

Land (Government focal points: Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development)

Goals for land-use policy in Norway

Land-use management in Norway shall protect and enhance the natural environment, cultural environment, landscapes and other important qualities of the surroundings throughout the country. A coordinated land use policy shall ensure coherence between Norway's goals for local and regional restructuring and its goals for protection of the natural environment and cultural heritage.

(Report No. 21 to the Storting 2004– 2005

The Government's Environmental Policy and the State of the Environment in Norway)

Municipal planning in Norway – land-use planning and development of land resources

Local basis

According to the Planning and Building Act, the local authorities (municipalities) are responsible for planning with a view to coordinating physical, economic, social, aesthetic and cultural development within their own areas. Each municipality is required to draw up a municipal master plan including a land use plan, a building development plan and a zoning plane. During planning processes, the local authorities must follow guidelines and targets set by government agencies and county councils. These bodies are responsible for ensuring that important national and regional considerations are taken into account during planning processes.

Teamwork between national and private parties

An efficient planning procedure requires early contact and good teamwork, initiated by the local authority, with private local interests and government bodies at national and regional level, at the formative stage. It is particularly important to encourage the participation of those affected by the plan and to facilitate public debate before the plan is adopted.

The municipality can approve plans on its own authority where there are no objections from national or regional authorities, or from neighbouring local authorities.

Planning and sustainable development

Regional planning shall facilitate effective development within the framework of sustainable development. Within this framework, planning is also intended to lay the basis for a society that safeguards important common values and good living conditions for different social groups. The planning system has been designed to coordinate public policy at the local and regional level through efficient assessment procedures that allow broad participation. Emphasis is placed on the role of the Planning and Building Act as

an instrument for weighing political considerations between development and conservation, for coordination between sectors and administrative levels and for decision-making by local authorities.

National and regional cooperation

Planning in accordance with the Planning and Building Act is based on the technical and political expertise of the local and regional authorities. The Government and the Storting define national objectives, while the municipal and county authorities develop overall solutions on the basis of local conditions.

The Ministry of the Environment

The Ministry of the Environment sets national targets and guidelines for land-use planning in Norway. Any conflict with these targets or guidelines must be settled by the Ministry of the Environment. In some cases, the Ministry of Environment can itself draw up the provisions for land use in local authority and local area plans.

In a 2005 white paper (Report No. 21 (2004–2005) to the Storting on the Government's Environmental Policy and the State of the Environment in Norway), the Government identified the following steps for promoting sustainable development in planning processes in Norway:.

- Strengthening municipal and regional planning pursuant to the Planning and Building Act as a tool for coordinating land-use management and value creation in areas designated as agricultural areas, areas of natural environment and outdoor recreation areas.
- Facilitating greater cooperation between various public- and private-sector actors in the management of mountain areas and uncultivated land.
- Safeguarding the key role of wild reindeer in the Norwegian mountain fauna through regional plans and the establishment of conservation areas for wild reindeer. Norway is home to most of the wild reindeer in Europe, and the Government intends to establish some areas that reflect the pattern of reindeer migration into Norway and others that are important for their survival in Norway in the future.
- Promoting the development of wind power as an important renewable energy source by coordinating procedures under the Planning and Building Act and the Energy Act.
- Taking biodiversity and outdoor recreation concerns into consideration to a greater extent during planning processes.
- Giving greater emphasis to landscapes in land-use management, in accordance with the requirements of the European Landscape Convention.

- Providing tools that will enable municipalities to draw up an overall strategy for safeguarding important agricultural landscapes and protecting cultivated and cultivable land.

Environmental impact assessment

- Norway's environmental impact regulations were updated in 2005, and are intended to ensure that the environment, natural resources and community are taken into account in the preparation of plans or projects, and when decisions are made as to whether, and if so on what conditions, plans or projects may be carried out.
- The Regulations set supplementary requirements for administrative procedures for plans and projects that may have significant effects on the environment, natural resources or community. Processing pursuant to the Regulations shall also meet the requirements relating to reporting and documentation that follow from other legislation and that are relevant to the decision for which the environmental impact assessment is to form the basis.
- Any person who prepares a proposal for a plan pursuant to the Planning and Building Act or who applies for a permit pursuant to sector legislation shall evaluate whether the plan or project lies within the substantive scope of the Regulations. The costs of preparing a proposal for a programme and an environmental impact assessment shall be borne by the proposer.

Involvement of all stakeholders in planning processes

The Planning and Building Act is based on the values of equity, liberty, and solidarity, and on the principles of dialogue and participation in planning processes. The Norwegian Government gives priority to stimulating the active use of the provisions concerning participation in planning processes. These principles particularly apply to planning in municipalities and in local communities, and should as far as practically possible also apply to nationwide planning.

It is particularly important to encourage women to participate in planning at all levels. All municipalities are required to provide suitable conditions for participation both in planning and in implementing agreed measures, and are expected to take into account the specific interests of women and children. Each municipality is also required to designate a special representative to represent the interests of children in all municipal planning processes.

In order to increase accessibility for all, the Norwegian Government has developed a circular that shall secure the equal participation by the disabled in the planning processes, and a policy circular in which local government practices are further developed and clarified by means of guidelines. Also, the circular lays down the rules for dispensation from requirements, and apply to construction and land-use projects specifically. In the event of a body or project being granted dispensation from a plan

(municipal master plan, local development plan or building development plan), an assessment must be made expressing an opinion regarding those interests that the plan is intended to safeguard.

A central issue in this circular is the principle of "universal design", the aim of which is to ensure that everybody is able to use the same physical solutions to as great an extent as possible, in terms of buildings, outdoor areas and modes of transport. This circular is addressed primarily to municipalities, county municipalities and county governors, but also to all affected ministries, organisations, user groups, and planners and designers of building projects and outdoor areas. The Government is now in the process of developing specific regulations in this field.

Participation by indigenous groups in the planning processes

Norway was originally established on the territories of two peoples, Norwegians and Sami, and both these peoples have the same right to develop their cultures and languages. Sami interests must be taken into account in the development of policies in relevant areas.

As an indigenous people, the Sami have the right to be consulted in matters that may affect them directly. To ensure that this is put into practice, the Government and the Sami Parliament have agreed that consultations between State authorities and the Sami Parliament will be conducted on a regular basis.

The Finnmark Act governs land use and the use of natural resources in Finnmark county, and helps to ensure the participation of the Sami people in planning processes that may affect them directly.

Development and use of land-use indicators and related monitoring systems

State of the Environment Norway (www.environment.no) provides the latest information about the state and development of the environment in Norway. The service presents various environmental topics and provides access to more detailed scientific presentations. All information and all data in State of the Environment Norway have been quality checked.

The Ministry of the Environment will continue the work of improving statistics on and indicators of physical development in cities and towns. These form a crucial basis for monitoring and following up national policy, and may also be efficient tools for benchmarking between cities, both within Norway and internationally. Efforts in this area will be closely linked to other development work on related statistics and indicators of city development, including work done by international organisations. Land-use statistics for cities and towns developed by the Statistics Norway are fundamental for these efforts (www.ssb.no).

Strategic urban planning approaches

"Urban settlement development shall promote a high quality of life and good health through good urban planning and design, environmentally friendly transport and the provision of good, easily accessible outdoor areas. Near housing, schools and day care centres, there shall be adequate opportunities for safe access and play and other activities in a varied and continuous green structure, and ready access to surrounding areas of countryside."

*(Report No. 21 to the Storting 2004– 2005
The Government's Environmental Policy and the State of the Environment in Norway)*

The Norwegian Government focuses on developing and supporting environmentally friendly urban areas and transport systems, improving physical surroundings and decreasing air pollution and noise. At the same time, the special characteristics of urban areas, their identity and diversity, valuable cultural environments, green structures and areas of natural environment must be protected and developed further. Development of more sustainable and competitive urban areas requires a long-term perspective, and coordinated land-use and transportation planning is an essential tool.

The specific situation, characteristics and assets of the towns and regions must be utilised in order to achieve improved regional balance and efficient economic exploitation of resources. This is, among other reasons, important to ease pressures on the largest towns, and to secure people a wide choice of possible employment and abode. The Government wants to support the development of attractive towns that act as thriving hubs for surrounding local communities.

Cooperation between the municipalities is important to stimulate regional development and avoid conflicts between different centres. The possibilities and roles of the different cities and towns within the city network should be clarified through regional planning. Several counties have, in consultation with municipalities, developed guidelines for centre structure and localisation of trade and other functions. Through the programme "Attractive and Environmentally-friendly Towns in Rural Districts" focus has been put on improving coordination of public and private means, developing better capacity for building methods of cooperation and partnership, disseminating knowledge and experience, and strengthening networks between participants.

The Norwegian Government will:

- Develop criteria and tools to ensure high quality in urban development processes.
- Develop models and tools for the development of town centres and the establishment of environmental action zones. Encourage the business sector to focus more on reducing the environmental impact of work-related travel.
- Draw up national policy guidelines for universal design.
- Follow up the action plan for greater physical activity and give more emphasis to public health in planning processes.

- Evaluate and if appropriate revise national policy guidelines to give more weight to the interests of children and young people.

Coordinated land-use and transport planning

National policy guidelines for coordinated land-use and transport planning were adopted in 1993 and constitute an important basis for planning by municipalities, counties and national authorities. The Government will revise and improve these guidelines on the basis of experience and evaluations

Urban regions are to be developed on the basis of coordinated land-use and transport plans. Plans must be based on the Planning and Building Act and have a regional perspective. Such plans are vital for decisions on land-use and the transport system at national, regional and local level. The following principles should be taken into account:

- The geographical scope of plans should be adapted to each town's/urban area's functional boundaries – independent of administrative borders.
- The authorities responsible for land-use planning and transport planning in the geographical area in question must cooperate on the planning process. Other organisations that may be able to contribute to the planning process should be involved from an early stage. This may include private businesses, property developers, transport operators, voluntary organisations and the general public.
- Goals should be determined for the main issues.
- The plan should set out a complete set of measures for meeting the challenges facing the urban area, including development pattern, centre structure, green structure, transport system investments and operations.
- The plan should clarify responsibilities for implementation and financing of the agreed solutions. If appropriate, the plan should also set out a time frame for implementation.

The Norwegian Government believes that local public transport must play an important role in urban regions, and that overall growth in the volume of transport must be curbed. This means that a special transport policy is needed for urban regions, so that an increased share of public transport will reduce the need to expand road capacity. Increasing the share of public transport in cities at the cost of transport by private car is a basic Government objective.

One-sided public transport improvements will not be sufficient to increase the share of public transport. Upgrading the public transport system must be accompanied by restrictive measures towards the use of private cars. Larger financial resources, enhanced coordination and organisation, and increased competitiveness and efficiency, are all factors that will contribute to the development of a better public transport system.

The fragmented distribution of responsibility for transport in urban regions makes it hard to develop and implement a comprehensive local transport policy. The Government will

therefore carry out pilot projects on alternative models of organisation for the responsibility of transport in large urban regions. The main intention is to obtain improved and more co-ordinated land-use and transportation policies in the largest urban agglomerations, and achieve a more efficient utilisation of the total resources spent on transportation by the national, county and municipal authorities. The experience gained in the pilot projects will also help assess appropriate organisation and planning in city regions.

Land-use and transportation planning greatly affects the individual's options, regarding both transportation in particular and lifestyle in general. The Government wants to further develop and communicate new knowledge on the connections between land-use, city-structure, transportation, physical activity and health, so that preventive health care policies may be integrated to a greater extent into land-use and transportation planning. The Government also wants to stimulate and support planning and projects transforming such knowledge into real projects. Further development of a continuous network of cycle lanes will be prioritized, where physical design, signposting and marking will be emphasized in particular. The fragmented responsibility for different parts of the cycle network will also be examined, in order to find ways to simplify and improve the current situation. The national road authorities will establish systems for measuring cycle traffic, just like car traffic.

The Government will also develop a national strategy for cycling as part of the National Transportation Plan (2006-2015), in order to ensure that cycling is viewed as a real option for short journeys in local planning and resource allocations.

Protecting and developing the green structure

Several municipalities are currently systematically mapping their green structure, using approaches like the 'Green Poster' method and municipal plans for green structures. The aim of this exercise is to integrate these structures in the cities' plans for land-use and transport. Also, protection of the green structure is a crucial part of the municipalities' work on preventive health care.

Municipalities are expected to safeguard important green areas, when necessary in cooperation with property owners, businesses and other users. All stakeholders, also the national authorities as property owners, share the responsibility for achieving good overall solutions. Sports grounds and schoolyards must be developed, and must be accessible at all times of day. Other commonly owned areas may also be used to benefit more people, for example, for social meetings or gardening.

To protect and develop green structures, the Government will:

- Ensure that an understanding of biodiversity is integrated into planning at all levels.
- Develop geographical information systems and geostatistics to better handle the need for data about the current state and development of green structures.
- Offer various types of guidance to urban municipalities, including on legal issues.

Reducing local air pollution and noise

Estimates show that present and planned actions are insufficient to achieve all national targets for air quality and noise within 2005 and 2010. Therefore, the Government will strengthen efforts to improve air quality and reduce noise annoyance in urban areas.

With the directives of the European Union, national targets for air quality constitute the basis for efforts at both national and local levels, as well as for the individual sector. Estimates indicate that national target levels for nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter and benzene will be exceeded in the largest cities if additional action is not taken. It is therefore necessary to implement new measures to meet national targets.

The Government will strengthen its efforts to improve local air quality by:

- Establishing stricter thresholds for local air quality through new legislation on local air quality, based on the EU directives on limit values for air pollutants. The new requirements will be stricter than today's and also incorporate new pollutants.
- Actively incorporating national targets into the long-term National Transport Plan.
- Assessing and implementing actions to reduce emissions from ships and harbour areas.
- Reducing the need to travel in urban regions by encouraging planning and decisions that give priority to this issue.
- Supporting public transport, cycling and walking.
- Increasing knowledge about air pollution from wood-burning stoves and furnaces and considering measures that may reduce this kind of pollution.
- Accommodating wider use of cleaner fuels.
- Inviting urban municipalities to carry out pilot projects on the establishment of environmental zones, where the focus is on controlling factors that affect health and welfare.

In 2000, the Storting agreed on a new national target for noise which is meant to secure a more comprehensive national policy for noise reduction. According to this target noise annoyance is to be reduced by 25% by the year 2010.

To achieve the noise target, the Government will implement a range of measures targeting the sources of noise, including:

- Encouraging increased use of low-emission vehicles and low-noise tyres
- Drawing up new regulations on preventive health care under the act on municipal health services;
- Adjusting the limit values for noise in existing regulations
- Incorporate the national target for noise into the National Transport Plan
- Invite municipalities to participate in pilot projects on the establishment of environmental action zones in towns, including quiet zones and implementation of various actions to reduce noise

- Strengthen expertise, research and model development within the field of noise, take serious steps to reduce noise in the most severely affected areas and meet the requirements of the present noise regulations.