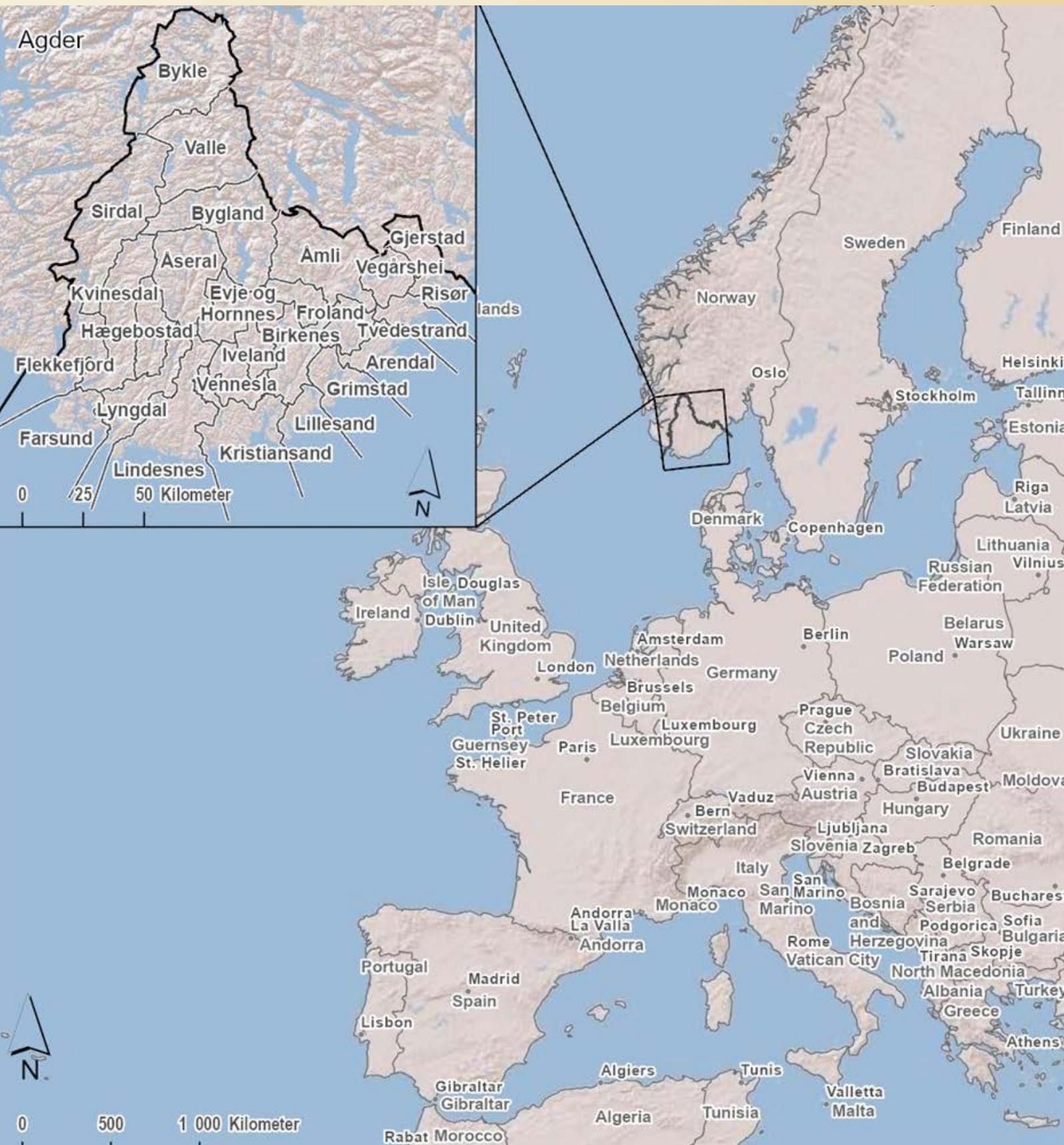




AGDER
County Council

Regional Development Plan Agder 2030

Attractive, co-creating and sustainable
Short version



About Agder

Agder is the southernmost region (county) in Norway and consists of 25 municipalities. The county has a combined area of 16 500 km², and a population of 309 000 inhabitants with backgrounds from 150 countries. The two largest cities in the region are the county capital Kristiansand and Arendal with 113 000 and 45 000 inhabitants, respectively. The majority of the region's population and businesses are concentrated along the coastline. The population density is 20 people per km². The unemployment is at 3,2% (registered without employment and on employment measures). The combined GDP of the region is 119 939 mill NOK (11 735 mill Euro) – equivalent to 394 857 NOK per capita (38 636 Euro). The GDP of Agder constitutes 1,6% of Norway's GDP.

The Agder region is experiencing economic and demographic growth. Green and blue growth, research and innovation are in the core of a futurelooking sustainable development. The region holds strong competency environments - both in the business community and at the University of Agder¹.

These competency environments are world leading within process industry, equipment to the offshore industry and use of e-health and welfare technologies. Half of Norway's power surplus originates from renewable hydropower in Agder, which gives the region a unique position globally. This is the background for the Electric Region Agder vision² to create the world's first fully-electric society based on 100 percent clean energy by 2030.

Kristiansand Airport Kjevik connects the region to Europe, whilst the Port of Kristiansand is one of Norway's largest ferry and container hubs. Last but not least, Agder has a university with about 13 000 students, attracting more and more students from abroad each year.

¹ <https://www.uia.no/en>

² <https://electricregionagder.com/media/awgk1o0f/era-3-slides-engelsk.pdf>

About the Regional Development Plan

The Regional Development Plan was adopted by the County Council in October 2019 and is an overall strategic steering document for the whole region. The plan describes the most important challenges and opportunities, a desirable future state of affairs for 2030, and what it takes to achieve the concrete objectives. The plan is the basis for policy development in the Agder region. It also provides guidance for the priorities, coordinated efforts and use of tools on the part of public authorities at different levels of government. The plan is

developed according to the Smart Specialisation methodology and indicates relevant areas for international cooperation.

The Regional Development Plan will be followed-up in quadrennial action programmes to be reviewed periodically (first edition was adopted in June 2021). The action programme will be seen in conjunction with various regional roadmaps and strategies for climate, energy and living conditions.

Main objectives

The main objective of the plan is to develop Agder towards an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable region – an attractive low-emission society with good living conditions. This would mean to cooperate to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on regional and local level and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 45% by 2030 in line with the Paris Agreement.

Focus areas

- Attractive and vibrant cities, towns and districts
- Value creation and sustainability
- Education, competencies and skills
- Transport and communication
- Culture and the Arts

Cross-cutting perspectives

- Business-development and cooperation on new jobs
- Living conditions, equality, inclusion and diversity
- Climate and environment

Challenges and opportunities for Agder

The Agder region is experiencing economic and demographic growth. Immigration is the main driver for population growth, which is however unevenly distributed. The growth is highest in the "capital" Kristiansand region, while several inland municipalities have experienced weak growth and would see population decline without immigration.

Agder has a varied and competitive work life and business community. The strongest sectors are in particular process- and mechanical industries, and supply industries for oil and gas. In addition, tourism is an industry with potential for growth. The archipelago and rich nature in the inland provide a good foundation for further developing Agder as a tourist destination.

There is a great potential for sustainable growth by combining the region's strong technology competencies and surplus of renewable energy (mostly hydropower). The wood-industry and maritime industries have a big development potential and could contribute to new jobs.

The completion rate in upper secondary education has been increasing steadily the last few years. Agder has a relatively high share of persons with vocational education. At the same time, the region is not self-sufficient with employees with higher education.

Ageing, with fewer people in working-age per retired, will put the public sector up against big challenges in the coming years. Elderly people are at the same time an important resource for the society, for instance when it comes to voluntary efforts.

Agder is among the regions in Norway with lowest employment rates, where in particular the share of young disability pensioners and recipients of allowance during work ability assessment period is high. The employment rate among immigrants is the

lowest in the country. The region has in addition a low share of females in management positions, and a high share of women in part-time jobs. The income inequality in Agder and the share of children in families with sustained low income has increased.

Parts of the inland and other remote areas are experiencing challenges related to living conditions and loss of jobs. Several municipalities have a one-sided labour market.

There are challenges with insufficient fibre and internet capacity in several places. Long distances and roads with low standard and capacity are preventing efficient transport of people, raw materials and products.

Agder must both cope with incidents due to more extreme weather and cut climate emissions – in particular from transport – to fulfil its obligations under the Paris Agreement. Provided that the efforts in research and development (R&D) and innovation are increased, the region has a big potential for developing new climate-friendly solutions and products, and thus for new green jobs.

The cultural life is thriving well, and initiatives for cultural buildings have been carried out in many municipalities. The voluntary sector is a central part of the cultural life in Agder.

Agder is an outward-looking region with long traditions for international cooperation. The business community in the region is export-oriented, and many of the companies have foreign owners. Agder has inhabitants from about 150 countries, many foreign students and employees, and several international transport connections. Internationalisation is regarded as an important tool to make the region more attractive, innovative, inclusive and learning.

Focus areas

Attractive and vibrant cities, towns and districts

Objectives for 2030

- There are attractive and varied living and labour markets in the whole of Agder.
- Cities, towns and rural centres are developed in a compact manner and with quality. The places have good and inclusive housing environments and meeting places.
- Municipal centres offer a variety of jobs, services and experiences.
- More people have access to housing and residential environments adapted to their life situation.

Value creation and sustainability

Objectives towards 2030

- The number of viable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) has increased.
- Agder has higher employment-growth than the national average – with focus on sustainable value-creation.
- The industry structure is more diverse – characterised by good cooperation between business, R&D and public sector.
- Value-creation is based upon sustainable use of human and natural resources.

Education, competencies and skills

Objectives towards 2030

- Employment has increased, in particular among vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- Significant improvements have been realised when it comes to equality, inclusion, physical and mental health.

- Nurseries, schools, higher educational institutions and companies all promote a culture for learning, health and well-being.
- Agder is recognised internationally as a competency region for production, distribution and use of energy for the future.
- A higher share of students complete upper secondary education, vocational college and higher education.
- There is a good balance between supply of and demand for competency in the regional labour market.
- Agder has a strong international orientation at all levels of education.

Transport and communication

Objectives towards 2030

- The transport need in Agder is reduced.
- Environmentally friendly, efficient, safe and universally designed mobility solutions have been established.
- Necessary infrastructure for a low-emission society has been built.
- The share of trips by foot, on bike and by public transport is increased.
- Infrastructure for transport and communication is adapted to climate change and extreme events.
- Digital infrastructure is robust and has sufficient capacity and connections to abroad.
- The planning of land use and transport shall promote a sustainable development.
- Agder is prepared for future transport solutions.

Culture and the Arts

Objectives towards 2030

- The research and development activities within the cultural sector are above national average.
- The density of artists and cultural workers is the highest in the country outside Oslo.
- The value creation related to coastal culture and cultural heritage in the inland countryside and the white wooden towns of Southern Norway³ has increased.
- The cooperation on cultural tourism between the cultural sector and the tourism industry has achieved status as a Norwegian Innovation Cluster⁴.
- All inhabitants have opportunities to participate in common arenas for culture and sports, and to develop their creative skills.
- All inhabitants experience good access to a broad spectrum of cultural and sports activities in the proximity of their homes.
- Voluntary activities are a driver in the future development of culture, the Arts and sports in Agder.

³ See pictures of the white wooden towns here:

<https://en.visitorslandet.com/things-to-do/the-towns-of-southern-norway/>

⁴ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/emcc/erm/support-instrument/norwegian-innovation-clusters>



For more information: www.agderfk.no

Layout: Agder County Council