

Åland Voluntary Review 2024

Everyone Can Flourish

on the **Islands of Peace**



Contents

Chapter 1: Opening statement	3
Chapter 2: Highlights	7
Chapter 3: Åland at a glance	8
Chapter 4: ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ and experiences from implementation	11
<i>Everyone Can Flourish</i>	12
<i>Experiences from implementation</i>	16
<i>Comments from government and academia</i>	20
Chapter 5: Åland Vision, Strategic Development Goals and Timeline	23
Chapter 6: Policy and enabling environment	27
<i>Common and mutual ownership</i>	28
<i>Institutional mechanisms</i>	30
<i>Incorporation of the vision and strategic development goals in government and municipal frameworks</i>	32
<i>Leaving no-one behind</i>	34
<i>Structural issues</i>	38
<i>Engagement in Finland and international cooperation</i>	40
Chapter 7: Progress on strategic development goals	43
<i>Civil society recommendations</i>	60
Chapter 8: Acknowledgements	63
Chapter 9: References	65



Chapter 1

Opening statement

Åland, a vibrant island society of just over 30,000 inhabitants, stands as an autonomous region with its own parliament, legislation, and flag. Nestled in the heart of the Baltic Sea, between Finland and Sweden, our archipelago has a unique cultural and geographical identity.

Upon first glance, the prevailing conditions on Åland appears favourable in many respects. With an average life expectancy of 83.5 years and remarkably high levels of trust between its people, Åland welcomes more newcomers than emigrants depart. The quality of education and health care is widely acknowledged, reflecting a collective commitment to well-being. There is widespread recognition that humans are part of nature, with 90 % believing it is our responsibility to protect biodiversity. Approximately 65 % of our electricity consumption is locally sourced from renewable energy.

However, deeper scrutiny uncovers shortcomings and deficiencies. Violence, particularly in close relationships, remains prevalent, while discrimination, corruption, and gender inequality persist. Eutrophication threatens our waters, while our per capita greenhouse gas emissions remain high. In addition, our consumption patterns contribute to significant spillover effects beyond Åland's borders.

In a sense, Åland is not an island. We are interconnected with the rest of the world and profoundly affected by the multitude of crises we currently face — peace, democracy, a liveable climate, and economic equality are today far from self-evident.

Recognising that we were entering a period of uncertainty, Åland embarked on a journey in the early 2010s to make a long-term transition towards a fully sustainable society, a commitment unanimously affirmed by the Parliament in 2014. As a result, in 2016 the Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland was drawn up by the people living and working on Åland. In this context, the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea was born:

'Everyone Can Flourish' embodies an ethos of ethical living in everyday life. It also represents an aspirational common future worth striving for, a 'Flourishing Age' in which no one is left behind and humanity has achieved peace within ourselves, with each other, and with rest of nature.

Eight years since its inception, the idea has taken root and is being implemented throughout society, albeit with varying degrees of success. With humility, we endeavour to take small steps that alter ourselves and our daily choices, while making collective and structural societal changes.

This implementation aligns with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, at the halfway mark to 2030 the SDGs are far off track and the Global Sustainable Development Report 2023 calls for transformative interventions, a role that the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea is poised to fulfil.

We hope that this Åland Voluntary Review 2024 will serve as a source of inspiration for deeper reflection and collective action, as we stand ready to collaborate with those who share our vision to advance humanity.

Katrin Sjögren

Head of Government

Annika Hambrudd

Deputy Head of Government

Micke Larsson

Secretary General Development and Sustainability Council





Chapter 2

Highlights

Åland, as an autonomous region within Finland, has proactively undertaken its sustainability efforts through the Development and Sustainability Agenda for Åland. The agenda serves not only as Åland's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda, but also embodies its vision of 'Everyone Can Flourish' along with seven strategic development goals. This approach has garnered interest beyond Åland, underscoring the broader significance of its sustainability initiatives.

The philosophy underpinning the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea is described in Chapter 4, followed by an exploration of Åland's experiences in implementing it. Additionally, some of the Åland collaborative partners offer insights into these working methods.

Chapter 5 and 6 delve deeper into Åland's sustainability endeavours since 2016, focusing on the involved actors, policies, institutions, and networks. It examines how Åland has institutionalised the implementation and offers critical reflections on its adherence to the 'Leaving no one behind'-motto while addressing structural challenges. Recognising that sustainability is a collective effort, Åland's national and international cooperation initiatives are also outlined here.

In Chapter 7, the Åland Progress on the SDGs is detailed through the lens of the seven strategic development goals, each contributing to one or more SDGs. Dedicated indicators are provided to depict the current state of progress. To enrich understanding, recommendations from Åland's civil society towards achieving these goals are incorporated.

Furthermore, Statistics and Research Åland has compiled data on the indicators for the 17 global SDGs where Åland's data is available, adhering to UN methodology. This data is accessible at www.asub.ax.

Chapter 3

Åland at a glance

The Åland Islands, or 'Åland', comprise an autonomous, demilitarised and neutralised region of Finland, situated at the entrance of the Gulf of Bothnia in the Baltic Sea. Within this extensive archipelago of over 6,700 islands and 20,000 skerries, only a limited number – approximately 60-80 isles – are inhabited. The largest among them is delineated by the Sea of Åland to its west, while smaller islands integrate gradually with Finland's archipelago to the east.

Throughout its history, Ålanders have maintained a strong bond with both the land and sea. This connection is evident not only in its vital maritime shipping industry but also in a diverse range of economic activities reflecting the region's entrepreneurial spirit. Åland's total population of approximately 30,000 inhabitants is mainly concentrated in its only town and capital, Mariehamn, which also hosts a University of Applied Sciences. The remaining population is spread over ten rural municipalities and five archipelago municipalities, the smallest of which has only 111 inhabitants. Åland is home to 350 active farms (2022), which produce a variety of agricultural goods such as milk, apples, grains and vegetables.

Åland's natural beauty is characterised by striking contrasts, encompassing lush forests, deciduous meadows, and fertile pastures alongside the stark beauty of the barren islands scattered across the outer archipelago. Despite its picturesque scenery, Åland faces unique challenges due to its limited land area. This constraint affects the region's biodiversity, as a remarkable array of plant and animal species, including rare varieties of mosses, sedges, grasses and orchids are unique to Åland and significantly enrich Finland's biodiversity, making the preservation of this vulnerable and natural heritage a global priority.

Åland stands as a unilingual Swedish-speaking region within Finland, a country otherwise constitutionally bilingual. Renowned as the 'Islands of Peace', Åland holds a special status as an autonomous, demilitarised and neutralised area, a distinction safeguarded by both national and international laws. The 'Åland Example' comprised of autonomy, demilitarisation/neutralisation, and minority protection, serves as an inspiration in international conflict management.

Autonomous, demilitarised and neutralised

6,757

islands

60

inhabited
islands

30,547

population

38 %

population born
outside of Åland

74

flourish
index

83.4

average life
expectancy

7.7 m/s

average
wind speed

88 %

of area
is water





Chapter 4

‘Everyone Can Flourish’ and experiences from implementation

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea and outlines Åland’s experiences from eight years of implementing the concept. Insights from government and academia in Finland, Iceland, and Sweden are also shared.

The subsequent chapters (5 and 6) introduce Åland’s vision, ‘Everyone Can Flourish in a Sustainable Society on the Islands of Peace,’ along with its seven strategic development goals, policies, and the enabling environment.

Everyone Can Flourish

'Everyone can flourish' embodies a way of ethical living in everyday life.

It also represents an aspirational vision of a shared future worth striving for. It envisages a 'Flourishing Age' where humanity has achieved peace within ourselves, with each other, and with rest of nature.

In this era, consensus, courageous dialogue, generosity and economic equality prevail, supplanting division and polarisation. Democracy experiences a renaissance, and we inhabit a world devoid of fossil fuels, weapons, and abuse.



The essence of the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea lies in three words: everyone can flourish. These words represent three intertwined elements that collectively form a cohesive whole. **'Everyone'** serves as the starting point.

The term 'everyone' is deliberately chosen over 'we'. This decision stems from the idea's inclusivity, encompassing all humans and other living beings, both present and future. 'Everyone' acknowledges our interconnectedness and interdependence, grounded in the recognition of 'I, thanks to others'.

A flourishing individual experiences freedom, yet this freedom entails responsibility. Flourishing must not come at the expense of others, whether near or far. Each of us is called upon to both contribute to and benefit from a nurturing social climate. We foster an environment that celebrates diversity and encourages innovation among those we meet in our daily lives, while respecting the wisdom and heritage of past generations.

'Everyone' lays the foundation for inclusive participation in society. It ignites a rejuvenation of democracy as a mode of governance, promoting engagement through various channels beyond election days. In this vision, no one is left behind, as everyone is actively involved.

The collective flourishing of everyone is essential for individual development and growth, leading us to the second element of the idea: **'can'**:

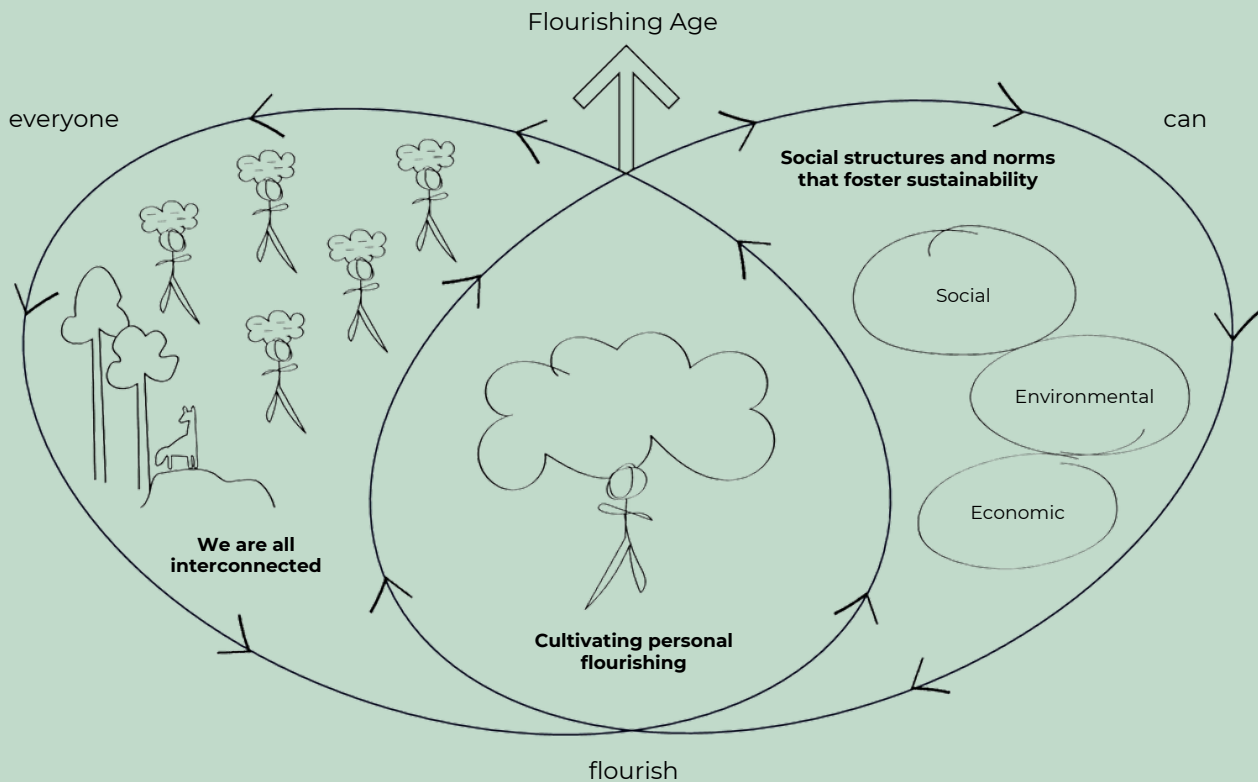
The term 'can' signifies society's responsibility to cultivate conducive conditions and intentionally create structures and a social milieu that supports persons in achieving a flourishing state. 'May' or 'shall' are avoided in favour of 'can', emphasising individual agency while highlighting the ongoing effort required to attain and sustain flourishing. It is neither a permanent state nor a bestowed gift; rather, it is an opportunity afforded to each individual, coupled with significant personal responsibility.

An environmentally and socially sustainable society forms the foundation for the flourishing humans and other living beings. Such a society fosters the conditions necessary for individuals to reach their full potential and thrive. It ensures that individuals feel acknowledged, embraced, and encouraged to develop and express their ideas and talents, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose.

In this context, it is imperative to begin with a scientific comprehension of the concept of sustainable development. One example is the four sustainability principles established by an interdisciplinary research panel in the 1990s (Broman & Rob  rt, 2015). These principles describe the characteristics of a sustainable society:

In the sustainable society, nature is not subjected to systematic...

- 1 ...accumulation of substances from the Earth's crust (e.g. fossil fuels and metals).
- 2 ...escalation in the concentration of substances originating from society's production (e.g. chemicals containing persistent substances and natural substances utilised in quantities exceeding nature's capacity).
- 3 ...degradation by physical means (e.g. over-exploitation of water, forests, fish or farmland, encroachment on vital natural areas, production resulting in waste instead of closed loops).



Additionally in a sustainable society, we strive to eliminate...

4 ...structural barriers to health, influence, skills development, impartiality, and the creation of meaning for individuals.

This scientific comprehension of sustainable development implies that economic activities are subordinate to social and environmental considerations. Individuals and organisations within a sustainable society adapt within the framework of these sustainability principles.

In essence, it entails satisfying our needs without imposing costs on others or other living beings. Such a society exemplifies adaptability and resilience, even in the face of unforeseen events and external upheavals.

The term 'can' means that individuals and societies prioritise living beings and warm, nurturing relationships over consumption, without compromising essential material conditions for a dignified life, while fully respecting the boundaries of nature and the planet.

Economic insecurity, as outlined in the fourth sustainability principle above has been identified as one such structural barrier. Economic security denotes the capacity to maintain a flourishing state over time, therefore, a sustainable society ensures that no person has to grapple with concerns about affording food and shelter.

At the heart of the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea lies the notion of **'flourishing'**:

We, as humans, complex and vulnerable as we are, have the capacity to pursue a state of flourishing. It is a state where we find grounding in ourselves, exhibiting tolerance, openness, and generosity towards others, while also asserting ourselves when necessary. In this state of flourishing, we possess the resilience to uphold our values, contemplate our role in the greater scheme of things and to make deliberate choices, both minor and monumental, even amidst trials, conflicts, and crises.



Historically, conceptions of human flourishing have often transcended mere happiness, aiming for a more enduring sense of well-being. In contemporary research, flourishing is characterised by the realisation of one's full potential, vitality, and adept functioning in personal and social spheres.

What capabilities facilitate individuals in achieving and sustaining a flourishing state? What resources are available?

Contentment, loving compassion, inquisitiveness, generosity and empathetic communication are valuable attributes. Contentment entails finding satisfaction in who we are and what we have, while acknowledging the impermanence of a flourishing state. However, contentment does not imply a passive resignation of the current situation; rather, it signifies a positive state where the pursuit of excess is no longer necessary.

Loving compassion is the grounded concern for our own well-being and that of others, recognising the validity of others' basic needs. With compassionate love, we refrain from exploiting others, even in subtle ways, especially within intimate relationships, where our vulnerability is most heightened.

Curiosity and the thirst for knowledge flourish alongside contentment and compassion, fostering a commitment to pursuits beyond oneself and immediate circles, thereby nurturing a disposition towards generous acts. Everyone has the capacity to be generous with their time, knowledge, guidance, and practical assistance. Even maintaining composure and wisdom amidst turmoil can be a significant contribution, transforming conflicts into opportunities for growth.

By speaking and listening with gentleness, we cultivate positive relationships. Thoughtful, truthful, and kind words promote understanding and concordance, while attentive listening, even in the midst of differing opinions and perspectives, fosters trust and lays the groundwork for forgiveness and friendship, enriching our lives immeasurably.

Three tools that facilitate the development of these attributes are courageous dialogue, meditation, and physical activity. Everyone needs at least one dialogue partner, someone capable of listening and facilitating courageous discussions in a space that accommodates discomfort, anger and despair.

Meditation aids in managing thoughts and emotions and fosters the cultivation of loving compassion, while physical activity enhances alertness, strength, and sleep quality, thereby positively impacting our mental well-being. A virtuous cycle emerges from the integration of courageous dialogue, meditation and physical activity.

In conclusion, the levels of human flourishing within a society can be measured. One example is the Human Flourishing Index, a validated measurement tool developed by Harvard University's Human Flourishing Programme, which comprises questions across six domains:

1. Happiness and Life Satisfaction
2. Mental and Physical Health
3. Meaning and Purpose
4. Character and Virtue
5. Close Social Relationships
6. Financial and Material Stability

The Global Flourishing Study, encompassing data from approximately 200,000 individuals in 22 countries, offers valuable insights into flourishing worldwide.

Ultimately, the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea is profound and multifaceted. It is hoped that this introduction will inspire further discourse and contemplation.



Experiences from implementation

Does the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea appeal to you? If so, the next question pertains to its implementation.

Executing the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea demands a concerted, multi-level effort spanning several years. Here, we reflect on our experiences over the past eight years of implementation efforts on Åland. Collectively, these experiences lay the groundwork for a democratic governance model conducive to implementing and institutionalising the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea:

This model envisages a democratic governance structure with the potential to provide a multi-level network platform capable of fostering grassroots participation and top-down approaches simultaneously. It embodies deliberative democracy that enriches and fortifies representative democracy.

Yet, transitioning to a society centered around the 'Everyone Can Flourish' concept is no trivial endeavour. We have gleaned that empowering individuals and communities through participatory methods holds promise. Our experience underscores the indispensability of a shared vision in catalysing widespread transformation aligned with the 'Everyone Can Flourish' idea. However, recognising the unique contexts of all communities, we refrain from asserting the universal applicability of our experiences beyond Åland.

Our experiences converge around four key areas, as outlined below:

- › Shared Vision and Goals
- › People, Organisations, and Businesses
- › Parliament and Government (or equivalent)
- › Supporting Functions and Network Platform
 - Grassroots Participation and Network Groups*
 - Structural Changes and Roadmaps*
 - Progress Reports and Indicators*
 - Guidance and Facilitation*

Shared vision and goals

Adaptation to context is key: The ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea must mold itself to fit specific contexts, eventually transforming into a shared vision statement for the society in question. For instance, consider the statements ‘Everyone Can Flourish on the Islands of Peace’, or ‘Everyone Can Flourish in a Sustainable and Integrated Nordic Region’. Such vision statements harmonise the universal ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea with the specific needs and aspirations of a society.

The abstract vision statement should ideally be supplemented by tangible development goals, spurring concrete action. These goals should be sufficiently specific and measurable, with a likely endpoint within 10-15 years. Sub-goals may be deemed necessary.

In practice, the journey begins with a comprehensive co-creation of the vision statement and tangible development goals. Facilitating a deliberative and democratic process is imperative. This can be achieved through various means, such as citizen juries, consensus conferences, deliberative polls, or town square meetings.

The impetus to initiate such a process may emanate from any quarter, most likely civil society or the government. Extensive efforts should be undertaken to ensure broad inclusion of individuals and stakeholders from the outset. The government’s involvement, coupled with the provision of resources and expertise, is crucial in this initial phase.

A diverse array of stakeholders - Individuals, artists, farmers, civil society organisations, educators, municipalities, businesses, government agencies and political decision-makers - all cognisant of their society’s opportunities and challenges, are encouraged to collaboratively develop the vision statement and goals.

Designated expert groups should be encouraged to contribute with analyses and proposals, particularly concerning the goals. Upon formulating the goals, the UN 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as valuable wellsprings of knowledge and inspiration.

With a vision statement and goals enjoying widespread support across society, the groundwork is laid. However, a vision statement as transformative

as envisioned in the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea will likely necessitate sustained efforts over many years to engender broad-based comprehension and internalisation.

People, organisations and business

The cultivation of a collective vision and goals across all strata of society inherently spurs proactive engagement and robust collaboration among individuals, artists, farmers, educators, academics, civil society organisations, municipalities, enterprises, and governmental bodies. It is imperative that every segment of society actively participates in the enduring transformation process following the adoption of this shared vision and goals. Such participation not only fosters consensus but also nurtures trust, both within society and in the relationship between the government and its populace.

Embracing this vision often necessitates a paradigm shift for individuals. Since this vision is a product of human endeavour, effecting change inevitably demands alterations in behavioural patterns to address societal issues that have prompted discontent. The pivotal role of civil society organisations cannot be overstated. These organisations serve as conduits for individual engagement with the vision, fostering close collaboration among them ensures a unified voice.

The envisaged dynamic collaboration could materialize through the establishment of a high-level council, tasked with evaluating the ongoing implementation efforts across society. Such a council must encompass not only parliamentary and governmental representation, but also voices from artists, farmers, educators, academics, civil society organisations, municipalities, and businesses.

Permanent membership in this council should include the Speaker of Parliament, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Finance (or their equivalents). A secretariat to support the council’s functions may prove integral. The breadth of representation within the council encourages discourse on challenges affecting the entirety of society, with diverse perspectives and opinions yielding valuable insights. Through courageous dialogue, the aim is for differences to catalyse positive synergy effects over time.

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Parliament and governmental bodies (or equivalent)

Both the Parliament and governmental institutions play pivotal roles in realising the vision and goals. These governing institutions must uphold transparency throughout the implementation process, particularly considering potential resistance from actors who perceive the 'Everyone Can Flourish' concept as less economically viable than the status quo.

An endorsement of the vision and goals by the parliament signifies the legislature's overarching political commitment to their realisation. Leaders of parliamentary political parties should oversee implementation through regular meetings and close collaboration with the aforementioned high-level council.

The government acts as a facilitator for implementation, with political leadership, particularly the head of government and officials responsible for public finances, being instrumental in achieving the vision and goals. These goals, along with potential sub-goals, roadmaps, and indicators, should underpin the government's strategic direction, budgetary allocations, and administrative activities.

As the vision and goals permeate public decision-making processes, governmental agencies can establish supportive structures to facilitate implementation across various sectors. These structures may take the form of legal frameworks, financial incentives, or direct investments, thereby enhancing the coherence and efficacy of implementation efforts.

Supporting functions and network platform

The envisioned transformation under the 'Everyone Can Flourish' concept spans multiple years, requiring iterative adjustments and dynamic collaboration, both of which must be supported in various ways. Establishing supporting functions stands as one of the primary actions following the adoption of the vision and goals.

These functions should not merely impose top-down hierarchical systems of rules; instead, they should foster innovation, participation, and feedback loops, thereby stimulating action, collaboration, and the institutionalisation of the vision and goals. A network platform serving as a hub for these supporting functions is deemed crucial. Ideally, such a network platform should remain neutral, freely formed, transparent, and constantly evolving. It is the participants – both individuals and organisations – that co-create and transform the content of this network platform.

The following section describes some key supporting functions:

- › Grassroot Participation and Network Groups
- › Structural Changes and Roadmaps
- › Progress Reports and Indicators
- › Guidance and Facilitation

Grassroot Participation and Network Groups

Extensive opportunities for grassroots involvement are essential for ordinary people in society to convene under the umbrella of the vision. This cultivates a sense of common ownership and serves as a vital breeding ground for trust and collective action. Encouraging intergenerational dialogue, particularly by involving youth and elders, yields meaningful contributions. Educating both groups about the vision and actively engaging them in implementation are recommended strategies. In-person meetings, held in accessible settings and times, form a foundation, while digital tools can complement these efforts. These groups and meetings serve as information and discussion hubs disseminating the idea, building support and fostering resilience.

Within this network, offering the opportunity for anyone to create specific network groups for different stakeholders – businesses, civil society organisations, municipalities, or artists – facilitates collaboration within each sector, allowing groups to focus on activities relevant to their interests.

A key success factor is extensive possibilities for grassroots, ordinary people in society, to get involved and meet under the umbrella of the vision.



Structural Changes and Roadmaps

Many governmental structures reinforce existing behaviours, necessitating structural changes to accommodate the implementation of the vision and goals. Establishing a permanent working group, tasked with identifying necessary structural changes, is recommended, preferably appointed by the proposed high-level council. This should comprise senior government officials and respected leaders from various societal sectors.

In practice, this working group would develop and coordinate implementation roadmaps for each goal. These roadmaps should comprehensively outline the structural changes required to progress from the current state to the realization of each goal.

Given the interdependence of the goals, the working group must ensure that the implementation of each goal considers the others, aiming to avoid conflicts and suboptimizational implementation and instead foster positive synergies. Legislative changes, financial incentives, and investments should be prioritised in analysing required structural adjustments. By breaking down the coordination of prioritised structural changes at the macro level, it becomes easier for all actors at the micro level to follow, contribute, and support one another in their actions.

Progress Reports and Indicators

Publishing an initial progress report, preferably within a year or two of adopting the vision and goals, is recommended. These reports offer an overview of the current state relative to the vision and goals, along with a review of implementation activities.

A set of indicators for all goals, ideally decided by the proposed council during preparations for the first progress report, provides a holistic view of societal development trends. The Human Flourishing Index, introduced previously, should be a top priority among these indicators.

While progress reports may not always present positive findings, acknowledging shortcomings is crucial for spurring necessary action. These reports should be public documents, easily accessible and disseminated widely in plain language.

Guidance and Facilitation

Effective functioning of the network platform as a hub for collaboration, co-creation, and implementation relies on knowledge and facilitation. Establishing a guidance function tasked with providing advice, tools, coordination, and communication efforts is essential during the drafting of the vision and goals. This guidance function should assist organisations and businesses in aligning their activities with the vision and goals, while also facilitating the sharing of best practices.

In conclusion, our eight years of implementation experience highlight the pivotal importance of achieving two key milestones: adopting the vision and goals and publishing the first progress report. This journey from initiative to these milestones typically spans around two years, providing an initial indication of progress.

The preceding discussion offers a concise overview of our experiences over the past eight years. In the subsequent chapters, ‘Everyone Can Flourish on the Islands of Peace’ and ‘Policy and Enabling Environment’, we delve into practical implementations.

These chapters are presented as ‘open source’, welcoming collaboration with anyone to further develop the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea and its implementation methods.

Comments from government and academia

In this section, representatives from government and academia in Finland, Iceland, and Sweden offer their reflections on the above introduction to the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea, along with the description of Åland’s eight-year implementation experience.

Eeva Furman

Secretary General of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development in the Minister’s Office of Finland

The Åland Islands, an autonomous, demilitarised and Swedish-speaking region, and a self-governing province of Finland, has for decades been a beacon of sustainability efforts. Sustainability is an integral part of and an enabler for peace in this demilitarised territory.

Åland emerged as one of the most proactive regions in Finland during the local Agenda 21 process, and today, amidst the 2030 Agenda, it continues its systematic pursuit of sustainable development with a specific, flourishing structure and process. This is what the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’-model is all about. After eight years of experience with the model, Åland now extends its invitation to others to adopt and experiment with this model, aiming to catalyse a global movement.

The timeliness of the ‘Everyone can Flourish’ idea cannot be overstated. In 1976, when philosopher Erik Allardt published his ‘Theory of Having, Loving, and Being’, he presciently echoed sentiments ahead of its time. Today, societies grapple with interconnected mega-challenges that push the world into a deeper vicious circle. This calls for a new model for ‘having, loving and being’ as individual members of societies and as societies, and this is where the Everyone can Flourish-model steps in. A model offering a pathway to systemic change, acknowledging the crucial role of cultural transformation in addressing pressing issues.

What makes the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’-description in this voluntary review most useful is that it shows how it can be done in practice – and how it is and has been implemented in practice. The Åland Islands have indeed tested and used it in political and societal decision-making. It has spurred debates in local media and prompted society to confront the reality that in the pursuit of sustainable development, controversial issues and conflict-prone decisions cannot be avoided.

Being a prosperous region, Åland faces the dilemma of economic interests conflicting with social and environmental sustainability issues. However, by being brave and embracing the Everyone Can Flourish model, Åland paves the way for broader and more systematic assessments in decision-making processes. As a member of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, Åland sets a commendable example for the rest of Finland.

Eggert Benedikt Guðmundsson

Leader of Sustainable Development in the Prime Minister’s Office of Iceland

The beauty of sustainable development lies in its simplicity. The definition from the Brundtland report is crystal clear: ‘Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. We shouldn’t compromise the opportunities of other countries, which requires us to control the spillover effect. Moreover, we also need to consider vulnerable groups within our own society in line with the principle of ‘Leave No One Behind’.

The objective is clear. However, when you delve into what needs to be done and how, complexity arises.

Consequently, when Sustainable Iceland was launched in 2022, we were determined to learn from the best. Luckily, we had access to our Nordic partners, European colleagues, and international organisations. We soon realised, that the example Åland sets, would be one of the most valuable to learn from. The fact that they are small islands with few inhabitants, akin to Iceland, was just one of the reasons. The more important reason was the quality of their work.

This voluntary review underscores their ambition and professionalism. The ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea has a clear vision that is explained in a compelling way. Each of the three words has its own purpose and together they project a vivid picture.

How do WE achieve this vision? The report also outlines the pillars of implementation. Broad cooperation is one of the key elements and in Iceland we have endeavoured to follow that example. Cooperation can be cumbersome and time-consuming, but ultimately, it is the force that unites our efforts and accelerates progress. Supporting functions, such as guidance and facilitation, are equally crucial in maintaining our resilience.

Åland’s generosity in sharing its vision and experience is commendable. The Icelandic colleagues appreciate the mutual dialogue and the regular opportunities to reflect on each other’s progress and lessons. We count on your continued cooperation and wish you all the best in your endeavour.

Professor Christine Wamsler

Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies, Sweden

Despite the prominence of sustainability as a concept and the goals and targets set since the 1980s, our societies’ trajectories remain deeply unsustainable. It is evident that our sustainability approaches have not catalysed the necessary change.

One reason is that the vast majority of sustainability scholarship, education, and practice has focused on external factors such as ecosystems, socio-economic structures, and technology. Accordingly, sustainability challenges are often framed as external threats or crises, leading to attempts to address them primarily with external and technical measures—simply because the way we define problems inherently determines our responses to them.

Thus, a second aspect of reality has been vastly neglected: our inner lives and capacities (Ives et al., 2023). What is changing the narrative now is an increased understanding that the threats and crises we are facing are, in fact, a reflection of an inner human crisis (Wamsler et al., 2022). These challenges stem from a kind of alienation, deeply rooted in modern life.

What does this mean? And how did we get there? It means that we face a time of sharp contrasts. On one hand, in today’s societies, many of us live in the utopia of our grandparents, enjoying the privileges of modern healthcare, democracy, and human rights. On the other hand, alongside these advancements, we bear witness to ecological catastrophes such as climate change and increasing natural disasters like floods, heatwaves, and windstorms, accompanied by biodiversity loss. Additionally, we observe related socio-economic crises such as rising mental health issues, an obesity epidemic, the impacts of the Covid pandemic, widening poverty, and political turmoil.

The ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea provides an alternative to these unsustainable pathways. It challenges us to ask difficult, existential questions: What story do we want to live? How do we relate (and are connected) to ourselves, others, and the world? How can we unleash our inner potential for compassion and commitment to effect change for a better life – to support individual, collective, and planetary wellbeing and flourishing? And how do we systematically integrate these principles into our cultural, political, and institutional landscape?

Without making the idea
concrete, hands-on, and easy
for everyone to understand,
it will not lead to the
expected outcome.



The case of Åland holds significant potential as a model for other societies to learn from. Our collaboration with Åland aims to translate this philosophical idea and alternative narrative to guide our lives into concrete and systematic change through the revision of organisations’ vision statements, working structures, tools for project management, monitoring and evaluation, policies, regulations, human and financial resource allocation, communication, and collaboration. Without making the idea concrete, hands-on, and easy for everyone to understand, it will not lead to the expected outcome.



Chapter 5

Åland Vision, Strategic Development Goals and timeline

In February 2016, the groundwork for the Development and Sustainability Agenda commenced with an ambitious vision workshop that welcomed participation from all corners of Åland. Ninety-six individuals came together, shaping the foundation of our vision ‘Everyone can flourish in a viable society on the Islands of Peace’. Subsequently, a diverse panel of 59 experts was convened to formulate proposals for strategic development goals deemed crucial for realising this vision. These seven goals now serve as our localised interpretation of the United Nations’ 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Over the years since its inception, our vision has evolved into more than just a statement—it’s become synonymous with ‘an idea of a way of life’, guiding our approach to these endeavours.



2014

In alignment with sustainability principles, Åland's Parliament commits to transforming Åland into a sustainable society.



2017

The inaugural status report is launched, aiming to provide essential follow-up statistics and key indicators for the agenda.

These reports are regularly published to offer insights into the current status of goal achievement.

2015

The United Nations adopts the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), providing a global framework for sustainable development.



2016

The Bärkraft.ax network and the Development and Sustainability Council are founded.

Within this collaborative network, Åland crafts its Development and Sustainability Agenda, guided by the vision 'Everyone Can Flourish'. On September 23rd, the community officially presents seven strategic development goals for 2030 as part of this agenda.





2020

Roadmaps for implementing the seven strategic development goals are developed, with accessibility provided through the Bärkraft.ax website.



2024

Åland achieves a significant milestone by drafting its inaugural Voluntary Review to the UN as well as releasing Status Report no.6, providing a comprehensive update on its progress.

2019

Åland's Development and Sustainability Agenda wins the European Sustainability Award in the category 'public bodies under 100,000 individuals'.



2021

Establishment of indicators for monitoring progress toward the goals of the Development and Sustainability Agenda is completed.

2022

Subgoals for the seven strategic development goals are revisited and aligned with the 2030 timeline.

For the first time, Statistics and Research Åland (ÅSUB) conducts measurements to assess the experience of flourishing.





Chapter 6

Policy and enabling environment

This chapter explores the policies and environment facilitating the implementation of the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea on Åland. It covers institutional mechanisms, integration of the idea into governmental and municipal frameworks, and measures taken to ensure inclusivity, leaving no one behind.

Special attention is given to shared ownership, grassroots participation, and inclusive decision-making. Additionally, selected structural issues will be examined. Furthermore, Åland’s involvement in Finnish and international cooperation efforts will be outlined.

Common and mutual ownership

In a collective journey and transition, it is crucial to ensure that everyone can participate, understand ongoing developments, and actively contribute.

Where can we work together to support each other in our journey towards development and sustainability?



The establishment of the Bärkraft.ax network in early 2016 reflects a commitment to fostering shared ownership and grassroots participation in realizing the 'Everyone Can Flourish on the Islands of Peace' vision and associated strategic development objectives. The network, known for its inclusivity, welcomes participation from entities across all sectors of society and any individuals keen on active involvement. The term 'Bärkraft' embodies the ideals of sustainability, resilience, and viability, representing the network's core values.

Over the years, the network has evolved into a vital platform driving democratic advancement on Åland towards inclusive decision-making. Notably, it has spurred proactive measures and facilitated collaborations among diverse stakeholders, including individuals, artists, farmers, educators, academia, civil society organisations, municipalities, businesses, and governmental bodies.

For more information on the Bärkraft.ax network, visit www.barkraft.ax.



Network groups

When it comes to participation and contribution, people often feel comfortable gathering in familiar settings, where they share common ground and can connect on a deeper level. This raises the question: Where can we work together to support each other in our journey towards development and sustainability? Over the years, many individuals and organisations seeking such an outlet have come together within the Bärkraft network to form various groups and forums.

These groups aim to speed up members' journeys towards sustainability and find creative ways to collaborate, reducing any sense of isolation during times of change. The sectors with sustainability groups include large companies, municipalities, civil society organizations, professional artists and performers, the research and education sector, as well as a group for individuals and creators.

These groups have developed manifestos, challenges, programs, and commitments over time, such as a climate commitment for large companies and a leadership program promoting flourishing leadership in both the private and public sectors. Each group is led by two or more chairpersons, along with a sustainability pilot.

Sustainability pilots

Any individual or entity on Åland can receive support for implementing and working with the 'Everyone Can Flourish on the Islands of Peace' vision and strategic development goals from a sustainability pilot. This support includes inspiration, coordination, and advice. The sustainability pilot role is managed by the association Bärkraft.ax Åland, established at the initiative of several partners within the network. Besides facilitating network groups, sustainability pilots also focus on educating and promoting tools useful for organisational sustainability endeavours, coordinating communication regarding the vision and goals, and arranging events and campaigns to raise awareness of pressing sustainability issues.





Institutional mechanisms

This section describes the institutional mechanisms that has been established to support leadership, coordination, integration, monitoring and policy coherence.

Development and Sustainability Council and its secretariat

The high-level Development and Sustainability Council, promotes the realisation of the vision and the strategic development goals. Established in 2016, as part of the Bärkraft.ax network, the Council operates on the trust and collaboration of stakeholders. It oversees the adaptation of goals, sub-targets, and indicators, and evaluates progress through comprehensive reports. Permanent members include figures such as the Speaker of the Parliament, the Head of Government, the Minister of Finance, and the Secretary General (i.e., Head of the Åland Government Administration), alongside representatives appointed by various sectors of society in alignment with the Council's mandate.

Guiding the Council's operations is the Secretary General, appointed for two-year terms, tasked with spearheading the implementation of the development and sustainability agenda. The Secretariat plays an active role in facilitating these objectives, encompassing tasks such as drafting progress reports, coordinating national and international sustainable development efforts, organising informative seminars, and managing the sustainability network's digital presence. Financial backing for the Secretariat and its initiatives is provided by the Parliament through government channels, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to shared objectives.

Coordination and Reporting Working Group and roadmaps

The Coordination and Reporting Working Group is responsible for overseeing the realisation of the seven strategic development goals. This responsibility is fulfilled through the creation of detailed roadmaps for each goal, outlining prioritised measures, timelines, and accountable parties. The Development and Sustainability Council, providing guidance and direction, confirms the composition and mandates of this working group.

Each goal is overseen
by a dedicated goal manager,
a process manager, and a
responsible senior official.

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Progress towards the objectives is conveyed through regular updates on key indicators hosted on the sustainability website barkraft.ax, alongside the preparation of comprehensive status reports, which are subsequently endorsed by the Development and Sustainability Council.

Overseeing this effort is a drafting group, chaired by the Secretary General of the Government Administration and a vice-chairperson appointed by the Council.

Within the working group, each goal is overseen by a dedicated goal manager, a process manager, and a responsible senior official. While the goal managers are not employed by the Government of Åland, the process managers and responsible senior officials work within the Government administration. Tasked with fostering broad understanding and support for the goals, the goal managers advocate for inclusive engagement, occasionally convening specialized sub-working groups tailored to each goal's specific needs.

The Group Leaders' Forum at the Åland Parliament

The Åland Parliament (Ålands lagting) holds the primary political responsibility for bringing the Vision and strategic development goals to fruition.

Within the Bärkraft network, the Parliament hosts a group leader forum aimed at supporting the Parliament in assuming long-term political responsibility for realising the Development and Sustainability Agenda.

The forum facilitates dialogue, information sharing, and works towards fostering societal trust, strengthening democratic institutions, and promoting gender equality.

Members of the group leaders' forum include the respective group leaders of the parliamentary parties. The forum appoints two conveners from among its members to oversee its meetings.

Progress reports and indicators

Ensuring alignment with the vision and strategic development goals entails systematic monitoring and reporting. Regular progress reports are issued for this purpose, assessing various indicators, including those tied to the seven strategic development goals. These indicators collectively provide insights into our progress and whether we are moving in the intended direction. Of most importance is the Human Flourishing Index (VanderWeele, 2017), prioritised for its significance.

While these reports may not always reflect positive outcomes, they serve a critical role. They shed light on areas of challenge and success, guiding decision-makers across society. Currently, five progress reports have been released, with the sixth scheduled for publication in autumn 2024. Acknowledging shortcomings is essential; it motivates action and facilitates necessary change. Thus, while not always indicative of smooth sailing, these reports are instrumental in driving meaningful progress.



Integration of vision and strategic development goals in government and municipal frameworks

In this section, the Government of Åland and the Åland Association of Municipalities elaborate on the integration of the 'Everyone Can Flourish on the Islands of Peace' vision and its seven strategic development goals within plans, strategies, and programmes.

Government of Åland

The autonomy empowers the people of the Åland Islands to legislate on their internal affairs and exercise budgetary control. The Parliament appoints the regional government, known as the Government of Åland. Notably, the Parliament wields legislative authority in various domains, including:

- › Education, culture and the preservation of ancient and historical sights.
- › Health and medical care.
- › Social welfare.
- › Promotion of industry.
- › Environmental protection.
- › Municipalities.
- › Police.
- › Postal communications.
- › Radio and TV.
- › Internal traffic within Åland.

In these areas, Åland functions akin to an independent state, with its own legislation and administrative apparatus.

As such, the Parliament bears overarching political responsibility for realising the Vision and strategic development goals.

Every four years witnesses the Government's submission of a comprehensive notification to Parliament. This document serves to chart the current landscape and its intentions for the forthcoming three to five years vis-à-vis the strategic development goals. Within this report, all governmental departments delineate their ongoing plans and strategies in alignment with the seven strategic development goals. The most recent report was presented in 2022 and deliberated by Parliament in 2023.

Upon assuming office, each government outlines its strategic agenda for realising the strategic development goals throughout its term of office. To this end, the Government appoints a minister to oversee each of the seven strategic development goals. Each year, the Government articulates its policy for advancing the strategic development goals within the proposal for the annual Åland public budget, subsequently chronicled in the Åland public annual report.

The Government Administration has undergone restructuring to effectively pursue the strategic development goals.



The Head of Government chairs the Development and Sustainability Council, as described in the section on institutional mechanisms. The Council is also comprised of the Speaker of the Parliament, the Minister of Finance and the Secretary General of the government administration.

The Government Administration has undergone restructuring to effectively pursue the strategic development goals. It presides over the Coordination and Reporting Working Group, detailed in the institutional mechanisms section. Senior officials from all government departments participate in this working group.

Åland Association of Municipalities

The commitment of Åland's sixteen municipalities to incorporate the 'Everyone Can Flourish' vision and the seven strategic development goals reflects a deep and comprehensive grasp of the societal challenges and opportunities at hand. The intimate connection between the municipal level and citizens, facilitated by democratic representation and municipal services, stands as a cornerstone in this endeavour. While the vision and goals serve as guiding principles for the municipalities, municipal autonomy affords them the flexibility to adapt their activities to local circumstances, resulting in diverse approaches and initiatives aimed at achieving the goals. For instance, the City of Mariehamn has formulated its long-term strategy, 'Vision 2040', based on the seven strategic development goals.

All seven strategic development goals are effectively woven into the daily operations of the municipalities. Municipal initiatives largely foster positive conditions for happy people, whose inherent resources are growing, through various forms of education and social support. Engagement in decision-making processes and the promotion of culture, sports, and community groups contribute to social cohesion, thereby fostering trust and active participation. The three strategic development goals pertaining to water quality, biodiversity, and sustainable consumption and production seamlessly integrate into municipal spatial planning processes, investments in water and sanitation infrastructure, waste management practices, and sustainable procurement policies.

The pursuit of attractiveness is pivotal for the vibrancy of municipalities. Several archipelago municipalities - Föglö, Sottunga, Kumlinge, and Kökar - have conducted 'habitability analysis', a tool that assesses living and working conditions in smaller communities or on islands. Moreover, all municipalities have demonstrated a robust commitment to significantly reducing their climate impact through energy efficiency measures and the phasing out fossil fuel-based heating systems. Additionally, several municipalities have procured or earmarked funds for the acquisition of electric vehicles, including Jomala, Mariehamn, Lumparland, and Saltvik.



Leaving no-one behind

The Government of Åland places a paramount emphasis on the principle of leaving no one behind in the pursuit of sustainable development. This principle is deeply ingrained in the ethos of inclusivity by the ‘Everyone Can Flourish’ idea, elaborated upon in Chapter 4. The term ‘Everyone’ underscores the commitment to creating an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to flourish, while the word ‘Can’ underscores the obligation of authorities to eliminate structural barriers hindering the realization of this vision. And finally, ‘Flourish’ embodies the ultimate aspiration – a society where every individual can reach their fullest potential. To gauge progress Åland employs the Harvard University Flourishing Index, as detailed in Chapter 7. This section delimitates the strategies devised by the Government of Åland strategies to bridge the gap between the status quo and a society where everyone can flourish.

While Åland boasts a well-developed welfare system by global standards, characterised by the absence of permanent homelessness, universal healthcare, and free school lunches up to secondary level, there remains a pressing need to intensify efforts aimed at supporting the most vulnerable segments of society.

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While Åland boasts a well-developed welfare system by global standards, characterised by the absence of permanent homelessness, universal healthcare, and free school lunches up to secondary level, there remains a pressing need to intensify efforts aimed at supporting the most vulnerable segments of society.

A robust framework of Ålandic legislation exists to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups, supplemented by ongoing initiatives across various government departments. However, recognising that strategies alone are insufficient to address societal challenges, the government commits to annual evaluations of all strategies outlined within the framework of the Development and Sustainability Agenda to identify areas requiring additional measures.

Key concerns and corresponding strategies are outlined below:

A recent report examining the social security system within the Åland autonomy authority and the extent to which different benefits reduce the risk of relative poverty, highlighted a concerning trend of **increasing economic inequality**, as evidenced by measures of income distribution. However, despite this challenge, there is a positive note from an international perspective: the proportion of individuals **living below the poverty line in Åland has shown a steady decline** since 2004 (Statistics and Research Åland 2024:2). To address this issue of economic inequality, it is imperative to adopt a multifaceted approach. Firstly, continued vigilance through statistical monitoring is essential to track developments accurately. Secondly, efforts should be directed towards ensuring that all households have access to income-generating opportunities, particularly through employment. Additionally, safeguarding crucial benefits, such as housing subsidies, which play a pivotal role in supporting the most vulnerable members of society, remains paramount.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge that managing these benefits presents a unique challenge. Since not all benefits fall under Ålandic legislative authority, decisions regarding them are made at the state level. Thus, fostering collaboration and advocating for the needs of Åland within the broader legislative framework is essential for effective policy implementation. **As the economic situation deteriorates, children and youth emerge as particularly vulnerable**, facing a cascade of challenges. Research (Ristikari et al. 2018) underscores the interplay between a family's reliance on social assistance and issues such as deteriorating mental health and an uptick in youth-related crime.

In response to these pressing concerns, Åland is currently in the process of crafting a comprehensive Child and Youth strategy in 2024. This strategy holds the potential to institute a framework where assessments of the impact on children, youth, and families are integral to decision-making processes families regarding financial matters. Grounded in the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this strategy aims to address the recent observations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2023), which encompassed Finland, including Åland.

Persons with functional disabilities continue to encounter challenges, especially concerning accessibility and, notably, accessing personal assistants and transportation services. In a proactive step to mitigate these obstacles and others faced by individuals with disabilities, the Government of Åland has devised 'An accessible Åland' – a programme slated to span the years 2022 through 2025.

Nearly a quarter of Åland's population is aged 65 and older. Recognising the unique needs of this demographic, the Government of Åland has embarked on two initiatives. Firstly, the 'An Elderly-friendly Åland' program, covering the period 2023 to 2030, aims to address overarching policy frameworks for the elderly. Secondly, a focused action plan spanning 2024 to 2027 is dedicated to enhancing the participation and inclusion of seniors within society.

The statistics regarding gender equality in Åland paint a bleak picture. Despite extensive efforts in raising awareness, including educational initiatives and the regular publication of gender-disaggregated statistics, fundamental issues remain in Åland society. Attempts to address disparities such as the gender pay gap and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles have yielded insufficient results.

In response to these challenges, the Åland Agenda for Gender Equality 2019-2030 has set a comprehensive goal: to ensure that women and men possess equal freedom and influence in shaping society and their own destinies, thereby contributing equitably to societal progress. However, intimate partner violence remains a significant concern. Research by Roos (2017) indicates 15.7 % of women in Åland have experienced physical or psychological abuse within their homes in the past year. Furthermore, data from the biannual 'Health in School' reveals distressing levels of sexual harassment and abuse, with over four out of ten female secondary-level students reporting disturbing sexual advances or harassment. This survey also sheds light on alarmingly high rates of abuse, encompassing mental and sexual abuse, among children and youth (Institute for Health and Welfare 2023).¹

Both governmental authorities and civil society organisations in Åland have joined forces to prioritise the issue of violence against women, aiming to tackle this pervasive problem head-on.

One-third of Åland's population consists of individuals born outside the region, contributing to a rich tapestry where over 70 languages are spoken. Åland's experience with immigration from non-Nordic countries is relatively recent, necessitating ongoing development of integration measures. Following the conclusion of the integration promotion programme in 2023, continuous efforts have been underway to develop a new one.

To bolster participation and inclusion, the Government of Åland has formed a permanent working group on democracy development, whose mandate encompasses the creation of a new democracy strategy.

Awareness of the situation and needs of individuals identifying as LGBTQIA on Åland has been elevated through ongoing sustainability efforts. To address gaps in understanding and promote equal opportunities in areas such as health, influence, skills development and fair treatment, the Government of Åland introduced the inaugural action plan for LGBTQIA equality in Åland society in autumn 2019.

1. The share varies among age groups and school types from 16-26 % of female students.

Alcohol, drugs, doping, tobacco, and gambling pose significant risks to public health, public order and safety, and the economy. In response, the Government of Åland implemented the Alcohol, Narcotics, Doping, Tobacco, and Gambling Policy Programme for the years 2022-2024. This initiative aims to prevent and mitigate the adverse physical, psychological, and social consequences associated with these substances and activities.

Åland's Comprehensive Public Health Strategy for 2023-2030 has recently been introduced. With the highest life expectancy as well as the lowest morbidity index in Finland, the region stands at the forefront of health outcomes with life expectancy rates increasing steadily. Notably, Ålandic women hold the highest life expectancy in the Nordic countries. The region's exceptional wellness profile is largely due to the strong emphasis on health promotion within Åland society. Furthermore, the effective functioning of health, medical care, social care, and social services plays a significant role in maintaining this favourable condition. However, amidst these achievements, **concerning trends, particularly in obesity and mental health,** have emerged. Urgent action is needed to address these challenges and improve lifestyle habits, including diet and exercise. The Government of Åland launched the 'Heja!' ('Go!') public health campaign in 2024, building upon this strategy. This initiative aims to inspire healthier eating habits and elevate physical activity levels across Åland.

Alongside the efforts of the Government, Åland has its own Ombudsman authority, ensuring rights are upheld at a personal level. This authority vigilantly monitors discrimination based on various grounds outlined in the Equality Act (such as gender, gender identity, and gender expression) and the Discrimination Act (including age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activities, trade union activities, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation). Moreover, the Ombudsman authority encompasses a Children's Ombudsman to safeguard children's rights, a Patient and Client Ombudsman, and a Consumer Law Advisor.

In conclusion, the Government of Åland acknowledges the multitude of challenges and issues, yet it approaches them with sincerity and determination, backed by a political resolve to enact the necessary changes.





Structural issues

Åland's self-governing status has been instrumental in driving the sustainability endeavours since 2016. With legislative competencies spanning environment, education, and social issues, coupled with robust autonomy institutions, a dynamic civil society, and entrepreneurial culture, Åland has positioned itself as frontrunners in sustainability. However, autonomy alone is not enough. Close cooperation with the Finnish state is vital, and as a member of the European Union (EU), Åland must adhere to EU standards and legislation across various sustainability domains.

Acknowledged by leading politicians and public servants, the development of Åland's environmental legislation owes much to the EU (The Åland Islands Peace Institute 2021). However, as the EU recognises states, not regions, Åland's autonomy lacks representation in the European Parliament, limiting its influence over EU legislative processes.

Autonomy grants Åland opportunities, yet they are finite. Åland faces constraints, unable to legislate in critical areas like taxation to promote sustainable practices. Acting as a microstate, Åland grapples with challenges akin to a larger state, but with fewer resources such as finances, specialists, and expertise for implementation. At the same time, efforts to attract and integrate immigrants with diverse backgrounds and skill sets into society at large, as well as the labour market, remain in their early stages.

With 16 municipalities serving a population of 30,000 inhabitants, Ålanders are accustomed to local decision-making close to the people. This decentralisation of authority ensures vital democracy, local identity, and community engagement, albeit presenting certain challenges. Smaller municipalities may struggle to meet legal obligations within regulatory frameworks. Therefore, it is of great importance to encourage the continuing development towards a more sustainable existence, within the municipalities and on an Åland-wide scale.

Despite progress, Åland remains economically dependent on non-sustainable activities, exemplified by funding civil society activities with gambling proceeds. Addressing the dependency on non-sustainable activities in general stands as Åland's paramount structural challenge in its pursuit for sustainability.

While Åland endeavours to reduce the flow of excess nutrients from land- and sea-based activities, it acknowledges that changing the Baltic Sea's status requires collective action.



The Baltic Sea faces severe stress as one of the world's most polluted seas. While Åland endeavours to reduce the flow of excess nutrients from land- and sea-based activities, it acknowledges that changing the Baltic Sea's status requires collective action. Therefore, as part of its strategic development goal for clean water quality, Åland recognises the importance of collaboration with other Baltic Sea states. As a member of HELCOM, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference and active participant in EU projects concerning the Baltic Sea environment, Åland is committed to cooperative efforts in addressing this pressing issue.

Åland, akin to other Nordic regions, enjoy relative wealth compared to global or EU standards (Statistics and Research Åland 2022:1). While this economic advantage provides a good foundation for investing in sustainability, it also carries risks of collective and individual over-consumption, resulting in a significant ecological footprint and negative spillover effects, impacting other countries' progress towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

For example, Åland stands as the most car-dense region in the Nordic countries (Statistics and Research Åland 2023), highlighting a structural issue concerning over-consumption and spill-over effects, which we identify as a value-action gap. In some respects, our societal values regarding status or success require assessment, while in others, we struggle to align our everyday actions with our professed values.

A recent survey on environmental attitudes (Statistics and Research Åland 2022:4), indicates that a substantial proportion of respondents believe in our responsibility to preserve nature. However, this sentiment contrasts starkly with the reality of Åland's consumption-based air emissions, which totalled 11.3 tonnes per capita in CO₂-equivalents in 2015 (Finnish Environment Institute). Similarly, a disparity exists between policy intentions and actual outcomes, notably in areas such as gender equality, where stated standards for equal pay coexist with a persistent gap in average monthly salaries between women and men, with women only earning 85 % of men's salaries. In contrast, the concept of an 'Everyone Can Flourish' society embodies the belief that individuals possess the strength, knowledge, and determination to live in concordance with their values.

Engagement in Finland and international cooperation

Åland is intricately connected to the global community in numerous ways. The Baltic Sea serves as a vital link, connecting Åland with the 90 million inhabitants residing within its drainage basin. Businesses in Åland distribute their goods and services worldwide, tapping into global supply chains for imports. Each year, two hundred thousand tourists visit Åland.

In its pursuit of sustainability, Åland relies in particular on countries surrounding the Baltic Sea to drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, given the interconnectedness of climate and other environmental issues across borders. Consequently, Åland actively collaborates in various forums and networks, both domestically and internationally.

Within Finland, Åland has been an active participant in the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development for several years. This commission, chaired by the Prime Minister of Finland and coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office, played a pivotal role in crafting the Finnish National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2022-2030, to which Åland contributed. Additionally, Åland contributed to Finland's Voluntary National Review 2020.

Sharing similarities as small Nordic islands, Åland collaborates closely with Iceland under a Memorandum of Understanding. This collaboration extends to the exchange of insights on sustainable development initiatives, drawing inspiration from Iceland's 'Sustainable Iceland' and the 'Everyone Can Flourish' concept and its practical implementation.

At the broader Nordic level, Åland works extensively with Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Sweden, alongside Greenland and the Faroe Islands, within the framework of the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The vision driving this collaboration is to position the Nordic region as the most sustainable and integrated in the world.

In its pursuit of sustainability, Åland relies in particular on countries surrounding the Baltic Sea to drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.



Sub-national governments play a vital role in sustainable development. Their proximity to citizens, sensitivity to social demands, and strategic influence on behaviour are invaluable. Åland's membership in the global Regions4 network underscores its commitment to sustainable development, offering a platform for collaboration and knowledge exchange among subnational governments.

Youth engagement is pivotal in shaping the present and future trajectory of Åland. As the birthplace of ReGeneration 2030, Åland supports this dynamic youth movement across the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions. This movement advocates for climate and social justice through political and economic reforms, empowering youth to drive positive societal change. Since 2018, Åland has hosted the annual ReGeneration Week, providing a platform for youth empowerment and social development.





1

Well-being



2

Trust and participation



3

Clean water quality



4

Biodiversity



5

Attractiveness



6

Significantly reduced
climate impact



7

Sustainable consumption
and production

Chapter 7

Progress on strategic development goals

This chapter gives an overview of how Åland is progressing with its seven strategic development goals for sustainability, as well as how it's implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) locally. The analysis of this progress primarily relies on specific indicators for each goal. More data on all 17 SDGs compiled by Statistics and Research Åland can be found at www.asub.ax.



Strategic development goal 1

Healthy people realising their innate abilities

Flourishing encompasses more than material welfare and constant enjoyment. In Åland's society, conditions are established for individuals to come into their own and thrive.

Sub-goals

- 1.1 Ensure universal access to resources that contribute to physical and mental well-being, meaning and positive relationships. Equitable access to quality health and social care services is guaranteed for all, while access to detrimental influences on physical and mental health is restricted.
- 1.2 Ensure universal access to quality education, arts, culture and other forms of learning that promote individual and collective flourishing.
- 1.3 Ensure engagement in learning, work or other productive activities for all young people and adults.
- 1.4 Promote individual responsibility among children, young people, and adults to the best of their abilities. This includes practices such as mindful consumption and caretaking. Encourage mutual support to cultivate qualities such as contentment and responsiveness.

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY
EDUCATION



Corresponds to SDGs:

- 3. Good health and well-being
- 4. Quality education for all

Indicators

1. Percentage of the population currently experiencing flourishing.

89%

of respondents in the 2022 Study on Trust report feeling a sense of flourishing at the time of the survey.

89 %

of respondents in the 2022 Study on Trust also expressed confidence in their long-term potential for flourishing.

Indicator 1 is considered Åland's most important indicator, aligning with the vision of 'Everyone Can Flourish'.

This indicator is monitored using a validated measurement tool developed by the Human Flourishing Program at the Harvard Institute for Quantitative Social Science, Harvard University.

This instrument facilitates an internationally comparable and recognised method of measuring 'flourishing'. It comprises 12 questions, each scored on a scale of 0-10, grouped into six thematic areas, with two questions per theme. These themes are:

1. Happiness and Life Satisfaction
2. Mental and Physical Health
3. Meaning and Purpose
4. Character and Virtue
5. Close Social Relationships
6. Financial and Material Stability

The cumulative scores from themes 1-5 generate a Flourish Index (ranging from 0 to 100) providing an indication of flourishing. Including the sixth theme, 'economic security', creates the Secure Flourish Index (ranging from 0 to 120). Incorporating economic aspects offers insights into the potential for continued flourishing in the long term.

74

Åland Flourish Index 2022.

88

Åland Secure Flourish Index 2022.

Progress

In the absence of prior flourishing data, 'Satisfaction with life' serves as a comparable indicator. It was assessed using response options 6-10 on a scale of 0 to 10. In 2022, a total of 90 % expressed satisfaction with their lives, consistent with the corresponding figure from the previous survey in 2018.

Source

The instrument is a component of the Study on Trust funded by the Government of Åland. The most recent study, conducted by ÅSUB, was published in December 2022 (Statistics and Research Åland, 2022:6), with the initial Study on Trust conducted in 2018 (Statistics and Research Åland, 2018:5, in cooperation with the Åland Islands Peace Institute).

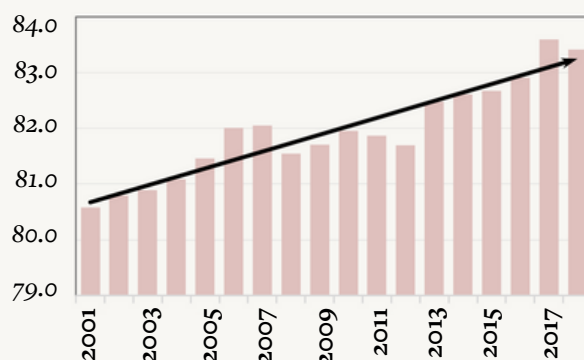
2. Life expectancy.

Life expectancy at birth (calculated with a five-year moving average).

Year	Total	Women	Men
2016-2020	82.91	85.46	80.44
2017-2021	83.59	86.00	81.24
2018-2022	83.41	85.75	81.16

Progress

In the last 30 years, the life expectancy of Ålanders has risen by approximately four years (equivalent to 5 %) for women and over seven years (10 %) for men.



Source

ÅSUB Social sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland).

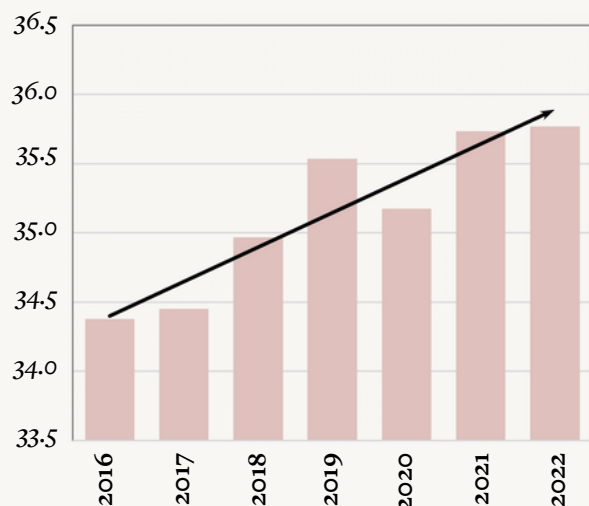
3. Percentage of the population with post-secondary education degree.

Age interval: 25-64 years

Year	Total	Women	Men
2016	34.4	39.4	29.4
2017	34.5	39.9	29.1
2018	35.0	40.6	29.4
2019	35.5	41.3	29.7
2020	35.2	41.2	29.1
2021	35.7	42.2	29.3
2022	35.8	42.3	29.2

Progress

35.8 % of the population aged 25-64 had a post-secondary education degree in 2022. This figure has increased since 2016, the first year with comparable data.



Source

ÅSUB Exam Register, Population Statistics (Statistics and Research Åland). Data is taken from the Statistics Finland's Register of Completed Education and Degrees, which unfortunately lacks a large number of degrees awarded abroad. This means, for example, that many degrees awarded in Sweden are not included.

4. Percentage of the population indicating a medium or high capacity to co-create meaningful conditions/activities in their lives at present.

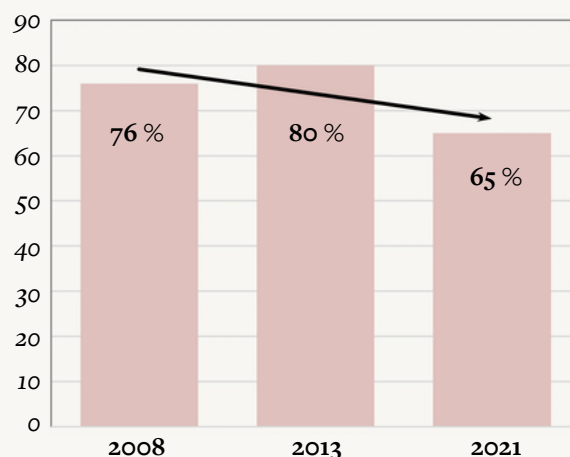
65 %

respond that they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with their own leisure time in 2021.

Progress

The level of satisfaction with personal leisure time notably declined compared to previous surveys conducted by Statistics and Research Åland. In 2013, 80 % expressed satisfaction, while in 2008, it stood at 76 %.

Various factors restricting leisure activities were assessed across all leisure behaviour surveys conducted in 2001, 2008, 2014 and 2021). In 2021, the primary constraints reported were related to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic (77 %), followed by constraints related to time (28 %) and financial limitations (13 %).



Source

Statistics and Research Åland, 2021:6.



Strategic development goal 2

Everyone has trust in community with genuine opportunities to participate

Lasting progress cannot be attained within a context marked by conflict and violence. A foundation of well-established interpersonal trust and peaceful relations is essential for long-term sustainability.

Sub-goals

2.1 There is an absence of discrimination or corruption.

2.2 Everyone takes responsibility to eradicate all forms of physical, sexual and verbal violence, especially in intimate relationships.

2.3 No one lives in an economic hardships and economic gaps are decreasing. Every home is a source of joy and peace.

2.4 Equal work is met with equal pay. Unpaid household and caregiving responsibilities are shared equally.

2.5 Åland is child- and elder-friendly and individuals with disabilities feel secure, empowered, and have access to resources.

2.6 Gender-equality and equity have been achieved. Women, men and immigrants are represented in decision-making bodies.

2.7 Decision-making is participatory, with high confidence in societal institutions and strong voter turnout. Åland's inhabitants, associations, businesses and authorities actively engage in shaping society. Children are given a voice in matters that affect them.

2.8 Culture, sports, and various organised activities bring people together and encourage participation.



Corresponds to SDGs:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
5. Gender equality
8. Decent work and economic growth
10. Reduced inequalities
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions

Indicators

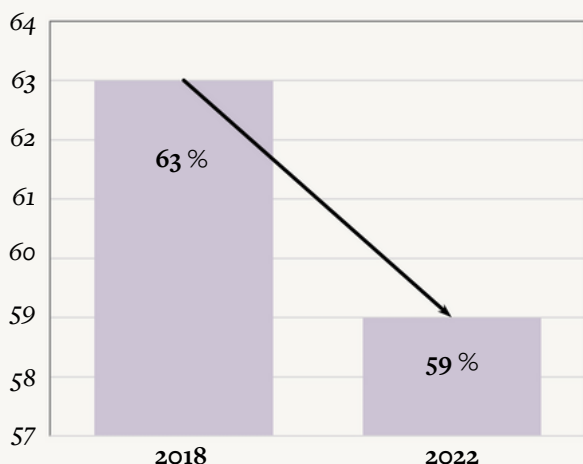
5. Proportion of the population indicating high interpersonal trust.

59 %

of respondents reported high levels of interpersonal trust in 2022.

Progress

This represents a decrease from 2018, when 63 % reported high interpersonal trust.



Source

Study on Trust 2022 (Statistics and Research Åland, 2022:6), and Trust Study Åland 2018 (Statistics and Research Åland and the Åland Islands Peace Institute, 2018:5).

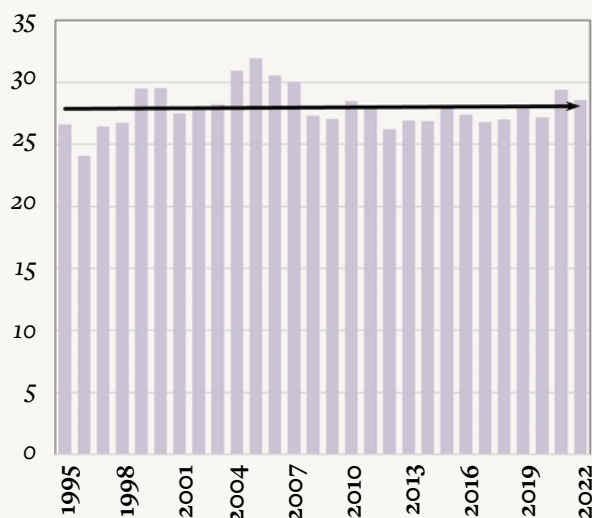
6. Economic equality (GINI coefficient).

28.60

the GINI coefficient² for Åland in 2022.

2. The Gini coefficient is the most common measure of income inequality. The higher the value of the Gini coefficient, the more unevenly income is distributed. The highest possible value of the Gini coefficient is one. This means that the person with the highest income receives all the income. The lowest possible value of the Gini coefficient is 0, when the incomes of all income earners are equal. In income distribution statistics, Gini coefficients are expressed as percentages (multiplied by 100). The Gini coefficient describes relative income differences. There is no change in the Gini coefficient if the incomes of all income earners change by the same percentage.

Progress



Source

ÅSUB Economic sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland), Statistics Finland (Statistics Finland).

7. Percentage of the population experiencing violence in close relationships in the last 12 months.

12.3 %

of respondents reported experiencing violence in close relationships during the past 12 months in 2017.

When broken down by gender, the percentage was 15.7 % per cent of women and 9.2 % of men indicated experiencing such violence. The types of violence included in this indicator encompass physical violence and threats, psychological abuse, sexual violence, neglect, and material harm.

Progress

As this is the initial data for this indicator, no comparison can be made. In general, violence against women in particular is a significant problem in Finland.

Source

Study on Violence in Close Relationships in Åland 2017 (Roos, 2017).

8. Percentage of the population experiencing discrimination and corruption in the last 12 months.

This indicator is divided in two components: experienced discrimination and experienced corruption, each measured separately.

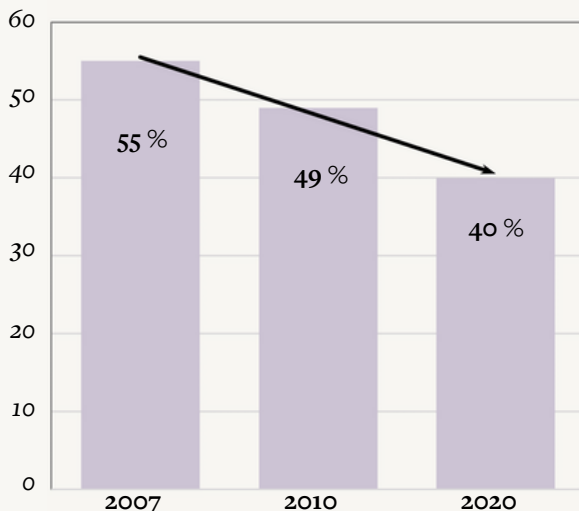
40 %

of respondents had experienced discrimination in Åland during the past 12 months in 2020.

24 %

of respondents had personally encountered instances of corruption in 2022.

Progress



Source

'Perceived discrimination in Åland 2020' (Statistics and Research Åland, 2020:7) and 'Perceived discrimination in Åland 2010' (Statistics and Research Åland, 2010:8) and the Åland Ombudsman's Office.

'Different Treatment in Equal Situations: On Discrimination in Åland' (Statistics and Research Åland, 2007:7).

Study on Trust (Statistics and Research Åland, 2022:6).

9. Gender equality

0.043

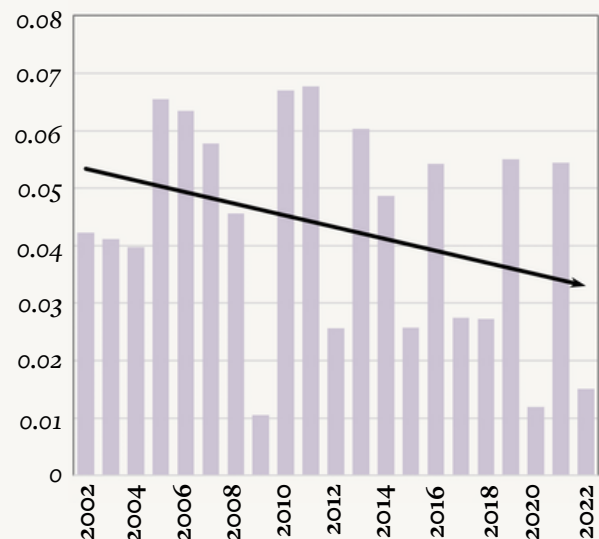
Åland's average GII key ratio for the years 2002-2022.

Åland's estimated UNDP Gender Inequality Index (GII)³ stood at approximately 0.015, i.e. about a 1.5 % decrease in gender equality performance in 2022. Calculations by ÅSUB indicate that Åland's average GII key ratio for the years 2002-2022 is 0.043.

Åland typically ranks very high in international comparisons, largely attributed to the low fertility rate among women aged 15-19. What works in Åland's favour is the low maternal mortality rate, the low fertility rate, the high level of education, and the relatively high labour market participation. However, the key figure deteriorates due to the low proportion of women among members of the Legislative Assembly.

3. GII is developed by the UN Development Programme and reflects gender-based disadvantage in three dimensions - reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. It ranges from 0, where women and men fare equally, to 1, where one gender fares as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions.

Progress



Source

Economic sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland).



Strategic development goal 3

Clean water quality

Water is vital for all living things on the planet. On Åland, there is a widespread understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy Baltic Sea, including its bays, deep areas, and surface water, as well as ensuring access to freshwater resources for clean drinking water.

Sub-goals

3.1 Everyone on Åland is knowledgeable about and takes responsibility for ensuring that Åland's water achieves high quality.

3.2 Åland plays a proactive role in the Baltic Sea region. Organisations and individuals from Åland collaborate with other regions to influence and achieve high-quality water standards.

3.3 Businesses in Åland implement sustainable circular solutions and aim to halve nutrient emissions by 2030 compared to 2015 levels.

3.4 Climate change considerations and their impacts are integrated into all development and planning processes affecting aquaculture and marine activities in Åland.

3.5 Net anthropogenic discharges of phosphorus and nitrogen into water are targeted to be halved by 2030 compared to 2015 levels.

3.6 Measures are being implemented to reduce the internal phosphorus load in lakes and bays in Åland.

3.7 Åland aims to lead the Baltic Sea region in circular nutrient management by 2030, becoming a net exporter of nutrients by 2051.

3.8 Leakage of harmful substances like pharmaceuticals, pesticides, household chemicals, microplastics, and toxins into aquatic environments has been reduced to non-harmful levels, effectively stopping water pollution.

3.9 A comprehensive and holistic approach to water use in Åland ensures that action plans and measures result in tangible improvements in water quality.

6 CLEAN WATER
AND SANITATION



14 LIFE
BELOW WATER



Corresponds to SDGs:

6. Clean water and sanitation

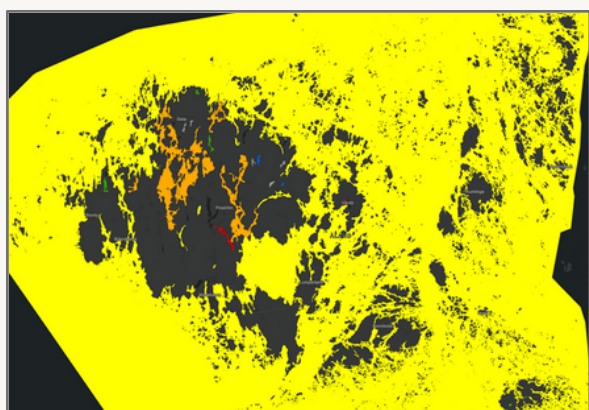
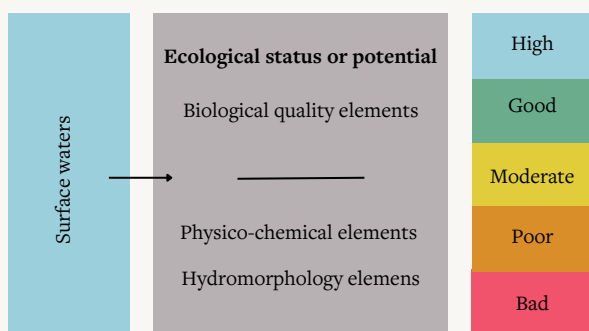
14. Life below water

Indicators

10. Water quality.

Water quality is evaluated based on the aggregated ecological status of water for the years 2012-2018. The map depicts the overall ecological status of the 61 bodies of water under the EU Water Framework Directive. The assessment is based on a weighting of the parameters visibility depth, total nitrogen, total phosphorus, chlorophyll-a, benthic fauna, and macrophytes. Updated classification is carried through every six years.

Assessment of ecological status of surface water bodies 2012-2018



Source

Ecological status of water (Government of Åland).

11. Emissions of phosphorus and nitrogen.

Between 2012-2018, the estimated discharge of nitrogen was approximately 3,255 tonnes annually, while the estimated discharge of phosphorus was around 91 tonnes per year.

The sources of watercourse loads include settlement, agriculture, fish farming, industry, tourism, as well as natural runoff and atmospheric deposition onto water bodies. Phosphorus mainly originates from fish farms on Åland, whereas nitrogen originates primarily from agriculture, fish farms, natural runoff. It is worth noting that elevated values in certain years may be attributed to heavy precipitation.

Progress

Due to changes in the methodology for calculating water body loads, there is unfortunately no available time series data.

Source

Ecological sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland)

12. Degree of implementation of water conservation measures.

The marine action programme for Åland encompasses 21 overall action points categorised into various themes, most of which align directly with the Water Directive's action programme. As of 2024, 20 of these action points have been initiated.

In addition to these measures, NGOs, operators, and municipalities undertake necessary legislation and numerous voluntary measures. These include the construction of wetlands and fish ladders. Furthermore, within the period of 2016-2021, 10 such action points within water conservation programs were implemented, 17 were initiated, while only 3 were not initiated at all.

Source

Government of Åland and Ministry of the Environment (Government of Åland)



Strategic development goal 4

Ecosystems in balance and biological diversity

Biodiversity serves as a fundamental pillar of the Earth's life support system, upon which both our current and future well-being depend. It enhances the resilience of ecosystems, ensuring their ability to adapt and thrive.

Sub-goals

4.1 Awareness of the intrinsic value of animals, plants, and ecosystems is widespread among those living and working in Åland. Knowledge of biodiversity, balanced ecosystems, and especially valuable species and biotopes is high across all sectors of society.

4.2 Ecosystems and biodiversity are seamlessly integrated into all land and sea use development and planning processes (referred to as regional greening). They are utilised as tools to mitigate the impacts of climate change, counteract habitat fragmentation and degradation, and establish green corridors.

4.3 The environmental impact of invasive species is so minimal that naturally occurring species and biotopes in Åland face no threat.

4.4 Marine, coastal and terrestrial areas, particularly those hosting coastal, marine and terrestrial areas and species of special conservation interest in Åland, are protected to meet or exceed the requirements set by EU legislation.

4.5 Loss of natural habitats has been halted. Areas formerly occupied by biotopes or species of special conservation concern have either been restored, or these species and biotopes have been reintroduced or recreated in locations highly suitable for their survival.



Corresponds to SDGs:

- 14. Life below water
- 15. Life on land

Indicators

13. Proportion of protected land.

2.3 %

The proportion of protected land.

14. Proportion of protected water.

3.21 %

The proportion of protected water.

Progress

Sub-goal 4.4 aims to align Åland's nature protection efforts with EU legislation. While there is no binding legislation for protected areas within the EU, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 targets the transformation at least 30 % of Europe's lands and seas into effectively managed protected areas. At the 2022 COP15, parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, including the EU, agreed to conserve and manage at least 30 % of land and water areas by 2030, known as the '30 by 30' target under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Source

Ecological sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland).

15. Public attitudes towards biodiversity.

92 %

of respondents in a 2022 survey considered biodiversity to be a fairly or very important environmental issue.

88.1 %

of respondents agreed that ensuring biodiversity is important, with 58.6 % completely agreeing.

Progress

There is no progress analysis for this indicator, as it is the first time the indicator is measured.

Source

The Ålanders and the environment – environmental awareness and engagement 2022 (Statistics and Research Åland, 2022:4).



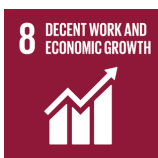
Strategic development goal 5

Attractive for residents, visitors and businesses

Attractiveness necessitates continuous progress. By the year 2030, Åland aims to be highly attractive for both residents and non-residents, serving as a sought-after destination and investment hub. This attractiveness is bolstered by the preservation and accessibility of its natural assets, with a particular focus on coastal areas.

Sub-goal

5.1 Åland aims to reach a population of 35,000 inhabitants.



Corresponds to SDGs:

- 8. Decent work and economic growth
- 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 11. Sustainable cities and communities
- 13. Climate action

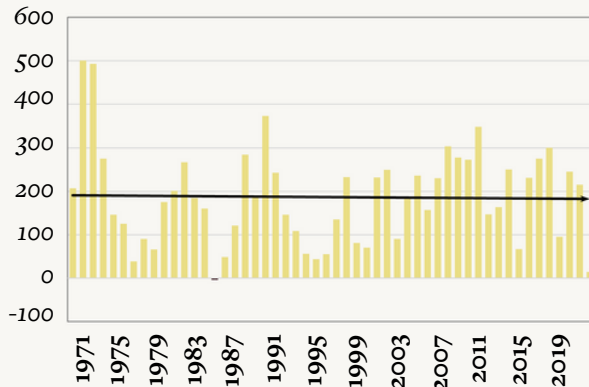
Indicators

16. Population change (births, immigration and emigration).

+15 persons

The population change for Åland in 2022.

Progress



Source

Population (Statistics and Research Åland).

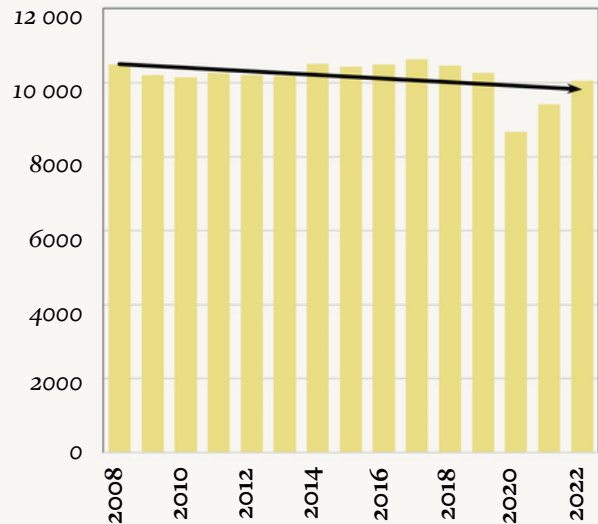
17. Number of jobs in businesses and companies.

10,047

positions of employment in the Åland private sector, including entrepreneurs in 2022.

Progress

The decline in the number of jobs in 2020-2021 is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions. The economic and energy crises also affected the labour market.



Source

ÅSUB Labour market/Population.

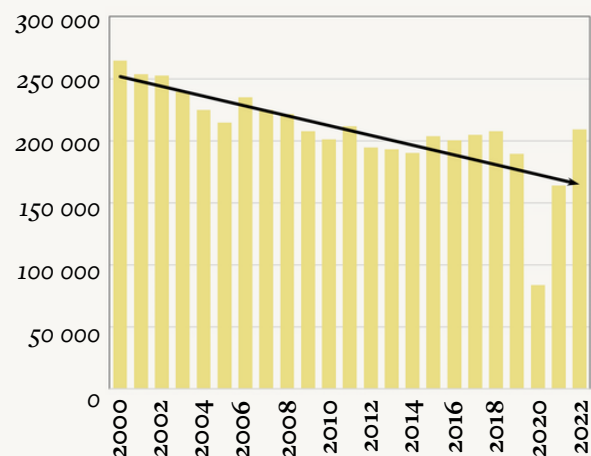
18. Number of overnight guests in commercial accommodation establishments.

209,326

number of overnight guests in commercial accommodation establishments in 2022.

Progress

The decline in the number of overnight stays in 2020-2021 is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions. The economic and energy crises also affected the tourism sector.



Source

Tourism (Statistics and Research Åland).



Strategic development goal 6

Significantly reduced climate impact

Åland is committed to achieving climate neutrality by 2035. This entails a significant reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, coupled with enhanced carbon sequestration efforts, ensuring that by 2035, emissions are at most equal to sequestration. Beyond 2035, Åland aims to further increase sequestration while continuing to decrease emissions. This commitment aligns with the Paris Agreement, reflecting a sense of responsibility towards future generations while also unlocking new growth opportunities and bolstering competitiveness.

Sub-goals

- 6.1** Achieve an 80 % reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions (excluding external shipping) compared to 2005 levels.
- 6.2** Implement a 50 % reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from road transport compared to 2005.
- 6.3** Transition to 100 % fossil-free energy sources for electricity generation.
- 6.4** Eliminate fossil-based heating systems in buildings.



Corresponds to SDGs:

- 7. Affordable and clean energy
- 13. Climate action

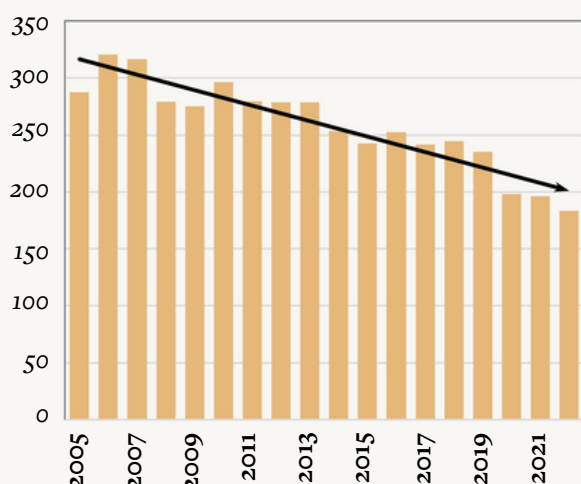
Indicators

19. Total carbon dioxide emissions.

183.4 kilotonnes

of CO₂ equivalents is the estimated CO₂ emissions on Åland in 2022.

Progress



Source

Ecological sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland) based on Finnish Environment Institute's calculations. A governmental report on Åland greenhouse gas emissions was published by Flexens in 2023.

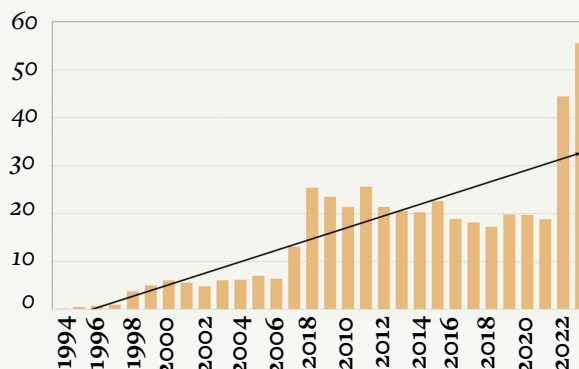
20. Percentage of locally produced fossil-free electricity.

55.5 %

of total electricity supply was locally produced electricity in 2023 (solar, wind and bioenergy).

Progress

In 2022, ten new wind turbines were commissioned, and wind power's share of electricity procurement increased to 40.7 %. In 2023, wind power production accounted for approximately 172 GWh or 52.2 % of electricity supply.



Source

Ecological sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland).

21. Amount of total fossil and fossil free energy use.

For this indicator, currently no data exists.

*

These strategic development goals and their corresponding sub-goals constitute first of three pillars of Åland's climate objectives. Complementing this effort is the second pillar, focusing on consumption-based emissions, in line with sub-target 7.9 of strategic development goal 7: Sustainable consumption and production. Additionally, the third pillar addresses emissions from ferry traffic to and from Åland, envisioned to be managed within the framework of the EU's emissions trading system.



Strategic development goal 7

Sustainable consumption and production

Sustainable and mindful consumption and production patterns are cross-cutting concerns that contribute significantly to the attainment of all six other Strategic Development Goals. Consumption encompasses both goods and services utilized by individuals, the public sector, businesses, and other organisations.

Sub-goals

7.1 Reduce the amount of waste generated in Åland to a maximum of 1.2 tonnes per person per year.

7.2 Ensure that all companies and organisations prioritise sustainability, resource efficiency, and circularity in their operations.

7.3 Implement sustainable public procurement practices across all public organisations.

7.4 Encourage sustainable, resource-efficient and circular building and renovation practices for everyone.

7.5 Promote the natural behaviour of domesticated animals by fulfilling their basic needs such as food and exercise.

7.6 Aim for at least 80 % of the population to adopt a resource-efficient and reusing lifestyle.

7.7 Encourage at least 80 % of the population to adopt a locally produced diet that aligns with current recommendations for human and planetary health.

7.8 Encourage at least 80 % of the population to avoid purchasing products containing harmful chemicals.

7.9 Reduce consumption-based air emissions of CO₂-equivalents to 4 tonnes per person by 2030 and 2 tonnes per person by 2040.



Corresponds to SDGs:

12. Responsible consumption and production

Indicators

22. Percentage of population living a resource-efficient and reusing lifestyle.

45.2 %

of respondents reported often or always living a resource-efficient and reusing lifestyle in 2022.

Progress

In general, an increase can be seen in the proportion of people who perform resource-efficient and reusing activities often or always compared with previous surveys. The activities that show an increasing trend since 2008 are avoiding buying goods with unnecessary packaging, favouring goods with a longer durability, taking goods for repair, leaving goods for reuse and buying second-hand goods. The results also suggest that the proportion of people who choose environmentally friendly services and participating in activities organised by nature or environmental organisations has increased. We can also see an increase in investing money in companies/funds with an environmental focus. The proportion of people who often or always buy organic food and eco-labelled goods, which increased from 2008 to 2015, seems to have decreased slightly in this survey.

Source

Data for this indicator was collected as an index within the framework of the study 'Ålanders and the environment - survey on environmental awareness and commitment in Åland' (Statistics and Research Åland, 2022:4). The survey covers attitudes, awareness, behaviour and priorities related to environmental issues and has been carried out previously in 2008 (Statistics and Research Åland, 2008:7) and 2015 (Statistics and Research Åland, 2015:5).

23. Number of companies, associations and organisations reporting their sustainability performance annually.

While some of the largest companies on Åland conduct sustainability reports, no comprehensive data is available for this indicator.

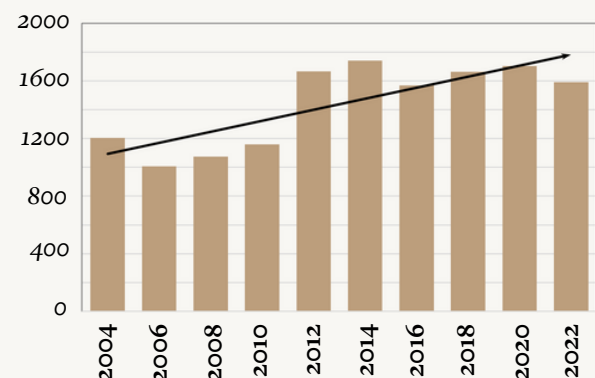
24. Amount of waste generated per person.

1,592 kg

The amount of waste generated per person in 2022.

Progress

Currently, Ålanders are about 400 kilogrammes away from the goal of 1.2 tonnes maximum waste per person per year. While the trend had been increasing since 2004, there was a decrease in waste generation in 2022, marking the first time in three years.



Source

Ecological Sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland).

25. Consumption-based air emissions of CO²-equivalents per person.

11.3 tonnes

per person was the estimated consumption-related emissions of greenhouse gases in 2015.

Progress

While no new data for Åland is available, the average carbon footprint of Finnish households' consumption expenditure decreased significantly from 2000 to 2021. While the carbon footprint per Finn was around 14 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) in 2000, the corresponding figure was 7.7 tonnes of CO₂ in 2021 (Finnish Environment Institute, 2024).

Source

Ecological sustainability (Statistics and Research Åland), based on calculations made by the Finnish Environment Institute.

Civil society recommendations

In anticipation of the forthcoming voluntary review, members of the Bärkraft.ax network group representing Åland civil society have contributed invaluable insights and recommendations regarding the advancement of the strategic development goals. Drawing from diverse perspectives and expertise, representatives from prominent organisations have collectively highlighted crucial areas warranting attention and action.

- › Funktionsrätt Åland
- › Ung resurs/Ungdomshuset Boost
- › Folkhälsan på Åland
- › ABF Åland
- › SKUNK
- › The Åland Society for Nature and Environment
- › Emmaus Åland

A recurring theme in the feedback from civil society is the imperative to address the structural challenges posed by Åland's municipal framework. Continuous dialogue and concerted efforts are deemed essential to navigate and resolve these complexities effectively. Moreover, fostering robust collaboration between the public and third sectors emerges as a priority for long-term development, necessitating enhanced cooperation mechanisms and sustainable funding arrangements.

Civil society representatives underscore the need for comprehensive actions across all aspects of the Åland Development and Sustainability Agenda. Emphasised is the principal of 'Leaving no one behind', with specific focus on marginalized groups such as individuals reliant on benefits and social assistance, persons with disabilities, women and the LGBTQIA community. Recommendations span a spectrum of concrete measures encompassing financial allocation, legislative reforms, and structural adjustments within the economic framework.

The network group representing Åland's civil society recommends the Government of Åland to:

In the field of inclusion and social justice:

- › Foster goal-oriented collaboration between social and health authorities and civil society.
 - › Enhance vocational training programmes to offer more opportunities and invest in employment initiatives for marginalised groups. Civil society organisations (CSOs) could offer workplaces and supervision, contingent upon funding for professional supervisors.
 - › Ensure that the application of social welfare legislation accounts for an individual's functional ability.
 - › Explore the possibility of enacting Ålandic legislation to provide social credit grants for individuals facing financial hardship.
 - › Consider legislation that promotes an inclusive society for all, beyond just physical accessibility.
 - › Implement disaggregated statistical follow-up for particularly vulnerable groups in society, utilizing criteria based on grounds for discrimination in legislation (including age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, health status, disability, sexual orientation). This approach aims to illuminate disparities in living conditions on Åland.
 - › Establish citizens panels to boost societal participation of children and young people, as well as people with mental illness or disabilities.
 - › Allocate resources to ensure affordable and safe housing for all individuals. Additionally, update rental legislation to meet modern standards.
- ## **In the field of economics and circular economy:**
- › Give priority to 'soft values' in the Åland public budget, aligning with economic frameworks such as the 'Doughnut model'.
 - › Link future possible wind power profits to a citizens' fund, akin to the Alaska Permanent Fund, to meet the needs of future generations.
 - › Advocate for circular solutions to substantially decrease nutrient emissions for agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture.

In the field of water protection:

- › Follow up on existing Water Protection Plans for bodies of water used for water supplies.
- › Ensure the security of future drinking water and invest in long-term wastewater management, while concurrently reducing water consumption.

In the field of nature protection:

- › Allocate resources to conduct nature inventories and accelerate nature protection efforts to achieve the goal of having 30% of nature protected by 2030.
- › Raise awareness across all segments of society regarding the significance of biodiversity and nature conservation. Ignorance breeds fear, leading to resistance.
- › Implement an Åland-wide regional planning tool that prioritises nature considerations. Recognise the unsustainability of infinite growth; we are currently living beyond our means.
- › Establish publicly managed farmland aimed at enhancing self-sufficiency while facilitating a shift in dietary habits.

Transform Åland into a sustainable, climate-neutral destination that aligns with the objectives of the Development and Sustainability Agenda.

**In the field of tourism:**

- › Transform Åland into a sustainable, climate-neutral destination that aligns with the objectives of the Development and Sustainability Agenda. This entails prioritising accessibility from the outset and investing in infrastructure for electric car chargers and fossil-free transportation to, from, and within Åland, utilising alternative modes of transport beyond cars.

In the field of energy:

- › Prioritise reduced energy consumption and enhanced energy efficiency as primary objectives, with the development of renewable energy as a secondary focus.
- › Summon the courage to impose stringent demands on major polluters.

In the field of waste reduction:

- › Enforce legal mandates for sustainable procurement, incorporating used goods into sustainable public procurement requirements.
- › Support initiatives to promote and facilitate the repair, reuse, rental, loan and exchange of products, alongside consumption of services to reduce reliance on goods. Establish an Åland consumption report to monitor long-term consumption patterns. Emphasise reuse over recycling whenever feasible and align the waste management system to incentivise sorting and submission for recycling and reuse. Engage civil society organisations (CSOs) in local circular resource management efforts.
- › Establish more stringent criteria for producers to guarantee the sustainable production and manufacture of recyclable products. Anticipate the forthcoming implementation of the proposed EU Waste Directive as an opportunity. For instance, extend producer responsibility for textiles to fund reuse and repair initiatives. Additionally, involve CSOs in financing efforts to reuse goods that aren't actually waste.

In the field of education:

- › Elevate the profile of Åland's upper secondary education by integrating sustainability principles. This includes incorporating sustainable construction education, sustainable hairdressing education, and other related fields.

By embracing these recommendations, Åland can chart a path towards inclusive, sustainable development, embodying the ethos of leaving no one behind while safeguarding the island's natural heritage for future generations.



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