



# National expectations regarding regional and municipal planning 2023–2027

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Ministry of Local Government  
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# Foreword

Norway is a good country to live in; we have great natural resources, technology and a highly skilled population. We have every opportunity to succeed in solving societal challenges and creating new growth and development. The efforts municipalities and county authorities invest in good planning are crucial to success.

The national expectations for regional and municipal planning are presented at a time marked by uncertainty. The county authorities and municipalities will face many situations involving a difficult balancing of interests in the years to come. Among other things, demographic changes, with more elderly people and a lower proportion of the population of working age, will require tougher priorities and better use of resources in the public sector. The supply of labour will decrease, and a larger proportion of resources will be tied up in meeting the need for services.

The Government will facilitate settlement, business development and the provision of good services in rural and urban areas throughout the country. It is particularly important to ensure that growth and development are facilitated in areas with slow or negative population growth.

The Government has ambitious climate, environmental and soil protection goals. Regional and municipal planning are good tools for developing a more sustainable society and for balancing interests and considerations. With its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 2030 Agenda covers all areas of society and can contribute to sound prioritisation in uncertain times. An important principle is that no one should be left out, and the most vulnerable groups must therefore be given priority in planning. Contributing to social and geographical redistribution is a key consideration for the Government. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Global

Biodiversity Framework are key to achieving the SDGs, and also require efforts by the county authorities and municipalities.

The Government expects the county authorities and municipalities to base their social and land-use planning on the SDGs, the national climate and environmental goals and local democracy, and to facilitate safe, sustainable and vibrant local communities throughout the country. Good local communities are the cornerstones of sustainable development, and it is important to counteract centralisation that weakens local services and offerings. Vibrant rural areas are also crucial to ensure food production and that agricultural land is kept in production.

The Government is facilitating the green shift and increased sustainable value creation that provides profitable jobs throughout the country. The resource base and competencies available regionally and locally are important assets when new and existing industries are to be developed. As planning authorities and social developers, the county authorities and municipalities play an important role as facilitators. Efficient and good planning processes are crucial to the success of the Government's goal of achieving the objectives of its Green Industrial Initiative.

The Planning and Building Act gives the county authorities and municipalities the flexibility to adapt planning to needs. The Government believes it is important that this latitude is utilised to facilitate desired development, while ensuring that planning is not made more complex than necessary.



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# 1 Introduction

Pursuant to Sections 3-5 and 6-1 of the Norwegian Planning and Building Act, the Government is required to draw up a document every four years setting out national expectations regarding regional and municipal planning in order to promote sustainable development throughout the country. The expectations must be followed up in the work on planning strategies and plans by the county authorities and municipalities, and must be applied by central government authorities when they participate in the planning processes.

## 1.1 The role of national expectations in the planning system

This expectations document summarises the Government's most important priorities in the planning area for the coming four-year period. Its purpose is to establish a common basis for the county authorities, municipalities and central government authorities in order to ensure that planning processes are efficient and targeted and unnecessary objections are avoided. The expectations document is a guideline and does not convey all national goals, tasks and interests that planning must address. The document must therefore be viewed in conjunction with relevant laws, regulations, reports to the Storting

(Norway's parliament) and circulars, and cannot be used as an independent basis for objections.

The national expectations apply to the entire country and to different planning situations. It is therefore important that the follow-up of national policy is adapted to regional and local conditions through sound planning processes. While the planning processes can give visibility to conflicting goals and expectations, they are also an arena for coordinating and balancing national, regional and local tasks and interests. Good collaboration between the planning authority, other relevant authorities and those affected by the plans is crucial to the success of the coordination ambitions and the achievement of integrated and sustainable solutions.

Central government planning guidelines and provisions concretise national expectations and define national policy in important areas. The [planlegging.no](http://planlegging.no) website provides an updated overview of current central government planning guidelines and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development's overall guidance for regional and municipal planning.

## 1.2 Planning must promote sustainable development

Norway has endorsed the 2030 Agenda with its 17 goals to promote socially, environmentally and economically sustainable development. As social developers, service providers and planning authorities, the county authorities and municipalities are crucial to our success in realising sustainable social development throughout the country. The national climate and environmental goals provide a framework for planning and are key to achieving the SDGs.

The Planning and Building Act has sustainable development as its main objective, and is of great importance for protection of farmland, nature diversity, the climate, cultural environments and development of the society. The Act aims to ensure democratic planning processes and that tasks and interests are seen in context through collaboration between the relevant authorities, businesses, civil society and citizens. By incorporating work on the SDGs into social, land-use and financial planning, the work is linked to the most important political decision-making processes and ensures that the work can be carried out effectively.

The expectations in this document provide direction for how the SDGs can be followed up, but do not cover all areas in which regional and municipal planning can contribute. It is therefore important that the planning processes are used to discuss how the SDGs can be followed up based on the challenges and opportunities that are most relevant locally and regionally. The planning processes are also important for anchoring sustainability work in society, handling conflicting goals and exploring new working methods and solutions that help to achieve the goals.

## 1.3 Important planning challenges going forward

Norway is well placed to achieve many of the SDGs by 2030. However, we still face challenges in achieving the goals of reduced greenhouse gas emissions, responsible consumption, use of resources, preservation of nature diversity and reduced inequality. These are challenges that the county authorities and municipalities must help to resolve through planning. In addition, the municipalities face other major societal challenges, including an ageing population with an anticipated greater need for care and a shortage of labour in various service areas in the municipalities. To achieve the SDGs, these societal challenges must be resolved, and we must adapt to a changing climate that will affect nature and large parts of society. Rapid changes and upheavals, such as an increased need to settle refugees, may also require a greater degree of preparedness and flexibility in planning.

The goal is a policy adapted to regional and local conditions that can facilitate new growth and stronger development in areas with weak or negative population growth. Centralisation that weakens local services and offerings is not sustainable. All municipalities must have the opportunity to develop small and large local communities. There must be significantly greater emphasis on local assessments and prioritisations, particularly in areas where the population is declining or stagnating.

The Government believes it is important that the county authorities and municipalities contribute to promoting value creation, the necessary restructuring of the economy, ensuring settlement throughout the country, reducing greenhouse gas emissions

and adapting to a changing climate, protecting nature, important outdoor recreation areas and cultural environments, streamlining energy use, providing equal services, managing demographic changes, counteracting skills and labour shortages and ensuring good, equal and safe local communities. At the same time, it is important that the county authorities and municipalities contribute to favourable framework conditions for the private and voluntary sectors. Solutions and forms of collaboration that facilitate efficient use of resources and help to support the overall objectives for social development will be prioritised.

There are major differences between municipalities in terms of the challenges they face, and it is the municipalities themselves that are best placed to assess which plans are most needed in their municipality. Municipal representative government provides for tailored solutions for each local community.

## **1.4 The structure of this expectations document**

The 2030 Agenda has five overarching perspectives, which have been chosen as the starting point for the organisation of the chapters in this expectations document. These are social, economic and environmental sustainability, societal safety and emergency preparedness, and collaboration to achieve the goals. The most relevant SDGs are highlighted in the chapter introductions. The purpose is to show the connection between the SDGs, national policy and regional and municipal planning.

Each of the five chapters emphasises the Government's priorities for how current challenges in the area can be met through regional and municipal social and land-use planning. Each chapter ends with specific expectation points. The expectation points must be viewed in context, including across the chapters.





## 2 Coordination and collaboration in planning

Regional and municipal planning is the county authorities' and municipalities' most important management tool for ensuring sustainable social development based on local democracy. The Government believes it is important that social and land-use planning facilitates safe, sustainable and vibrant local communities throughout the country. The overarching plans must stake out the direction for social development, help achieve the SDGs, and coordinate tasks and considerations that are important in realising these objectives. Updated plans

are necessary to address current challenges and to ensure that national frameworks and goals are followed up. Planning processes that are open and inclusive lend legitimacy to adopted plans. At the same time, it is important that the plans are realistic and facilitate efficient use of resources in the public and private sectors. This requires a close alignment between overarching planning and financial planning.



## 2.1 Updated plans

Updated plans are necessary in order to achieve sustainable social and land-use development and to implement local, regional and national policies. The county authorities and municipalities must assess the need for planning at the beginning of each election period through regional and municipal planning strategies. The purpose is to prioritise planning tasks and ensure political management of planning, so that it is adapted to needs and not made more complex than necessary. The need for new or updated plans is assessed in the light of social developments, new knowledge, central government planning guidelines and the national expectations.

The regional planning strategy and the social element of the municipal master plan are the most important documents for clarifying how the SDGs will be followed up in further planning work, fulfilment of tasks and financial planning. It is important that central government authorities provide the necessary knowledge about how their own sector areas can be viewed in conjunction with the SDGs.

The social element of the municipal master plan is intended to provide strategic direction for both the development of the municipality as a community and as an organisation. The social element should facilitate good interaction between the various social and service areas in the municipality and with civil society and the private sector. This can contribute to innovation and efficient utilisation of municipal resources.

A land use strategy in the social element is important for clarifying the municipal council's long-term land use policy and how national and regional guidelines and goals will be followed up. When the land-use strategy is used as a basis for the revision of the land-use element of the municipal master plan, this helps to ensure that land-use and social development are seen in context. The social element will be followed up in the sectors' planning and in financial planning. To strengthen the follow-up of the social element, the implementation element of the municipal master plan can be merged with the finance plan.

Through regional planning, the county authorities shall coordinate tasks and interests in the region, put relevant issues on the agenda and support development in the municipalities. The regional planning strategy provides direction for the county authority's role as social developer. Regional plans are important to ensure integrated management and development in the regions within issues that cross municipal boundaries. Regional plans must be prepared in close cooperation with the municipalities to ensure good support and a shared understanding of how the plans will be followed up.

## 2.2 Effective and inclusive planning processes

Efficient planning processes are important to ensure sufficient building of housing, business development and to facilitate the green shift. Effective planning is ensured by making decisions at the most appropriate planning level and with a level of detail that matches the need. The flexibility of the planning system and the opportunities for parallel case processing can be better utilised. Active collaboration between the municipality and private proposers contributes to better quality of private zoning plan proposals and more efficient procedures. The prerequisites for the planning work must be clarified realistically and at an early stage. Good collaboration with property developers on development agreements and financing of common infrastructure contributes to efficient implementation of plans.

Digital technology offers opportunities for new services and ways of working that provide benefits for citizens, businesses and the local government sector. Digitalisation opens up new ways of interacting, which should be used to improve and streamline planning processes. Most municipalities have already established electronic planning registers and adopted digital solutions for public participation.

The planning processes must be open and verifiable, and all interests must have the opportunity to be heard. The public participation of citizens, the business community, civil society and other stakeholders will be actively facilitated. Early involvement contributes to better plans, fewer conflicts and efficient implementation of the plans. The municipalities shall ensure that public participation is also facilitated in private planning proposals. Municipal-





ities have a particular responsibility to ensure the active participation of groups that require special facilitation, such as persons with disabilities, children and young people, and non-digital users. For groups and interests that cannot participate directly, the proposer and the planning authority must find other ways to ensure good public participation, for example through county and municipal advisory councils or user organisations.

The Sami population and national minorities shall be given the opportunity to participate and provide input in matters that concern them. The Sami Act contains a special obligation to consult the Sami Parliament and other Sami interests, such as village councils, reindeer grazing districts and local organisations. The Sami Parliament's right of objection in planning cases fulfils the obligation to consult in these cases. The obligation to offer consultation to local Sami interests applies regardless of the Sami Parliament's right of objection, and in addition to the

public participation provisions in the Planning and Building Act. Public participation under the Planning and Building Act must start as early as possible in the process.

The planning tools are also important for facilitating the development of Sami culture, business and community life, including preserving and strengthening Sami languages. Where relevant, municipalities must plan well for the recruitment and continuing education of linguistically competent personnel. In the administrative area for Sami languages, the challenges facing Sami languages should be discussed in connection with regional and municipal planning strategies.

### **1.1 Knowledge-based planning, expertise and quality**

Social and land-use planning must be based on an updated and sound knowledge base to provide a basis for real strategic discussions, clarification of

interests and sound solutions. The Norwegian Public Base of Geospatial Data must be used in planning, and it is important that municipalities, county authorities and central government agencies share data in the national infrastructure and collaborate to strengthen the set of basic map data.

All land-use plans must account for the effects of the proposals in the form of a plan description, or an environmental impact assessment for plans that require this in accordance with the Regulations on impact assessments. Assessment of alternatives and the overall impact of the proposals in the plan must be included in the work on environmental impact assessments. A good overview of land-use development will be an important basis for preparing land-use accounts for use in planning. The public participation of those who live and work in the area is necessary to elicit local knowledge and empirical knowledge as part of the basis for decision-making.

The county authorities shall guide and assist the municipalities in social and land-use planning. This may involve building a regional knowledge base to assess regional challenges and to create a shared understanding of challenges and solutions. Such work should be done in collaboration with the municipalities, so that the knowledge base is tailored to their needs. It is also important that central government authorities contribute updated knowledge in their fields by participating in the planning processes in the form of general planning guidance and by organising and quality assuring data.

The municipalities are encouraged to collaborate through inter-municipal planning offices and other forms of inter-municipal planning cooperation in order to strengthen their capacity and competence to drive social development. Inter-municipal plans can provide better solutions to planning issues that cross municipal boundaries and contribute to the sharing of knowledge and experience. County authorities and county governors should place particular emphasis on assisting municipalities that lack sufficient competence and planning capacity so that they can discharge their planning tasks in an expedient manner. Regional planning networks are an important measure for developing competence in the municipalities.

## 1.2 Good coordination between authorities

Early involvement lays the foundation for good collaboration and is a key to strengthening coordination in planning processes. The planning authority is responsible for facilitating early dialogue with the relevant authorities, and the sector authorities must present important interests as early and clearly as possible. This will help to ensure that clarifications are made early in the planning processes and that any conflicts are resolved at a local level. In cases that require decisions under both the Planning and Building Act and sector-specific legislation, it is important that central government authorities, county authorities and municipalities work together to ensure efficient and coordinated administrative procedures.

All county authorities have established regional planning forums that are used to clarify and coordinate interests in planning matters. Targeted use of planning forums will be a tool for more efficient planning in matters of national and regional importance. This requires the active contribution of the municipalities, county authorities, central government authorities and the Sami Parliament.

Consideration for local democracy must be emphasised, but the municipalities are responsible for ensuring that national and regional interests are also safeguarded. The right to make objections is intended to ensure that municipalities do not adopt plans that conflict with such interests.

The county governors have been tasked with coordinating central government objections. This is to ensure that objections are sufficiently grounded and that conflicting objections are not submitted to the municipality. It is important that the scheme is practised in a manner that ensures transparency, predictability and efficient processes.



## The Government's expectations

1. The SDGs, national climate and environmental goals, local democracy and solutions that strengthen value creation and settlement throughout the country form the basis for overarching social and land-use planning and for the central government's participation in the planning processes.
2. Work on planning strategies is prioritised to ensure that the plans are up-to-date and meet the needs arising from changes in social, demographic, political and natural conditions.
3. Regional planning tools and the social element of the municipal master plan are used to provide strategic direction for social development and are prepared in collaboration with residents, civil society, the business community and other public sector actors. Adopted goals and strategies are followed up in financial planning and in other plans.
4. A long-term land-use strategy is included as part of the social element of the municipal master plan and forms the basis for the land-use element of the municipal master plan.
5. Cost-effectiveness for private and public actors at the municipal, county and central levels is emphasised in the planning process.
6. The opportunities in the Planning and Building Act to streamline and simplify planning are utilised. Overarching plans are kept up to date, more planning levels than necessary are avoided and the level of detail in plans and reports is adapted to the need.
7. Private zoning plan proposals are processed efficiently and good plan quality is ensured through an active dialogue with the proposer during the planning process.
8. Public participation and involvement of relevant parties and interests is facilitated early in the planning processes, including in private planning proposals. Digital participation solutions are utilised. Groups and interests that are not able to participate directly, or that cannot utilise digital solutions, are ensured opportunities for public participation in other ways.
9. The Sami population and national minorities are ensured the opportunity to participate in planning processes that affect them. Consultation is carried out with affected Sami interests.
10. The planning process facilitates the strengthening of Sami culture, business and community life and Sami languages.
11. In the administrative area for Sami languages, the challenges facing Sami languages should be discussed in connection with regional and municipal planning strategies.
12. The electronic planning registers are kept up to date. Easy access to planning data in the digital planning register and to topical data in the Norwegian Public Base of Geospatial Data is facilitated.
13. An e-Building application solution is utilised to ensure efficient and fully digital processing of building applications.
14. Affected authorities give early and clear signals of important interests and considerations in municipal planning processes. Central government objections will be fewer and better coordinated. The right to make objections is intended to ensure that municipalities do not adopt plans that conflict with national or significant regional interests, or other considerations described in Section 5-4 of the Planning and Building Act.
15. The regional planning forum is actively used as a basis for clarifying and coordinating central government, regional and municipal interests in relevant planning matters.
16. Efficient decision-making processes are ensured through good coordination between decisions under the Planning and Building Act and sector-specific legislation.
17. Social and land-use planning is based on an updated and sound knowledge base. Municipalities should prepare land-use accounts as part of such a knowledge base.
18. Alternatives and overall effects of the proposed land use and cumulative effects must be assessed in environmental impact assessments.



### 3 Safe and inclusive communities

Norway is varied and diverse, and this diversity is valuable. The Government wants the county authorities and municipalities to facilitate safe and inclusive local communities throughout the country during their planning work. A socially sustainable society requires that we succeed in developing large and small cities and towns, large and small urban areas and sparsely populated areas so that it is good to live and work there.

Social and land-use planning shall ensure physical environments and social arenas that are diverse, inclusive and sustainable, with access to necessary services for all segments of the population. Good local communities and neighbourhoods in urban and rural areas provide the basis for stable residential environments and quality of life in different phases of life. Attractive and well-planned surroundings, access to nature and varied amenities and meeting places are important for identity, public health and the environment.





### 3.1 Vibrant cities, towns, urban areas and rural communities

Regional and municipal planning can help to strengthen social welfare and facilitate a diversity of choices. Cities, towns and urban areas with a diverse range of workplaces, cultural offerings, services and amenities are important for local residents, commuters and visitors alike. The planning process can facilitate that areas throughout the municipality can be developed based on local conditions and needs. Settlement in small local communities, villages and hamlets is important for ensuring that the population has good opportunities to maintain social and cultural relations, be close to nature and large outdoor recreation areas, and for sound management of our rich, renewable natural resources for current and future generations.

When the municipality wishes to develop large or small local centres, it is important that distinctive features and common areas are preserved, and that heights and density are adapted to the location. Densification in urban centres can provide more practical use of land and centres that function better for all residents in the municipality. Mixed use buildings allow for a greater diversity of activities in cities, towns and smaller local communities. A wide range of activities and businesses can make the central parts of the municipality or urban district more attractive both during the day and in the evening. Co-location of various public and private functions and activities can make it more attractive to invest, thereby contributing to the development of good and stable local communities. It is important that town centres are developed in a long-term collaboration between the municipality and private actors, and with the involvement of citizens and the civil sector.

The county authorities are responsible for assisting the municipalities with a platform of knowledge and guidance that supports the goal of attractive cities, towns and urban areas that interact well with their surroundings.

### 3.2 Enough and varied housing

In attractive areas, high home prices and rapid inflation make it difficult for many population groups to obtain suitable housing. This also applies in areas that have seen a high level of building activity. In many rural municipalities, however, the housing markets are unstable and characterised by a low level of activity. These areas often have few rental properties. Low home prices and slow price growth may result in slow renewal of the housing stock due to lacklustre housing construction and deficient upgrading of existing homes. A lack of suitable housing can also hinder recruitment to both the private and public sectors.

In order to meet the expected growth in households and the housing needs resulting from a larger proportion of the population getting older, growth in business start-ups and the development of rural areas, there is a need for good planning and increased speed in residential construction in many places. Each municipality must assess the needs that exist in their municipality. It is important that children and young people have good housing conditions, that young people can establish themselves in the housing market, that newly arrived employees have a place to live, and that the elderly and persons with disabilities have access to suitable housing built with universal design features. A good and varied range of housing options can also prevent more people from becoming disadvantaged in the housing market and counteract segregation.

The development of adapted housing for the elderly, with physical proximity to important functions and services, can make it easier and more attractive for the elderly to stay in their own homes for longer. This can reduce the need for municipal assisted care housing and institutional places, while freeing up single-family homes for younger residents and creating a more well-functioning housing market in the municipality. As many services as possible should be localised so that they can be offered without a particular need for transport. This will enable older people to walk to these services themselves to a greater extent, which will also help them to be physically active and have social interaction where the services are provided. Proximity between seniors living at home and service offerings will prevent valuable labour resources from being used for transport

while reducing costs and providing environmental benefits. Private and non-profit organisations are also more likely to want to establish attractive offers aimed at an older population if they live close to each other.

Regional planning is important to ensure that the region as a whole can facilitate sufficient housing construction and an efficient transport system in cities, towns, urban areas and sparsely populated areas. Municipal planning must follow up on the regional plans and ensure a good supply of regulated plots, based on knowledge of population trends and housing purchasing power. Cooperation and dialogue between municipalities can make it easier to assess how they can contribute to the region as a whole facilitating sufficient and varied residential construction. It is also important that municipalities play an active role in contributing to the realisation of housing construction.

To strengthen social sustainability, it is important that housing is built with good quality, and that the housing supply is varied enough to meet the different needs of the population and foster diverse neighbourhoods. There is a need to build housing in different neighbourhoods, of different types and sizes, and both owner-occupied and rental housing. For example, home purchase models such as rent-to-own, rental housing and housing co-operatives can provide increased variety. By integrating social housing considerations into social and land-use planning, municipalities can help to provide good housing options for the disadvantaged and enable more people to own their own homes.

### **3.3 Good physical framework for everyday life**

The physical environment affects our behaviour and experiences, and land-use planning is important for ensuring that local communities throughout the country are good places to live and work. Municipalities are responsible for ensuring quality in the built environment in all land-use plans and building projects. Choices made here will in part lay the foundation for well-being, greenhouse gas emissions and energy use for a long time to come and affect the ability to deal with climate change. Greater emphasis on architectural quality in the design of buildings and outdoor areas can provide more functional

solutions that contribute to increased sustainability, value creation and well-being. An important issue in the dialogue between municipalities and developers is how architecture can contribute to good residential environments, public health and the achievement of climate and environmental goals.

The general standard of housing and outdoor areas in Norway is high, and many people have good access to nature, green areas and public spaces. At the same time, there are differences in the population's access to green spaces. The coronavirus pandemic has shown how important it is to have access to both green spaces and good neighbourhoods that provide opportunities for socialising and activities. In some areas and projects, however, too little consideration is given to local building traditions and aesthetics. Residential developments have little variation, natural areas are being lost to buildings and outdoor areas are being established with facilities of insufficient quality. The municipalities are responsible for ensuring local ambitions for architecture and building design in plans and building projects.

### **3.4 Natural and cultural environment as a resource**

Climate change and changes in land use are putting pressure on both the natural and cultural environment. Land-use planning that protects nature is important for nature diversity and ecosystems, carbon capture and storage, surface water management, local climate, pollution, outdoor recreation, health and well-being and a number of other ecosystem services. Connecting green structures helps to safeguard these functions and provide opportunities for nature experiences, recreation and outdoor life in the local environment.

Cultural environments are sources of knowledge about Norway's history, and about the many-sided interaction between nature, climate and human life and work throughout the country. Cultural environments can be used as a resource in social development and contribute to environmental, social and economic sustainability. The continued use, reuse and transformation of historic buildings and built environments can contribute to the well-being and attractiveness of both large and small places. Cultural environments can also be organised to stimulate outdoor life and physical activity. The



county authorities and municipalities play a key role in safeguarding a diversity of cultural environments through social and land-use planning.

### **3.5 Better living conditions and public health**

Although there are small differences in living conditions in Norway compared to other countries, inequalities are increasing. The proportion of the population living on a persistently low income has also increased. Some urban areas have seen a higher concentration of residents with low incomes and challenges linked to living conditions, and some areas have experienced negative development trends. There is also great variation in the proportion of inhabitants with low incomes and challenging living conditions in sparsely populated areas. Too many children, adolescents and young adults in both urban and rural municipalities are excluded from school, education and the labour market.

Social and land-use planning, housing policy instruments, residential construction and public services can help to counteract an accumulation of living conditions challenges caused by economic inequality. Good planning can also help to ensure equal and fair access to public amenities. Important measures include ensuring variation in the supply of housing within residential areas and equalising differences between these areas. New construction and improvement of residential areas and neighbourhoods can contribute to a better living and local environment.

It is important that municipalities use planning actively to ensure equal access to cultural and leisure activities, green spaces, parks and good transport links. Outdoor activities contribute to better public health, and to achieve high participation in outdoor activities among all groups of the population, municipalities should plan for a varied network of hiking trails and walking paths. It is also important to ensure that the population is not exposed to pollution, poor air quality and noise. Planning should ensure that new development does not result in existing buildings being exposed to noise and pollution above the thresholds.

The general health of the population is good, but there are increasing social inequalities in health,

and we do not get enough physical activity. Activity levels vary throughout the course of people's lives and between genders and social groups. While most children are physically active, the trend is moving in the wrong direction. Only half of 15-year-olds are sufficiently physically active, and the decline already starts at the age of nine. Facilitating physical activity is a national consideration that must be taken into account in planning. Good access to nearby natural areas has proved particularly important in efforts to promote increased physical activity. By experiencing nature, such areas also contribute to good public health.

Societal and land-use planning can contribute to better public health. In sparsely populated areas, people often have close access to nature and outdoor recreation areas, with plentiful opportunities for exercise and physical activity in everyday life. In densely populated areas, it is important to reduce harmful noise and air pollution while making it possible for more people to walk and cycle to and from work, school and leisure activities. Walkable and activity-friendly communities and neighbourhoods promote physical and mental health and quality of life. Persons with disabilities still face barriers that prevent equal opportunities for activity and participation. Universal design will facilitate participation, equal opportunities and equality.

The Public Health Act requires the municipality to facilitate collaboration with the voluntary sector in the planning process. Voluntary organisations perform a number of important social tasks, bolster the provision of public services and contribute to vibrant local communities.

### **3.6 Varied meeting places and offerings**

It is important to ensure meeting places and common arenas in large and small cities, towns and urban areas. Much of the development takes place as densification and transformation, and it is important to maintain quality outdoor areas. Streets, squares, public spaces, parks, green areas, allotment gardens, school gardens and pedestrian and cycle links are important infrastructure for physical activity, growing food and social interaction. Municipalities have a special responsibility to ensure easily accessible areas for recreation and activities for children



and young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Urban agriculture can strengthen both social and ecological sustainability in local communities and neighbourhoods.

Children and young people spend large parts of the day in kindergarten or at school. Good and safe outdoor areas are important and can contribute to more equal formative conditions. Outdoor areas often function as a resource in local environments after opening hours. The location of and land for kindergartens and schools have a major impact on the ability to ensure good and safe outdoor areas, and it is important that land requirements are considered early in planning processes.

A varied and inclusive cultural life contributes to creating vibrant local communities and a good life

for individuals. Arts and culture, sports and other voluntary activities contribute to social cohesion and make local communities more attractive. It is important that the planning process allocates sufficient space for cultural activities, sports and other voluntary activities, and that these needs are viewed in context. Voluntary organisations need access to municipal and county buildings, and both professional and voluntary cultural organisations need suitable premises for cultural activities. Sports activities in local communities require the development of sports facilities for both organised sports and self-organised physical activities. Assessment of joint use, multi-use and planning, upgrading and development of premises for voluntary activities is a prerequisite for varied local meeting places and programs.



## The Government's expectations

19. Efforts are made to develop good local communities in rural and urban areas, in small villages and sparsely populated areas with access to housing and services in line with municipal requirements and needs.
20. Housing, businesses, workplaces, commerce and services are located in cities, towns and urban areas so that they contribute to increasing the attractiveness of the places and support the functions of the town centres. The town centres are developed and monitored in collaboration with private stakeholders and residents.
21. Sufficient housing construction in the municipalities is facilitated in line with local and regional needs. Residential construction should contribute to good and varied housing options and residential environments for everyone.
22. Housing programmes for the disadvantaged are facilitated in different parts of the municipality. Establishment of home ownership for the disadvantaged is emphasised.
23. Arrangements are made so that older people who wish to do so can stay in their own homes for longer. The municipalities view the development of health and care services in conjunction with housing planning and the municipality's long-term finances.
24. The municipalities use architecture as a tool in social development and define local ambitions for architecture and building design. The distinctive character of the places, cultural environments and important landscape features are emphasised in urban and place development.
25. Sufficient areas of good quality are set aside for green structures, outdoor spaces and meeting places that stimulate physical activity, nature experiences and social interaction, while cities, towns and urban areas are developed through densification and transformation.
26. Cycling, walking and public transport are prioritised in cities, towns and urban areas through the planning of integrated infrastructure that is connected, accessible, attractive and safe. In the work on urban growth agreements in the major cities, the majority of growth in housing and jobs will be in or near major hubs to support the zero-growth target, with the adjustments that follow from the individual agreement.
27. Safe routes to school and activity-friendly neighbourhoods with varied play and recreational facilities for different age groups are facilitated. Participation in society for as many people as possible is ensured through universal design of new buildings and outdoor areas.
28. When planning kindergartens and schools, localisation and land requirements are assessed early in the planning processes in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
29. Social and land-use planning are used as instruments to equalise differences, prevent challenges related to living conditions and ensure socially balanced development through housing construction, localisation of technical and social infrastructure and public services.
30. Culture, art, sports and volunteering are facilitated in the planning and sufficient areas are set aside for cultural and sports purposes.



## 4 Welfare and sustainable value creation

Tomorrow's welfare and value creation must be developed within the framework of social, economic and environmental sustainability. Regional and municipal planning are important tools for facilitating green industries and the transition to a more circular economy, ensuring good infrastructure and contributing to restructuring in the public sector. Integrated planning is necessary to secure the resource base for the development of nature- and culture-based industries such as agriculture, reindeer husbandry, fisheries and tourism.

A sustainable welfare society with vibrant rural areas depends on the creation of value throughout the country. Good framework conditions for a diverse, sustainable and competitive business sector are key. Through their planning and knowledge of regional and local conditions and advantages, the county authorities and municipalities can make a significant contribution to stimulating sustainable business development across the entire spectrum of business and industry, thereby helping to facilitate high-growth regions and local communities.





## 4.1 Facilitate green industries

The green shift in the business sector makes it possible to renew existing industries and establish new industries. Developments in carbon capture and storage, renewable energy, energy recovery, hydrogen, batteries, green shipping and inland transport, the processing industry, forestry and wood processing industry, and aquaculture are contributing to the transition. These are industries that are important for creating more profitable jobs and for increasing overall value creation and export revenues. Regional and municipal planning is important to facilitate green business development throughout the country.

Good access to clean and renewable power has been a competitive advantage for Norwegian industry, and will be important in the future to achieve climate targets and industrial policy goals. It is important to ensure a good balance between more renewable energy and environmental considerations. Through their planning, the county authorities and municipalities should help facilitate more renewable energy production. This is particularly true in areas with plans for power-intensive industrial development. The county authorities and municipalities should also facilitate efficient and flexible energy use, including the utilisation of surplus energy from industry. Efficient and flexible energy use will free up energy and grid capacity for other purposes and help to minimise the need for further expansion.

Regional planning should provide strategic direction for business policy priorities, mobilise stakeholders and coordinate public efforts and instruments in the county. Good knowledge of regional strengths and advantages is an important starting point for regional planning, and provides a basis for value-creating collaboration between the public sector, research and trade and industry. Smart specialisation can

be a suitable method of collaboration to explore and develop new niches for business development where the region can become competitive.

Many of the existing and new green industries require large spaces, grid capacity and considerable energy. New workplaces may also require more housing, better infrastructure and land-intensive support functions. The county authorities can contribute to a sound basis for assessment by preparing regional analyses of the availability of and need for land for the relevant purposes, in light of a realistic supply of energy. An important dimension in land-use planning for new industrial and commercial development must be socio-economic profitability, both in the municipality and the county, and the effects on climate and the environment. Regional plans can be a good tool for viewing industrial and commercial land in conjunction with energy needs, power production and the capacity of the power grid and other infrastructure. Regional assessments and balancing of interests could mitigate conflicts, assess land-use and energy needs across municipal boundaries and strengthen development in the region.

Municipal planning is crucial to ensure attractive industrial and commercial areas for industry and the long-term space requirements for the mineral and aquaculture industries. Integrated land-use plans are necessary to achieve sound trade-offs between different interests, so that adequate consideration is also given to climate, soil conservation, nature, cultural environments, health, landscape, local communities, transport, Sami interests and traditional industries such as fishing and reindeer husbandry. Municipalities can reduce the negative consequences of new development by considering reuse and more efficient utilisation of existing industrial and commercial areas and infrastructure before new areas are put into use.

Regional and municipal planning are important tools for ensuring that valuable mineral deposits, which can provide future value creation, are not lost to building developments. In plans for the extraction of mineral resources, it is necessary to ensure a predictable framework for investment, environmentally sound handling of tailings, clean-up and other environmental issues.

The coastal zone is under increasing pressure, and updated plans are essential to ensure the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry. Localisation of new areas for aquaculture must be assessed in a regional and inter-municipal perspective. Inter-municipal coastal zone plans are a suitable instrument for facilitating a favourable location of aquaculture areas, and it is important that new knowledge about environmental consequences is assessed. When plans affect Coastal Sami areas, Sami interests must be taken into account, including coastal and fjord fishing, major spawning areas and traditional fishing areas.

## 4.2 Access to skills, labour and good services

Good access to sufficient and relevant labour is a prerequisite for innovation, restructuring and value creation. Both the public and private sectors are currently facing challenges in finding enough skilled workers. This is particularly true in less central parts of the country. There are also differences in access to education and skills development programmes between rural and more central areas.

The county municipality is responsible for helping to ensure the best possible match between the demand for labour and availability of education and skills programmes in the region. It is therefore important that the county authority takes overall responsibility for skills and education policy in the county. Regional plans and skills partnerships, based on knowledge of local and regional skills needs, are good tools for coordinating efforts.

People have different preferences, and a good balance in the development of both small and large places will therefore be important for the attractiveness and strength of a region. Attractive cities, towns and urban areas with vibrant centres can be a competitive advantage for a region, because they can help to attract labour and ensure that incoming workers stay put. Regional planning can help to ensure that these advantages benefit the entire region.

## 4.3 Good infrastructure as a basis for value creation

Trade and industry are dependent on good infrastructure and efficient logistics hubs, such as freight terminals, fairways for shipping traffic and ports. It is

important that localisation of logistics hubs is viewed in a regional perspective and that suitable and sufficient areas are clarified by municipalities in cooperation with national expert authorities. The transition to emission-free commercial transport requires the development of charging and refuelling stations.

The county authorities are responsible for the county road network and for public transport on land and sea. The regional transport system complements national infrastructure and is crucial for business activities, access to services and settlement. The county authorities should facilitate the use of emission-free and other new technology in the transport sector, while also facilitating public transport, cycling and walking. This contributes to better capacity utilisation, increased traffic safety, lower emissions and better services for travellers.

The county municipalities have an important task in contributing to the coordination of central government, regional and municipal planning processes for transport. In order to achieve good processes and increase the social benefits of central government transport projects, it is important that county authorities and municipalities are clear about their needs and priorities early on in the planning process. In the work on the choice of concept studies for major central government investments, the county authorities and municipalities must be involved in the process of determining social goals.

Access to high-capacity mobile networks and broadband is a national goal, and is an important framework condition for settlement, business and working life throughout the country. Further development of the digital infrastructure (broadband, mobile networks and data centres) must be seen in conjunction with land-use planning, settlement, business development and the use of various digital solutions to facilitate increased value creation. It is important that the county authority takes an active role in helping to ensure that everyone has access to high-speed broadband and mobile networks.

## 4.4 Facilitating nature- and culture-based business and industry

Nature and culture-based industries such as agriculture, tourism, fisheries and reindeer husbandry are important for value creation, jobs and settlement in



large parts of the country. Long-term and predictable planning and management of the areas, which takes into account a changing climate, is crucial for the future of these industries. Further development of the industries, based on local conditions, is a relevant issue in regional and municipal planning.

Primary industries such as agriculture, forestry, reindeer husbandry and fisheries are green industries, which produce from renewable and perpetual resources if managed correctly. Production shall be developed in a more sustainable direction by the industries taking new steps to reduce emissions, switching to a more environmentally friendly direction and by protecting nature diversity to an even greater extent.

Forestry and the production of wood-based products are important in large parts of the country. Sustainable forest management has positive climate benefits, preserves nature diversity and can contribute to jobs and value creation in rural areas. Wood-based products are important in the green shift. In their planning, the county authorities and municipalities can facilitate new sustainable industries in connection with agriculture and forestry.

Long-term and predictable social and land-use planning is essential in order to safeguard the natural and cultural basis for local Sami communities and important Sami industries such as reindeer husbandry, fishing and traditional use of outfields. Sami use of outfields – meachásteapmi – is based on tradition and knowledge about utilising available resources for subsistence, and is an important part of the cultural foundation of the Sami.

Sami reindeer husbandry has special protection under international law, and authorities at all levels are obliged to ensure an adequate land base for reindeer husbandry. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights means that interventions in reindeer husbandry areas may not be undertaken if the intervention, seen in conjunction with previous and planned interventions, leads to significant negative consequences for the opportunity for the Sami to practice their culture. It is therefore important that planning is based on a sound knowledge base, and that development and other activities do not cause reindeer herding areas

to be reduced, fragmented or made inaccessible to too great an extent. It must also be recognised that reindeer husbandry needs access to different types of grazing areas in order to have sufficient flexibility in the face of changing weather conditions and the impacts of climate change. The county municipalities within the Sami reindeer grazing area should consider preparing regional plans for reindeer husbandry in order to view the areas as a whole across municipal boundaries.

The tourism industry includes both mass tourism and more tailored experiences for smaller groups. Nature and culture-based travel experiences can help to increase the attractiveness, extend the season and increase profitability in the cultural sector and the tourism industry. The national park municipalities are in a special position to utilise value creation opportunities through good planning of land use and facilitation in the peripheral zones of the national parks. Holiday housing is of great importance for business development in many rural municipalities.

Regional and municipal plans are good tools for clarifying the framework and localisation of tourism initiatives and new holiday housing developments. In order to facilitate sustainable development of travel destinations, where different social considerations are balanced, it is important that strategies and main priorities for the development of travel destinations are rooted in the social and land-use elements of the municipal master plan and through good public participation of all stakeholders and actors. This is in part important to ensure that the scope and localisation of development and facilitation of activities and travel take into account nature diversity, outdoor life, the landscape, cultural environments, agriculture, reindeer husbandry and experience qualities.

#### **4.5 Value creation in a circular economy**

More circular solutions and better resource utilisation are necessary to achieve more sustainable development in Norway. In a circular economy, resources and products are utilised efficiently and for as long as possible, in cycles where the least possible resources are lost. This replaces the extraction of, and production with, new resources. Long-term



and sustainable management of resources and efficient land use are important to reduce consumption, greenhouse gas emissions and the loss of natural and cultural environments.

A circular economy provides opportunities for the development of new businesses and jobs throughout the country, and the county authorities and municipalities can facilitate this through social and land-use planning, business operations and as drivers of business development. The municipalities play a key role in the transition through the management of their own land, infrastructure and properties, in the design of waste services, localisation and facilitation of waste treatment and by facilitating the reuse of existing buildings and facilities and increased recycling of materials. County authorities and municipalities can also influence consumption

by setting climate and environmental requirements within the regulations for public procurement.

The reuse of excess soil and stone materials and other high-quality mineral resources is an important step towards a circular economy in the building and construction industry. Reuse can reduce space requirements and the costs and emissions associated with transport, limit the disposal of soil and stone materials on land and in the sea, and help gravel and crushed stone resources last longer. It is important that the extraction of crushed stone, gravel and sand and land for intermediate storage and disposal of excess soil and stone materials are viewed in context and clarified in regional and municipal plans. In all plans for major developments, it is important that a balance of materials is endeavoured to avoid excess soil and stone materials.



## The Government's expectations

31. The green shift, sustainable value creation and profitable jobs will be facilitated throughout the country.
32. More renewable energy production is facilitated, especially in areas with power-intensive industrial development. It is important to ensure a good balance between more renewable energy and environmental considerations.
33. More efficient and flexible energy use is facilitated.
34. A sufficient amount of industrial and commercial areas with the least possible negative impact on the climate, environment and society is facilitated. Industrial and commercial areas are planned with a regional perspective, and energy use, access to power, reuse and more efficient utilisation of existing industrial and commercial areas and infrastructure are included in the planning assessments.
35. Sufficient and suitable new areas for aquaculture are set aside through updated regional and municipal plans for coastal areas, which may also include development of off-shore and land-based aquaculture. The plans safeguard environmental considerations and other societal interests.
36. The county municipalities take overall responsibility for skills policy and the development of skills plans that help ensure that the region has access to the skills sought by the labour market.
37. Further development of ports and maritime transport will be facilitated, and localisation and necessary areas will be assessed in a regional perspective.
38. The county municipalities take on a coordinating role for transport planning in the region, and provide input to the choice of concept studies for major central government transport initiatives.
39. The transmission of mobile and broadband networks is ensured by utilising existing cabling routes as far as possible, and by allowing the placement of transmitting stations for mobile communication on public buildings.
40. The natural basis for Sami culture and business development is emphasised, and planning safeguards areas for reindeer husbandry in line with Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The planning processes ensure a sound knowledge base about reindeer husbandry.
41. Sustainable value creation and green industries are facilitated in connection with agriculture and forestry and in the peripheral zones of the large protected areas.
42. Through their land-use and social development and business operations, the county authorities and municipalities facilitate the transition to a more circular economy, where resources and existing buildings and facilities are utilised for as long as possible and are reused and upgraded to a greater extent.
43. Important mineral deposits are safeguarded in regional and municipal plans, and extraction is balanced against environmental considerations and other societal interests.
44. Integrated management of soil and stone materials is clarified in regional and municipal plans. Plans for major building and construction work clarify how excess soil and stone materials are to be disposed of and how the necessary area for handling them is to be ensured. The possibility of reuse and recycling of materials is assessed, and a balance of soil and stone materials should be endeavoured.



## 5 Climate, nature and environment for the future

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Global Biodiversity Framework provide a framework for national policies and are key to achieving the SDGs. Long-term welfare, value creation and quality of life in line with the SDGs are dependent on addressing many considerations simultaneously: We must maintain intact ecosystems, safeguard nature diversity, cultural environments and outdoor recreational areas, and limit and adapt to climate change while ensuring the continued development of good public services, infrastructure and profitable business activities.

The Government believes that integrated social and land-use planning must help to ensure that climate and environmental efforts are viewed in a coherent cross-sectoral manner. Going forward, important issues in regional and municipal plans will include consideration of nature diversity, the transition to a climate-resilient, low-emission society, long-term land use assessments to minimise the loss of natural areas and integrated management of water resources.





## 5.1 Integrated planning to achieve climate and environmental goals

Climate change is affecting nature diversity and causing human and economic losses. Measures to improve nature diversity are usually also beneficial in mitigating climate change. Land-use changes in natural environments that store considerable carbon lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the possibility of future carbon capture. Building is the land use change that causes the greatest greenhouse gas emissions. Building on forestland, especially on organic soil, and marshland generates the greatest emissions per unit area. Building on natural areas can also make ecosystems less resilient to climate change, which in turn can lead to increased greenhouse gas emissions.

Nature is our livelihood and a prerequisite for the development of economically and socially sustainable societies. Forests, wetlands and oceans cover large areas and absorb and store large amounts of greenhouse gases. Robust ecosystems in the best possible condition help to mitigate the effects of climate change, including flood mitigation, water purification and protection against erosion, and they are more resilient to climate change than vulnerable ecosystems. The UN Nature Panel (IPBES) has established that animals, plants and ecosystems are becoming extinct at an unprecedented rate. The global impact on the environment is now so extensive that nature's ability to meet basic needs such as clean water, clean air and stable access to food in the future has been drastically reduced. Conservation and restoration of nature is therefore a national interest.

The municipalities' land-use planning is crucial if Norway is to reduce emissions in the land use sector by 2030. Over 80 per cent of the country's land is managed through the Planning and Building Act, mainly through municipal planning. The Act

forms the basis for most decisions on land use, and authorises the authorities to weigh different societal interests against each other and to decide which interests should be prioritised in each individual case. How this responsibility is managed is key to Norway's contribution to achieving the SDGs and the national climate and environmental goals.

When revising the land-use element of the municipal master plan, the municipality should assess whether previously adopted land use corresponds to current and future expected needs. It is therefore important that the municipality considers removing or reducing the scope of development areas that are no longer as relevant. It is important that densification and transformation of residential and commercial areas are considered before new development areas are set aside.

## 5.2 Preventing greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring possibilities for carbon capture

Norwegian greenhouse gas emissions fell 4.7 per cent in the period 1990–2021. The goal of cutting emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 and 90–95 per cent by 2050 requires a comprehensive societal transition that affects all sectors. It is important that planning contributes to a comprehensive and well-anchored transition to a low-emission society. Environmental impact assessments and land-use accounts provide important knowledge for assessing the climate impact of planning proposals.

Regional and municipal planning affects both how much land is built on and the need for transport. Good planning can help to facilitate energy conservation, energy efficiency, more flexible energy use and increased electrification with renewable energy in, among others, the building, construction, property and transport sectors. Good planning can also make it possible to avoid some journeys and instead use less energy-intensive modes of transport such as public transport, cycling and walking.

It is important for Norway's ability to fulfil its nature and climate goals that the county authorities and municipalities use planning tools to prevent building on carbon-rich areas such as forests and marshes, but also agricultural land (especially grazing land). This includes utilising opportunities for densifica-



tion, reuse and transformation of already built-up areas, before agricultural land, important nature and outdoor recreation areas and carbon-rich land such as marshes, forests and other nutrient-rich soil are reassigned.

An active and sustainable forest policy is another specific and inexpensive climate measure on which the Government will focus. Growing forests absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, and active forest management, with regeneration felling, planting, fertilisation and tending of young stands, can contribute to significant uptake of greenhouse gases if the materials replace building materials with higher emissions. It is important that the climate and environmental effects of forestry measures are considered together to ensure sustainable management of Norwegian forests. Striking sound balances between activities and environmental considerations, between nature and climate and between use and conservation must be key to a sustainable forest policy.

As planning authorities, county authorities and municipalities have excellent tools to ensure efficient land use, good mobility for citizens and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. By densifying and transforming built-up areas, and reusing and maintaining existing buildings, greenhouse gas emissions from new construction can be reduced and natural areas and topsoil can be preserved, while safeguarding important site qualities, nature diversity and cultural environments. In planning, priority should be given to facilitating a development pattern that limits the need for transport, provides a basis for good public transport services and makes cycling and walking safe and attractive.

How towns and urban areas should be delineated is an important question in municipal plans. The wide variation in Norwegian municipalities means that development patterns must be adapted to local conditions. The land-use element of the municipal master plan provides scope for differentiating land use based on regional and local conditions and the degree of development pressure, in line with central government planning guidelines and circulars.

At the same time, it is important to build for the future, for example by considering that the transport of passengers and goods will increasingly

use zero-emission technology, ensuring sufficient charging infrastructure and facilitating more efficient and flexible energy use to reduce the need for grid expansion and new power production. It is also important to ensure that those who will manage the renewable resources and industries associated with the green shift can live close to where these are located. It is therefore important to adapt their development to local and regional conditions.

### **5.3 Preserving nature diversity, outdoor recreation interests and cultural environments**

Nature diversity is being lost as a result of land disturbance, land-use changes, pollution and climate change. The Norwegian Nature Index 2020 shows that the condition of ecosystems on land and in freshwater is strongly influenced by land use and physical interventions, while climate change and harvesting are stronger impact factors in the sea and ocean areas. It is the overall impact that determines how vulnerable species and habitats are, and climate change is exacerbating the negative trend. Sound, long-term land management is necessary to achieve the SDGs and fulfil international commitments on climate and nature diversity. Pollinating insects play an important role in ecosystems and agriculture, and it is important that their habitats are preserved.

Regional and municipal planning is important both to preserve nature and to facilitate sustainable value creation based on natural and cultural resources. Integrated and long-term planning is necessary to avoid negative impacts on nature diversity and outdoor recreation interests from piecemeal building and to safeguard the cultural environment. It is important that world heritage values are safeguarded in accordance with the obligations of the World Heritage Convention, and that consideration for world heritage values is ensured through integrated social and land-use planning.

Up-to-date knowledge about nature is an important basis for planning, and the planning processes can help to identify important nature diversity, ecological connections and important functional areas on land and at sea. Experience-based knowledge from industries that live off nature must be part of this knowledge base. Systematic work on nature diversi-



ty during the planning process will contribute to the long-term preservation of valuable natural areas, and can reveal the need for further knowledge. A thematic municipal sector plan for nature diversity can be part of such an endeavour. Similarly, it is important to have good knowledge of the landscape and outdoor recreation areas in the municipality. Cooperation across county and municipal boundaries can also strengthen the basis for more long-term planning.

We currently have more than 445,000 holiday homes, and the number has increased steadily over the past 20 years. Holiday housing constitutes an important economic base in many municipalities. At the same time, further development can in many cases have negative consequences for nature

diversity, outdoor life, greenhouse gas emissions, the landscape and cultural environment, and lead to conflicts with agriculture, reindeer husbandry and other industries. Through good planning, holiday housing developments can be assessed in a regional perspective and the land take can be limited. New developments should take place in connection with existing building areas and infrastructure, and be adapted to buildings, the landscape and terrain. It is important to avoid new, extensive holiday housing developments in important agricultural, nature, outdoor recreation and reindeer husbandry areas and development on marshland. In mountainous areas, it is particularly important to preserve large, contiguous areas without buildings and not to facilitate new holiday housing developments in and above the forest limit. Connecting green structures and natural

migration routes and migration paths for reindeer must be protected.

The shore zone along the shoreline and along watercourses is important for nature diversity, outdoor life, business and settlement. The shore zone is also rich in cultural heritage in many places and lends a unique character and identity to local communities. In parts of the country, the shore zone along the shoreline is under great development pressure, while at the same time large parts of the shore zone are not easily accessible. It is important that central government planning guidelines for differentiated management of the shore zone along the shoreline are used as a basis for planning, and that piecemeal building through exemptions is avoided. In areas with little development pressure and much accessible shore zone, in zone 3 in the guidelines, it will be possible to a greater extent to facilitate new development that contributes to business development and jobs. Differentiation of land use will take place through the municipalities' overall planning, where the need for land for various development purposes and land to be protected from new interventions is assessed.

Wild reindeer are an important part of Norwegian nature and culture. Given that almost the entire European population lives in Norway, we therefore have a special management responsibility for the species. Wild reindeer are now classified as near threatened on the National Red List. Six of the 10 national wild reindeer areas are considered to be of poor quality, and none of the areas are considered to be of good quality. Effective and targeted measures are therefore necessary to protect wild reindeer and their habitats. It is important that the county authorities and municipalities emphasise the results of the classification of wild reindeer areas and work actively to achieve the quality goals for the national wild reindeer areas. The regional plans for mountainous areas with wild reindeer are an important tool for achieving this.

## 5.4 Clean and rich waters and watercourses

The watercourses are managed through regional water management plans, where the municipalities are key contributors through the local water sub-districts. The goal is a coordinated management of

water resources at all levels, ensuring the protection and restoration of water bodies such as rivers, lakes, groundwater and coastal waters. Land-use planning shall contribute to keeping Norwegian water bodies in good condition, in line with the regional water management plans. Planning must take into account land use in the entire catchment area, including coastal marine areas. National policy guidelines for protected watercourses form the basis for planning.

The state of the aquatic environment is affected by discharges from wastewater, industry and residential areas, agriculture, aquaculture and building projects. The water regulations and pollution regulations are intended to prevent pollution and contribute to a better aquatic environment, and it is important that municipalities actively utilise their instruments in land-use planning. Life in the Oslo fjord is in very serious condition, and an integrated action plan has been drawn up to improve the state of the environment. The municipalities in the Oslo fjord catchment area are responsible for implementing many of the measures in the plan.

Throughout the country, there is a large backlog of necessary maintenance and development of sewer systems and wastewater treatment capacity. The municipalities must view their responsibility for wastewater and planning in context under the Planning and Building Act. This is important to ensure connection and sufficient treatment capacity before new developments are initiated. Land-use planning is necessary to ensure that surface water is assessed and managed in an integrated manner. The reopening of closed watercourses and the separation of surface water and wastewater should be assessed on an ongoing basis.

### The Government's expectations

45. The transition to a low-emission society and contributions to achieving climate and environmental goals are prioritised through land-use planning that reduces emissions, land take and transport needs. The Government encourages municipalities to set targets to reduce the loss of land to buildings.
46. Energy efficiency and flexible energy use in businesses, households and public buildings is facilitated.



47. When revising the land-use element of the municipal master plan, the municipality assesses whether previously approved land use should be changed out of concern for the climate, nature diversity, cultural environment, protection of farmland, reindeer husbandry, climate change adaptation, societal safety and an appropriate development pattern.
48. Reassignment of and building on carbon-rich land, including marshes, tidal marshes and other types of wetlands and forests, are avoided as far as possible, so that the areas' ability to store and capture carbon is maintained.
49. Densification and transformation of residential and commercial areas are considered before new, larger development areas are set aside and utilised.
50. Regional development patterns, centre structures and overall transport solutions are stipulated in regional or inter-municipal land-use and transport plans. The plans take into account regional and local conditions and development pressure.
51. Greenhouse gas emissions, congestion, air pollution and noise are reduced by facilitating public transport, cycling and walking, efficient land use and defined town centre and urban areas.
52. A good charging infrastructure is facilitated in part by allocating sufficient areas for the establishment of fast charging for both light and heavy vehicles.
53. Important nature diversity, agricultural land, water environments, outdoor recreation areas, overall green structure, cultural environments and landscapes are identified and protected in the planning process. The overall impact of existing and planned land use is emphasised.
54. Consideration for world heritage values is ensured through integrated social and land-use planning.
55. The use of land in the shore zone along the shoreline and in and along watercourses is assessed in an integrated and long-term perspective. More differentiated management of the shore zone is facilitated with greater opportunities for business development and settlement in sparsely populated areas along the coast in zone 3 of the planning guidelines for the shore zone.
56. Regional and municipal plans facilitate sustainable development in the mountains and outlying areas. Development is limited to contiguous nature and outdoor recreation areas and important areas for agriculture, reindeer husbandry and other industries, including through long-term development limits.
57. The potential for densification or expansion of existing holiday home areas is assessed before facilitating development in new areas, especially where there is development pressure. New holiday housing developments in and above the forest limit and on marshland should be avoided.
58. Wild reindeer habitats are protected, and adopted regional plans for wild reindeer mountains are updated in accordance with new knowledge and followed up in municipal planning.
59. The municipalities contribute to good environmental conditions in and along the watercourses through participation in the work on the water sub-districts, implementation of environmental measures and good land management. The use and conservation value of watercourses is safeguarded in the planning process, and building on watercourse ecosystems and filling in of watercourses is reduced.
60. Planning helps to safeguard natural assets and good environmental status in waters, for example by avoiding planning for building projects in wetlands when there are good alternatives.
61. Social and land-use planning is coordinated with water supply and drainage planning, including surface water management and assessment of nature-based solutions.
62. The county authorities and municipalities in the Oslo fjord catchment area follow up the integrated action plan for a clean and rich Oslo fjord in land-use planning.



## 6 Societal safety and emergency preparedness

Safe and well-organised local communities are the most important framework for ensuring that we all have a secure everyday life. As planning authorities, the county authorities and municipalities can contribute to this by facilitating that new development is safe from natural hazards now and in the future climate, and from accidents and other societal risks. This is best ensured through interdisciplinary and

integrated work on social and land-use plans, risk and vulnerability analyses and emergency preparedness plans. Society depends on planning to secure land for food production and contribute to access to clean and sufficient drinking water, power supply and communication. Good preparedness also depends on safeguarding the Norwegian Armed Forces' land requirements.



## 6.1 Natural hazards and climate change adaptation

The risk of damaging natural events is increasing as a result of climate change, and good land-use planning is an important tool for minimising these consequences. Higher temperatures lead to increased precipitation, with a higher proportion falling as rain instead of snow. Periods of torrential rain will become more frequent, increasing the likelihood of, among other things, flooding and landslides. Ice melting and ocean warming are causing sea levels to rise along the Norwegian coast. Climate change will have consequences for almost all sectors and areas of society. The impacts of climate change are already causing devastation to people and nature, and are increasingly evident and more tangible. In Arctic regions, significant consequences of climate change are already being felt.

In order to adapt to a changing climate quickly enough, planning must take greater account of climate change. When the impacts of climate change are assessed in planning, the high end of the range in national climate projections and a sufficiently long time perspective must be used as a basis. The county climate profiles provide a good overview of projections and expected challenges, and are an important part of the knowledge base for planning. Knowledge-based land-use planning with broad involvement is necessary to accelerate climate adaptation efforts and to prevent damage from floods, landslides, sea level rise, storm surges, erosion and surface water.

When planning new urban development, areas with sound and stable ground conditions should be chosen, also in light of climate change. If there is a high risk of danger or inconvenience due to natural conditions or earlier interventions in the terrain and watercourses, alternative development areas should be considered. This may mean that planning and building in some places should be carried out

in completely different areas than those that have traditionally been developed.

When planning and implementing new development, it is important that filling in watercourses is avoided and that the natural retention of water is taken into account, partly to make society less vulnerable to floods and droughts. Wetlands, riparian zones, marshes and forests are valuable ecosystems that can help mitigate flooding and the negative effects of climate change. When preparing land-use plans, it is important that conservation and restoration of nature, and possibly the establishment of new nature-based solutions, are considered as climate change adaptation measures. If other solutions for climate change adaptation are chosen, the grounds for why nature-based solutions have been rejected must be given.

Consideration of flooding and surface water is particularly important in densification and transformation projects, where opening of streams, safe floodways, more green areas that drain water, green roofs, artificial streams and pools can contribute to climate change adaptation. In areas where quick clay may be present, it is also very important that the risk of quick clay landslides is taken into account when assessing whether the area is suitable for development and which safety measures should be implemented.

## 6.2 The Norwegian Armed Forces' land requirements

Defence policy is affected by the security policy situation, technological and economic developments and climate change. The Norwegian Armed Forces, and the capacity for Allied reception and civil preparedness, will therefore be strengthened. The Norwegian Armed Forces' base structure will be affected by national and Allied defence plans, and the ability to receive Allied equipment and personnel may also depend on areas outside existing military installations. At the same time, the Norwegian Armed Forces' artillery ranges and training grounds will be further developed to meet new needs and requirements, and to better facilitate exercises and training between foreign and Norwegian units. It is crucial that the Norwegian Armed Forces' land requirements related to military installations and artillery ranges and training grounds is taken into



account in planning as part of the development of a modern and prepared total defence system.

### 6.3 Protection of cultivated land

The Government aims to increase Norway's degree of food self-sufficiency. Planning must help to facilitate the production of as much food as possible in our own country. Due to topographical and climatic conditions, we have little cultivated land, and per capita the land suitable for growing food grains is lower than the European average. For reasons of preparedness and food production possibilities, it is necessary to preserve soil resources throughout the country and ensure that the land is kept in production. The preservation of cultivated land is therefore a national interest. The reassignment of cultivated land shall be reduced, and land-use planning will contribute to achieving the goal of reduced reassignment of topsoil in line with the new soil protection strategy from 2023.

It is important that the county authorities and municipalities follow up the national soil protection strategy so that development needs are better balanced against the long-term consideration of domestic food production. Particularly in areas under pressure, it is important to practise strict soil protection to prevent important agricultural land from being lost to buildings. In sparsely populated areas, it is also important to facilitate development in rural areas and generational transitions in agriculture, so that the basis for settlement and agricultural production is secured. The goal is a settlement pattern and provision of services that makes it attractive to live in rural areas at different stages of life, especially when young people put down roots. In order to maintain Norwegian food production, it is important to ensure settlement in connection with agricultural land, which helps the next generation to continue farming the land. This can be done, for example, by setting aside relevant areas for scattered residential development in the land-use element of the municipal master plan.

The best agricultural land is often located where development pressure is the highest. At the same time, agricultural land close to urban areas is of great value in terms of emergency preparedness. Efficient land use with good utilisation of areas that have already been built up can help to reduce the

need to build on cultivated land. It is important that the potential for densification and transformation is utilised where the alternative is development on cultivated land.

When revising plans, it is important to consider whether areas that have previously been set aside for purposes that involve the reassignment of cultivated land, but which have not yet been developed, should be returned to agricultural, nature, outdoor recreation and reindeer husbandry purposes. The opportunities to preserve cultivated land are also linked to regional development and transport patterns. Soil conservation considerations are therefore an important issue in regional planning, for example by preparing a regional soil protection strategy.

### 6.4 Clean and safe drinking water

Municipalities are responsible for ensuring that households and businesses have access to sufficient quantities of safe drinking water. This is a prerequisite for good health and a well-functioning society. Securing sources of drinking water and land for water supply and wastewater infrastructure is therefore an important part of municipal plans. Water bodies used for water supply must be protected against pollution by means of special consideration zones with associated planning provisions. This can also help to reduce the need for purification in the production of drinking water.

A robust water supply is crucial for societal safety. Municipal water mains are generally in poor condition; the leakage rate is high and the renewal rate of the pipeline network is not sufficient to avoid increasing deterioration. Because this entails a risk of contamination of drinking water and supply failures, it is therefore important that municipal sector and land-use planning is viewed in context and contributes to resolving these challenges.

### 6.5 Risk and vulnerability analyses as a basis for better plans

Societal safety in land-use planning involves obtaining an overview and knowledge of risks and vulnerabilities that can threaten or affect society's assets, and taking this into account in the plans. It is important that land-use planning takes into account that society must have the capacity and ability to protect the population and society in the event of undesir-



able incidents. Risk and vulnerability analyses must provide a basis so that planning can prevent the risk of injury and loss of life, health and important infrastructure, prevent the loss of critical societal functions and services, and ensure the capacity to protect the entire population. It is important to consider groups that are particularly vulnerable in the event of a crisis.

Acceptable risk is risk that is accepted in a given context based on current values in society. What is acceptable can change over time and vary between areas. For some issues, acceptable risk is stipulated by law or regulation. For other risk factors, the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable risk must be defined in the plan, for example as special consideration zones with provisions. As the planning authority, the municipality must actively decide which risks are acceptable in the plan.

Risk and vulnerability analyses are necessary to make the municipality aware of how planning decisions will affect risk and vulnerability, and to be able to make decisions regarding acceptable risk. The analyses are an important basis for highlighting natural hazards and business risks and how land use should be planned to prevent and reduce the consequences of serious incidents. Risk and vulnerability analyses provide in part a basis for assessing the safe location of major hazard businesses and

installations with hazardous substances, and for establishing adequate special consideration zones around them.

Through the municipal emergency preparedness obligation, a comprehensive risk and vulnerability analysis must be carried out as a knowledge base for the municipality's societal safety challenges. This will be followed up with long-term goals, strategies and prioritised follow-up of societal safety and emergency preparedness work. This is also an important basis for land-use planning, and must be followed up in the risk and vulnerability analyses that are prepared for land-use plans. Knowledge of changes in risk and vulnerability as a result of new development also provides a basis for updating the comprehensive risk and vulnerability analyses.

Geographical information provides insight into conditions that can help prevent future natural hazard events and emergency situations. Sharing public data is a prerequisite for the development of coordinated services across sectors and administrative levels, and access to up-to-date and easily accessible geographical data strengthens preparedness in emergency situations. It is important that geographic information is regularly updated, shared and available for use through the national geographic infrastructure in a secure manner.

## The Government's expectations

63. Societal safety and emergency preparedness are emphasised in planning. Risk and vulnerability analyses are based on up-to-date knowledge and form the basis for the processing of planning and building applications.
64. The Norwegian Armed Forces' land requirements are secured when this is necessary to safeguard the country's defence capability and to follow up national defence plans.
65. A changed climate is taken into account in planning, and the high end of the range in national climate projections and a sufficiently long time perspective are used as a basis when assessing the impacts of climate change. The county climate profiles are used.
66. Land use is planned so that surface water and hazards related to flooding, erosion, landslides, sea level rise, storm surges and other natural hazards are properly managed.
67. Conservation and restoration of natural areas, or the establishment of nature-based solutions, are considered in order to adapt society to climate change.
68. County municipalities and municipalities contribute to strengthening soil protection and

that land management contributes to achieving the goal of reduced reassignment of topsoil in line with the new soil protection strategy from 2023, and contributes to maintaining the operation of agricultural land.

69. When revising the land-use element of the municipal master plan, it is assessed whether areas that have previously been allocated for purposes that involve the reassignment of cultivated land should be returned to agricultural, nature, outdoor recreation and reindeer husbandry purposes.
70. To reduce the reassignment of cultivated land, a soil protection strategy should be considered as part of the overarching regional and municipal planning.
71. The municipality's drinking water supply must be included in the assessment of societal safety in the social and land-use elements of the municipal master plan. Drinking water sources are taken into account and safeguarded in planning, partly to reduce the need for water purification.
72. County authorities and municipalities update and share geographical information in the national geographical infrastructure.









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