

A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a rocky, grassy coastline in the foreground. A person is standing on the shore, looking out at a large, layered ice formation in the water. The sky is clear and blue.

# A JUST GREEN TRANSITION

Nordic measures for inspiration and discussion  
(Short version)

January 2021

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## About the report

This report is a short version in English of a report issued by the SAMAK Board as a follow-up on the SAMAK Nordic climate summit in Copenhagen on January 29, 2020. The purpose is to inspire further discussions and follow-up in SAMAK and amongst the social democratic parties and the trade union organisations in the Nordic countries.

The working group has consisted of the following members:

Denmark:

- Denmark's Social Democratic Party: Iben Merrild (International consultant and political adviser, leader of the working group), Anne Paulin (spokesperson on climate, Parliament)
- FH – Danish Trade Union Confederation: Henrik Jepsen (Consultant on climate policy)

Finland:

- Finland's Social Democratic Party (SDP) and The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (FFC/SAK): Lauri Muranen (Leader of business policy, FFC/SAK)

Norway:

- Norwegian Labour Party: Espen Barth Eide (Spokesperson on climate policy, Parliament)
- Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO): Wegard Harsvik (Leader of community contact and strategic work)

Sweden:

- The Social Democrats: Marlene Burwick (Member of the committee for environment and agriculture, Parliament)
- Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO): Johan Hall (Researcher of climate, environment and energy)

SAMAK:

- Jan-Erik Støstad (Secretary General)

The working group thanks student assistant Flavio Saleh, the Social Democratic Party of Denmark, for his assistance with this report.

As background for parts of the report, the working group has had a report «Green growth policy – which possibilities can be found in the tool box and which should be used?» developed by the Norwegian think tank Agenda.

SAMAK is the cooperative organisation for the labour movement in the Nordic countries. In 2020, the Social Democratic Party of Denmark has had the leadership in SAMAK with party leader and prime minister Mette Frederiksen as SAMAK leader.

LAYOUT:

- Robert Mehmet Mulleng Sezer, LO Media

## I: Introduction

Climate change is one of the most urgent and complex challenges our societies have ever faced. Climate change is inextricably and directly connected to the still growing problems in our nature and environment. Most agree that we have an obligation to pass on a sustainable planet to the next generation. But the question is how and from what perspective?

Many underestimate the ideological dimension of climate policy. But the fundamental ideological choices: the role of the state versus the market; collective safeguarding of workers' rights or not, cannot be ignored when climate policy is pursued, even though problems with the climate and environment are profound and must be at the top of the political agenda.

We do not believe that it is possible to solve the climate challenges in an efficient and just way without well-founded political and professional choices in these fundamental issues of governance. For example, we cannot count on unregulated markets to solve the climate and environmental challenges.

According to the labour movement the best approach to solving climate and environmental challenges is to use and further develop the Nordic model. With its progressive values, the three pillars: good economic management, welfare and education/training schemes and a well-organised work force, it is a unique solver of crises. This is partly due to the fact that it contributes to a common understanding of the reality of society and to a broad collaboration on concrete initiatives.

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Workers are climate solvers.

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK



## II: Our suggestion for a greener and more just society

The labour movement's aim is for all people to live secure and good lives. This requires a society that is built on our core values - equality, freedom and solidarity. We humans live together, but always close to and as part of the natural environment. We are all completely dependent on nature for food, resources and relaxation. It will always be this way.

Now, both nature and the environment are threatened both globally and locally. It has gone too far and it is our responsibility to rectify the situation, so that we can continue to live off and on the Earth, also in the future. It is our most important political objective that we and our children have a safe future.

History has shown that the market cannot solve the challenges alone. Political will is needed if we are to stop global warming and the degradation of nature. We must manage society in such a way that we push for an effective transition that is both green and red. This is a transition that makes a difference in relation to taking care of the environment and reducing harmful emissions, where diverse nature is accessible to all, while we maintain a strong welfare society and create sustainable growth, where cohesion and social balance are ensured in society, also between the rural and urban areas. Our societies in the Nordic countries are too small for differences being too great.

Everyone must participate, and everyone must contribute. If we are to succeed, it requires that we organise our society in such a way that we all live, produce and transport ourselves in a sustainable way. We must both produce and consume in a climate friendly way.

But we must ensure that it is not those with the least who end up paying the most. On the contrary, the green transition may depend on more redistribution than we have today. Precisely for this reason, the Nordic model, with a fair and strong welfare society and a decent working life, must be activated as the very key to the green transition. Studies show that people in high-income groups on average have a larger climate footprint.

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Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and leader of the Brundtland-Commission, at the SAMAK climate summit at Marienborg.

PHOTO: WWW.SAMAK.INFO



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Restoring bogs helps both the local environment and the climate.

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK



The welfare society provides the security needed when the economy changes, which it inevitably will. The welfare society must ensure that ordinary people dare to wholeheartedly support the green transition, trusting that no “A and B teams” will be created, with those who win and those who lose out on the transition. The labour movement has learned from the experience of globalisation, where the benefits of increased integration of the global economy have been unevenly distributed. We will not let this happen when it comes to the green transition.

And we must change the world for the better. It is therefore also our duty as social democrats and trade unions that the work with the green transition promotes technological and digital solutions, furthers education and retraining, and creates green jobs. Many of the green jobs will be brand new, while others will be an adjustment of existing jobs that need to become greener.

It is also necessary to stimulate rapid transition of business sectors thereby ensuring that they become market winners in the future and are in the best possible position to secure earnings and jobs.

We must be aware that the prerequisites for the green transition first and foremost are ordinary people with the right skills. It is workers in manufacturing, construction, agriculture, etc. who must create and implement tomorrow's climate and environmental solutions. Their competencies are necessary to both develop and utilise new technologies. If we are to succeed in getting everyone across the country involved, we must with equal attention focus on those who work in rural areas, especially the unskilled. Therefore, it is important that we also have a local starting point, especially at the individual workplace, so that those who are most affected by the transition can influence their own future. It increases both participation in, support for and democratisation of the green transition. It also follows that the trade union's participation and efforts are crucial for the success of the green transition.

As rich, highly developed societies, we have a special responsibility in the Nordic countries to take the lead and show international leadership in the green transition. This requires that we do our homework, while at the same time inspiring and influencing the rest of the world in a green direction. We must both reduce our footprint in the Nordic countries and strengthen our handprint globally, so that we create better living conditions together and a sustainable future for all of us.

We are ambitious and we must act now.

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Access to climate friendly transport must be possible in both urban and rural areas. Here from Iceland.

PHOTO: ADOBE STOCK



### III: Need for political leadership

In light of COVID-19, it is important to maintain the pressure in the political struggle for a green transition. If the market could solve the nature and climate crisis, we should already be on the right track. We are not. It is clear that the restructuring of the Nordic economies is characterised by such great technological change, international influence and a complex picture of actors, that it requires clear political action. This means a more active and guiding industrial policy, and an ongoing and coordinated nature and climate policy. There is no doubt that the major climate challenges we see require our society to undergo a comprehensive transformation. The costs of the transition must also be seen as investments. This is partly to avoid future costs, and partly to modernise our economies and take the lead in the fourth industrial revolution, where climate and environmental technology are expected to play a key role.

We believe that there is a need for selected targeted government measures to combat climate change. The economist Mariana Mazzucato's research claims that the state is the strongest engine of innovation. According to Mazzucato, the role of government in the most successful economies has gone far beyond creating the right infrastructure and regulation. They have taken a leading role and promoted innovation by proactively creating strategies for new areas with high growth potential; by financing the most uncertain phases of technology development that the private sector is too risk-averse to engage in; by creating demand for and commissioning further development, and often even by overseeing commercialisation processes.

In other words, governments should use their muscles even more to address the major challenges we face, and not just for short-term economic recovery.

The think tank AGENDA suggests that we take a closer look at six types of government initiatives, which you can read more about in the main report.

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Read more in the main report.

- Taxes
- Public procurement
- Subsidies
- Risk capital
- State ownership
- Bans and injunctions

## IV: Initiatives for inspiration

We are closely connected in the Nordic countries and have always been able to learn a lot from each other. Below we have chosen to highlight selected green initiatives from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which either shed light on technological initiatives or inclusive processes that can ensure a fair transition. And at the same time they highlight where we can mutually benefit from our respective competencies.

The technological measures highlighted below may not be equalising in themselves. But by supporting the development of green technology, we not only help reduce CO2 emissions, we also help create new green jobs for those who stand to lose theirs in the green transition. By being at the forefront of technology, it is possible to compete with skills instead of lower wages and poorer working conditions. In other words, new innovation and technological development can increase our level of competence, competitiveness, high wages and tax base, and thereby help to ensure a strong welfare society. It is equally important that the individual workplaces develop their own strategies for climate neutrality, and that employees are involved and allowed to participate in this work. There is still time to implement planned and strategic initiatives to restructure our societies and economies

Read more in the main report.

### 1. Technological initiatives

- Energy islands and floating offshore wind
- Power-to-X
- Carbon Capture and Storage
- Hydrogen and Fuel Cells
- Circular economy
- Green district heating
- Green transport: electrification of roads
- Fossil-free production of steel

### 2. Fair and inclusive initiatives

- Education and training
- Strong social security
- Trade union climate agreements

### 3. Joint Nordic initiatives

- Green sector partnerships
- Joint initiative on Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage
- Joint Nordic "Energy for Development" initiative

Together we can achieve more.

ILLUSTRATION: ROBERT MEHMET MULLENG SEZER





SAMAK is the Labour Movement's Nordic cooperation committee. The abbreviation SAMAK comes from the Nordic concept "samarbejdskomité", which means cooperation committee.

SAMAK's member organisations are the Social Democratic parties and trade unions in the Nordic countries, as well as the parties in Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. It has a total of 13 members:

#### **Social democratic parties**

- The Social Democratic Party, Denmark
- The Finnish Social Democratic Party, SDP
- The Social Democratic Alliance Samfylkingin, Iceland
- The Norwegian Labour Party
- The Social Democrats, Sweden
- Føroya Javnadarflokkurin, The Faroe Islands
- Siumut, Greenland
- Åland Social Democrats

#### **Trade unions**

- FH – Danish Trade Union Confederation
- The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (FFC/SAK)
- The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASI)
- The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions – LO
- The Swedish Trade Union Confederation - LO

## **WE BUILD THE NORDICS**

The main report can be downloaded at [www.samak.info](http://www.samak.info).

