'leave no one behind' principle." The Swedish Parliament also committed the government to following up on the goal by submitting a written report to the Parliament on Agenda 2030 efforts and results every two years. The [first report](#) was presented to Parliament in May 2022.

The country's [voluntary national review](#) (VNR), submitted in 2021, reflects on the progress made in toward the SDGs since 2017. In this second VNR, a chapter covering how the SDGs are incorporated into national frameworks has been added. Among some of the challenges addressed were increasing economic and social inequalities, the vulnerability of young people, who have been exposed to increasing mental health challenges in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the tasks faced in improving sustainable consumption and production and the transition to a circular economy. The VNR also focused on the [financial instruments available to act on the goals](#), both nationally and internationally. With regards to the latter, Sweden is committed to allocating 1% of the country's gross domestic product to [official development assistance](#) (ODA) to meet Agenda 2030 objectives. Sweden will continue to focus on global health, as well as its commitment to democracy, the rule of law and equality, including gender equality, all of which are part of national and global sustainability efforts, and remain a core element of Swedish policies.

Governance and multilevel coordination

The responsibility for SDG co-ordination and implementation is shared between the ministries and builds on a “whole-of government” approach. The government bears the main responsibility for implementation, but all ministries are also tasked with co-ordinating the SDGs within their respective remits. Under the previous government, the Ministry for the Environment was responsible for co-ordinating national implementation, while the Ministry for Foreign Affairs oversaw international implementation.

As the national responsibility for the 2030 Agenda implementation is shared across ministries, the government has appointed a task force of state secretaries who meet regularly to exchange information and views on how efforts to attain the SDGs are progressing in the different ministries. In addition, each ministry has one or two civil servants who co-ordinate the work within it. The respective ministerial representatives meet once a month to discuss relevant issues concerning the 2030 Agenda at a national, Nordic, EU, and international level. Important briefings and presentations of relevant reports are provided. The overall work of the government on the 2030 Agenda is co-ordinated by two ministries: At a national level by the Ministry of the Environment while international co-ordination is managed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[A national co-ordinator](#) has been appointed in Sweden with a mandate that runs from 2020–2024. Their key role is to support the government in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Sweden by initiating, promoting, strengthening other actors’ efforts. The national co-ordinator invites representatives from different areas to work together with different objectives linked to the SDGs. The [five priority areas](#): leadership for social transformation; sustainable economic development; transformation at local and regional levels; data for sustainable development; and sustainable consumption and production.

Government agencies have an important role to play in achieving the SDGs. Along with the municipalities and regions, they are responsible for implementation of the agenda. Several knowledge sharing forums have been established to enhance SDG work; these include the [DG Forum](#) which consists of 90 Swedish government agencies with a joint pledge seeking to make the 2030 Agenda a central plank of public administration.

Sweden’s [National Strategy for Climate Adaptation](#) from 2018 also underpins the country’s sustainability efforts, seeking to mitigate and adapt to climate change, halt the loss of biodiversity and restore ecosystems.^[38] Through it, the government has also appealed for further co-ordination and policy coordination in meeting targets while seeking to avoid conflicting goals. An Environmental Objectives Council has thus been set up by the government, which acts as a platform for action and work at all levels of society to achieve Sweden’s environmental objectives.

38. In 1999, the Swedish Parliament adopted an environmental goal system with the objective of attaining the environmental quality goals it laid out within a generation.

High priority is also placed on social sustainability, including gender mainstreaming and public health policies. Also in place are support structures for public health at central government level, a Council for Sustainable Cities, one for Youth, one for Inter-agency collaboration in international development, and one for joint work by county administrative boards.

A new government came to power in October 2022 and may introduce policies that affect the current Agenda 2030 systems.^[39]

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

During the spring of 2023, [Sweden will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#) (also known as the Council of Ministers), a period in which the European Commission is in the process of drafting a joint European Voluntary Review for the UN's High-Level Political Forum 2023. One of the [key policy areas](#) during Sweden's EU Presidency will be speeding up climate transition in line with sustainability and green targets.

The 2030 Agenda is reviewed annually in the national budget. Although it is an element of the budget it does not have budget lines, since the starting point for implementation is that it should be incorporated into ordinary policy processes.

News regarding the national Agenda 2030 co-ordinator activities is occasionally updated on the website www.agenda2030samordnaren.se.

Regional and local level implementation

Municipalities and regions play an important role in localising the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Sweden submitted a [voluntary sub-national review](#) (VSR) in 2021, which was written by SKR, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions. In addition, the cities of [Helsingborg](#), [Malmö](#), [Stockholm](#) and [Uppsala](#) also carried out voluntary local reviews that were presented at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2021.

At a regional level, county administrative boards have worked together on the 2030 Agenda since 2017. They play an important role in implementing the national objectives through partnerships with the municipalities. They also encourage knowledge sharing within and between counties and are represented in the DG forum.

At the local level, the peer-to-peer network called [Glokala Sverige](#) has hosted workshops for municipal and regional administrations and politicians to learn more about SDG localisation, including the "Mötesplats Agenda 2030" conference. Until spring 2023, the network has been co-ordinated by the Swedish UN Association together with SKR and ICLD (International Centre for Local Democracy) with the support of Sida, the Swedish Development Agency. Over [200 municipal and regional members](#) are active in the network, 70% of whom

39. See e.g., *Utfrågning av riksdagspartierna: Sveriges utvecklingspolitik efter valet* <https://www.youtube.com/...>

use the SDGs as tools in local development work.

The Swedish Agency for Public Management (Statskontoret) monitors progress at a local, regional, and national levels. Their [report from 2020](#) underscored that although a clear majority of municipalities and regions apply the 2030 Agenda in their sustainability work a wide variation in the level of ambition exists. The risk of exacerbating differences between resource-rich and resource-poor municipalities and regions is, therefore, evident.

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

Multiple actors in Sweden are involved in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Civil society is paving the way through its own efforts and by encouraging action from decision makers. Since 2018, [Concord](#), on behalf of Swedish CSOs, has conducted the '[Barometer-reports](#)' assessing the government's work on Agenda 2030 and the extent to which these efforts contribute to sustainable global development. The 2021 review, conducted by 19 organisations, points out that some of the global outlooks are limiting and that assessing government progress is challenging. Civil society would like to see a strengthened cross-party parliamentary forum on the 2030 Agenda, to ensure that Swedish policy is coherent and founded on the rights perspective, and that the perspective of poor people on development is also included.

The private sector is also responsible for introducing several innovative 2030 SDG features into its business models, while trade unions continue to push for social dialogue and decent working conditions. The research community contributes its findings and innovation on sustainable development; examples include the [SDG Synergies tool](#) developed by the Stockholm Environment Institute, which can be used to understand how groups of policy areas and targets interact, using systems thinking to support governments in implementing the SDGs.

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

In addition to the annual reviews of the Parliament's targets for Agenda 2030 in the Budget, and the government's biannual report to the Parliament, Statistics Sweden is the government agency responsible for the statistical monitoring and co-ordination of the SDG indicators targets.^[40] An updated list of [national indicators in 2022](#) is available. The country also has the [Kolada database](#) in which all municipalities can retrieve key indicators and data for analyses of sustainability progress.^[41] The key figures in Kolada are based on national statistics from Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB), but data is also drawn from other sources. Kolada is owned by the non-profit association Council for the Promotion of Municipal Analyses (RKA) in partnership with the government and SKR. For local and regional authorities Kolada enables self-assessment and open comparison of SDG progress across all municipalities.

40. <https://www.scb.se/en/About-us/main-activity/statistics-swedens-work-on-the-sdgs-and-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>

41. See the report from 2020, "Öppna jämförelser Agenda 2030," <https://www.scb.se/contentassets/...>

Internationally, Sweden ranks in the top tier of many comparison tables of Agenda 2030 implementation. However, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have hampered progress and exacerbated existing challenges. The country ranked third in the Sustainable Development Report in 2022 but also contributes to considerable negative spillover effects in other countries with a score^[42] of 65.7/100. This is better than Iceland and Norway but worse than Finland and Denmark.

42. Countries are ranked by their spillover score. Each country's actions can have positive or negative effects on other countries' abilities to achieve the SDGs. The Spillover Index assesses such spillovers along three dimensions: environmental & social impacts embodied into trade, economy & finance, and security. A higher score means that a country causes more positive and fewer negative spillover effects. (Source: <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/rankings/spillovers>)



Photo: Ozan Öztaskiran, Unsplash.com

Åland

Overview and targets

Åland has a long tradition of approaching sustainable development in a national context, efforts that in 2016 resulted in the establishment of the "Everyone Can Flourish Vision" with its seven strategic goals and the multi-stakeholder network [bärkraft.ax](https://barkraft.ax). The Åland goals seek, of course, to contribute to the implementation of the SDGs and Åland's broader Development and Sustainability Agenda.^[43] The work has earned the government international recognition. As a measure of Åland's development and sustainability strategy, Åland, as the only Nordic actor, was awarded the EU Prize for Sustainable Development in 2019 in the category "Public bodies with less than 100,000 inhabitants".

Åland aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and achieve climate neutrality by 2035 but has consistently paid close attention to the importance of social sustainability. The autonomous region's sustainability goals are guided by the vision of "blomstrande människor" (flourishing people), where everyone can thrive in a viable society, while ensuring everyone's well-being. [Annual reports on the vision's progress](#) have been published for the past five years. To extend its commitment to inclusion and leaving no one behind, the Åland vision is also available as an audio version on the [bärkraft.ax](https://barkraft.ax) webpage.

Governance and multilevel coordination

Åland's development and sustainability agenda, including its seven strategic goals, is implemented in the form of a 'social contract' that all sectors on Åland

43. Bärkraft (2016) Development and sustainability agenda for Åland. The vision and the seven strategic development goals. Available at: <https://www.barkraft.ax/sites/default/files/attachments/page/media/development-and-sustainability-agenda-for-aland-2017-03-01.pdf>

have collectively drawn up and support. The parliament has overall responsibility for the development and sustainability agenda, while the government is responsible for its implementation.

As of 2022, the Development and Sustainability Council (Utvecklings- och hållbarhetsråd), established in 2016, is appointed by the government, except for representatives from civil society and municipalities, who are chosen by their respective network groups within the sustainability network, and the Ministry for Culture (kulturdelegationen) which appoints one representative. Permanent members of the council include the Head of Government together with the Deputy Head of Government and the Head of Administration and Development. The Council consist of leaders from all sectors and always has 9–14 members. A Secretary General is appointed and is expected to work directly with the implementation of the Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland, meaning the realisation of the vision and the seven strategic development goals.

The rest of the network is an independent forum of other stakeholders, called Medaktörerna, which works in parallel with the council. These 'co-actors' represent all organisations and individuals on Åland that wish to participate in the work.

National implementation of the 2030 Agenda

Every year since 2016, Åland has published status reports on sustainable development. [The report for 2022](#) highlights Åland's work to protect the environment, recognising for instance that the level of fertilisers use has not fallen by any significant degree in recent years and is impacting the agricultural sector. At the same time, Åland wishes to attract more people to come and live and work on the islands, so a balance between existing ecosystems and biological diversity must be struck. A step in this direction was the commissioning of the wind farm in Långnabba, Eckerö in the spring of 2022, increasing Åland's renewable energy capacity from approx. 20% to approx. 65%.

There are additional [action programmes called 'färdplaner'](#) which are updated annually in order to achieve the seven strategic development goals and progress on these can be viewed online. In 2022, specific initiatives focused, for instance, on identifying five new land cap species (part of Åland's 4th strategic goal) and efforts to enhance sustainable business travel (part of the 7th goal - Sustainable consumption and production). In addition to these measures work is being done all fo the time on a small and large scale by organisations and private individuals.

In September 2022, the Working Group for Co-ordination and Reporting (arbetsgruppen för koordinering och rapportering), which consists of the individuals responsible for implementing the goals (målansvariga) in the Development and Sustainability Council, presented a proposal to the government to strengthen its sustainability efforts and ambitions for green transition with [resources from the EU](#). Pointing to examples from Finland and Sweden, which have initiated significant programmes on the circular economy as well as

research and innovation, Åland has the potential to further target its work. The proposal was backed by stakeholders from the public, private and civil society sectors as well as the sustainability network.

The bärkraft.ax network also actively works with stakeholder engagement internationally, aiming to share knowledge about the approaches to sustainability work that has been successfully implemented. In related endeavours, Åland presented its sustainability model to the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development led by the Prime Minister's Office and shared reflections on Åland's experiences and input to the implementation of Finland's new national action plan on sustainability (2022-2030).^[44] Åland also spoke at the Stockholm+50 conference in June 2022.

Regional and local level implementation

Åland has a population of 30,000 in 16 municipalities. Åland recognises that the municipal sector is essential to the realisation of its development and sustainability agenda, which is to become a sustainable society by 2051 and for the seven strategic goals to be realised by 2030.

As part of bärkraft.ax, Åland has a network for sustainable municipalities. The group's main purpose is to promote, strengthen and unite the municipalities in local sustainability efforts contributing to the 2030 Agenda. This includes exchanging experiences and ideas, emphasising what the municipalities can learn from each other, finding common synergies and working towards the goals together efficiently and using resources effectively. The group is led by two chairpersons from different municipalities and meets twice a year. The chair rotates once a year.

Engagement of civil society and stakeholders

The bärkraft.ax network remains the main co-ordinator of all Agenda 2030 activities and broader sustainability work engaging the public sector, the business community, associations, and the educational sector. The members also work in smaller network groups focusing on specific sectors (private, civil society) with their own initiatives.

The network's extensive information portal includes an activity calendar for different seminars and events for information sharing, and a media library with downloadable educational and information material. There are also regularly updated roadmaps outlining initiatives taken and to be taken by members of the network to implement the Åland agenda. Refer to the section on implementation for an overview of the network's recent activities and outreach.

Follow-up mechanisms, reporting, and international comparisons

Åland is not included as a separate country in the Sustainable Development Report Index or other large international comparisons. Nevertheless, in order to

44. <https://www.barkraft.ax/nyheter/aland-delar-sina-erfarenheter-finlands-kommission-hallbar-utveckling>

achieve the seven strategic development goals by 2030, 42 sub-goals and 24 [key performance indicators](#) have been identified and show the most important measures that the Åland community needs to adopt alongside the 'färdplaner' roadmaps.

The strategic development goals were outlined by analysis groups based on proposals submitted by a panel consisting of 59 experts. Following the same time horizon towards 2030, Åland's progress is [regularly measured](#) using 24 indicators. The working group for co-ordination and reporting (a unit within the bärkraft-network) is responsible for following up the work on the goals and reporting on progress toward Åland's targets, and the data is included in the status reports (published since 2016 by the Development and Sustainability Council), [most recently in 2022](#). The description of each goal and selected targets and indicators can be found at <https://www.barkraft.ax/mal-2030/mal-1>. The overview also includes the actions individuals can take in their daily lives to contribute to the goal.

The bärkraft.ax network has also recently carried out an awareness and attitude survey linked to the sustainability agenda and Åland's "flourishing people" vision. The survey shows that 76% of the population is aware of the development and sustainability agenda and the vision, that this is associated with mostly positive and rational attributes, and that 69% of the population would like to live more sustainably. In parallel, Åland's statistics bureau, ASUB, is currently [collating data about the "flourishing people" vision](#) for the first time based on a method of quantification devised at Harvard University. This method includes six areas that measure the individual's opportunities and the resources needed to flourish, which are: Satisfaction with life, mental and physical health; meaningfulness; character traits; social relations; and financial security.

Conclusions

The processes and structures for SDG implementation show that the Nordic countries each have their respective strengths and challenges. The ways in which national priorities and strategic plans have been put in place and how progress is monitored vary, as does the interaction between government, parliament, and societal actors. What is increasingly noticeable is the effort to improve stakeholder engagement, and there is an increasing data collection consistency on part of the national statistics agencies that have been given responsibility for following up on national SDG indicators. This work is also reflected in the voluntary national reviews, which make the reporting even more comprehensive in scope. Table 1 shows an overview of the types of reporting in each country at the different levels of governance.

	Denmark	Norway	Finland	Sweden	Iceland
Voluntary National Review	2016, 2021	2016, 2021	2016, 2020	2018, 2021	2019, 2023
Voluntary Sub-national Review		2021		2021	
Voluntary Local Review	Gladsaxe, 2021	Asker, 2021 Viken County, 2021	Helsinki, 2019; 2021 Vantaa, 2020 Espoo, 2020 Turku, 2020	Malmö, 2021 Stockholm, 2021 Helsingborg, 2021 Uppsala, 2021	

Table 1. Overview of the Nordic countries national and local level reporting to the UN High-Level Political Forum as of 2022.

Nordic regional and local leadership remain key

Considering that two thirds of the SDG targets can only be reached by involving local and regional actors, the efforts of these actors have increasingly been pushed up the Nordic sustainability agenda but need to be further encouraged. Here, the co-ordinating role played by the Nordic local and regional associations (LRAs) is a significant factor in enhancing and sustaining capacity for Agenda 2030 localisation. Through knowledge sharing events and activities within and across the Nordic countries, regional and local level participation continues to demonstrate best-practice cases and know-how. In short, Nordic cities and municipalities are increasingly integrating the SDGs into their strategies and planning tools across sectors. Innovative practices are being developed and tested to engage citizens, civil society, and businesses in reaching the goals, which in turn contributes to implementation at national and global levels.

Inclusion and broad engagement will be important

Nordic co-operation places emphasis on youth involvement across all dimensions and programmes, including instigating constructive dialogues with civil society, the business community, trade unions and scientists about SDG implementation. This is, in principle, to ensure that young people are entrusted with more responsibility in decision-making processes that concern them. Ultimately, it will be the coming generation that will have to deal with the sustainability problems of the future and bear the brunt of any shortcomings that may occur now. The people of the Nordic Region and Europe are making considerable demands for a closer focus on the SDGs. The Nordic countries are certainly well on their way in this regard, this is reflected in the [Leave No One Behind \(LNOB\) Index](#), which tracks inequalities in the areas of poverty, services, gender, and income where a higher score reflects that fewer population groups are being left behind. Still, all the Nordic countries face obstacles when it comes to fully integrating young people into decision-making on sustainability issues. Another remaining challenge is the widening income gaps.

The SDGs remain the future the Nordic Region wants

Sustainable development has long been a top priority for Nordic co-operation. The Nordic prime ministers have set out a vision of the region becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. They have urged the countries to work together more ambitiously and faster than ever.

"It always seems impossible until it's done."

Nelson Mandela

This places considerable expectations on the Nordic Region, but if it is not accomplished, what would that say about the challenges ahead beyond 2030? With this overview, where, how and why should the Nordic countries step up its efforts, and what will it take in the years that are left? As SDG action needs to accelerate, bridging research and policy will increasingly be important to prepare for a post-2030 Agenda. Meanwhile, let's keep in mind the quote by Nelson Mandela that Sweden included in its 2021 VNR, "It always seems impossible until it's done".

About this publication

The Nordic Region and the 2030 Agenda:

Governance and engagement (2021-2022)

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Nordregio report 2023:4

ISBN: 978-91-8001-042-9 (online)

ISBN: 978-91-8001-043-6 (PDF)

ISSN: 1403-2503

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.6027/R2023:4.1403-2503>

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This publication was produced by Nordregio and funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Expert Group for Sustainable Development. Nordregio has since 2018 focused on Nordic efforts to localise Agenda 2030, to foster dialogue and strengthen knowledge exchange among municipal and regional representatives, research institutions, and civil society networks working with the SDGs. The content however does not necessarily reflect the Nordic Council of Ministers' or Nordregio's views, opinions, attitudes or recommendations.

Acknowledgements are due to members of the Nordic Expert Group on Sustainable Development and colleagues from the Nordic Associations of Regional and Local Authorities (Faroe Islands, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Åland) who provided key inputs and up to date information on the fast-evolving nature of national and local level SDG activities. The information in this report has additionally been gathered through desk studies, workshops, and conversations of informal character with the aforementioned representatives.

Nordic co-operation and the Nordic Expert Group on Sustainable Development

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland. The Nordic Expert Group for Sustainable Development supports the Nordic Committee for Co-operation and the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation in the implementation and follow-up of Our Vision 2030 and cross-sectoral efforts relating to sustainable development in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The expert group consists of members representing the ministries and youth organisations in the Nordic countries, with close ties to national efforts relating to sustainable development and Agenda 2030.



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