

# NORDIC MATRIX

National Action Plans for the  
Sustainable Development Goals



# INTRODUCTION

## Nordic Matrix on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and National Action Plans (NAPs) in the Nordic countries.

This publication is a result of the exchange and learning process realised by Nordic Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) involved in the project “Civil society cooperation on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Nordic countries”, supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Through the project period, Civil Society Organisations from Denmark, Norway, Finland and Sweden have established a **network for cooperation and exchange**, which has enabled a better understanding and a basis for **comparative analysis** of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals across the Nordic region.

This report is based on a compilation of experiences and comparative analysis of the process related to NAPs, in Denmark, Sweden and Finland, as it is a point of comparative contrast Norway has had the opportunity to reflect on these findings in the national debate about whether and how to adopt a NAP of its own.

The findings concerning the adoption and implementation of the National Action Plans and the relations between political decision-makers, civil society and other stakeholders, are presented in the following pages, first in **short national narratives** and then condensed and compiled in a **change to comparative Matrix chart**.

Based on these findings, the Nordic CSOs have elaborated a **series of recommendations** that were found to be valid and pertinent for all the countries involved. They reflect challenges that are common to all the Nordic countries, and suggest solutions that are applicable in all their national contexts.

The recommendations can serve as an inspiration for decision-makers and civil society in Norway and other countries in the Nordic region that do not yet have NAPs (such as Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland). They also serve countries that are in the process of rethinking and rewriting the first generation of National Action Plans, such as Denmark and Sweden, and for countries such as Finland, that may widen the scope of their existing Action Plans in relation to spill-over effects and impact.

Finally, some recommendations address the Nordic Council of Ministers as a unique space where Nordic ministers and decision-makers can be inspired and involved in the sustainable development of the region, individually as well as together in a regional framework strengthened by the common urgency and necessity of implementing the 2030 Agenda in the Nordic region.

The authors of this report can be contacted for more information. For information on the Nordic project, contact the Danish 92 Group.



Denmark  
and Nordic project

Helene Gjerding:  
hgjerding@92grp.dk

Sweden

Sofia Svarfvar  
sofia.svarfvar@concord.se

Finland

Outi Hakkarainen  
outi.hakkarainen@fingo.fi

Norway

Kathrine Sund-Henriksen  
kathrine.sund-henriksen  
@forumfor.no



# DENMARK



## DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF THE DANISH NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

The Danish NAP was adopted in June 2017, with no specific expiry date. However, it has not been officially valid after the government change in June 2019. Since the Paris Agreement in 2015, Danish CSOs have continuously worked for new global goals, including development *and* sustainability, and insisted on the necessity for a Danish NAP. The Minister for Development supported CSO participation in dialogues, held mainly with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Environment.

The NAP was finally elaborated by government initiative. CSOs were not consulted or involved in the process, and the NAP was neither debated nor adopted in Parliament. CSO networks produced a letter with observations and recommendations to the NAP, after it was published. Because the letter was a reaction to

a finalised plan, input from civil society and other stakeholders are not reflected in the NAP document.

The 2017 NAP is not elaborated based on a baseline or gap analysis for Denmark and includes no Theory of Change. It presents no timeline or specific benchmarks.

In 2020, a comprehensive national project to establish a baseline and produce specific national indicators on all SDGs is being developed. The baseline was commissioned by the *2030 Panel* (a multi-stakeholder advisory board to the ministerial SDG-network). It is developed by a coalition of consultancy firms and private foundations and has a broad public participation process. It could possibly serve as a basis for a new NAP.



## SCOPE, CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The NAP contains 4 priority areas, which have a number of related objectives (a total of 37 objectives). Each objective has 1-2 indicators and a list that refers to relevant SDGs. Most objectives have several related SDGs. In that way, all 17 SDGs are covered by the focus areas. However, the connection between the objectives and indicators, and the SDGs is unclear.

Civil society requested more clarity about the connection between the national priorities and the global goals, as well as the criteria for the selection of national objectives and indicators. No alternative CSO indicators were developed, since there was no consultation process. Civil society also pointed out that the 2017 NAP is based on a general understanding that Denmark

is basically doing well regarding the SDGs. Actions are mainly descriptions of already existing initiatives and scalable measures. CSOs ask for a more nuanced understanding of the universality of the SDGs and a prioritization of those goals that Denmark is furthest from reaching, towards a transformative agenda – both nationally and in acknowledgement of our global responsibility.

The implementation of the NAP is anchored in the Ministry of Finance, and coordinated by a cross-ministerial working group. Individual ministries are responsible within their own areas. It is necessary for political ownership that the entire government takes responsibility.



## MONITORING AND REPORTING

Government is committed to producing a yearly progress report and a parliamentary briefing. An in-depth discussion in Parliament is to take place every 4 years.

The first progress report was published in June 2018. A draft was given to CSOs for consultation.

The data presented illustrated the situation in specific selected areas, but was insufficient and unsuitable for measuring progress. As NAP indicators do not directly report to specific SDGs, it is difficult, with no baseline or benchmarks, to assess progress towards achieving the SDGs in Denmark. The impacts of Denmark's international activities and global footprint were not included in the analysis.

CSOs produced a series of specific recommendations and pointed out that no reflections on implementation strategies or strategic considerations for the next reporting period were presented.

The government parallelly reports on global indicators to the UN, through the national statistical institute, Statistics Denmark. A national statistics platform and a multistakeholder "data partnership" have been established by Statistics Denmark. No external evaluation of SDGs or NAP progress is planned.

There are no specific allocations to the NAP in the national budget or any other direct funding options. It remains unclear how sufficient financing will be ensured, especially for those SDGs where Denmark is lagging behind.

# SWEDEN



## DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF THE SWEDISH NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

The Swedish government proclaimed already in 2015 to be a leading country for the 2030 Agenda. However, Sweden does not have an overarching strategy and the Swedish National Action Plan (NAP) that was launched in June 2018 only runs until 2020.

In 2016, the government appointed a 2030 Agenda Delegation with the mandate to give advice to the government and to anchor the agenda within society. The first report from the 2030 Agenda Delegation included an analysis of the status in Sweden at that time and was based on several multi-stakeholder consultations. The 2018 NAP focus areas were developed from that analysis.

The Ministry of Finance, responsible for the 2018 NAP, also held a multi-stakeholder consultation. The input from civil society and other stakeholders is partly reflected in the final document. However, the major CSO concern about the Swedish NAP that it is a list of actions or policies already in place, and is not as forward looking and ambitious as expected, was not acknowledged. For example, the NAP has no benchmarks, milestones or long term strategy towards 2030.

The whole government has political ownership of the NAP and the implementation, follow-up and reporting should be integrated in the government's procedures and frameworks. However so far, there has been no specific report to Parliament. Although the NAP refers to the vital role of Parliament and paves the way for more involvement of parliamentarians, little action has been taken by the Parliament.

The mandate for the 2030 Agenda Delegation ended in 2019 when they produced a final report with recommendations to the government. The main recommendation is an overarching objective for Sweden's leading role for sustainable development. The recommendations were referred for consideration to different actors in society, including civil society.

The government now aims for a proposal with an overarching goal for sustainable development that will be put to Parliament in June 2020. Moreover, in February 2020 a National Coordinator for the 2030 Agenda was appointed.



## SCOPE, CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The NAP includes all the 17 SDGs, in a comprehensive approach, with six focus areas. National indicators were not included but are being developed by Swedish Statistics. The NAP includes a mission to develop voluntary indicators for municipalities. This has been done in consultation with different stakeholders. Swedish Statistics also has a vital role for the development of the global indicators.

The government emphasises that policy coherence is a prerequisite for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Swedish Policy Coherence for Development, published in 2003, was

updated in 2016 and framed and in line with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The implementation of the NAP involves the entire government, with specific responsibility for national implementation borne by the vice Prime Minister/Minister of Environment and Energy and for international implementation to the Minister of Development Cooperation. The government is open for dialogue with civil society and other stakeholders, but there is no official systematic structure for inclusive follow-up and review.



## MONITORING AND REPORTING

The government is officially responsible for the implementation and should monitor and report on progress within the existing government framework and processes. There is no specific report on the 2030 Agenda. However, the national bill from 2018 states that the 2030 Agenda should be implemented through ordinary governance and procedures.

Policy Coherence of Development must be assessed and reported every two years. In the last two of these reports, the 2030 Agenda was set as the framework for the assessment. Regarding statistical follow-up, the NAP includes a mandate to Swedish Statistics

and to the Swedish Agency for Public Management for evaluating progress at national and regional levels and how well the three dimensions are integrated in existing systems. No external evaluation of the Agenda or NAP progress is planned.

No additional funds are allocated to the National Action Plan. According to government policies, the 2030 Agenda should be reflected in the entire national budget and initiatives should be implemented within the ordinary framework of governance. However, many ministries increasingly refer to the 2030 Agenda in the national budget.



## DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF THE FINNISH NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

The first Finnish NAP was adopted in February 2017. Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development – *The Finland We Want by 2050* – which constitutes Finland's national interpretation of the 2030 Agenda, formed a framework for the NAP. This commitment was formulated in 2013, updated in 2016 to be aligned with the 2030 Agenda. It has a vision, principles and eight goals for Finland for the period up to 2050.

The results of a baseline study conducted in 2016 fed the NAP, and the preparatory process included several consultations among stakeholders. CSOs were pleased with the opportunity but the final content was a disappointment for many of them, due to low level of ambition of the NAP. However, as CSOs hoped, the NAP was

published as a government report and thus discussed in several committees of the parliament. The committees invited different stakeholders, including CSOs, to express their ideas about the NAP and they also were widely acknowledged in the statements the committees made on the NAP.

The new government (adopted in June 2019) programme has sustainable development as a guiding approach. The government presented a first draft of a new NAP in March 2020 for the National Commission on Sustainable Development. Different stakeholders are represented in this commission, including CSOs. The new NAP will also be published as a government report, and thus it will be widely discussed in Parliament.



## SCOPE, CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The NAP builds on two key focus areas: (1) a carbon neutral and resource-wise Finland and (2) a non-discriminating, equal and competent Finland. There are several tangible actions to be reached during the government period (9 and 14 respectively).

The focus areas are supposed to support the simultaneous realisation of multiple goals nationally, and advance the global realisation of Sustainable Development. The Development Policy Committee is playing a major role to further the global dimensions of the NAP.

The importance of coherence between national and international policies is underlined but CSOs have argued that the global reflections of the NAP are limited. The policy principles

of the NAP are: (1) long-term action and force for change, (2) consistency, and (3) global partnership, ownership and involvement. The previous government proposed these principles to be used beyond government terms, and the new one has included them in its draft for the NAP.

As with its predecessor, this NAP equally reflects the government programme and the timescale is limited to the government period, but the core structure is different. In the new one actions are presented under all 17 SDGs, reflecting national and global context. The prime minister's office continues to coordinate sustainable development actions, with the general secretariat of the National Commission on Sustainable Development, but a new element for the commission is a multi-stakeholder roundtable on climate policy.



## MONITORING AND REPORTING

The comprehensive monitoring system of the NAP is laudable. The government reports on progress as part of its annual report to parliament, this discussion is an essential part of the annual monitoring cycle. Parliament supervises government activities and administration, to ensure policy coherence. An annual event for parliament and other stakeholders is another yearly culmination point. The National Audit Office provides a statement on governments report, and evaluations and recommendations provided by the scientific community and views of civil society and the private sector feed into discussion on achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Government reporting is based on 10 monitoring baskets identified by a national, multi-stakeholder monitoring network, each basket

have 4-5 indicators for which data is already collected. Another source of evidence is the data collected by the Statistics Finland on the indicators defined by the UN for the 2030 Agenda, insofar as they are relevant to Finland and are available.

Every four years an external evaluation is conducted and a report issued on the state of Sustainable Development in Finland. The first was the PATH 2030 study, published in March 2019. It provides useful elements for strengthening Sustainable Development policy, mainly to clarify national targets and to draw up a roadmap to achieve them. The current government programme includes these tasks, and the draft of the new NAP has as comprehensive monitoring and reporting plans as the previous one.

# NORWAY

In 2017, Parliament requested the government to present a plan for SDG implementation. The government has not delivered, but Parliament is not particularly vocal on the issue.<sup>1</sup>

There is, however, political will to pursue a holistic approach to certain aspects of the SDGs. A case in point is the National Action Plan for Sustainable Food

Systems, which was launched in June 2019 and brings together five departments in a common effort to address food production, value creation and markets; nutrition and diet; and policy and governance.<sup>2</sup>

The concern among Norwegian civil society is that the lack of one overarching framework represents a lost opportunity to stimulate innovation across sectors and

## DATA AND STATISTICS

Norway has not developed a set of public national indicators on the SDGs and subsequently reports on the global indicators. Statistics Norway is able to produce statistics for approximately half of these indicators. In the National Budget for 2020, Statistics Norway was allocated funds to establish a digital platform for

all national SDG statistics. This is an important building block to ensure a quality NAP with a baseline and monitoring based on Norwegian statistics. This will be an important tool for Parliament, civil society, media and other actors who wish to hold the Norwegian government to account.

## BASELINE <sup>3</sup>

Norway does not have a baseline for SDG implementation. However, Norway's previous minister for development, Nikolai Astrup (2018-2019) was appointed Minister of Municipalities and Modernization in January 2020 with a particular responsibility to oversee the implementation of the SDGs in Norway. He has already stated his intention to initiate a mapping of the status for SDG implementation in Norway.<sup>4</sup> This would potentially serve as

a baseline for a future national action plan. For civil society, an important task will be to advocate close coordination between Astrup and the current Minister for Development, Dag-Inge Ulstein, and to develop similar mapping for Norway's development policy abroad. Ideally, Statistics Norway would be tasked to develop nationally relevant SDG indicators for the purpose of this mapping.

## NATIONAL INDICATORS

Indicators tell us whether we are on track to reach the SDGs or not. The 232 global targets are more relevant in a developing country than in Norway, and the UN recommends that all member countries develop indicators that are specific and relevant to the national context. Civil society has recommended that the government task Statistics Norway with developing a set of national indicators to supplement the global indicators. So far this has not happened. That said, national indicators for

gender equality and attractive cities have been commissioned by the departments of Family and Equality, and the Department of Municipalities, Health, and Climate respectively. Indicators are also being developed at the municipal level, and the research institute FAFO has been commissioned by Forum, the Norwegian Labour Organization, the Norwegian UN Association and Unicef Norway to develop indicators for civil society shadow reporting on the SDGs.



departments in reaching the SDGs and that divergent goals and interests are not detected, and subsequently not properly addressed.

Lessons learned from our neighbouring countries, however, indicate that certain steps should precede the adoption of an SDG NAP, and that the NAP itself should include certain steppingstones and building blocks in

terms of a baseline for SDG implementation, national indicators, quality data and accessible statistics. The following presents the Norwegian situation as of March 2020.

## MONITORING AND REPORTING

Implementation of each SDG is covered by a relevant government ministry, which reports on progress in their chapters in the state budget. In addition, the Ministry of Finance reports on the SDGs in a separate chapter in the national budget. The government also reports on policy coherence in a separate chapter. In addition, Norway reports through the UN in the annual One Year Closer report.

The quality and scope of SDG reporting varies greatly between departments and is generally generic. Policy steps are rarely

linked to specific SDG targets, and hardly ever to the global indicators. Statistics are used sparsely.

The OECD has labelled Norwegian reporting on policy coherence as "ineffective".<sup>5</sup> Both the OECD and Norad have pointed out that the state and national budget are not well suited formats for reporting on the SDGs and policy coherence. In the budget, each department focuses on success stories, rather than challenges and policy dilemmas.<sup>6</sup> An alternative would be to report in the form of an annual white paper, as recommended by ForUM.<sup>7</sup>

- 1 There are, however, examples of cross-sectoral action plans for defined policy areas, such as the National Action Plan for Sustainable Food Systems, which was launched by the government in June 2019 and involves six ministries. Civil society has welcomed this action plan. The government has also provided funding for Statistics Norway to establish a national digital platform for SDGs statistics in 2020, which is strongly welcomed.
- 2 [https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/combat\\_hunger/id2661244/](https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/combat_hunger/id2661244/)
- 3 According to the Nordic Council Report, "The Norwegian government has undertaken a gap analysis exercise to map those targets it will find challenging to meet, and has chosen to work with these specifically" (p. 36). However, this is the only reference we have been able to find to such a baseline, and this analysis is based on the assumption that this gap analysis is not used for current policy decision making.
- 4 <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/nikolai-astrup-blir-barekraftsminister/id2685430/>
- 5 [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/oecd-development-co-operation-peer-reviews-norway-2019\\_75084277-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/oecd-development-co-operation-peer-reviews-norway-2019_75084277-en#page1)
- 6 <https://norad.no/contentassets/4ac3de36fddd4229811a423f4b00acf7/8.18-evaluation-of-norwegian-efforts-to-ensure-policy-coherence-for-development.pdf>
- 7 <http://forumfor.no/assets/docs/Samstemthetsnotat-03-nov.-2019-web.pdf>

# 1. DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS



## DENMARK

### STATUS OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

Adopted in June 2017.  
No expiration date but not officially valid after government change in 2019.  
New National Action Plan expected in 2020.

### NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ELABORATED BASED ON BASELINE

No.  
Baseline for SDGs to be finished in 2020, can possibly serve as baseline for new National Action Plan.

### NATIONAL ACTION PLANS INCLUDES THEORY OF CHANGE (OR BUILDS ON SEPARATE TOC DOCUMENT)

No.

### POLITICAL INITIATION FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

By government initiative.

### ROLE OF PARLIAMENT

National Action Plan neither debated nor adopted in Parliament.

### OFFICIAL CSO INVOLVEMENT

No CSO consultations.

### OFFICIAL CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS (ACADEMIA, STATISTICAL BUREAU, PRIVATE SECTOR)

No.



## SWEDEN

Adopted in June 2018.  
Expires in 2020.

Yes.  
Comes from 2030 Agenda Delegation's first report.

No.

By government initiative.

National Action Plan neither debated  
nor adopted in Parliament.

CSOs involved as part of multi-stakeholder  
consultations.

Yes.  
Multi-stakeholder consultations based on the proposed  
focus areas.

## FINLAND

National Action Plan adopted in 2017.  
Focus areas for government period (until June 2019).  
Policy principles and monitoring plan beyond that.  
New National Action Plan to be adopted in March-April  
2020.

Yes.

No.

By government initiative.

Parliamentarians involved in multi-stakeholder  
consultations. Several parliamentary committees  
made statements on National Action Plan.

CSOs involved as part of multi-stakeholder  
consultations.

Yes.  
Multi-stakeholder consultations were held.

## 2. SCOPE, CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS



### DENMARK

#### SCOPE

4 priority areas and 37 goals.

#### SDGS COVERED BY THE FOCUS AREAS IN NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

All SDGs are listed.  
However the relation to priority areas is unclear.

#### PERSPECTIVES REFLECTED IN NATIONAL ACTION PLANS (LOCAL, NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL)

National and EU perspective predominant.

#### NATIONAL INDICATORS DEVELOPED FOR NATIONAL ACTION PLANS IMPLEMENTATION

Yes.  
However indicators are not directly SDG related.

#### NATIONAL INDICATORS DEVELOPED FOR SDGS (FOR UN REPORTING)

Under development.

#### ALTERNATIVE CSO INDICATORS DEVELOPED/INCLUDED

No.

#### NATIONAL ACTION PLANS INCLUDES TIMELINE/BENCHMARKS

No.

#### INPUT FROM CIVIL SOCIETY AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ON DRAFTS REFLECTED IN FINAL NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

No.

#### MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

Anchored in the Ministry of Finance.  
Coordinated by an inter-ministerial working group chaired by the finance minister. All individual ministries responsible within their own areas.



## SWEDEN

## FINLAND

6 focus areas.

2 focus areas with 9 and 14 target actions.  
3 key policy principles of implementation.

All SDGs.

No.  
Focus areas linked in general to implement the 2030 Agenda.

National perspective predominant, global and EU included.

National perspective predominant, global and EU included.

Under development.  
Swedish Statistics responsible.

No.  
However, there is a commitment to update existing national indicators for sustainable development.

Under development.  
Swedish Statistics responsible.

Under development.  
Statistics Finland responsible.

No.

No.

No.

No.

Yes, to some extent.

Yes, to some extent.

A whole government responsibility.  
Specific responsibility on vice prime minister/minister of environment (before minister of administration) for the national implementation and on minister of development for the international implementation.

Prime minister's office coordinates.  
All ministries participate at the sustainable development coordination network.

### 3. MONITORING AND REPORTING ON NATIONAL ACTION PLANS



## DENMARK

**GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY REPORTS ON NATIONAL ACTION PLANS PROGRESS**

Yearly to Parliament.  
However only 2018 report exists.

**GOVERNMENT REPORTS ON SDGS TO UN STATISTICS ON GLOBAL INDICATORS**

Yes.

**GOVERNMENT REPORTS ON SDGS TO PARLIAMENT**

Yearly in a progress report.  
However only 2018 report exists.

**CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTED ON NATIONAL ACTION PLANS REPORTING**

Yes, on draft in 2018.

**PARTICIPATION OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

None.

**STATISTICAL FOLLOW-UP**

Yearly progress report includes some statistics.  
Baseline under development in 2020.

**AVAILABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF NATIONAL SDG STATISTICS**

National statistics platform developed by Statistics Denmark.  
Multistakeholder "data partnership" established by Statistics Denmark.

**EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF SDGS**

No.

**SPECIFIC ALLOCATIONS TO NATIONAL ACTION PLANS IN NATIONAL BUDGET**

None.

**OTHER FUNDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

No additional funds are allocated.

**VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REPORT**

2018



SWEDEN	FINLAND
No.	Yes. Part of annual report of government to parliament, annual event to debate progress.
Yes.	Yes.
No. Only report on the Policy Coherence for Development.	Yes. The current government will do so.
No specific report on 2030 Agenda after the adaption of the National Action Plan.	Debates on national performance in achieving the SDGs. Since 2019, annual citizens' panel (open call).
No specific report on 2030 Agenda after the adaption of the National Action Plan.	Debates on national performance in achieving the SDGs. Since 2019, annual citizens' panel (open call).
The National Action Plan includes a mission to the Swedish Statistics to develop national indicators and voluntary local indicators.	Governments annual progress report based partly on statistics of national indicators and some international comparison.
Yes. The official reports from Swedish Statistics.	Database developed by Statistics Finland for UN indicator data. Data for national indicators published yearly at prime minister's office's website on sustainable development.
No. However the Swedish Agency for Public Management has a mission to analyse national implementation. Final report June 2020.	Yes. Every four years: External evaluation of national implementation, and National Audit Office's impact assessment.
None.	None.
Integrated in the national budget.	Some.
2017	2016, 2020.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## NORDIC MATRIX – RECOMMENDATIONS

The organisations involved in the project have elaborated the following recommendations that are valid and pertinent for all the countries involved. They reflect challenges that are common to all the Nordic countries and suggest solutions that are applicable in all the national contexts.

The list can serve for Norway and other countries in the Nordic region that do not yet have NAPs (such as Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland).

They are also relevant to countries that are in a process of rethinking and rewriting the first generation of NAPs, such as Denmark and Sweden, or considering to widen the scope, such as Finland. Finally, some recommendations address the Nordic Council of Ministers, as a unique space where Nordic ministers and decision-makers can be inspired and involved in the sustainable development of the region, in a regional framework strengthened by the common urgency and necessity of developing the 2030 Agenda in the Nordic region.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

- **Establish cross sectoral forum** within Parliament for the 2030 Agenda, that includes Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.
- **Take ownership and hold governments accountable** for example by follow up on the request for National Action

Plans' development (Norway) or revision (Denmark and Sweden).

- **Take ownership and hold the government accountable** by requesting strong reporting on SDG implementation, based on national statistics institutes and national indicators.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

- **Set a good example and work long term** to ensure that all dimensions of sustainability and that no one should be left behind become a natural part of all operations.
- **Be more visible** in their activities to reach the SDGs.

- **Strengthen cooperation** across different sectors of civil society to strengthen collective capacity to enhance the 2030 Agenda.
- **Continue and further develop cooperation** in a Nordic framework.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

- **Continue to support initiatives** that stimulate and enable civil society in the Nordic countries to work together and make more joint Nordic initiatives.
- **Ask national parliamentarians** to discuss, exchange and collaborate more within a Nordic frame.
- **Push for an ambitious agenda of change** within the new Strategy for the Nordic region as the most sustainable region in the world. This could be through pushing for ambitious Action Plans in the Nordic countries that install a *race to the top* towards responding to the common challenges we face.
- **Create a space or platform** for different kinds of new innovations to enhance sustainable development.
- **Push Nordic countries** to take regional (Nordic and EU) and global (UN) political leadership together, with initiatives

to strengthen Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

- **Create a space for multi-stakeholder meetings** involving governments, civil society, and the private sector from all the Nordic countries as well as from partner countries for exchange and peer-learning.
- **Draw on civil society organisations** in each of the Nordic countries by conducting bilateral meetings, broader consultations and commissioning reports on SDG implementation.
- **Follow up on existing Nordic initiatives:** Based on Nordic analysis (for example *Bumps on the Road*), **identify common barriers to transformative agendas** and policy coherence – at national and Nordic levels – and together with CSOs, **develop a common Nordic approach** for solutions and action.



## RECOMMENDATIONS TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS



### DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS

- **Set a target date** for the adoption of a National Action Plan for all SDGs (Norway and others), update expiring NAP (Denmark and Sweden), and broaden the scope to include spill-over and impact (as Finland).
- **Elaborate preceding gap-analysis, baseline and theory of change.**
- **Develop benchmarks and milestones** towards 2030 for the government, ministries and authorities.
- **Work in partnership with stakeholders** and consult civil society, academia and private sector on gap-analysis, national indicators, the content and priorities as well as prudent reporting formats.
- **Create a comprehensive policy for sustainable development** that includes policy coherence at all relevant levels (such as coherence between national, Nordic, EU and international policies, as well as interlinkages between different SDGs).



### SCOPE, CONTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

- **Ensure the NAP leads to a transformative agenda**, which includes policy actions towards reaching the whole Agenda, including international impact and responsibilities as well as Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.
- **Avoid listing existing policies as new initiatives.**
- **The commitment to Leave No One Behind** should be standard.
- **Justify why specific areas are in focus** and not others, if the NAP is *not* comprehensive of all the SDGs.
- **Choice of indicators must be clearly explained** and they should serve the purpose of effectively measuring progress towards the achievement of the goals.
- **Avoid indicators which the country already excels at** – instead pay special attention to the issues that present the greatest challenges.
- **Establish a national multi-stakeholder forum**, to ensure ownership, understanding and commitment from the local to the global levels.
- **Develop and implement** SDG-alignment/screening mechanism.
- **Establish a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities** for its implementation and identify specifically which entities are accountable for the statistical follow-up and monitoring progress (government, municipalities, civil society).
- **Ensure coordination** between ministers and ministries.
- **Task national statistic institutes** with developing national SDG indicators, including Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.
- **Allocate specific and additional funding** for the implementation.



### MONITORING AND REPORTING

- **Baseline, gap-analysis and theory of change** must serve as a point of departure to measure progress.
- **Ensure a clear correlation** between the targets described in the plans and those measured in the monitoring process.
- **Ensure the quality**, transparency and availability of data.
- **If indicators or data for a specific target** are not available, explain and produce a plan to procure such data in the near future.
- **Monitoring should be mandatory** and follow specific timeframes for progress reports (e.g. annual, bi-annual)
- **Justification** must be given if, for any reason, states do not deliver the monitoring report.
- **Allocate budget and resources** specifically for monitoring.
- **Conduct consultation of CSO stakeholders on draft texts** (not only on the final documents), for monitoring and reporting on NAPs, through a systematic dialogue.
- **Avoid that evaluations merely address potential shortcomings** – they should also explain how the government plans to rectify the situation.
- **The government** should produce regular reports to the Parliament.

WITH SUPPORT FROM:



Nordic Council  
of Ministers