



How Viken County is localising the Sustainable Development Goals

A local voluntary review

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1 Opening statement

Viken County Council has decided to base everything we do on the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) and on the principles of planetary boundaries.

We know that the world's climate and environmental systems are weakening in a way that could be a threat to the future of society. Solving climate change issues is about reducing greenhouse gas emissions while dealing with the environmental, social and economic consequences of ongoing climate change. This knowledge makes it natural for Viken to base our work on the planetary boundaries, recognizing that climate, nature and environment are mutually dependent. The principles of planetary boundaries has to be followed if we want to reach all the social and economic sustainable development goals. The development goals are in line with the main objective of Agenda 2030: To ensure sustainability for humans and the planet by the year 2030.

In the 2030 Agenda another important principal is “no one left behind”. We recognize that in order to reach a sustainable society everyone must be included, to experience the benefits of sustainable development and to be able to use their resources to contribute to it.

Working towards a sustainable Viken County thus necessitates collaborations and solutions which only can be found across geography, structural and government levels, sectors and thematic areas. We have to be innovative in a shifting landscape with changing demographics, reduced public finance and increasingly complex problems, such as poverty or global crises like the Covid-19-pandemic.

This means that we must find better ways to connect, to generate, exchange and use knowledge and experiences, and to develop methods where co-creation and innovation are at the core of our work processes. We need to see the opportunities these challenges bring, and think and act in new ways in all aspects of our work.

To enable such cross-sectoral, cross-thematic and innovative work we need to secure alignment of our values, culture, systems and processes, making the efforts on the SDGs as easy and effortless as possible. We need to create a common understanding of where we are going creating strategies, tools and partnerships that are required to get there – both within our own organization and in the region as a whole. This requires cooperation, trust and partnerships.

Viken county Council emphasizes a knowledge-based approach in the process of developing our organisation and the region. This must be complimented by transparency about our work, experiences and reflections.

This local voluntary review reflect our holistic, knowledge-based and open approach to the SDGs whereby we prioritise cooperation, innovation and dialogue between the international, national, regional and local levels. We view this VLR as one of our first steps in sharing our experiences, reflections and efforts on the SDGs, showcasing where we are today. Hopefully, this early presentation can contribute to a better understanding of our work, a regional perspective on the SDGs and also give a glimpse of the development and line of thoughts this far.

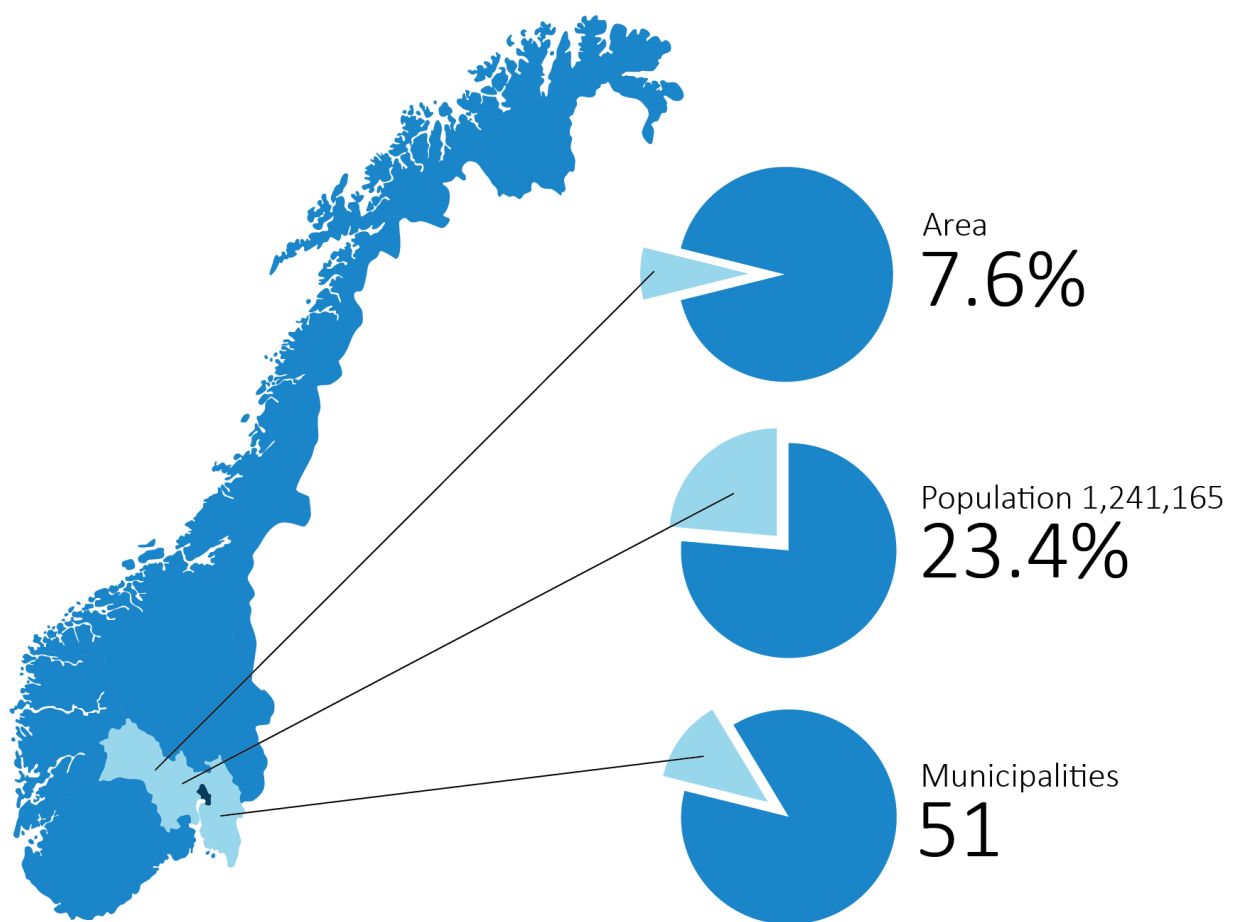
This is how we work to create a common sustainable future - a future where the inhabitants of Viken County can live good lives and realize their dreams, with secure health and work conditions, and access for all to diverse natural surroundings in a stable climate. Viken county council will do its part in the global effort to make a more sustainable future for all.



2 Highlights

Viken are building and developing an organization (and a region) using the SDGs and sustainability as our framework and compass. This entails challenges but also immense potential and opportunities.

Viken's vision is "Viken leads the way", and our main goals are; sustainability, development and competence. Our vision commits us to take the lead, be proactive and set the course for others. Our vision and goals has been with us from the start and are the foundation of our work localizing and implementing the SDGs



«Viken is Norway's sixth-largest county in terms of land. As of 1 January 2020, the total population of Viken was 1,241,165, spread over 51 municipalities»

Viken County is the largest county in Norway in terms of inhabitants, and a county of great diversity: there are mountain areas, coast lines, small towns, larger cities, different levels of education, and different business communities. Our diversity and large number of residents are a great strength but it also demands an ability to differentiate between different needs and opportunities in the different geographic regions.

2.1 Policy and enabling environment

In working with sustainability issues, we must think both holistically and coherently. Coherence is more complicated than addressing each goal in isolation. If we are to be able to implement the radical changes that are needed to achieve the SDGs, we must work together across different disciplines, sectors and levels of government.



Localizing the SDGs in a local and regional framework

The Viken County Council administration plays a role in the development of Viken County and in the coordination of our regions effort to achieve the SDGs; a role strengthened by the territorial reform. Hence, Viken County should deploy its resources, methods and responsibilities in a holistic matter and in close cooperation with other stakeholders to find solutions to the complex challenges in our society and to achieve sustainability.

To create common goals and strategies for the stakeholders in our region we have a Regional planning strategy, operationalized through regional (thematic and area specific) plans made thorough regional cooperation processes.

To follow up the regional plans we have action programs that determines which activities and resources are required by each party to implement the plan.

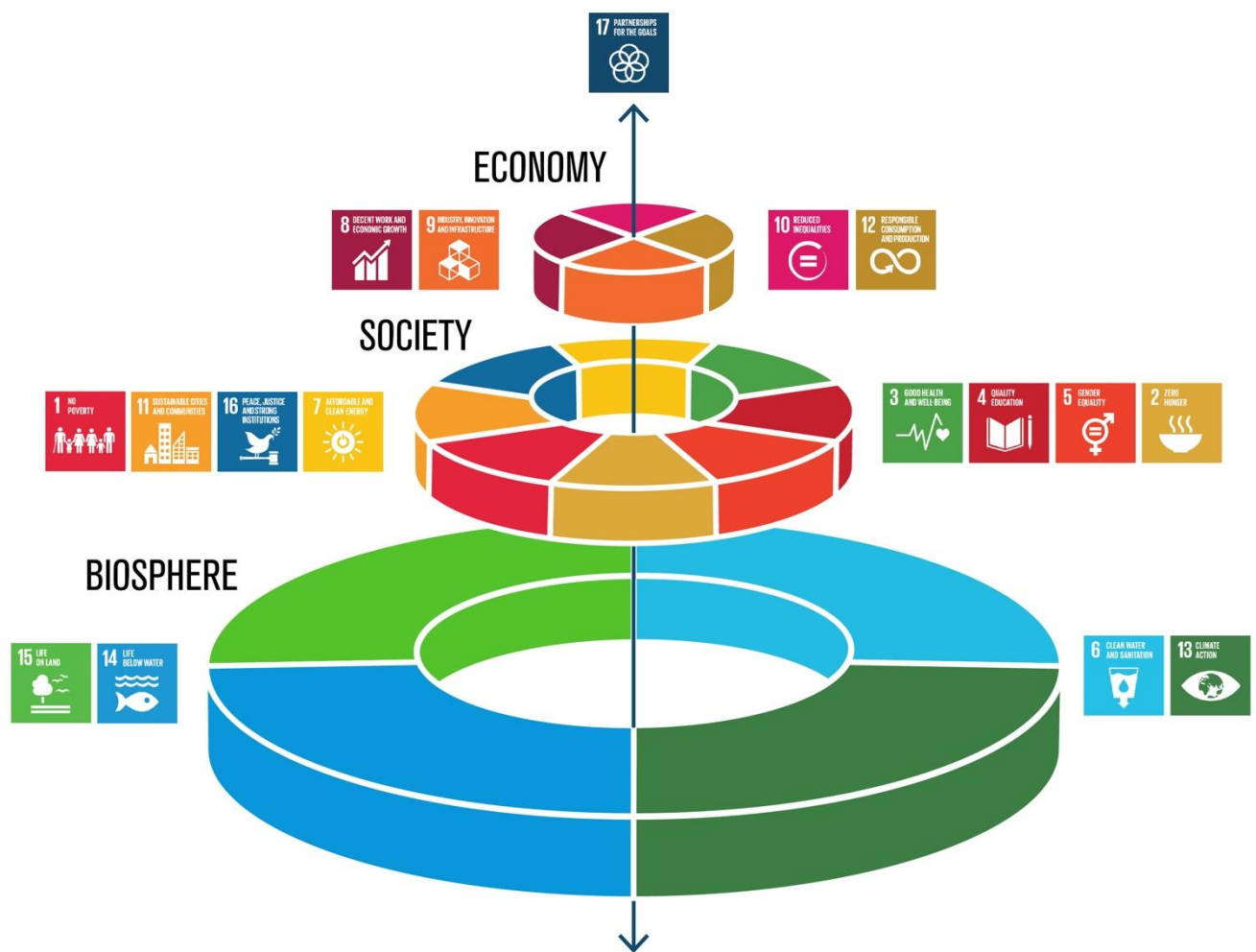
These actions programs can be the starting point for binding partnerships or cooperation agreements between the stakeholders, and each party implements actions and priorities in their own organizations to deliver on their part of the regional commitments.

The regional planning strategy

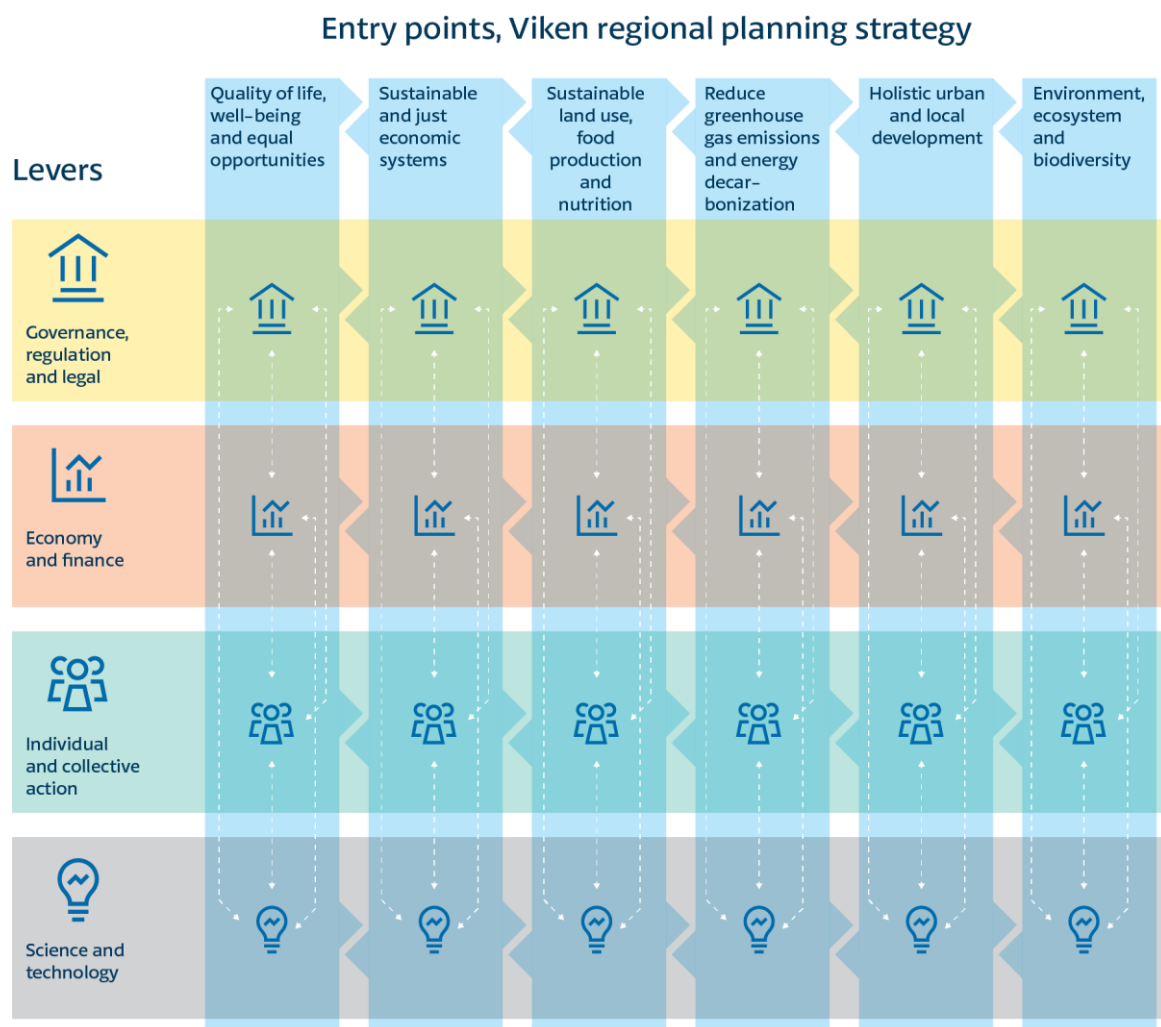
[The Regional Planning Strategy](#) is the county municipality's foremost tool for exploring, designing and triggering regional cooperation within various areas of society. In the "Regional Planning Strategy for a Sustainable Viken 2020-2024", Viken's tasks and priorities towards the 2030 Agenda, alongside five long-term goals, are outlined.

The long-term goals are in line with the main objective of Agenda 2030: To ensure sustainability for humans and the planet by the year 2030.

A matrix with six entry points and four levers adapted from the [Global Sustainable Development Report \(GSDR\) 2019](#) devise the framework the county should operate within in the short- medium and long-term to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The principles of planetary boundaries, pondered in the "Wedding cake" model developed by Stockholm Resilience Center is also a guiding element.



“The principles of planetary boundaries, pondered in the “Wedding cake” model will be guiding element to achieve the 2030 Agenda in Viken, Source: Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University”



A matrix with six entry points and four levers devise the framework the county should operate within to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The matrix is adapted Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, (United Nations, New York, 2019). The framework is localized by Viken in Regional Planning Strategy for a Sustainable Viken 2020-2024

The regional plans

he planning strategy is operationalized through three cross-sectoral regional plans with three different focus areas: Increased quality of life, participation, and equality, competence and value creation, and Land use and mobility.



Three cross-sectoral regional plans regarding; Quality of life participation and equality, Competence and value creation, Land use and mobility.

Three pressing interdependent themes must be included in all of the plans (Climate and Environment, Public Health, Cooperation). Source: Regional Planning Strategy for a Sustainable Viken 2020-2024

Viken county council, along with other partners and stakeholders will begin developing these plans in the autumn of 2021, and the plans are due to be adopted and implemented in 2023.

Cooperation and involvement in the planning process

During the process of developing the regional planning strategy and regional plans, participation and involvement of central actors in the region is essential to create ownership and develop a collaborative environment where we work together to achieve our goals. This legitimizes the chosen framework and the goals selected for Viken County.

The planning strategy and the regional plans are just the first steps, and will be further complemented by a broad effort both internally in the county administration and externally in the cooperation and dialogue with regional actors. This will include, among other things, developing partnerships on different themes, participation in a national network of municipalities and counties, developing a package of training resources to ensure that leaders and employees (in our municipalities and our administration) have the necessary understanding of the SDGs in Viken and establishing a new procurement strategy.

Together - across sectors, levels of government, and boards – we will create a sustainable future. Our contribution is a thorough effort within our own region in creating awareness and a regional direction, and also participating in foras and platforms sharing knowledge and experiences.



2.2 Progress on goals og targets

Reports and evaluations

A knowledge-based approach is an important part of our work on the SDGs. Evaluating and learning while working is important to us, and we do this in many ways. We would like to highlight two reports that are, important for our work.

A territorial approach to the SDGS

As part of working and evaluating our work on the SDG Viken has been a pilot in the OECD-initiated program [A territorial approach to the SDGs since 2018](#). The program is developed to support cities and regions to develop, implement and monitor strategies to achieve the SDGs.

The program seeks to support interested cities and regions in fostering a territorial approach to the SDGs by

- measuring where they stand vis-à-vis the national average and their peers.
- engaging in a multi-level dialogue with their lower and upper levels of government to build consensus on who can do what, at what scale and how.

- sharing best practice and lessons from international experience.

A report and recommendations from the OECD were submitted early in 2021.

Sustainability report 2020

Viken County Council has also decided that a comprehensive sustainability report must be created for both our own internal organization and for the community. A climate account, including the work on eco-lighthouses¹, must also be completed.

For the sustainability report of 2020, the goals are:

1. We will highlight the work done to ensure that the SDGs permeate all work in Viken County Council.
2. We will use the report to highlight lessons and experiences from the work, as well as to build competence.
3. It shall be reported to the County Council on how a comprehensive sustainability report has been followed up. In addition, the report must help to motivate the organization to further work on sustainable development and market our sustainability work.

Examples on how we work

In addition to Viken county council's work to develop methods, processes, and reports to strengthen our work on the SDGs, an extensive range of initiatives, projects, and facilities ensures our sustainability work at a more operative level. This includes work in schools, public transport companies, dental clinics, in procurements, and in cooperation with private and voluntary sectors.

Schools:

One example of this is the focus on the SDGs in the high school cafeterias in Viken. [By implementing a strategy for healthy schools and through the Eco-Lighthouse certification scheme, 30 high schools now participate in a pilot project to give free school lunches to students that](#) includes setting up the menus with locally made produces and reducing food waste.

Businesses:

Viken county government made funds available for businesses to offer tailor-made initiatives to increase the capacity of staff and leaders in a Covid-19 business support package. Applicants were strongly encouraged to base their applications on the SDGs. This has been a way of using the crisis package to boost green transition and sustainable thinking in businesses. Linking SDGs to the support package was positively received by the businesses, and many saw it as a possibility to highlight the sustainable focus they already had, and an [informal network between these businesses](#) has been established.

Procurement:

¹ Eco-Lighthouse is Norway's most widely used certification scheme for enterprises seeking to document their environmental efforts and demonstrate social responsibility. More background information can be found here: [The Certification Scheme - Stiftelsen Miljøfyrtårn \(eco-lighthouse.org\)](https://www.stiftelsenmiljofyrtarn.no/en/the-certification-scheme)

Viken county Council has established a new procurement strategy which includes criteria such as fossil-free vehicles and construction sites, solutions based on circular economy, and decent work requirements. The County government also offers [free advisory services](#) to its municipalities to ensure that procurement and construction projects are climate-friendly.

PART I: Introduction and process for preparation of the review

3 Introduction

3.1 Our history

Viken County was formed on 1 January 2020 following the merger of Akershus, Buskerud, and Østfold counties according to the mandated Norwegian territorial reform.

In the autumn of 2017, prior to the creation of Viken County and the election of the new Viken County government in September 2019, an administrative project team and a joint political board with representatives from the former counties was set up to initiate the transition to Viken County. This early process involved working together across the three counties and creating a product that would belong to an organisation and geographic entity that did not yet exist.

Following its establishment, the joint political board in early 2018 adopted the use of the SDGs as the basis for all regional development in Viken. The following year, the board adopted the use and implementation of the SDGs as the foundation for all of the county's responsibilities and functions by way of, among other things, developing its planning and steering system and its management system, building the internal culture of the organisation, and fostering internal dialogue between the communication, human resources, and budget-steering departments.

The incentive for using the SDGs as the foundation for the county's operations was the expectation that the territorial reform would lead the counties to take a stronger, more strategic, and holistic role in regional development. The counties would function as "bridge builders" between government sectors at the national level and the diversified local needs of the municipalities, enabling more strategic regional development, particularly in respect of challenges such as sustainability.

The focus of the territorial reform on holistic governance correlated with the transformative Agenda 2030 and provided a more visible representation of Viken County Council's work on sustainability. The publication of the *Expectation Document for Regional and Local Planning*, published by the Norwegian Government in May 2019,

highlighted the essential responsibilities of Viken County Council, such as basing all of its comprehensive planning on the SDGs. The publication indicates future challenges such as creating a sustainable welfare state, a socially sustainable and safe society for all, and an ecologically sustainable society with a proactive climate policy. Furthermore, it emphasises the counties' responsibility to solve these issues and further solidify the decision that Viken County be founded on the SDGs.

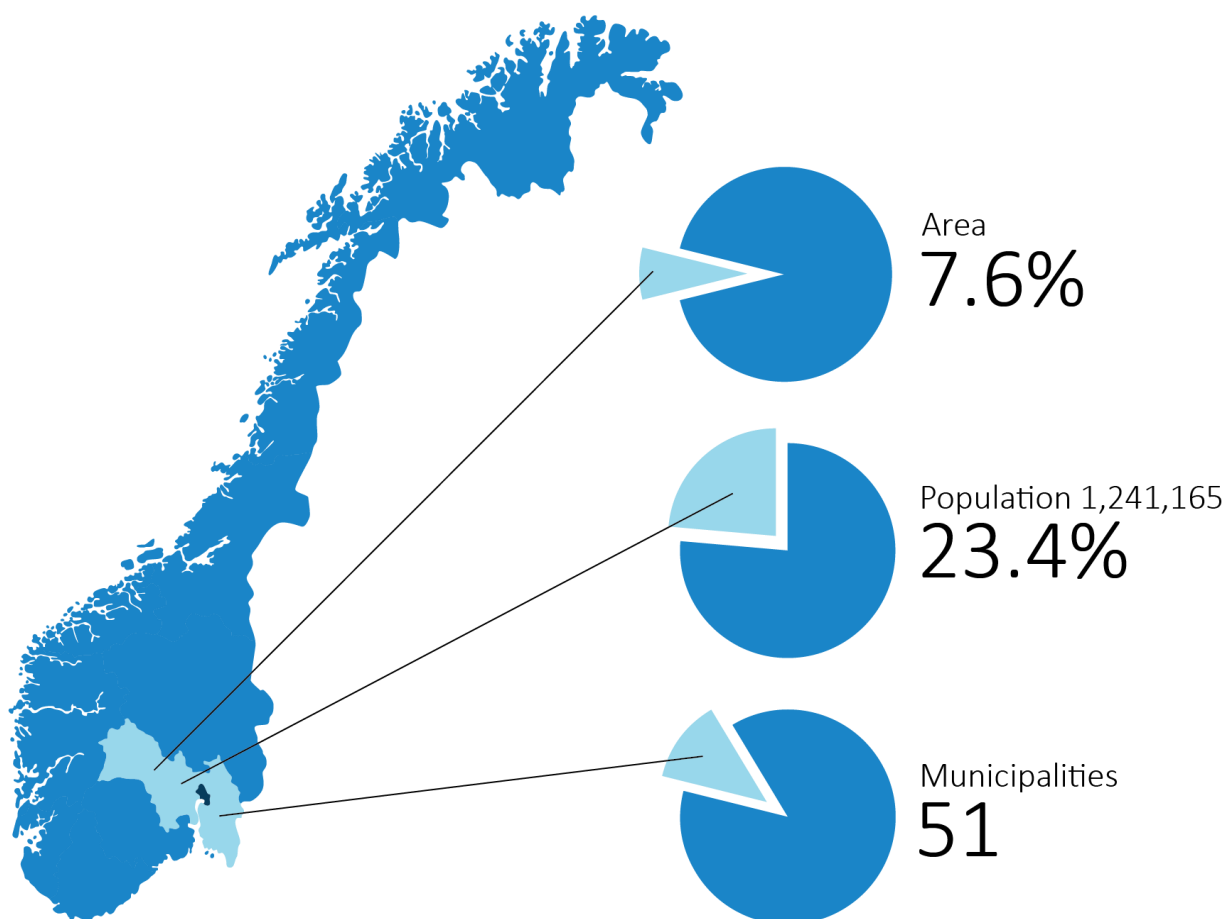
Although the SDGs were put on the national agenda, a driving force behind all our efforts since early 2018 has been Viken's own political ambitions in respect of the SDGs and how they should be used to create a framework for developing the region. This has created a special opportunity to truly integrate the SDGs into the heart of the planning and steering system and use them as both the foundation and a common language for cooperation and co-creation in the region. The SDGs have become an important tool for overcoming cultural, organisational, and regional differences within the county.



3.2 Key facts about Viken

Viken comprises 24,593 km² and is Norway's sixth-largest county in terms of land. As of 1 January 2020, the total population of Viken was 1,241,165, spread over 51 municipalities.

Viken is Norway's most populous county. Alongside Oslo, it is the county that has seen the fastest population growth over the last ten years. Many Norwegian municipalities are experiencing a decline in population, but in Viken this is true of only a handful of municipalities.



Viken's 51 municipalities are diverse in size and nature, ranging from municipalities in the Oslo metropolitan area to rural areas in the west (formerly Buskerud) and the south-eastern interior (formerly Østfold). Sixteen of the municipalities have fewer than 5,000 inhabitants, while the largest (Bærum) has over 128,000.

OECD evaluation- achieving the SDGs in Viken

The chart below is based on the OECD's regional data base measuring how far the regions and cities have to go to achieve the SDGs. The data used here is based on the original counties before the creation of Viken County on 1 January 2020.

The chart shows how close the region of Viken was to achieving the Agenda 2030 goals in 2019, as illustrated by the OECD regional indicator scheme, where 100 is a perfect score (i.e. Agenda 2030 goal achieved).

Although the data sources used are incomplete, they give us a clear picture of the region's strengths and challenges. It showcases Viken County's starting point in working towards the SDGs.

The chart shows our potential to strengthen our scores for SDGs 12, 14, and 15.

	Viken*	OECD average
SDG 1	95	68
SDG 2	77	62
SDG 3	97	68
SDG 4	88	59
SDG 5	Lacking data	Lacking data
SDG 6	78	69
SDG 7	100	64
SDG 8	98	76
SDG 9	73	49
SDG 10	97	77
SDG 11	92	73
SDG 12	66	70
SDG 13	96	68
SDG 14	16	42
SDG 15	18	58
SDG 16	100	72
SDG 17	78	64

Source: OECD regional data base measuring the distance to achieving the SDGs in regions and cities. Accessed 05.05.21 [Regional Statistics - OECD](#)

4 Methodology and preparation process for the review

Fact box

What is a voluntary local review and what is its benefits?

A Voluntary Local Review (VLR) is a fundamental instrument for sustaining the transformative and inclusive action of local actors towards achieving the SDGs.

According to the European Handbook for SDG Voluntary Local Reviews, “A Voluntary Local Review is a tool that allows cities to assess their achievement of the SDGs and their contribution to Agenda 2030. It also enables cities to prioritize actions and raise awareness about sustainability in the administration and local community.”

A VLR usually consists of a report describing the local government’s progress on the SDGs. The assessment can consist of both quantitative and qualitative measures. Both localised and comparable indicators, as well as a qualitative description addressing local issues, may be a part of the assessment.

The value of creating a VLR is understood to be as much about the journey as about the product. During the VLR process, local governments confirm their commitment to the SDGs. This process helps local administrations to strengthen links with a number of stakeholders and, internally, to foster cooperation among different departments. For instance, the preparation of a VLR requires several steps and interaction with a number of local actors from local communities, academia, the private sector, civil society, and NGOs, amongst others.

4.1 The Voluntary Local Review process for Viken County Council

In March 2021, Viken County Council was contacted by the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and asked to contribute a VLR to complement its chapter on the voluntary national review of regional and local work on the SDGs.

It was emphasised that what mattered at this point was conveying what was being done at the different levels of government and the experiences thus far.

This VLR is therefore based on existing and ongoing work related to our efforts on the SDGs. It is not an independent endeavour but rather a summary and snapshot of Viken’s work on sustainability as of spring 2021.

Ideally a VLR would provide a more comprehensive report on Viken County and an assessment of its progress on achieving the SDGs. Such a report should have included greater involvement from the various external departments and organisations in Viken. At this point in time, however, and given the time limitations, such a process was not possible.

Coordination with Asker municipality was prioritised, however, as it too had prepared and completed a VLR for KS's contribution to the voluntary national review. Together, Asker municipality and Viken County Council came up with a common understanding of the work related to their VLRs and sustainability, with the goal being to show the complementary roles played by municipalities and counties in the regional sustainability work.

4.2 Our internal process

The Office of the Governing Mayor was given principal responsibility for coordinating the report, in close collaboration with the Department of Regional Planning in the Council for Planning, Climate and Environment. These sections of the Viken County Council organisation are responsible for preparing and coordinating the regional planning network, statistics and analysis, development of the planning and steering system, and dialogue with municipal regions, and for being a driving force behind and coordinator of the organisation's sustainability work.

Because of the tight deadline, no comprehensive participation processes were carried out within the administration or externally with partners. However, the reports and documents compiled in this VLR utilised extensive participation processes.

We view this VLR as a first step that showcases where we are today. Hopefully, this early presentation of our work will contribute to a better understanding of our work on the SDGs and give a glimpse of future progress between 2021 until the next reporting period.

Part II: Policy and enabling environment

5 Methodology and framework for working on the Sustainable Development Goals

Viken's vision is "Viken leads the way". Its goals are sustainability, development, and competence. Our vision commits us to taking the lead, being proactive and setting the course for others.

Viken County Council's administration plays a role in the development of Viken County and in the coordination of our region's effort to achieve the SDGs, a role that has been enhanced by the territorial reform.

The County Council has decided to deploy its resources, methods, and assignments in a holistic matter and in close cooperation with other actors to find solutions to the complex challenges of our society and to achieve sustainability in line with Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

Our work with the SDGs is driven by two major process developments: (1) the regional

planning strategy and (2) the new planning and steering system for the county administration.

This involves laying a strategic path, mobilising business, industry, civil society, and the cultural sector, coordinating the use of our own tools and the tools of other public authorities, and exercising authority in the region. Coordination also entails a responsibility for creating good meeting places, networks, and partnerships.

The following chapter will explain how we have worked with the knowledge base and adopted specific models and methodologies, and how these have been integrated into the Regional Planning Strategy in order to create the basis for the local and regional framework for the SDGs in Viken County.

5.1 The planning and management system

The main goal of the planning and management system is to ensure that we are able to carry out the activities needed to achieve the organisation's goals and tasks. As a new organisation we are currently shaping our new planning and management system to incorporate our holistic approach to the SDGs.

Using the SDGs as a foundation, and emphasising the county council's role as a regional developer and coordinator, the planning and management system seeks to ensure a strong connection between political long-term goals, the prioritising of our resources and the actions carried out.

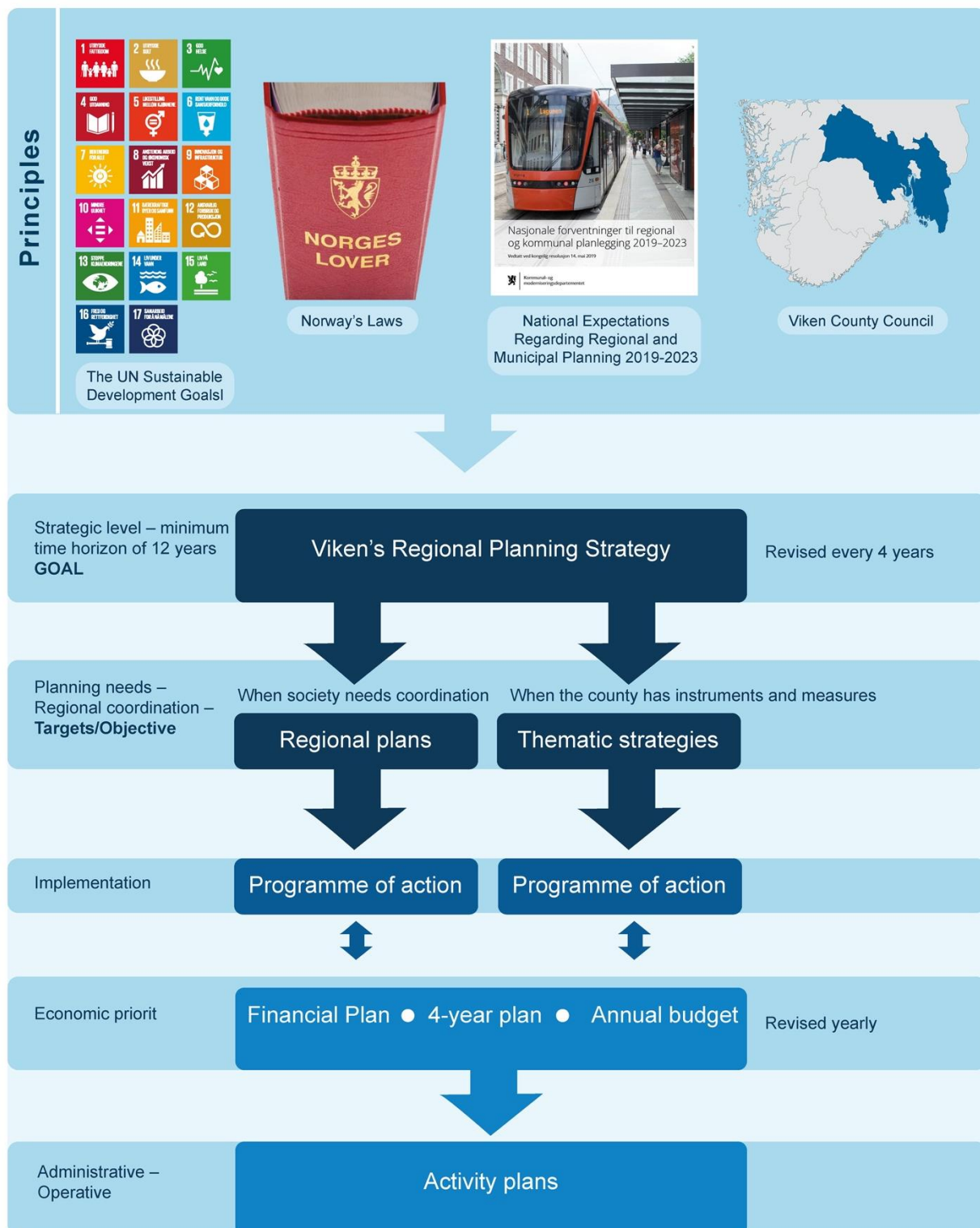
The Regional Planning Strategy represents the superstructure for the county and municipality planning system for Viken County. The Regional Planning Strategy describes the planning needs and requirements and serves as the basis for further cooperation through regional planning work and partnerships. The goals within the Regional Planning Strategy will form the basis for new plans and partnerships, as well as for rolling out existing plans and action programmes.

The Regional Planning Strategy is operationalised by way of regional plans.

Together these not only establish target levels for the County Council but they also serve as common goals for the region as a whole. Co-creation and active participation on the part of actors in the Viken region, across sectors and government levels, are therefore crucial to the process of creating content for the plans.

To follow up the Regional Planning Strategy and plans, action programmes will be developed to determine which activities and resources each party requires to implement the plan. These can serve as a starting point for binding partnerships or cooperation agreements between stakeholders. Each party will then implement the actions and priorities (thematic strategies, business plans, budgets) within their own organisations so as to deliver on their part of the regional commitment.

Reporting and evaluating are an important part of the planning and management system and will be part of the knowledge base used to create new regional planning strategies and regional plans.



5.2 Living in Viken: a knowledge base for a sustainable future

Plans, strategies, and decisions must be based on a thorough and up-to-date knowledge base.

In 2018, the three merging counties began to develop a common knowledge base using the SDGs as an overall framework. Initially the intention was to create a baseline and common foundation for Viken County and its regional planning. Our main report on the SDGs is called *Living in Viken* (Vi i Viken). It was released in November 2019.

The report is based on extensive data collected from the national statistics bank, Statbank Norway and provides a detailed picture of Viken as regards all of the SDGs, including progress on the global and national levels. Maps and other illustrations have been used to highlight key data points.

The knowledge base includes indicators that show societal development trends relating to all the SDGs rather than selected ones deemed most relevant to the county. It was a challenge to identify relevant data for all the SDGs and targets, as this data needed to be available at the right level of granularity, particularly in respect of the geographical and administrative levels.

The full report, *Living in Viken*, is available only in Norwegian; the associated short version, which has been translated into English, is called [*Living In Viken: a knowledge base for a sustainable future*](#). The short version contains only a selection of the datasets and trends.

Work has been initiated to further develop knowledge about Viken in the form of statistics, analyses, studies, and reports. This will be an ongoing endeavour in which material is presented primarily in digital format. The Viken statistics bank is organised according to the 17 SDGs which will thus underpin the development of new knowledge about Viken.



Goal 1 No poverty

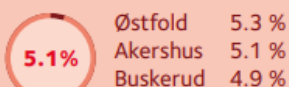
Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 is about combating extreme poverty and ensuring that economic growth is inclusive and more evenly distributed among countries and populations. Economic growth must create sustainable jobs and provide equal opportunities for all.

Risk factors in Viken

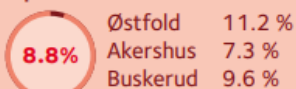
Those who are overrepresented among people with financial difficulties are:

- low income earners
- people with disabilities
- single parents
- recipients of social security benefits
- unemployed people
- immigrants

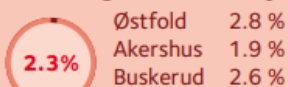
Percentage of single parents households:



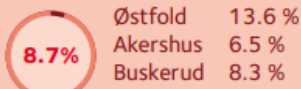
Percentage with persistent low income:

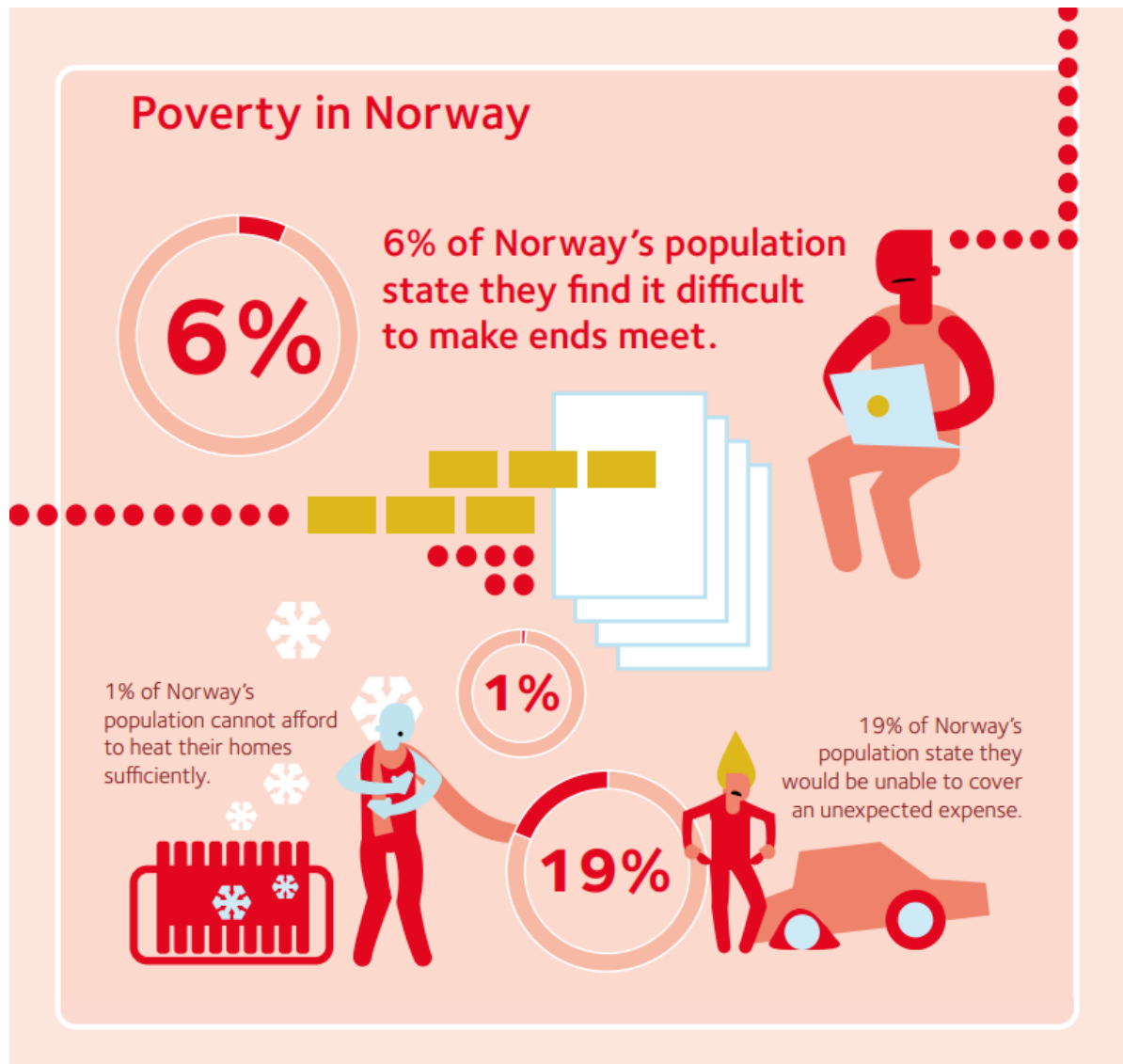


Percentage of people receiving social security



Percentage receiving disability benefits:



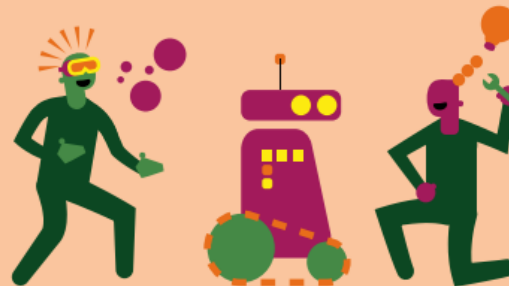




Goal 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure

SDG 9 is about building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation.

In the 4th quarter of 2017 there were no jobs available in the high-tech industry in more than half of Viken's municipalities.



Percentage of employed persons who work in high-tech companies





Tekst og kilde melkeveien

References and remarks.

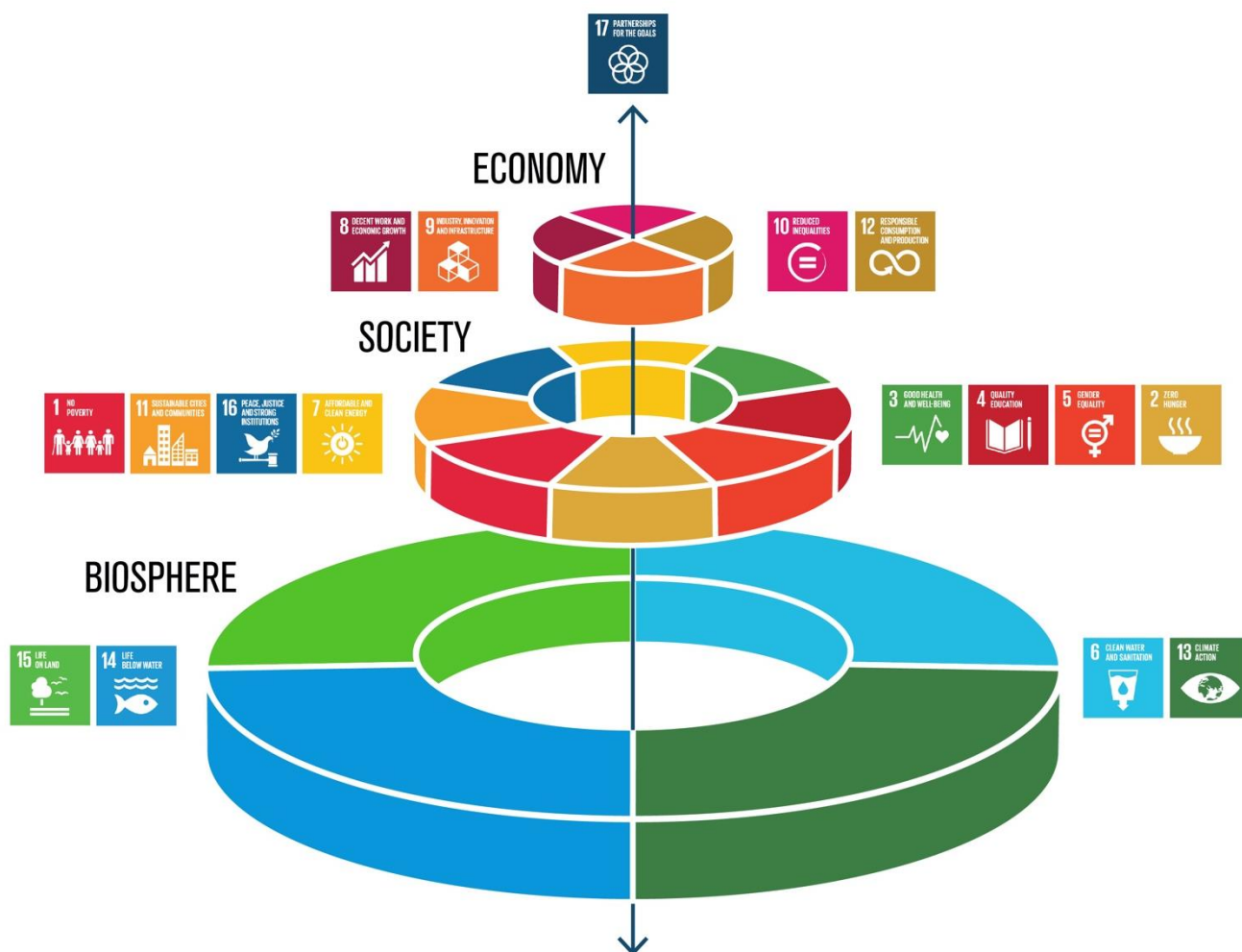
The whole process of creating the knowledge base is fully explained in the OECD report [A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals in Viken, Norway](#).

5.3 Treating the SDGs as an indivisible whole – the use of entry points in regional planning

The Regional Planning Strategy plays an important part in Viken County's efforts to achieve the SDGs. The strategy provides us with the direction and goals needed to achieve the sustainable Viken society of the future. It identifies challenges and opportunities.

The Wedding Cake Model developed by the Stockholm Resilience Centre illustrates the approach to sustainability within the Regional Planning Strategy. Here, the biosphere and planetary boundaries are

the foundation of social and economic sustainability. The crown of the cake, SDG no. 17, shows the need for collaboration to achieve the other SDGs.



“The principles of planetary boundaries, pondered in the “Wedding cake” model will be guiding element to achieve the 2030 Agenda in Viken, Source: Azote Images for Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University”

Viken further recognises the concept of planetary boundaries for guiding policymaking and priorities in the promotion of regional development while keeping ecological systems intact and using natural resources sustainably.



Fact Box:

The Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2019 looks at the potential for transformative change from a systems perspective. It acknowledges that focusing on single goals and targets may jeopardise the achievement of Agenda 2030 and that some cross-cutting trends that affect all of the goals – such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and inequality – are actually moving in the wrong direction.

The report thus identifies “entry points” and “levers” that relate more to the underlying systems that facilitate Agenda 2030 rather than to any cluster of goals and targets.

These entry points and levers are derived on the basis of growing scientific evidence about the crucial interlinkages between the goals and targets and identify potential pathways that may break negative patterns.

The entry points selected for Viken are:

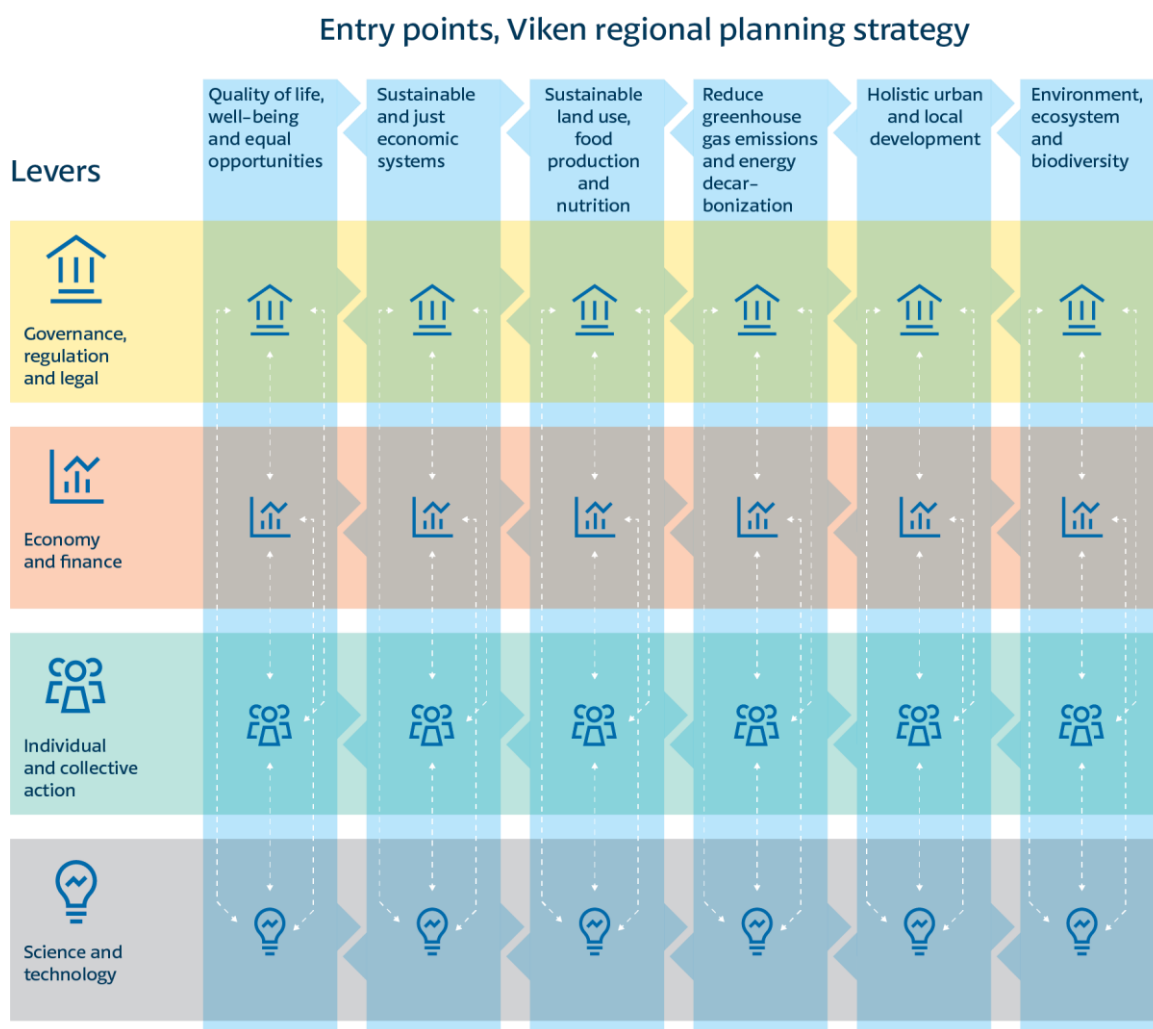
- Human well-being and capabilities
- Sustainable and just economies
- Food systems and nutrition patterns
- Energy decarbonisation with universal access

- Urban and peri-urban development
- Global environmental commons

The levers are:

- Governance
- Economy and finance
- Individual and collective action
- Science and technology

The GSDR matrix has been made in a global context, and the expert panel emphasises the need to “localise” its use through context-dependent combinations.



A matrix with six entry points and four levers devise the framework the county should operate within to achieve the 2030 Agenda. The matrix is adapted Global Sustainable Development Report 2019: The

Future is Now – Science for Achieving Sustainable Development, (United Nations, New York, 2019).
The framework is localized by Viken in Regional Planning Strategy for a Sustainable Viken 2020-2024

If the work was to be relevant to and useful in our everyday lives, adapting the SDGs to our own context was crucial. The focus areas from GSDR19 were therefore a good tool for dialogue to stimulate collaboration on complex sustainability challenges across sectors, disciplines, actors, and administrative levels and boundaries.

Hence, we localised the focus areas to our regional context and used them as a tool for dialogue when inviting others to participate in processes to discuss the types of regional social development we want in our future.

Along with the knowledge base, the responses from the participation processes were the main source of input for tailoring an approach that would contribute to regional planning cooperation and developing pathways for more comprehensive and sustainable development. The responses encouraged a more coherent use of resources and tools in the region.

The Regional Planning Strategy has thus been operationalised through three cross-sectoral regional plans with three different focus areas: increased quality of life, participation, and equality; competence and value creation; and land use and mobility.

Building on the understanding of the interlinkages between the three dimensions of sustainable development, three interdependent themes that should transverse the three plans have been defined. The interdependent themes are of such importance that they should be heavily emphasised in all county planning work implementing the Regional Planning Strategy.



Three cross-sectoral regional plans regarding; Quality of life participation and equality, Competence and value creation, Land use and mobility.

Three pressing interdependent themes must be included in all of the plans (Climate and Environment, Public Health, Cooperation). Source: Regional Planning Strategy for a Sustainable Viken 2020-2024

While the process of developing the plans will take years to finalise, the use of entry points and levers has helped establish a process that treats the SDGs as an interdependent whole in the region's work on Agenda 2030.

Remarks and references.

[Living in Viken- knowledge base for a sustainable future](#)

The process of creating the Regional Planning Strategy is elaborated upon in greater detail in the OECD report [*A territorial approach to the Sustainable Development Goals in Viken, Norway*](#).

5.4 Cooperation and a common toolbox for change

A greater emphasis on co-management increases the need for the county municipality to be a good and efficient partner in order to ensure broad involvement and transparency in important processes. Close cooperation is planned between the county municipality and the municipal regions in the new county.

Making the Regional Planning Strategy in collaboration with Viken society

The County Municipality of Viken has been involved in an extensive participation process to develop the Regional Planning Strategy.

The municipalities are key to the development of the new county. The municipalities cooperate in so-called regional councils. During the process of developing the planning system we have had regular meetings in various regions.

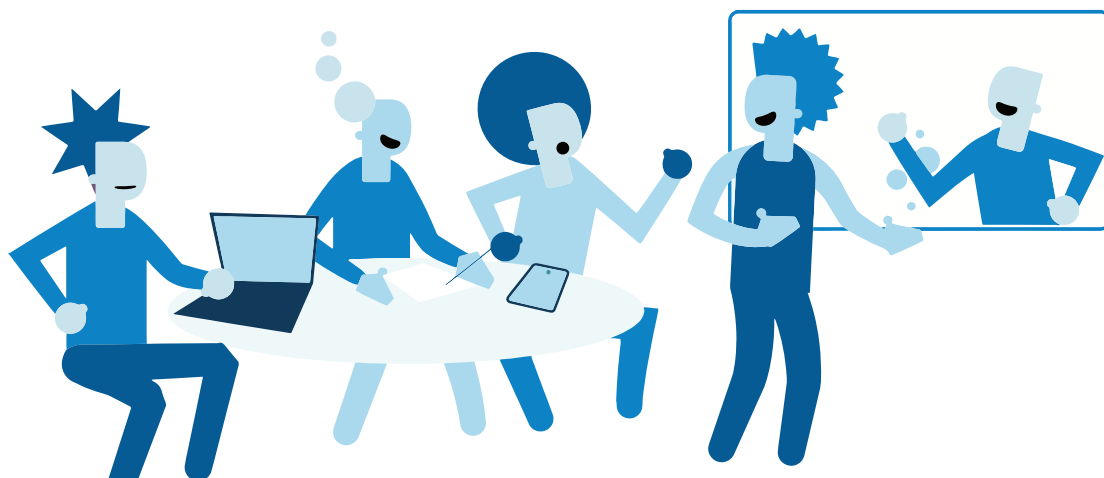
Likewise, the governing administrations of the municipalities, business leaders, volunteers, and residents are important dialogue partners.

The Viken bus was created as part of the Regional Planning Strategy process. There were agreements for it to visit about 40 different gatherings in the county to meet residents and organisations. Its tour had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 and thus the plan was not carried out. Nevertheless, a total of 59 meetings were held with the Viken community using a range of digital tools in order to involve people and organisations in the planning process while complying with national coronavirus restrictions.

An internal reference group with participants from all council areas in the county municipality and an external reference group with participants from regional, state, and municipal sectors, as well as from interest organisations, the R&D sector, business and industry partners, volunteers, and consumer and user groups, have contributed to the work. The reference groups played an important part in discussions and in prioritising which themes Viken should work on further.

Children and young people were involved through visits to various primary and lower secondary schools and input was received from youth councils.

In addition to their cooperation on the regional plans, partnerships and networks can be used to coordinate the use of various tools within society. Such forms of cooperation take different forms and be of varying durations. The new regional plans will build on existing cooperation agreements and partnerships with the former counties and determine which of these will continue in Viken.

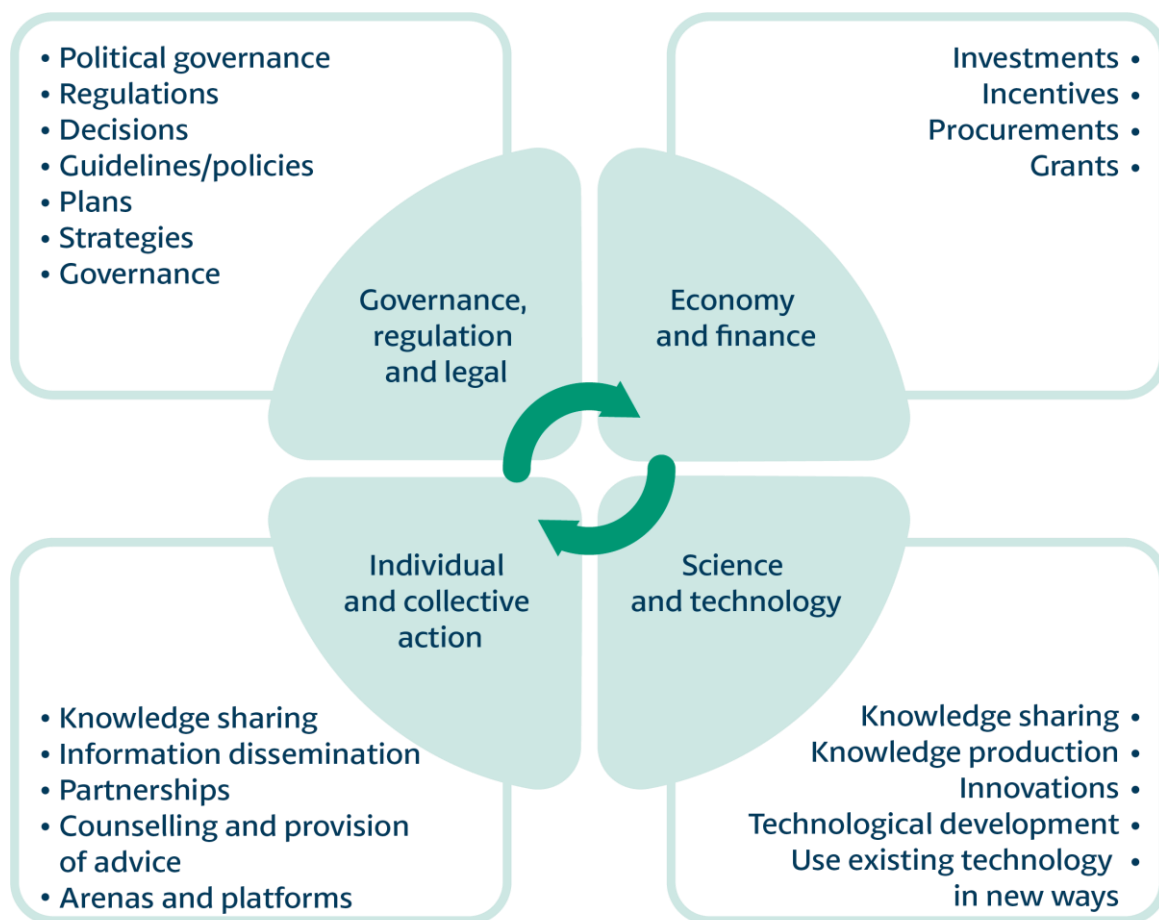


Creating a common toolbox for change

In dialogue with the Viken community, we have looked at how we can use the six entry points in our model to collaborate locally. Dialogue is a crucial element in using Viken's overall tools to focus on common goals.

Everyone – the county municipality, the municipalities, the business community, the state, employers, and private individuals – can influence change by finding opportunities to do so. We refer to these various opportunities for change as tools (“levers” in the UN 2019 report). Based on a good, up-to-date, and accessible knowledge base, the state and the regional and municipal authorities can create new and stronger forms of cooperation with the private sector, civil society, and R&D sector.

Through the planning strategy process, Viken County Council has defined four categories of tools based on UN methodology. The categories will help to identify, map, and systematise the tools that are available to Viken society. This is how we can further develop existing partnerships and find new ways to collaborate. Categorising in this way can also help us combine tools in new ways.



Four levers to bring about sustainable transformation, and examples of means or roles related to each lever. Source: Regional Planning Strategy for 2020-2024

By engaging with actors from the public, private, and voluntary sectors in Viken along the way, we have created mutual understanding and shared knowledge of our respective perspectives and our (joint) ownership of common challenges, as well as creating a common framework for working with the SDGs. This collaboration has laid a crucial foundation for us to build upon in our future work. Only through local and regional ownership can we achieve a sustainable future.

Part III: Progress on goals and targets

6 Viken as a pilot project in the Territorial Approach to the SDGs programme

Since late 2018, Viken has been a pilot project in the OECD-initiated programme [A territorial approach to the SDGs](#). The programme was developed to help cities and regions to develop, implement, and monitor strategies to achieve the SDGs.

The programme seeks to help interested cities and regions foster a territorial approach to the SDGs by:

- measuring where they stand vis-à-vis the national average and their peers
- engaging in multi-level dialogue with their lower and upper levels of government to build consensus on who can do what, on what scale, and how
- sharing best practice and lessons from international experience

Viken has been engaged in fact-finding missions to collect data, engage in dialogue, and share its ambitions for the SDGs with stakeholders locally and internationally. The dialogue has been open and has focused on sharing our best experiences and different points of view. A range of different stakeholders have been invited to attend on an equal footing.

This open approach, which is based on facts, knowledge sharing, and multi-level dialogue, is in line with our approach to the SDGs.

Early in the spring of 2021, the process culminated in the OECD presenting a detailed report with eight key recommendations for Viken's work on the SDGs. The recommendations will be followed up in Viken's future work on the SDGs.

The report is available here: [A territorial approach to the Sustainable Development Goals in Viken, Norway](#).

7 Sustainability Report 2020

Viken County Council has decided that a comprehensive sustainability report must be created for both its own internal organisation and for the community. A climate account that includes the work on eco-lighthouses must also be completed. The County Council has also decided that this is to be developed into a model for municipalities and for other regions in Norway.

The working meetings of the County Council regard the concept of sustainability *reporting* as more comprehensive than a single sustainability *report*. This means that the County Council will receive information on the organisation's work on the SDGs through many different reports and cases and not exclusively through the sustainability report.

The Viken Annual Report will report on the organisation's goals and activities, including its sustainability achievements. For the 2020 reporting period, this report will be supplemented by a separate, but complementary, sustainability report. However, to further consolidate the interlinkages between Viken's activities and our focus on sustainability, future annual reports will strive to sufficiently report on and include all aspects of a sustainability report.

In the sustainability report for 2020, our goals are to:

- highlight the work done to ensure that the SDGs permeate all work in Viken County Council
- highlight the lessons and experience gained from this work, as well as to build competence
- report to the Viken County Council on how the comprehensive sustainability report has been followed up on
- motivate the organisation to carry out further work on sustainable development and to market our sustainability work

This means that the sustainability report for 2020 will focus on how we have worked with goal number 17 and cooperation. In addition, great emphasis will be placed on showing how work has been carried out to meet the goal of well-functioning institutions (goal 16). This goal was especially important for Viken County Council in 2020, as we developed a completely new organisation in accordance with the political decision to use the SDGs as the "organisational idea".

The final structure of the sustainability report will be presented to the June 2021 meeting of Viken County Council. Among other things, the preliminary signs are that Viken County Council is interested in:

1. Developing Statbank and other knowledge bases. For instance, work has been initiated to further develop knowledge about Viken in the form of statistics, analyses, studies, and reports. This will be an ongoing endeavour in which most of the material is presented digitally. [The statistics bank of Viken](#) has been organised according to the 17 SDGs, which will thus underpin the development of new knowledge about Viken.
2. Developing the first version of a sustainability barometer for Viken, which the county council will have accomplished by the summer of 2022. It will be possible to extract information at the local level for use by municipalities, for instance.
3. Initiating an internal, two-year project that will critically examine how we work with the SDGs (reflective practice). Here we will examine selected issues within our own organisation in depth with the objective of learning. This will, among other things, help us familiarise ourselves with the use of qualitative methods in our sustainable development efforts.



Illustration provided by BDO

8 From theory to practice

Viken County Council's approach to operationalising the SDGs is holistic and contextualised. As we have chosen the Wedding Cake Model and the Matrix Model, our approach to our sustainability efforts is based on integrated and cross-sectoral work in which all 17 SDGs are relevant to our work. This means that it is not easy to find external resources that we can use in our daily work. We have therefore started to develop many methods and tools ourselves.

For the county to follow up on the models and approaches chosen for our work on the SDGs, we need to strengthen our culture and knowledge both within the organisation and across different levels of government.

We are therefore currently focusing on work in three different areas:

- innovation
- the comprehensive use of our toolbox
- interdisciplinary collaboration across sectors and levels of government and with other actors

As part of the process of strengthening the knowledge and culture within the organisation, we are developing a package of training resources to ensure that leaders and employees have the necessary understanding of the SDGs in Viken. This resource package also aims to help leaders and employees integrate sustainability into their work tasks. Parts of it will also be made available to Viken's 51 municipalities.

Furthermore, a method for assessing projects, proposals, and various work streams is also being developed. This method will enhance our sustainability analyses by identifying consequences, ways to reduce potential risk, and how to utilise collaboration to achieve the best results.

We are also developing resources that will make it easier to identify, work with, and get an understanding of the tools that both we and other actors in the region have available to us so that we can more easily pool our resources when we come up against difficult problems and other complex issues on our way to a more sustainable region.

9 SDG-related projects and good examples

In addition to Viken County Council's efforts to develop methods, processes, and reports to strengthen our work on the SDGs, an extensive range of initiatives, projects, and facilities supports our sustainability work on a more operative level. This includes work in schools, public transport companies, and dental clinics, as well as in procurement and in cooperation with the private and voluntary sectors. Here are a few specific examples.

9.1 Schools and cafeterias

The SDGs focus on the high school cafeterias in Viken. [By rolling out a strategy on healthy schools and the Eco-Lighthouse certification scheme, 30 high schools are now participating in a pilot project to give free school lunches to students.](#) Among the 42,000 students in Viken, 4,000 do not eat anything during the school day. There are also many who eat very little or who eat food that is not very nutritious. Ensuring that students have meals that are free and nutritious improves their ability to learn during the school day while reducing the effects of social inequality. The project also involves students in operating the cafeterias – for instance, through the creation of menus, ensuring that food is locally sourced and efforts to reduce food waste.

9.2 Private sector and business

As part of the Covid-19 business support package, the Viken County government has made funds available so that businesses can offer tailor-made initiatives to increase the capacity of staff and leaders. Applicants have been strongly encouraged to base their applications on the SDGs. This has been a way of using the crisis package to boost the green transition and sustainable thinking in business. Linking the SDGs to the support package has been positively received by businesses, and many have seen it as an opportunity to highlight the sustainable focus they already have. [An informal network has been established](#) for a handful of the businesses that have demonstrated extraordinary focus on sustainability as an integral part of their core business. The network's activities focus on sharing, learning, and taking collective action that contribute to the SDGs in a wide range of thematic areas. Examples of such activities include social sustainability and well-being, how to anchor sustainability among one's own employees, and innovative methods for a circular economy. The businesses represent a variety of sectors, including aircraft engine manufacturers and clothing brands.

9.3 Procurement

Public actors have an important role to play in setting standards for procurement and value chains as a way of demanding the sustainable production of goods and services. Viken County Council has established a new procurement strategy which includes criteria such as fossil-free vehicles and construction sites, solutions based on the circular economy, and decent work requirements. The county government also offers [free advisory services](#) to its municipalities to ensure that procurement and construction projects are climate-friendly.

10 Conclusion and next steps

Today we know that the economy, inequality, and the environment are interdependent. We also know that the world's climate and environmental systems are being undermined in a way that may threaten the future of society. Solving climate change issues means reducing greenhouse gas emissions while dealing with the environmental, social, and economic consequences of ongoing climate change.

This knowledge makes it natural for Viken to base its work on both planetary boundaries and the principle of leaving no one behind.

As a consequence, Viken requires a holistic, multi-level and cross-sectoral approach to achieving the SDGs. In practice, however, this is a challenge. The various levels of public government all too often work separately, in silos, on the basis of our various geographies, thematic areas, and the services that we offer. Not only do we need to become better at seeing our respective areas of work in a broader context, but we also need to coordinate and connect our activities and tools so that we are working towards the same goals.

To reach our full potential, we need to harmonise the existing resources and tools available to all types of actors across various sectors and levels so that we can achieve an optimal and sustainable use of the resources we have, create efficient synergies, and avoid goal trade-offs. This can be accomplished only if we work together towards common and agreed goals and find the best solutions to the challenges we face.

To achieve this, we need to create platforms, routines, and practices that will enable us to find and identify each other across structures and sectors. It will also require a change in work culture. We are all used to competing for the same scarce resources, and we all wish to take ownership of successes and specific areas of work. However, if we want to achieve the SDGs, we must cultivate a culture of generosity, true collaboration, and innovation. This will take time. Viken has an important role to play in the coordination of our regional efforts. It is our responsibility to work as a social developer, community builder, and coordinator between the sectors, public government levels, and subject areas within our region (and in cooperation with other regions).

With hope that the regional plans will allow us to create a shared outlook and common goals throughout the region. In the future, we hope to do even better, more focused work with our municipalities in this respect, and we want to continue to engage with actors from civil society, the private sector, and research and knowledge institutions, as well as individual citizens.

Throughout 2021, Viken County Council will develop reports on the status of, and the work on, the SDGs in the region and within the organisation, and it will roll out training material on the SDGs for its leaders, employees, and municipalities. Viken's VLR for 2021 is just one of many actions that will secure ownership of the SDGs in the region, ensure the development of competence, share knowledge and experience, and move us towards a more sustainable society.

We are learning and developing every step of the way. This is just the beginning of our journey – the first step.



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