

The Nordic View on Sustainability

Learnings from the Local Level



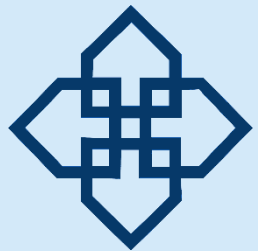
Nordic Voluntary Subnational Review 2024

A first-ever cross-national review on how municipalities are localising the SDGs
Based on surveys, interviews, webinar + chapters by Nordic **youth** and **CSO** networks

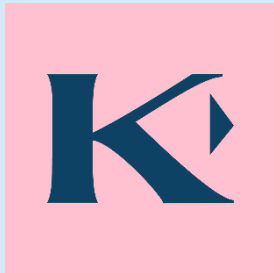
Aiming to:

- Share Nordic learnings
- Showcase the **vital role of local governments** in reaching the SDGs
- Spur more local SDG action worldwide

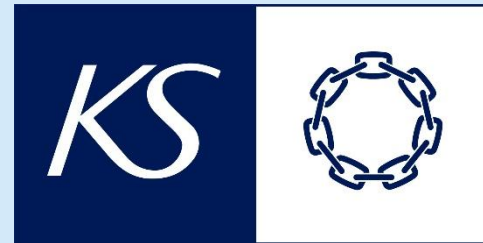
Produced by Nordregio and Nordic Associations of Local and Regional Governments
Financed by Nordic Council of Ministers



 Nordregio



IKL



Swedish Association
of Local Authorities
and Regions

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*One of the main **benefits** of working with SDGs is having a common language across sectors. The business sector and civil society keep the SDGs high on their agendas, putting pressure on us. This can be helpful in times of political shifts.”*

Ingvild Gundersen Little, Sustainability Adviser,
Kristiansand kommune, Norway

Selected Nordic VSR survey results

Different response rates in
different countries:

95% in IS

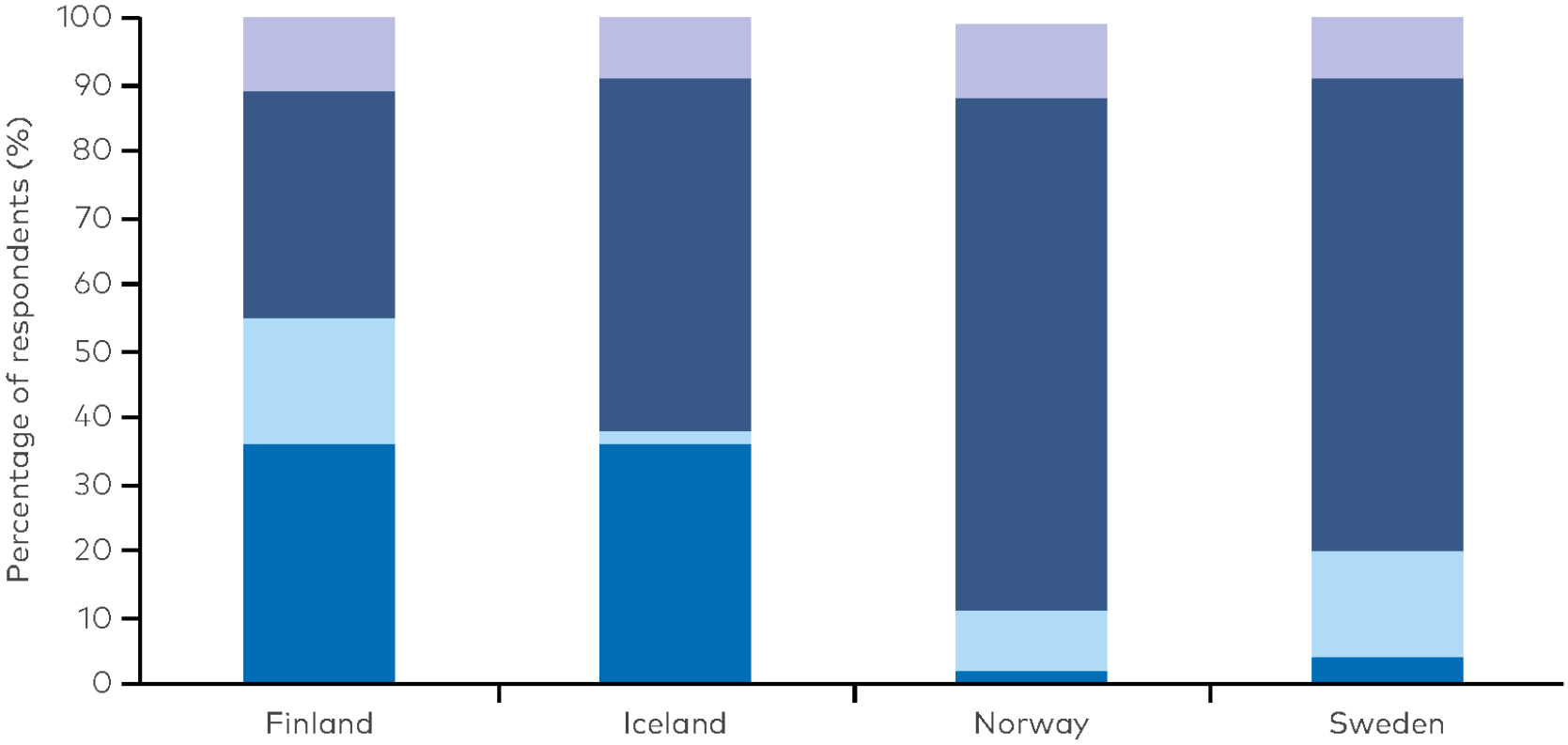
83% in DK

78% in SE

< 30% in NO and FI



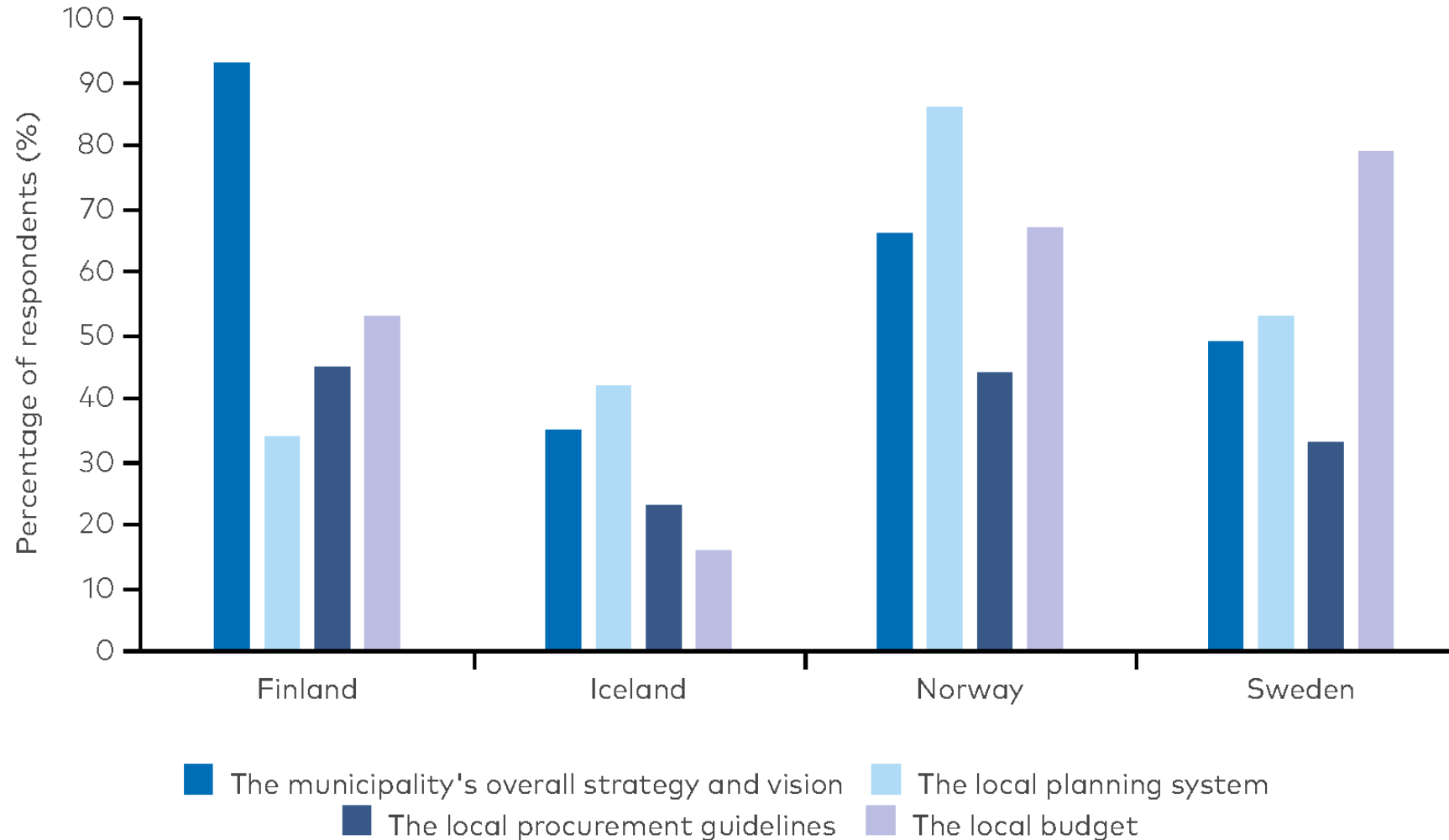
How far has your municipality come in working with the 2030 Agenda?



In the Danish survey, **80%** responded, they work concretely with the SDGs.

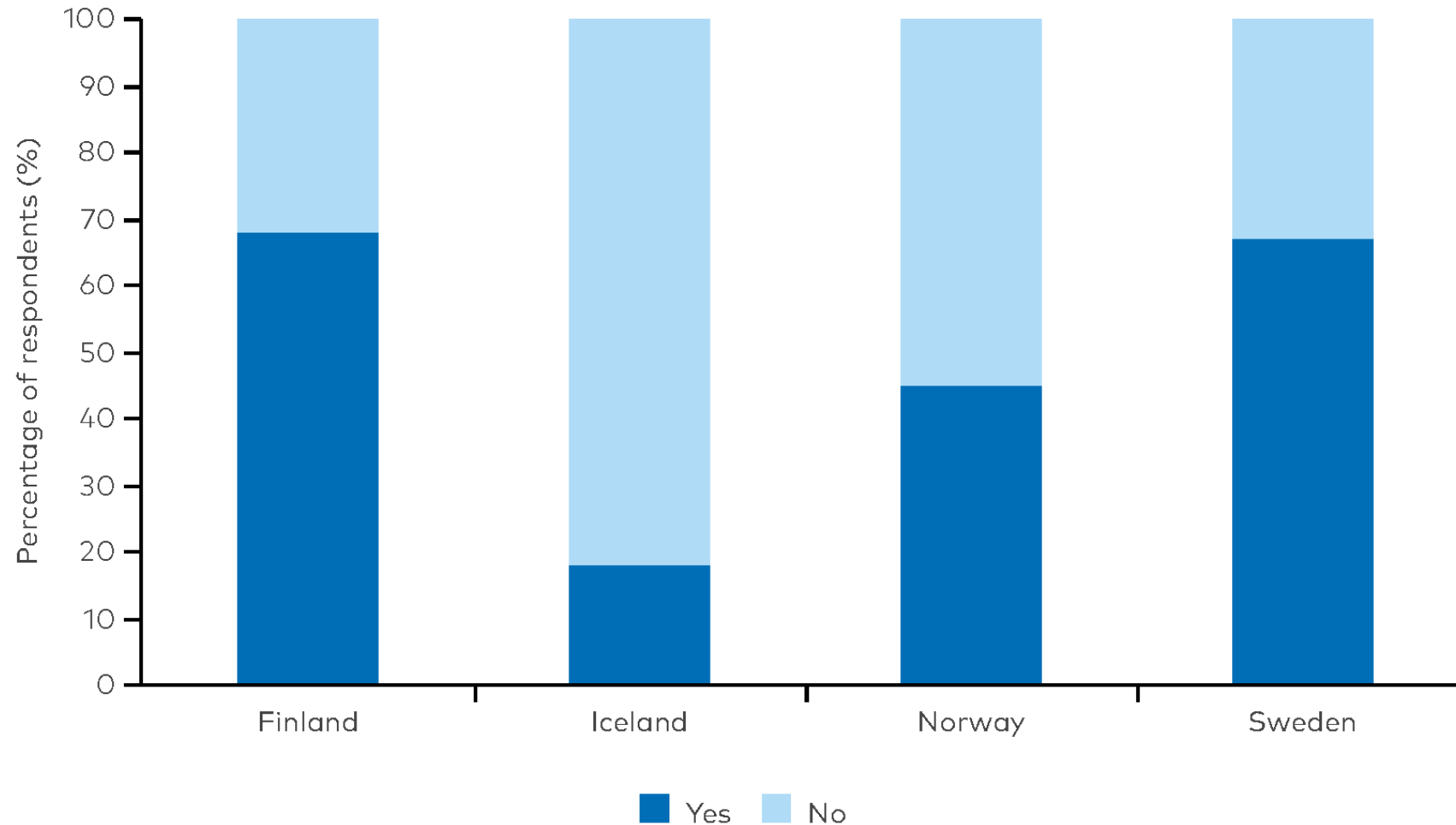
- We have not (yet) started to work with the 2030 Agenda
- We have just started the work
- We are working on it
- We consider our municipality a frontrunner in the work with the 2030 Agenda

Which steering documents have you integrated the SDGs into?



75% of Danish respondents have integrated SDGs into existing strategies or plans. Up from 66% in 2021.

Does your municipality measure progress in its work with the 2030 Agenda?



Nordic SDG governance – success factors

- **Strong local self-governance model:** autonomy; broad service delivery
- **Early adopters** of sustainability and climate targets
- **High degree of trust** and local–national level dialogue
- **Proactive role of LRGAs:** capacity building, peer-learning, advocate local needs
- **'Copy with pride':** municipalities like to compare and collaborate
- **Collaborative culture,** tradition of voluntary work:
 - thriving civil society, Youth councils;
 - Public-Private Partnerships, integrating SDGs in procurement guidelines
- **Use of local SDG indicators** and data collection (SE, NO and FI)

Nordic local SDG governance challenges

- Decline in use of SDGs as holistic framework; **SDG fatigue** also in the Nordics
- Reduced **government support**, political polarization
- Youth **distrust** politicians' ability to solve key problems; *Generation Greta?*
- Lack of **resources** & local indicators
- Frequent **shifts** in local political leadership >> recurring SDG training
- Difficult to work holistically locally when **national policies remain in silos**.

”

*Everyone wants to live a **good life**.
Create consensus around that goal
and then debate politically the means
for how we get there.*

– Simrishamn Municipality, Sweden

Nordic learnings

- **Set local goals:** ensure politicians see benefits of SDGs to **improve life quality**
- **Anchor the SDGs** in the municipality's budget and smart reporting systems
- **Dedicate a person or a team of staff** to coordinate SDG implementation
- **Utilise tools, resources** and **peer learning** networks offered by **LRGAs**
- **Copy with pride!** Compare and collaborate with your neighbours
- Measure **progress** and analyze **gaps**
- **Use public procurement** to reach your sustainability targets
- Engage **businesses, youth and civil society** in local development
- **Benefit from international collaboration** – and peer learning platforms: **Act glocal**



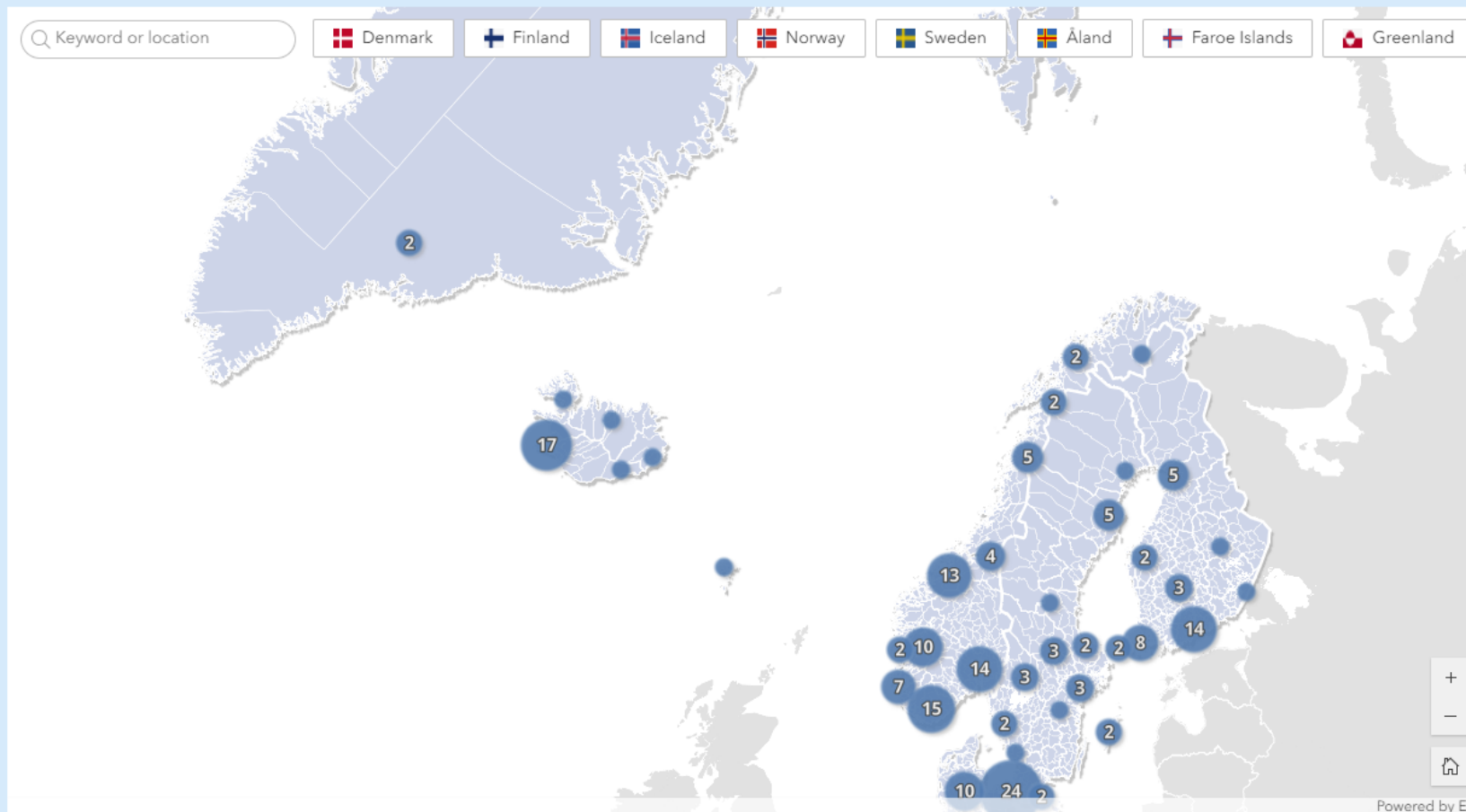
NORDIC TOOLBOX

Good practices on localising the 2030 Agenda

Welcome to the Nordic Toolbox, an interactive tool visualising examples and strategies implemented by Nordic municipalities and regions to localise the 2030 Agenda. These good practices, collected during the development of the first **Nordic Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR)**, highlight just some of the many initiatives taking place in the Nordic countries. Learn more in **Agenda 2030 at the local level – Nordregio Projects**.

FILTER BY SDG

- No Poverty
- Zero Hunger
- Good Health and Well-being
- Quality Education
- Gender Equality
- Clean Water and Sanitation
- Affordable and Clean Energy
- Decent Work and Economic Growth
- Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- Reduced Inequalities
- Sustainable Cities and Communities



FILTER BY TOPIC

- Enhancing capacity to work with SDGs
- Financial tools and budgeting
- Improving commitment, ownership and involvement
- Leaving no one behind
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Planning instruments or strategies
- Procurement strategies
- Progress indicators and monitoring
- Youth engagement

Youth as partners in the green transition

From 'youth washing' to meaningful participation



Photo: Andreas Omvik / Norden.org

Gains of including youth in decision-making

- Raising the **knowledge** level of decision-makers. Increased awareness of young people's perspectives and needs affects political priorities and actions.
- **Improved decision-making** with increased focus on sustainability and inclusion. More perspectives are taken into account in the decisions through broader participation.
- **Increased innovation and creativity**. Give young people the opportunity to propose activities and develop innovative ideas and unconventional solutions to local sustainability challenges.
- **Promotes democracy and active citizenship**. Young people who are empowered to take responsibility in the municipality can become future leaders with knowledge of important democratic tools.
- **A more vibrant city or countryside**. When young people are included, a stronger society is created with more meeting places, jobs and activities. A place where young people want to stay and contribute to economic and cultural development, and resilience.

Four steps to real youth inclusion – Call to Action:

By Nordic Youth Network for Sustainable Development

1

Implement principles for **meaningful** participation in all youth inclusion measures.

2

Establish local **youth councils** and youth groups in collaboration with local **schools**.

3

Use social media & **digital platforms** to reach youth beyond youth council members.

4

Focus on **all SDGs** in education programmes and school **curricula**, not just climate issues.

Source: **Nordic VSR 2024**, chapter 5 – special subchapter on youth engagement

How do you do it in practice?

Nordic toolbox examples – Copy with pride!

NO: Local & regional Youth councils by law
Competition *Årets ungdomskommun* (Kvam 2023)

DK + IS: *Child Friendly Cities* – using UNICEF's guidelines: Gladsaxe, Kopavogur

FI, Korsholm: Change-agents in schools

SE, Tierp: Dialogue for mental health & new app
– digital youth council

Karlstad: Student council for climate

POLICY BRIEF 2023:4

Youth as partners in the green transition

Building sustainable communities

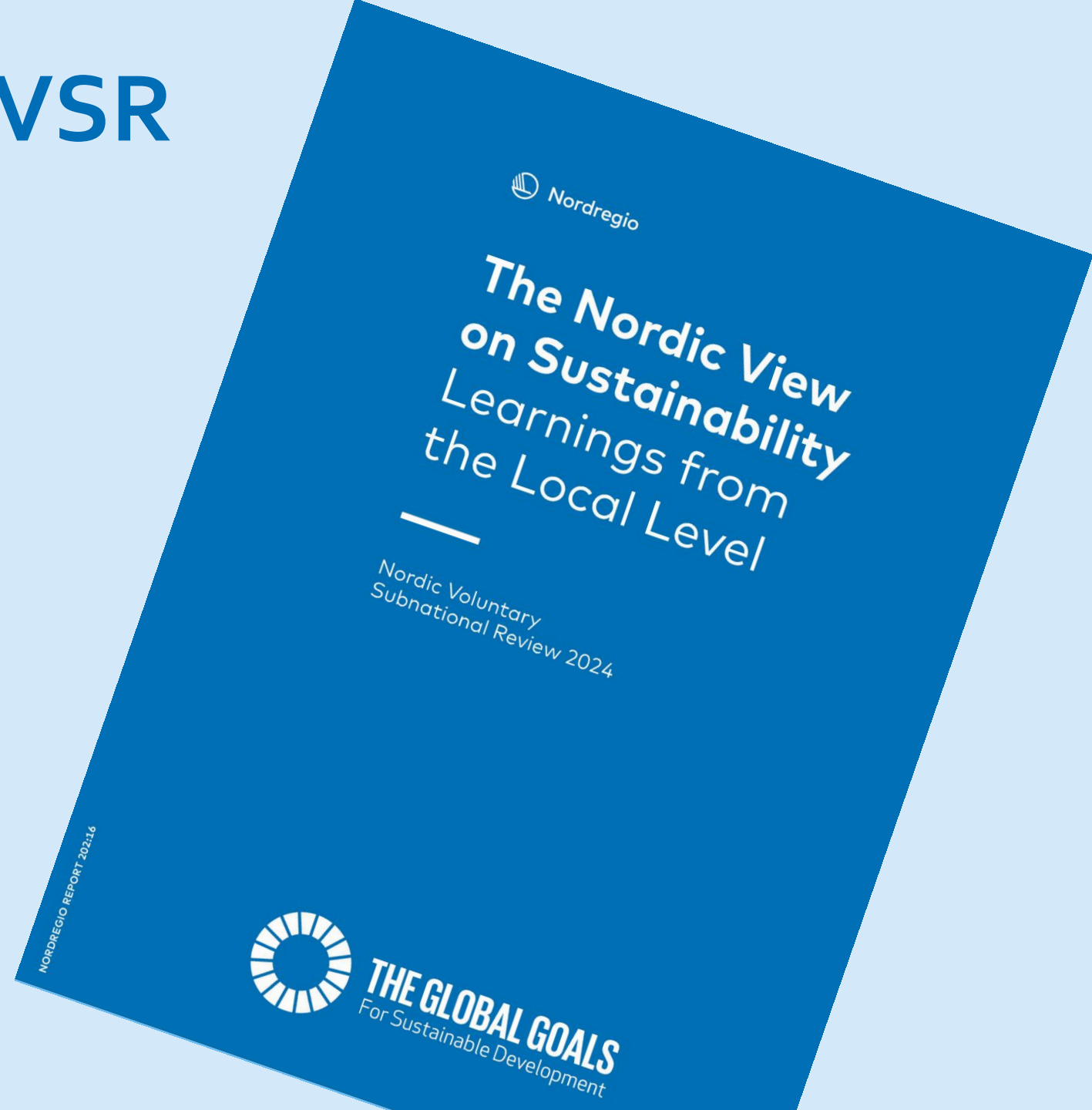
Localising Agenda 2030 policy brief series



Access the Nordic VSR Report and Toolbox



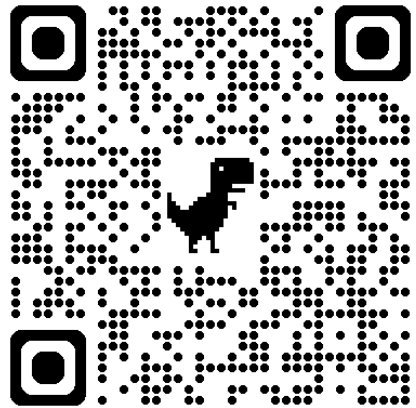
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Nordic Toolbox for a Just Green Transition

Navigate challenges, listen to those affected, and get inspired through this interactive, research-based toolbox for policymakers.

Nordregio report 2024:21



[Introduction](#) →

[Six priority areas for a Just Green Transition](#) →

[Climate goals and emissions in the Nordics](#) →

[What is the green transition and why should it be just?](#) →

[Policy memos: Voices and views from people in the Nordics](#) →

[Checklist for policymakers](#) →