

ATTRACTIVE AND
SUSTAINABLE
NORDIC TOWNS AND
REGIONS

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urbanization represents both a key challenge and opportunity the Nordic region faces in its transition to a green economy. This project on green transition and competitiveness in Nordic urban regions aims to help to make Nordic towns part of the solution to environmental and climate challenges. The project is designed to identify indicators and methods for attractiveness and determine how the quality of small and medium sized towns affects the environment, public health and the creation of attractive jobs.

18 SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED NORDIC TOWNS – BOTTOM UP DEVELOPMENT

A network of 18 small and medium sized Nordic towns was established by an invitation to apply. The selected towns have defined their own focus areas within the scope of the project. The Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment, The Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Service and The Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernization leads the project. Sweco is hired to support the project by suggesting indicators and methods that support attractive and sustainable town development.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS A COMMON FRAMEWORK

Sweco suggested that the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) should be an executive framework for the project and should serve as a common ground for work on sustainability and attractiveness in the Nordic towns throughout this project. The SDG framework responds to what residents want, the world over, and works as a common denominator for working on both sustainability and attractiveness. Working on sustainable development together at different geographical scales, global, national, regional and local, has the potential to improve the quality of life for residents and promote new economic opportunities for green growth. As the world turns towards more sustainable modes of living and development, countries, regions, cities, towns and territories that invest in sustainability today will be ahead of the curve and acquire a competitive edge over other regions for development and investment.

30 SUGGESTED INDICATORS FOR ATTRACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE NORDIC TOWNS

In this report we have suggested a selection of 30 different indicators. They focus on issues that are important for small and medium sized Nordic towns where common issues are; developing attractive and liveable town centres, ensuring sustainable mobility patterns, attracting and keeping young people, investigating new ways for citizen involvement and cocreation, enabling sustainable town growth and facilitating business development. The suggested indicators aim to illuminate the issues brought up by the towns, while not ignoring the issues and trends we know affects the Nordic region in general like urbanization, digitalization, climate change and integration. The selection of indicators also aims to meet the Sustainable development goals that are considered most relevant for small and medium sized towns in the Nordics.

A TOOLBOX OF 60 SUGGESTED MEASURES, METHODS AND ACTIONS FOR ATTRACTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE NORDIC TOWNS

The toolbox is a gathering of inspirations on how to work with concrete measures for attractive and sustainable town development. Indicators can provide direction, but they do not alone contribute to sustainable urban development or ensure urban qualities. The toolbox is therefore a more practical approach that compliments the suggested indicators. The toolbox should not be read as a A-Z cookbook for successful local development, but rather as an inspiration for further local adaptation of a towns practice based on their local conditions. Sweco have mapped existing tools, methods, guides and measures that can be used as an inspiration at a local level to further secure sustainable development and ensure urban qualities within small and medium sized Nordic towns.

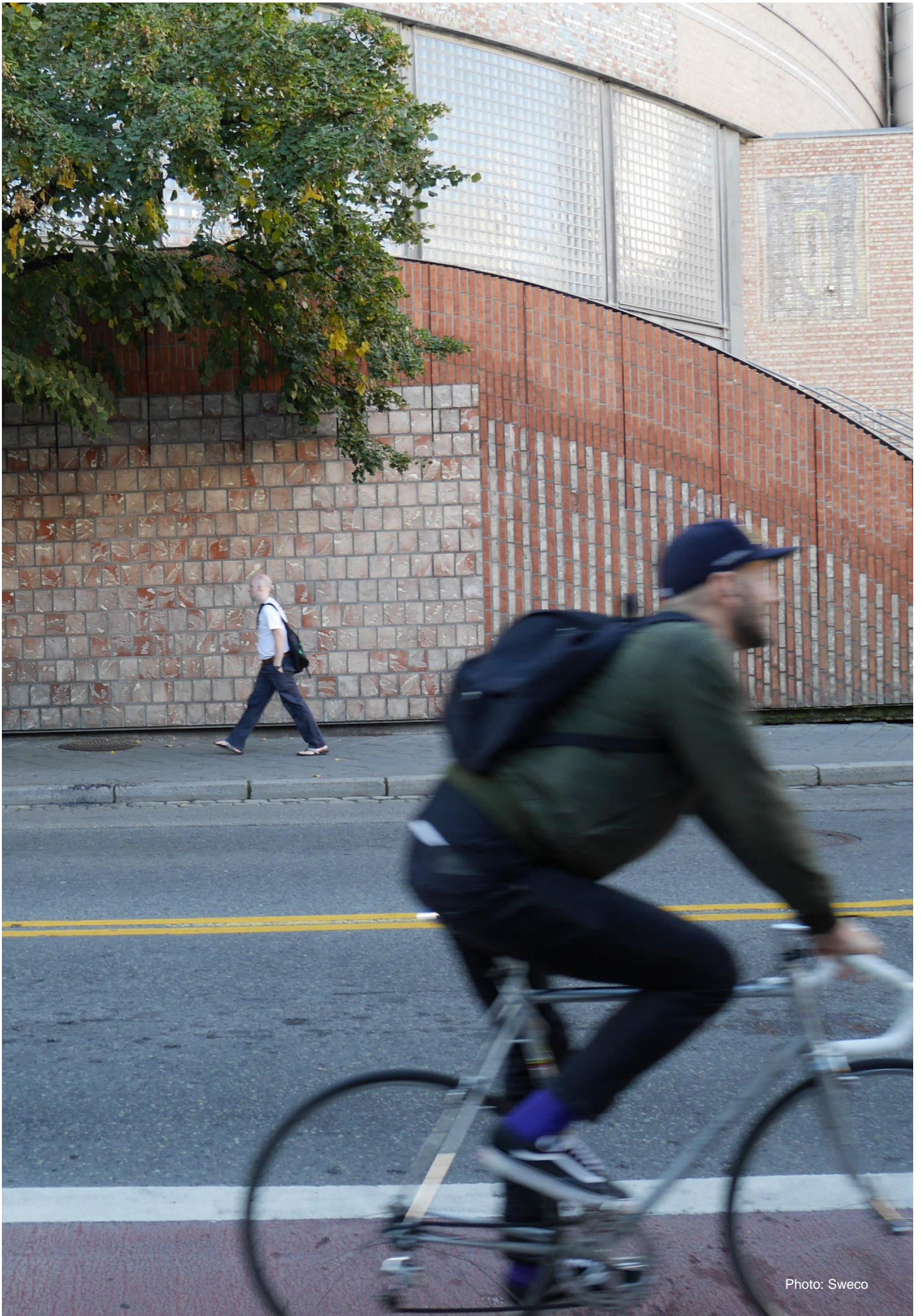


Photo: Sweco

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2. BACKGROUND

One of the main priorities for the Nordic Council of Ministers is "The Nordic Countries in Transition". Norway held the presidency of the Council in 2017 and then launched the presidency project "Attractive towns. Green redevelopment and competitiveness in Nordic urban regions. Towns that provide a good life for all", is one of several initiatives to promote Nordic competitiveness, green redevelopment, the transition to a low-emission society, integration and a good environment for public health.

The project is led by the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernization in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Care Services and the Ministry of Climate and Environment.

PURPOSE

Urbanisation represents both a key challenge and an opportunity that the Nordic region faces in its transition to a green economy. This project on green transition and competitiveness in Nordic urban regions aims to assist Nordic towns to contribute with part of the solution to global environmental and climate challenges. The project is designed to identify indicators for attractiveness and determine how the quality of small and medium sized towns affects the environment, public health and the creation of attractive jobs.

The presidency project will prepare a joint Nordic strategy for how towns and their surrounding areas can become more attractive through the development of vibrant and inclusive urban environments that are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. Environment- and climate-friendly solutions, social balance and equal opportunities for all, good social and public health services, cultural activities, vibrant town centres, historical-cultural objects and environments, good blue-green structures, urban spaces and architecture, coordinated land use and transport solutions and attractive job opportunities are important elements to achieve that goal.

The project consists of four subprojects:

1. Mapping, development and use of methods to measure urban qualities and sustainability
2. Share knowledge between Nordic decision makers, administration and academic communities
3. Contribution to handling complex decision-making challenges in urban regions
4. A common Nordic strategy for attractive and inclusive urban environments

A network of small and medium sized Nordic towns is established by an invitation to apply. The advertisement was announced on the web sites of the Nordic Council of Ministers, underlying Nordic thematic groups and through the Nordic networks of The Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment, The Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Service and The Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernization.

The networking towns are:

Denmark: Sønderborg, Middelfart, Viborg

Finland: Pori, Salo, Vasa

Iceland: Akranes, Hornafjörður, Mosfellbær, Fljotsdalshérað

Sweden: Växjö, Lund, Ystad

Norway: Hamar, Narvik, Innherredbyen (Steinkjer, Levanger, Verdal)