

Final project report: Implementing the 2030 Agenda in organizations (IntAg2030)





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(IntAg2030)
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Summary

This report presents the results from the project Implementing 2030 Agenda in organizations (IntAg2030) financed by the Swedish Institute. The aim of IntAG2030 was to explore the best practices on how to implement the 2030 Agenda to promote sustainable development in private and public organizations. The project has been implemented by Zemgale Regional Energy Agency (Latvia), Estonia University of Life Sciences (Estonia) and County Administrative Board of Östergötland (Sweden). Public and private organizations have been interviewed and a model called “Scope of sustainability” developed. The interviews are presented as short reports in appendix 2. The model “Scope of sustainability” is developed based on the interview results and is additionally supported by existing scientific research in the field. The described model brings out six important areas to focus on when an organization starts implementing a sustainability structure. These areas are:

1. Strong leadership and early adopters,
2. Committed management,
3. Integration of sustainability in the internal strategic management
4. Knowledge and commitment among employees,
5. Coordinate, cooperate and collaborate
6. Follow up and communicate progress.

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda is not a quick fix to achieve sustainability status in any organization. The work requires long-term planning, and continuous activities and that key actors in the organization have the right level of capability, motivation, and opportunities to work towards the sustainable development.

This report can be used as supporting material for both private and public organizations for their sustainability work starting today.

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1. Introduction

In 2015 the United Nations launched a 15 yearlong action plan for sustainable development in the world with the name 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda contains 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone everywhere. [1]

Since 2015 the world has done progress and had setbacks for fulfillment of the sustainability goals [2]. The world is now facing interlinked global crises and conflicts such as COVID-19 pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine and the climate emergency. These crises have a destructive impact on the possibilities of meeting the sustainable development goals. All these crises are creating negative side effects in areas such as food and nutrition, health, education, peace, and security and including the environment. In other words, the world is currently going through environmental societal and economic crisis. In order to reverse it everyone has a crucial role and responsibility to contribute towards the sustainable transition. The sustainable development goals (SDG:s) can be seen as the roadmap out of the crisis [2]. A great deal of the work can be done on the local level within public and private organizations. In the Baltic Sea Region only a few organizations have implemented the 2030 Agenda in their operations and more work needs to be done.

This report presents the results from the project Implementing 2030 Agenda in organizations (IntAg2030) financed by the Swedish Institute. The project was conducted between January 2021 and October 2022. The aim of IntAG2030 was to explore the best practices on how to implement the 2030 Agenda to promote a sustainable development in private and public organizations. The project has been implemented by:

- Zemgale Regional Energy Agency (Latvia),
- Estonia University of Life Sciences (Estonia)
- County Administrative Board of Östergötland (Sweden).

One of the project objectives was to increase knowledge on how the 2030 Agenda can be implemented in organizations. The objective was also to increase knowledge on methods to support organizations in the work with the 2030 Agenda. The objectives, indicators and planned outputs of the project is presented in table 1.

Table 1. Objectives, indicators and planned outputs.

Short-term Objectives	Indicator	Output
Increased knowledge on how to implement the 2030 Agenda in organizations.	Four good examples/country, 12 in total. Representing examples on how organizations will work towards sustainability.	In total 12 good examples described, representing six public and six private sector organizations.
Increased knowledge on methods to support organizations to implement the 2030 Agenda.	Two examples per participating country. Preferably from different sectors.	Six identified methods supporting organizations in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

In this report the work with the 2030 Agenda and the sustainability goals will also be referred to as the term sustainability work and include economic, social and environmental performance. Some organizations do not call their work with sustainability “2030 Agenda” because working to promote sustainability is something that will take place in the organization longer than to the year of 2030.

1.1 Method

To achieve the objectives of the project, information has been gathered through interviews, literature studies and during systematic project meetings. Private and public organizations were selected in each partner country to participate in the project. The recruitment of organizations was done through existing networks, e-mails, telephone calls and social media. When the organizations were selected, a questionnaire was formed by the project partners. The questionnaire is presented in appendix 1. The questionnaire was divided into three parts:

1. the initial work with the 2030 Agenda;
2. the current situation and
3. future work.

The semi structured interviews were conducted during the spring of 2021. All responses on the questions were presented via online meetings among the project partners. The interviews were compiled into short reports in the folder appendix 2.

Based on the interview results, a model was developed. The model represents different aspects identified during the project to be considered important to work with in order to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda in an organization. The model is called “Scope of Sustainability”. The model is also supported by the research and practices previously published.

During the project one physical meeting with partners and interviewed organization representatives was organized and held in Sweden in June 2022. The conference contained one day meeting for experience and knowledge exchange and one day for study visits to forerunner organizations in Östergötland county.

2 Results

2.1 Increased knowledge on how to implement the 2030 Agenda in organizations.

In total ten organizations, five public and five private sector representatives were interviewed on how to implement the 2030 Agenda. The result together with the objectives and indicators are presented in table 2 and the result from the interviews are presented in appendix 2.

Table 2. Results of good examples presented together with objectives and indicators.

Short-term Objectives	Indicator	Output
Increased knowledge on how to implement the 2030 Agenda in organizations.	Four good examples/country, 12 in total.	10 good examples: 5 public and 5 private organizations.

The interviewed organizations were:

Sweden:

- The municipality of Åtvidaberg,
- The municipality of Norrköping,
- Econova AB (Recycling company)
- Städarna Sweden (Cleaning company)

Latvia:

- GREN the Northern European green energy company (heat supplier)
- Jekabpils County municipality
- Zemgale NGO Centre

Estonia:

- Tartu City
- Tartu Regional Energy Agency (TREA)
- Estonia University of life Science

2.1.1 Similarities and differences of the interview results

Based on the interview results the organizations showed differences in the level of their sustainability work. Some organizations have worked with the 2030 Agenda since the year of 2015 and others have just started. In some organizations the sustainability work has been introduced and initiated by employees and in some other organizations the clear assignment and introduction have initiated by the management level.

Multiple of the organizations started with the definition of the current situation by mapping connections between the sustainable development goals and their existing

assignments or business plans. By doing this, the awareness and knowledge was raised among the employees of each organization.

Many of the organizations shared the concept of using the 2030 Agenda as a tool or framework for the organization's sustainability work. One private organization mentioned the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals as "the most generally accepted framework for developing institutional capacity". Whereas one private organization called their work with sustainable development as "obvious work", because the sustainability work should be a natural part of all work, not just a project on the side.

Some of the organizations have chosen not to use the 2030 Agenda or the sustainable development goals when they speak about sustainability. These organizations focus on other types of national strategies connected to the social, economic, and ecologic dimensions of sustainability.

One public organization mentioned that the hardest part of their work was to communicate the whole meaning of the 2030 Agenda. The 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals is a broad framework with many different areas that need interdisciplinary solutions, which can involve many people within the organization. The same organization also highlighted that the sustainability work will not end in the year of 2030, it is a continuous work and requires constant follow-up and development.

Both private and public organization explained how important it is to have commitment among management (and politicians in public organizations) in order to integrate the sustainability work into governing documents.

In summary, the interviews result showed that both in private and public organizations to implement the 2030 Agenda it is important to have strong leadership, awareness and knowledge of the issue, commitment among management and employees as well as strong cooperating and collaborating ecosystem within and outside the organization. It is also important that sustainability is integrated into the governing documents and that the sustainability work is followed up and that progress is systematically communicated. These key areas are packaged into the model "Scope of sustainability" and will be presented in more detail in the next chapter.

2.2 Increased knowledge of methods to support organizations in implementing the 2030 Agenda. – Scope of Sustainability

The objective to increase knowledge of methods that support organizations in implementing the 2030 Agenda has been achieved. Within the framework of the project, a model called "Scope of Sustainability" has been developed. The results together with the objectives and indicators are presented in table 3.

Tabell 3. The results of methods presented together with objectives and indicators.

Short-term Objectives	Indicator	Output
Increased knowledge on methods to support organizations to implement the 2030 Agenda.	Two examples per participating country. Preferably from different sectors.	Model: Scopes of sustainability including six areas to work with.

Scope of sustainability illustrates six areas that are important to work with when an organization starts implementing a sustainability structure. The areas are:

1. strong leadership and early adopters;
2. committed management;
3. integration of sustainability in the internal strategic management;
4. knowledge and commitment among employees;
5. coordinate, cooperate and collaborate;
6. follow up and communicate progress.

The six different areas identified are described in more detail in the next chapter.



2.2.1.Strong leadership and early adopters

The results from the interviews in this project showed that strong leadership is crucial to implement the 2030 Agenda towards sustainable development in an organization. Regardless of whether an employee's job duties involve sustainability tasks, commitment, and missions can be created by raising the topic in meetings or other conversations. In the three of the interviewed organizations, new positions were created precisely because of talking about the importance of sustainability with the management and politicians.

One of the definitions of leadership is a person's ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organization they belong to [3]. Leadership is a behavior that everyone in an organization can practice. It is important that an organization have a culture where people dare to practice leadership [4]. The implementation process is affected by how much freedom of action employees have. A great freedom of action contributes to an increased willingness to implement a measure. If there is also a sense of meaning, the desire to implement becomes even greater.

The theory *Diffusion of innovations* [5] explains how innovations are spread thorough a few individuals so called early adopters. Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated over time among the participants in a social system over time. Innovation must be widely adopted to self-sustain and that early adopters are important to start the process. Early adopters are proved to be good at engaging and exciting people about possibilities even in the face of challenges. Early adopters don't wait for complete clarity to try new ideas. They solve the problems along the way instead of waiting for all answers to be there. [6]

In implementation theories, this perspective is called a bottom-up perspective. In this perspective, central decision-makers do not have the ability to control the implementation process as they are too complex for the decision-makers to understand [7]. Early adopters can also be called grassroots bureaucrats who play a

crucial role in the implementation process because they have direct contact with day-to-day operations of the organization. The actions of grassroots bureaucrats can either be driven by self-interest or by professional norms and competence, or by a mixture of the two. The space for action can also be controlled by resources, rules and routines [7].

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in an organization can be described as a complex change that requires constant adaptation to overcome hurdles and work around challenges [8]. The hardest work is in the early days of change before the wider organizations is fully supportive and pulling in the same sustainable direction. It is important to believe that even if all answers are not there, challenges can be overcome. Strong leadership together with early adopters paves the way for the 2030 Agenda to be integrated in an organization.

2.2.2. Committed management

The outcome of the project shows that a committed management is essential for implementation of the 2030 Agenda in an organization. In both, politically governed and private organizations the decision on the highest level is crucial. A committed management can contribute to more mandates and resources to facilitate the implementation work. Attitudes and actions regarding sustainability can vary widely among managers in the organization. Some managers may identify sustainability as an important strategic imperative while others may not. Active and committed leadership, for example by the CEO and senior managers, is a key to success to any type of significant organizational change [9]. In implementation theory this perspective is called the top-down perspective [7]. The top-down perspective assumes that the implementation process is controlled by the decision makers at the top level of the control chain, such as the management.

One way to increase commitment in the management team and at the same time map the current situation is to conduct a sustainability barometer [10]. The sustainability barometer consists of questions linked to the organization's sustainability work. The questions can be answered with the answer options "Yes, Partially, No or Not relevant". The results will serve as a broad-based and justified analysis of the current situation for the organization's sustainability work. Three examples of questions can be:

- Are sustainable development and Agenda 2030 important topics of conversation in top management?
- Do we consider the three dimensions of sustainable development in decisions, processes, and activities?
- Do we report our sustainability work in an annual report?

The answers from the barometer can be used as basis for an internal action plan.

A survey of how sustainability does or does not permeate an organization's governing documents can also increase the management knowledge and commitment [11]. The mapping can be done either by the management or by the responsible sustainability coordinator. To create a continuous commitment for sustainable development in a management, the issue must be a permeant part in the board structure. For example, through a cross functional sustainability council or committee, or simply as part of the regular meeting agenda [9].

2.2.3. Integration of sustainability into internal strategic management

In this project, some organizations integrated the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development into the internal strategic management. In this case, it can be called an integrated approach to sustainability management [12]. An integrated approach provides an opportunity as well as a challenge to develop coherence and organizational learning. An integrated approach depends on aspects such as structure, leadership, and coordination [12]. The components of the internal strategic management can be described as the organizations mission, values, goals and programs [13].

Mission

A mission identifies how an organization defines its purpose and priorities. A mission can provide signals to the employees about the aim of the organization. A sustainable mission must balance financial performance, social performance, and environmental performance. By creating a sustainable mission, the organizations' managers reflect success in the three dimensions of sustainability [13].

Values

Sustainability should also be integrated into the organization's values. Values should answer the question – *Who are we as an organization?* The values refer to beliefs about the types of goals an organization should pursue. Values can be described as the basis for common norms and expectations and define appropriate behavior among employees. Shared values can provide motivation and commitment among employees in an organization [13]. Integrating sustainability into organizational values reassure employees that the sustainability work is something that should influence everyone and everything in the organization.

Goals

The goals should complement the missions and the values of the organization and answer the question- *What will the organization achieve?* Goals create the basis for a roadmap of the activities and metrics for measuring the progress [13]. The goals can be linked to the sustainable development goals (SDG:s) and reflect progress on a bigger scale. By aligning with the SDGs, companies can set more meaningful goals and communicate more effectively about its commitment to a sustainable development [9]. It is important that the goals are reflecting the ambitions in all the three dimensions. It is often a fact that organizations only have goals for the environmental dimension and not the social dimension such as poverty eradication and anti-corruption [9]. It is important that the goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time bounded [14]. Selecting key performance indicators (KPIs) is an essential stage in setting goals. KPI:s or other key figures can be used as the basis for driving, monitoring, and communicating the progress. More about KPIs and following-up in section 2.2.6.

Sustainability program / Sustainable business models

In public organizations, a sustainability program can be one way to structure the sustainability work within the organization. The starting point for a sustainability program can be in the vision and goals of the organizations. The program can describe various long-term development areas that strives towards reaching the future state in the vision. The program can also outline direction and set priorities that include more specific areas of development and directives. The extension of such a program can be action plans in different operation areas. [15] The sustainability program can be seen as a steering document to use in moving from words to action to achieve the organization's vision, overall goals and the 2030 Agenda. [15]

In private organizations, business models can act as vital forces to facilitate sustainability transitions. A business model can be described as the organization's activity to secure competitive advantages. The business model should also involve all stakeholders inside and outside the organization, including both customers and partners. A sustainable business model (SBM) integrates sustainability into value proposition, value creation or value capture [16]. Integration of sustainability across the value chain (Raw materials→ Suppliers→ Inbound logistics→ Company operations→ Distribution→ Product Use→ Product end life) can protect and create value for the organization in terms of increasing sales, new market segments, strengthening the brand, stimulating product innovations etc. [9]

A sustainable business model can integrate sustainable activities at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels to reach long-, medium-, and short-term goals. At the long-term strategic level, the sustainable business model focuses on achieving the organization's mission and purpose. In this case a question "*are the business offering sustainable products, services or technologies?*" can be answered. At the medium tactical level, the focus is on creating networks and collaboration towards sustainable development. For example, the organization can co-create sustainable values together with consumers. At the short-term operational level, the focus is to establish a sustainable mission and goals and starting to implement sustainable practices. Activities at this level can be a business adopting sustainable technologies or innovations. [16] Private organizations that are more advanced towards sustainability are most likely to increase trust among stakeholder, strengthen the license to operate, reduce legal reputation and other business risks, and build resilience to costs or requirements imposed by future legislation [9].

2.2.4. Knowledge and commitment among employees

Knowledge and commitment among employees are essential to achieve success in the sustainability work in all organizations. Once the sustainability perspective is integrated into the organizations mission, value, goals, program and or business models, it is time to communicate it to all employees. Managers and management or other designated sustainability coordinators have an important role to play here. This can be done in internal management meetings, departmental meetings, unit meetings etc.

To achieve a change in employers' behavior it is important that they have capabilities, motivation, and opportunities [17]. Capabilities can be defined as the employee's psychological and physical ability to engage in the work with sustainable development. Questions such as, "*Do the employee have the relevant knowledge and skills to support the work?*" can be asked. Motivation can be defined as the brain processes that energize and guide behavior. This can be answered by questions "*Are the advantages for the employee clear?*" Or "*Does the employee have an emotional connection to the sustainability work?*". Opportunities can be defined as the factors that make the behavior possible such as finances, material support and technology [17].

The result of the interviews in this project shows that it is common to map the sustainable developments goals (and sub goals) to existing activities. It aims to increase the knowledge among employees of how their work contributes to different sustainability goals. The mapping itself does not necessarily have to lead to progress towards the sustainability goals. In some organizations the work stops here, and no extra efforts is made, the mapping becomes a "legitimization strategy" to continue "business as usual" [18]. One way to turn the mapping to something concrete, is to identify the gap of where the employees/unit lacks work and turn it to activities. The activities can be included in action plans, e.g., sustainable procurement plan. In private organization the mapping can show where they have positive and negative

impact on the sustainability goals. Different action plans to be developed can contain concrete activities to increase the positive impact and reduce the negative impact. There are several tools that can be used for private organizations to map their high impact areas such as life cycle assessment and environmentally extended input-output (EEIO) [9].

Depending on the nature and impact of the organization, some functions are more important than others to involve in the sustainability work. In private organization, functions such as business development, supply management and operations and human resources are extra important to embedding sustainability in [9].

2.2.5. Coordinate, cooperate and collaborate

The terms coordination, cooperation and collaboration are often recurring in the discussion of 2030 Agenda [19]. To increase the capacity in the work with coordination, cooperation and collaboration, resources such as knowledge, motivation, and political legitimacy (in public organizations) are needed. Understanding, good leadership, and partners to collaborate with are also important. [19]. Some of the organization that were interviewed in this project mentioned that they are participate in various sustainability networks. It can be networks of only public organizations, networks with a mix of organizations and networks of only private organizations. The networks contribute primarily to the exchange of experience and inspiration.

To reach sustainable solutions in an organization, where the three dimensions of sustainability are included, internal coordination between different units and departments is important. In most cases, public organizations are organized in silos, which means that forms of competence transfer across unit boundaries must be developed. Effective internal coordination and cooperation paves the way for external collaborations and cooperation. One of the interviewed organizations in this project has reorganized the internal organization structure so that the strategic sustainability questions were placed under the municipal management. This helped the organization to integrate the sustainability work into the other functions of the organization.

External collaborations are important both for public and private organization to exchange experiences and information. It helps to understand how different organizations are handling their sustainability work. External collaboration in a small public and private organization can be crucial because there is usually one single person who pushes the sustainability work forward. Collaboration with similar and different organizations are an important source of inspiration and capacity building [19]. Cooperation between sectors is important to achieve sustainability in the whole society [20].

Collaboration is also explicitly built into the sustainability goal 17. Partnership for the goals and refers to the need for cross sector and cross-country collaboration [1]. For private organizations, collaboration can also be called partnership. Partnership can be created in value chains where the organizations can bring new solutions to the market and combine and compare, for example technologies and skills. The partnership can also be within sectors and bring “leader organizations” together to raise standards across the sector to overcome shared challenges. Multi-stakeholder partnership between the private sector, civil society organizations and the government are also essential to tackle complex challenges [9].

2.2.6. Follow up and measure progress

Data and statistic can light the way to reach the 2030 Agenda and the sustainability goals [2]. Follow up of organization's sustainability work can be done in different ways. The follow-up-work is mentioned in this project as one of the most difficult tasks.

The United Nations have developed indicators for all the sustainable development goals that can be adopted on a local level and be used in different organizations [21]. However, the operations of different organizations look different, so it may be necessary to adapt indicators or create new ones.

Key performance indicators (KPI:s) are common to use in private organization, but can also be used in public organizations. KPI:s can be divided into the three sustainability dimensions and different categories. The KPI:s can be used to measure progress of different categories. For example, can one category be "Public Space and Nature" and the indicators; *Size of green areas, green area accessibility, protected natural areas, recreational facilities* [22].

Follow up work can be standardized or non-standardized. One of the world's most widely used standard for sustainability reporting is called Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) [23]. With the help of the GRI standard organizations increase their understanding of the impact and contributions to sustainable development. GRI has defined ten principles for sustainability reporting: stakeholder inclusiveness, sustainability context, materiality, completeness, balance, comparability, accuracy, timeliness, clarity and reliability. The standard is divided into three series of standards, Universal Standards, Sector Standards and Topic Standards. The Universal standard is a broad standard that includes both the sector standard and the topic standard. The Sector standard is developed for 40 sectors and list topics that are likely to be material for most organizations and indicate relevant disclosures to report on these topics [24]. The Topic standard contain disclosures for providing information on topics e.g., waste, occupational health, safety etc. By using a standard, benchmarking can be achieved, which means that comparisons can be made between organizations [24].

In Sweden, key figures for the sustainability goals are collected in a database called Kolada. The data comes primarily from official statistics and gives an overview of the cost, scope and quality of the organizations. Currently there are today approximately 5,000 key figures in the Kolada database. The database also has a so-called input function, where municipalities can make voluntary reporting about their achievements. Kolada contains various tools (functions), for example, comparisons to follow developments over time and comparisons between municipalities and regions within Sweden [25].

In Estonia there is a similar system called Tree of Truth [26] The Tree of Truth shows the status of indicators important for Estonia and including status of the work with Estonia national strategy on sustainable development (Sustainable Estonia 21) Estonia 2023 and the Government Action plan. Tree of Truth contains 145 indicators and are broken down in fifteen branches representing different areas of the society. Tree of Truth answer the question – "*How is our country doing*"

Communication of the results from the following-up is important in order to create trust and to support value creation. In private organizations, sustainability information can be increasingly important for sound investments and decision-making. In both public and private organizations, solid sustainability work can strengthen the brand of the organization and as an employer, which gives the

organization competitive advantages. When sustainability work is linked to the 2030 Agenda and the sustainability goals, there is a common language that ensures common dialogue between stakeholders.

Conclusions

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the sustainable development goals requires long-term planning and continuous activities. This project and available literature show that the top management in an organization must be committed to support the implementation. This commitment can be developed through strong leadership among employees so called “early adopters”. Sustainability must be integrated into the internal strategic management such as the organization’s mission, values, goals and programs/business models to become a natural part of the organization’s operation. Employee’s commitment is important and requires the right level of capability (knowledge and skills), motivation (clear benefits for the employees), and opportunities (finances, material, support etc). Capacity, motivation and opportunities can be strengthened through internal and external coordination, cooperation and collaboration. Systematic follow-up is crucial to achieve success and right indicators need to be identified for the specific impact of the organizations processes.

This report can be used as support by both private and public organizations to start their sustainability work.

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Appendix 1. Interview questionnaire

Part 1. Initial work

1. How did the work with 2030 Agenda begin in your organization?
2. What work did you consider to be most important to start with?
3. How was the work initially anchored in:
 - a) Politicians,
 - b) Management group,
 - c) Employees,
 - d) Customers,
 - e) Other
4. How did the involvement in the above-mentioned groups affect the initial work on 2030 Agenda?
5. What do you consider to be the most important success factors in the initial work?
6. What would have been done differently today in the initial work if you were to restart?

Part 2. The current situation

1. What does the work with 2030 Agenda look like in your organization today?
 - a) Is there a vision?
 - b) Are there goals?
 - c) Is there a strategy?
 - d) Is there an action plan?
 - e) Is there a program?
 - f) Important processes?
2. What does the organizational structure look like? (working group, management group / steering group)?
3. How is the sustainability work anchored within the organization?
4. How do you assess the commitment and level of ambition for the work with the 2030 Agenda in:
 - a) management group,
 - b) politicians,
 - c) employees,
 - d) working group,
 - e) other:
5. How does the involvement in the above-mentioned groups affect the work on the 2030 Agenda?

6. Describe how you work operationally. How are the municipality's residents, companies, organizations involved in the work with 2030 Agenda?
7. How does collaboration take place around the 2030 Agenda:
 - a) local,
 - b) regional,
 - c) national,
 - d) international?
8. How does the above-mentioned collaboration affect your work with the 2030 Agenda?
9. What do you find most difficult about working with the 2030 Agenda?
10. What do you consider to be success factors in how you carry out the work on the 2030 Agenda right now?
11. What do you think are the biggest benefits that the work with the 2030 Agenda has given your organization?
12. Have you seen any results in the work of achieving the goals?
13. What do you think are your most important lessons in working with 2030 Agenda?

Part 3. The future

1. What is the forthcoming most important work to do?
2. What future needs do you have to get further in the work with the 2030 Agenda?
3. What are your needs for collaboration in the continued work with the 2030 Agenda?

Appendix 2. Interview results

Implementing 2030 Agenda in organizations (IntAg2030)





The aim of the project IntAG2030 was to explore the best practices on how to implement the 2030 Agenda towards the sustainable development in organizations. This folder presents the results from interviews with both private and public organizations in Sweden, Latvia and Estonia. Questions about the organizations work with sustainability have been asked and the result can be seen as a source of inspiration.

The interviews were conducted during the spring in the year 2021 and the participating organizations are:

Sweden: The municipality of Åtvidaberg,
The municipality of Norrköping, Econova AB,
Städarna Sweden (Cleaning company)

Latvia: GREN the Northern European green energy company,
Jekabpils County, Zemgale NGO Centre.

Estonia: Tartu City, Tartu Regional Energy Agency (TREA),
Estonia University of life Science.

IntAg2030 contributes to strengthen the partnership between the participating countries through collaboration, exchanging knowledge and gain experience. The project has been carried out by the Zemgale Regional Energy Agency (ZREA), Estonia University of Life Sciences (EMÜ) and County Administrative Board of Östergötland (CAB).





Step into your leadership shoes! How the municipality of Åtvidaberg implemented Agenda 2030.

Yasmine Dernelid began working with Agenda 2030 in 2015 in connection with updating municipal environment programmes. Yasmine then decided to approach her supervisor as well as local politicians with the idea of creating a sustainability program – an idea that was welcome by everyone! Since 2015, Åtvidaberg Municipality has:

- Mapped out the current situation and drawn up internal sustainability development goals. *'We all agreed to focus on ourselves first and set a good example before reaching out to the business community and other local stakeholders.'*
- Applied its Sustainable Development Goals on a local level. We asked ourselves: *'What do these goals mean for us in Åtvidaberg Municipality?'*
- Worked on integrating the perspective of sustainability in every process. The overall vision and objectives of the municipality are, among other things, linked to Agenda 2030 and the Global Goals.
- Engaged and involved municipal employees in the sustainability work through workshops and knowledge-building activities.
- Raised awareness among politicians and members of the Community Management Group through communication initiatives. *'These days, the issue is driven by politicians which is critical to the success of our work.'*
- Integrated the sustainability perspective in the municipal budget. *'We believe it to be of utmost importance that issues relating to environmental sustainability remain visible throughout the budgeting process.'*
- Participated and collaborated with a number of regional networks. *'The networks primarily contribute with inspiration and an exchange of knowledge.'*
- Reorganised its operations in line with Agenda 2030. Today, Yasmine Dernelid heads up the new Strategic Development Unit. The unit employs people with expertise in social, economic and ecological dimensions. *'We are altogether three people who work to ensure that the sustainability perspective is not forgotten and instead, permeates every aspect of the municipal work.'*
- Developed and implemented an initial sustainability programme. *'To be able to see how we are doing, we must follow up on every Sustainability Development Goal!'*
- Åtvidaberg Municipality is currently developing a sustainability programme that covers the overall objectives of the municipality. There must be a common thread running through it all from the overall vision, objectives and sustainability programme of the municipality down to management and operational plans. *'In this way, the sustainability programme becomes the overall governing document of the municipality.'*



Yasmine Dernelid,
head of Strategic Development Unit, Åtvidaberg Municipality



Use the sustainability perspective as a competitive advantage!

Econova is a company that has had a circular business model from day one. 'The company brand is strongly linked to sustainability and circular solutions,' explains Anders Bergquist, Sustainable Development and Strategy Manager. As part of its sustainability work, Econova has:

- Developed and integrated a Sustainability Strategy. *'We aim to become the most sustainable company on the market in terms of social, ecological and environmental aspects.'* *'Working with these issues now will give us an advantage in future – and not just us but everyone!'*
- Linked all business plans to the Sustainability Strategy. For almost all employees, our business plans have been transformed into personal plans. *'There must be a common thread running throughout – from strategy and business plan to other employees.'*
- Created support and commitment and received clear assignments from the Management Group. *'It is a lot easier to have the company owner and management with you from the start rather than trying to drive issues from the bottom-up (..) 'The questions asked by members of the Management Group have shown be very useful. Questions such as 'when are we going to build a new factory or buy a new machine?' This makes us think about sustainability in everything we do, from the work environment to environmental issues, finances, etc.'*
- A sustainability department that drives development forward. The department is staffed by a Sustainability Manager, a Sustainability Integration Manager and Anders Bergquist.
- Developed a sustainability reporting framework with the aim of achieving higher goals and ambitions than is required by law. *'This is significantly above the level of reporting required under the law.'* Econova see their sustainability reporting and status as an effective marketing strategy that will bring in more business. They also want to be transparent about where and what they can improve on.
- Developed methods for categorising products based on Agenda 2030 sustainability goals. At Econova, the perspective of sustainability is linked to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are used to measure how effective the company is at achieving vital business goals.
- Networked/networking with other companies, authorities and academia. Econova has participated in many local sustainability projects and regularly collaborates with students on their degree projects.



Anders Bergquist,
head of Sustainable Development and Strategy at Econova.



How sustainability initiatives were set in motion by a new political direction.

Norrköping Municipality has long worked with sustainability in many different ways. The municipality has for many years been the organiser of a sustainability event called the Global Weeks, the aim of which is to raise awareness of Agenda 2030 throughout the community.

In 2019, Norrköping Municipality was unambiguously assigned the task of working with Agenda 2030 within the municipal group. As part of its sustainability work, Norrköping Municipality has:

- Received the assignment to increase the level of ambition in its work with the Agenda 2030 and Global Goals. The councils and corporate boards have been tasked with helping employees gain a better understanding of the Global Goals and introducing particular activities that will contribute to the fulfilment of such goals. 'All councils have been asked to describe in their Action Plan how they intend to work with the Global Goals.'
- Linked the overall goals of the assignment period to provisional global targets. 'It is difficult to make an impact without a political assignment,' says Karin Faxér, Environmental Strategist at Norrköping Municipality.
- Created a working group called the Global Working Group at the office of the municipal council with the task of supporting all (municipal) operations and companies in their work with Agenda 2030 and the Global Goals. The Group develops tools, guidance and knowledge-building activities for the implementation of the work with Agenda 2030.
- Developed a Global Goals portal on the municipality's intranet with information about the Global Goals and budget assignment. The Global Working Group uses the portal to provide information on the ongoing sustainability work and development of tools.
- Organised a number of inspirational lectures and workshops in 2021 for municipal corporations, municipal management groups and councils on how to integrate Global Goals into everyday operations.

- Followed up/following up on how the sustainability work of the municipality contributes to the fulfilment of the subgoals of Agenda 2030. Activities that are followed up include activities linked to the subgoals of Agenda 2030 such as the reduction in purchases of single-use plastics. 'A development in the right direction and the performance indicator for the fulfilment of provisional global targets shows GREEN (right direction). A development in the wrong direction and it shows RED (wrong direction). If most of the activities carried out to fulfil a subgoal lead to a development in the right direction, the performance indicator for the entire goal will show GREEN.' Corporate sustainability work is reported in a Sustainability Report, 'The companies report, among other things, on what activities have been implemented and how Global Goals are integrated into business plans.'
- Investigated how aspects of sustainability can be used to market the municipality of Norrköping.
- The Municipal Director has created a forum where CEOs and other managers can exchange ideas, experiences and discuss their work with Agenda 2030.



Karin Faxér,
Environmental
Strategist,
Norrköping
Municipality



See sustainability work as the most obvious work an organisation can do!

The company Stådarna AB has worked hard for many years to protect the well-being of its employees in the form of strong collective agreements and competent staff. The company refers to its work with environmental sustainability as its 'manifesto.' In 2019, the company recruited Jenny Berg as its new Sustainability Manager. Since then, Stådarna AB has:

- Held a workshop on the Agenda 2030 and sustainability goals with CEOs and employees at the head office. *'It was a fantastic workshop where everyone got to learn more about the Global Goals.'*
- Mapped the company's existing sustainability work as a result of which, it was discovered that much of the work had already been done within the social and economic dimensions. *'Our greatest potential for improvement lies in our environmental work.'*
- Drafted Sustainability Reports, referred to by the company as its 'Manifesto'. All employees were given the chance to be involved in the preparation of the report. *'It is very important for all employees to feel that what is stated in the report is true and not just empty words.'*
- Organised a Sustainability Evening for all employees with the aim of raising awareness of environmental issues and sustainability at the same time as launching the company's second 'Manifesto'.
- Integrated sustainability issues in the company's Employee Survey.
- Invested in assessment and follow-up courses. *'We need to learn how to follow up and measure progress towards sustainability goals.'*
- Enlisted the help of students in its work with sustainability. The students have, among other things, assisted the company in making climate calculations in line with the GHG (Greenhouse Gas) Protocol.
- Networked with other companies, local authorities and academia. *'It is extremely important to help and learn from each other.'*



Jenny Berg,
Sustainability Manager, Stådarna AB



An ecological way of living must reach all citizens!

Sustainability issues, similar to Agenda 2030, are very important in Tartu city development, now and in the future.

- Tartu is not specifically working with Agenda 2030 within the organization, but sustainability issues are very important in the city and are in focus.
- City of Tartu has a strategy called the development strategy "Tartu 2030". Agenda 2030 goals are also partially covered with our Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan.
- Tartu's vision for 2030: *"An ecological way of living must reach all citizens. In city life, this means a more environmentally friendly system of waste collection, sorting and storage. For residential building construction and renovation, environmentally friendly solutions and materials as well as efficient energy use will be preferred. City life management will curb uncontrolled urban sprawl, while promoting the use of non-motorised and public means of transport."*
- Click for more information:
<https://tartu.ee/en/sustainable-tartu>.



Raimond Tamm,
Deputy mayor, Tartu City, Estonia



Everybody talks about the sustainability but very few are ready to pay for it!

Agenda 2030 is currently the best internationally accepted framework developing sustainable institutional capacity.

- It all started through the participation in European energy efficiency grant programs for public sector. Establishing funding opportunities and financial sustainability of the activities. This cooperation model was essential for the main work to begin.
- The most significant benefit working with the Agenda 2030 is that it is internationally and the most generally accepted framework for developing institutional capacity.
- A long way is ahead but all is possible although additional financial support is crucial. Energy transition and reducing the consumer habits/ mentality among the Estonian public is important issue to tackle forward.
- In society, better coordination of sustainable initiatives and more organizations in the region need to accept their role as forerunners of energy efficiency and transition towards clean energy.
- Click for more information: www.trea.ee/eng



Neeme Kärbo,
Project Manager,
Tartu Regional Energy Agency (TREA),
Estonia.



Marek Muiste,
Energy Expert,
Tartu Regional Energy Agency (TREA),
Estonia.



Commitment in every level is crucial to make Agenda 2030 a success in academia!

There is need to talk about the Agenda more nationally and in connection to the academic studies.

- It all started with the sustainability seminar where the management made an introduction to the Agenda 2030 in January 2020.
- The seminar initiated the discussion about the connections of the SDG and curricula. All connections with specific goals were pointed out on EULSs curriculum basis, so that in the future it would be possible to show it more in the curricula but also to think about how to further support the achievement of goals through university curricula towards society.
- This broader knowledge about the SDGs made university staff to think about the connections both at the level of the curriculum as a whole and in terms of subjects, especially if the curriculum related to several goals.
- Currently and in the future curriculum managers and lecturers will take the SDGs into account when new curricula and individual subjects are developed.
- Click for more information:
<https://www.emu.ee/en>



Ina Järve,
Department of Academic Affairs, Head of the Department,
Estonian University of Life Sciences (EULS), Estonia



I am the angel of earth because... Experience of Jekabpils County.

In Jekabpils county, Latvia you can stand by poster, imagine you have wings as an angel of the earth and tell what are the good things you have done and do for the planet earth – why are you the angel...

- Jekabpils municipality started to work with UN Agenda 2030 sustainability goals quite long time ago. In planning the goals were/are pursued in indirect way. In Latvia the Cross-Sectoral Coordination Centre (CSCC) – the institution under the direct authority of the Prime Minister is responsible for the Latvian development planning at national level. Municipalities, when elaborating its local plans and strategies, take into account the national sustainability documents and strategies.
- Goal 7 – affordable and clean energy: In 2009 Jekabpils signed the Covenant of Mayors and use of wood biomass in district heating has increased more than two times since then, green procurement started to be used and in public transport among others 6 natural gas (methane) busses are used.
- 2018-2021 Jekabpils City Education Initiative Centre implemented the project “Global Civil Education – Bridge to Sustainable Development” project or “Bridge47”. The aim was to involve the citizens of Jekabpils in promoting global sustainability.
- A bus of global targets was set up, reminding people visually of 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, or Global Goals.
- A wall of Global Objectives was created.
- In future human resources would be crucial to maintain/improve the work with UN Agenda 2030 – to have funds to hire a specialist for work with UN2030, who would be responsible for including the UN 2030 targets in the work of the municipality, would develop wider cooperation with NGOs and others through networking and advice.
- Click for more information:
<https://www.jekabpils.lv>





This is where the future is being energized today in a sustainable and efficient way.

The heat provider of Jelgava city, Latvia – GREN – works mostly with the goal 7 of UN2030 sustainability goals – affordable energy.

- Gren – the Northern European green energy company, as a brand is quite new. Yet it is positively familiar to its stakeholders as Gren companies have been operating in the Baltic market for several decades. The owner and the brand has changed, but the solid foundation of sustainability and environmental responsibility laid is strong and continues to drive Gren's operations and development.
- Gren focuses on developing and providing sustainable energy solutions, primarily district heating, using renewables and local resources to meet local communities' needs and provides comfort for their daily lives while also having a positive impact on the environment.
- Gren has continuously improved efficiency of energy production and district heating (DH) network in Jelgava, Latvia. As the result Jelgava DH system is among the greenest in Europe.
- To improve the affordability of clean energy and the service of DH in Jelgava, Gren is continuously working on connecting new customers to the network.
- GREN's combined heat and power (CHP) plant in Jelgava is the first large scale biomass CHP plant in Latvia that uses local renewable energy resources, primarily wood chips, to provide heat and electricity. Today around 95-97% of heat energy necessary for Jelgava DH is produced from renewable resources.
- Gren's CHP plant in Jelgava has played an important role in reducing the CO₂ emissions from heat production by 90% Jelgava and favored fulfillment of the city's targets under the Covenant of Mayors.
- To further improve resource efficiency and responsible production, Gren has constructed a 5000 m³ large heat accumulation tank at Jelgava biomass CHP plant. That secures more efficient use of the primary fuel – wood chips.
- Now Gren is developing a new project that will secure diversification of fuels in Jelgava biomass CHP plant. Adding up to 35% refuse derived fuel (RDF) to the main fuel – wood chips, would lessen the amount of waste that is taken to landfills and will develop more sustainable waste management system in the region. It will also have positive effect on heat and waste management prices for customers.
- Gren's most valuable asset is its employees. To take care of the health and wellbeing of its employees Gren regularly organizes different lectures on healthy lifestyle, common sports activities, internal entertaining competitions both remotely and when possible, also in person.
- Click for more information: <https://gren.com>





Zemgale NGO Centre: Work with UN Agenda – a sense for better future.

Work with UN Agenda 2030 objectives is in the hands of organization staff and the board – a sense of a better future, which is consistent with these objectives.

- Zemgale NGO Support Centre, Latvia, started to work with Agenda 2030 about 2 years ago, when the organization "LAPAS" (Society "Latvian Platform for Development Cooperation") introduced with sustainable development objectives.



- It was important to look at the day-to-day activities of the organization and to see where we could introduce sustainable development objectives. Which were the day-to-day activities, where we could apply them? Gender equality in events (selecting participants), waste sorting, diversity assessment in the activities of the organization, developing countries involved in the international projects, ensuring that national representatives could be involved. These are some small things that are already in the process, but we understand that they still have little influence.
- The success factors would be work with all sectors, including the education system and not only young people, but it should also be integrated into the lifelong learning system for adults.
- Click for more information: <https://zemgalei.lv/en/>

Uldis Dumins,
Chairman of the board of Zemgale NGO Centre

The County Administrative Board creates social benefits through advice, coordination, permits, supervision, examination, support and grants. We protect the environment, ensure that important natural and cultural values are preserved and create conditions for developing the countryside and business life in the county. We also have socially important assignments e.g., crisis preparedness, social issues, animal welfare and community planning. In this way, we contribute to the County Board's vision of a viable Östergötland



LÄNSSTYRELSEN
ÖSTERGÖTLAND