



MICROPOLIS
THE POWER OF STRONG LOCAL COMMUNITY



Erasmus+

Cultural activities with added community values. Pilot work in Middelfart Municipality

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Publisher: Interfolks Forlag

Layout: Interfolks Forlag

Published: April 2024

The pilot works have been developed in the context of the 16 months Erasmus+ small-scale partnerships (Key Action 2, Adult education) entitled “Micropolis 2023 - the power of strong, inclusive identity and local relations”, May 2023 – September 2024, where the applicant and coordinator organisation is Wawerskie Centrum Kultury from Poland.

For more information, see the project portal: <https://micropolis.club/>

The project has been supported by the Polish National Agency of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union



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Table of content

Introduction to the Danish Pilot work.....	4
Pilot work 1: Workshops about sustainable clothes production	6
Pilot work 2: A green menu at Volunteer Centre Middelfart	9
Pilot work 3: Stalls at events, like the People’s Climate meeting	10
Pilot work 4: Cultural workshop for co-creation and networking	12
Pilot work 5: Erasmus+ mobility for new knowledge, inspiration and networking.....	14
Pilot work 6: Transfer the ESG-framework to NGOs.....	17

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Introduction to the Danish Pilot work

The recommendations from the survey in WP 5, July – September 2023

During the Micropolis project, work package 5, June – September 2023, the Danish team completed a survey in Middelfart Municipality regarding the cultural and social organisations provision of added community values for the benefit of the living conditions in Middelfart municipality. ¹ The added community values we focussed on, included:

- Local identity, connectedness to the area, community spirit
- Social inclusion, openness, and diversity
- Active citizenship and democratic values
- Environmental sustainability and green values

The aim of the survey was to clarify the status (the baseline) of the added community values provided by the cultural actors in Middelfart Municipality and to disclose areas, where the cultural and social organisations could make improvements. The survey during disclosed that:

- The green values and practises regarding environmental sustainability and nature protection had a low score.
- The different NGO sectors did not have much cooperation that could open for both knowledge transfer, activity development, and improved communication to the wider communities.
- Ther associations could have more cooperation with peers in other parts of the country and in the other EU states' civil societies to gain new inspiration and a wider outlook on the societal values of their activities.



The waterfront in Middelfart

¹ [Cultural activities with added community values. Survey in Middelfart Municipality. August 2023](#)

The priorities for the pilot work in WP 8, November 2023 – April 2024

With reference to the preceding survey, the Danish team's priorities for the pilot work in the work package 8 had focus on the following objectives:

- To promote green values and practises regarding environmental sustainability and nature protection
- To promote more cooperation between the different NGO areas, which could open for both knowledge transfer, activity development, and improved communication to the wider communities.
- To promote a wider networking with peers in other parts of Denmark and in the wider European civil societies, because the local, national, and European perspectives are not opposites, but can mutually support each other.

The implemented pilot activities

With reference to the above-mentioned priorities, the action plan for WP 8 preliminary included the following pilot activities:

1. New local training courses / workshops in the context of cultural activities that include and promote green aims and values.
2. Advice and initiatives in relation to social associations on how to incorporate green values in their activities.
3. Guidelines on how local voluntary associations can take part in and have stalls and activities in a bigger national event about sustainability, like the yearly People's Climate meeting in Middelfart.
4. Culture workshops for co-creation and networking, arranged by the Municipality's culture unit in cooperation with the local cultural associations, where NGOs and public actor and politicians can meet and exchange experiences, clarify common development needs, and implement common initiatives.
5. A new Erasmus+ mobility application with the aim that staff from the municipality and the associations together can take part in international training courses to gain new knowledge and inspiration and develop new international contacts and networks for further European activities.
6. Clarify how the holistic ESG-framework (Environment, Social, Governance), promoted by the EU Commission, can be transferred and adjusted to NGOs in the civil society context to improve the planning, evaluation and reporting of their activities.

Below we present the six examples of pilot works, which in our point of view in varied ways can help to promote environmental, social, and cultural qualities for a sustainable and strong local community, and we also think the local work only is strengthened by having contact to peers in other parts of our country and to wider European contacts and networks.

Pilot work 1: Workshops about sustainable clothes production

Objective

To promote green values and practices regarding environmental sustainability and green values.

Pilot activity

The new local training courses/workshops that include green aims and values in the context of cultural activities were developed with reference to the preceding surveys among associations in Middelfart municipality. Here, the survey showed that virtually none of the associations had incorporated green values and practices regarding environmental sustainability and nature protection.

The Volunteer Centre Middelfart completed in collaboration with Middelfart Culture and Library (also on the occasion of Libraries' World Goals Week), two workshops with the purpose to introduce the concepts of environmental sustainability and nature protection in a calm and "safe" way - namely through popular workshops which addressed a broad target group.

The approach was chosen as the areas are new to association life and we as a volunteer centre do not want to "pull" a lot of "shoulds and shoulds" over the heads of the associations.

Workshop 1

The first workshop was a one-hour workshop/presentation about the clothing crisis, sewing and recycling. In 2018, Stine Højland decided to no longer buy newly produced clothes. The decision led to changed habits and new experiences and became the start of the company *ATTER* - with a simple concept: to sew clothes from recycled materials.



OASECAFÉ – OM TØJKRISE, SYNING OG GENBRUG

Tirsdag 23. april kl. 17.00-18.00
Biblioteket, KulturØen I Gratis

I 2018 besluttede Stine Højland sig for ikke længere at købe nyproduceret tøj. Beslutningen medførte ændrede vaner og nye erfaringer og blev starten på virksomheden *ATTER* – med et simpelt koncept: at sy tøj ud af genbrugsstoffer.

Få historien om *ATTER* og den grønne vision bag. Få fif og gode råd om iværksætteri, sømrum og zig-zag og hør om glæden ved at gribe syning og kreativitet mere frit og eksperimenterende an.

Arrangeret af Frivilligcenter Middelfart og Middelfart Kultur & Bibliotek.

At the workshop, the participants could learn the story of *ATTER* and the green vision behind it. The participants also received good advice about entrepreneurship, seams and zig-zag and the joy of approaching sewing and creativity more freely and experimentally. The workshop was free.



Stine Højland from *ATTER* at the first workshop introduce sustainable clothes production for 22 participants at Middelfart Library in cooperation with Volunteer Center Middelfart, April 2024.

Workshop 2

The second workshop was a workshop where old textiles were made into new things. The afternoon was spent making **tashes** (**moustache?**) out of old t-shirts. Recycling designer Tina Amlund from *UkendtFyn* guided and gave a lot of tips and tricks to upcycle everything, we find in the recycling shop or have lying at the back of the wardrobe. Simple whimsical ideas that are easy to get started with. There were t-shirts ready for the participants to use - but they could also bring their own t-shirts.

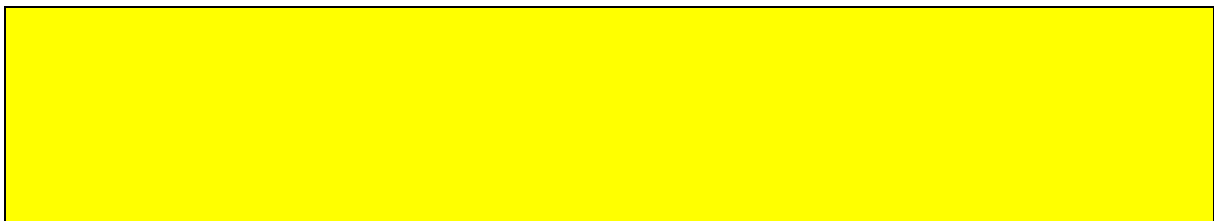
	<p>WORKSHOP – FRA GAMMELT TIL NYT</p> <p>Lørdag 27. april kl. 13.00-17.00 Biblioteket, KulturØen I Gratis</p> <p>Hvorfor smide gammelt tøj ud når det kan genbruges? Denne eftermiddag laver vi tasker ud af gamle t-shirts. Genbrugsdesigner, Tina Amlund fra <i>UkendtFyn</i>, guider og giver en masse tips og tricks til at upcycle alt det vi finder i genbrugen eller har liggende bagerst i tøjskabet. Simple finurlige ideer, som er nemme at gå i gang med. Der er t-shirts klar, men medbring også gerne din egen t-shirt. Kig forbi KulturØen og slip kreativiteten løs. I forbindelse med workshoppen kan man også få hjælp til tøjreparationer af syersker fra Repaircaféen. Alle er velkomne.</p> <p>Arrangeret af Frivilligcenter Middelfart og Middelfart Kultur & Bibliotek.</p>
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The workshop was held at the same time as *The Repair Café* - a café where volunteers sit and repair everything from lamps to coffee machines.



Tina Amlund from *UkendtFyn* introduced at the second workshop how to unleash your creativity and reuse and upcycle old clothes. Arranged at Middelfart Library in cooperation with Volunteer Center Middelfart, April 2024.

Learning points



Pilot work 2: A green menu at Volunteer Centre Middelfart

Objective

To promote green values and practices regarding environmental sustainability and nature protection

Pilot activity

Advice and initiatives in relation to social associations on how to incorporate green values in their activities.

The Volunteer Centres in Denmark in general have, until recently, not paid much attention to the environment and sustainability in relation to our member associations – so there is not much experience or methods available to encourage association life to make these topics natural focus areas in the association's work.

Therefore, the Volunteer Centre has prepared a “green menu” with suggestions for how the associations can quietly incorporate the topics into their daily association work. The menu contains the following proposals – as well as an offer to the associations regarding sparring on specific initiatives in their respective associations.

Insert the menu here



Learning points

Pilot work 3: Stalls at events, like the People's Climate meeting

Objective

To promote more cooperation between the different NGO areas, which could open for both knowledge transfer, activity development, and improved communication to the wider communities.

Pilot activity


Voluntary associations take part in and have stalls and activities in a bigger event about sustainability, like the yearly People's Climate meeting in Middelfart.²

Middelfart annually holds a national climate meeting. For the first time, the associations were invited to a debate event where, among other things, the associations' responsibilities in connection with the environment and sustainability was discussed – led by a panel of invited people from association life afterwards there was discussion in plenary. In addition, "best practice" discussions were held in small groups – here the associations' own recommendations and wishes in connection with association life, the environment and sustainability were discussed.

As an extra feature and attraction, there were association representatives from the voluntary association life at the climate people's meeting who transported the guests around on cargo bikes – and while the guests being transported around had to answer climate questions during the transport.

The activities were organized in collaboration between Middelfart Municipality, Volunteer Center Middelfart, and selected member associations.

Photos from the tent are inserted here

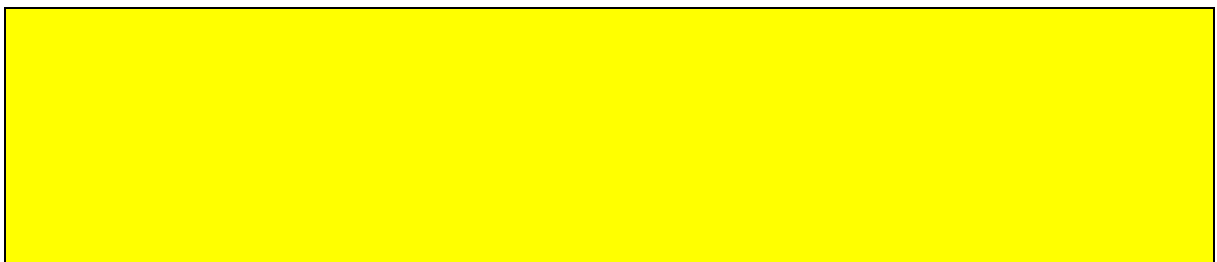


² See the [website for People's Climate meeting, 2023](#), including a link to a short video about the event.

Photos of the bikes are inserted here

The questions from the debate and the bike ride are inserted here.

Learning points



Pilot work 4: Cultural workshop for co-creation and networking

Objective

To promote co-creation and networking between various cultural associations, cultural entrepreneurs, and the municipality with an aim to strengthening the local identity and cultural opportunities throughout the municipality.

Pilot activity

At the end of 2023, we invited to our first cultural workshop as a three-hour evening meeting with dining and a tour of a local cultural institution.

We made invitations directly to all the associations in the cultural field that we knew of. We also invited individuals, who work with culture - e.g. visual artists. Our wish was to get many people involved, so that we could have a broad and diverse conversation about culture with many different perspectives.



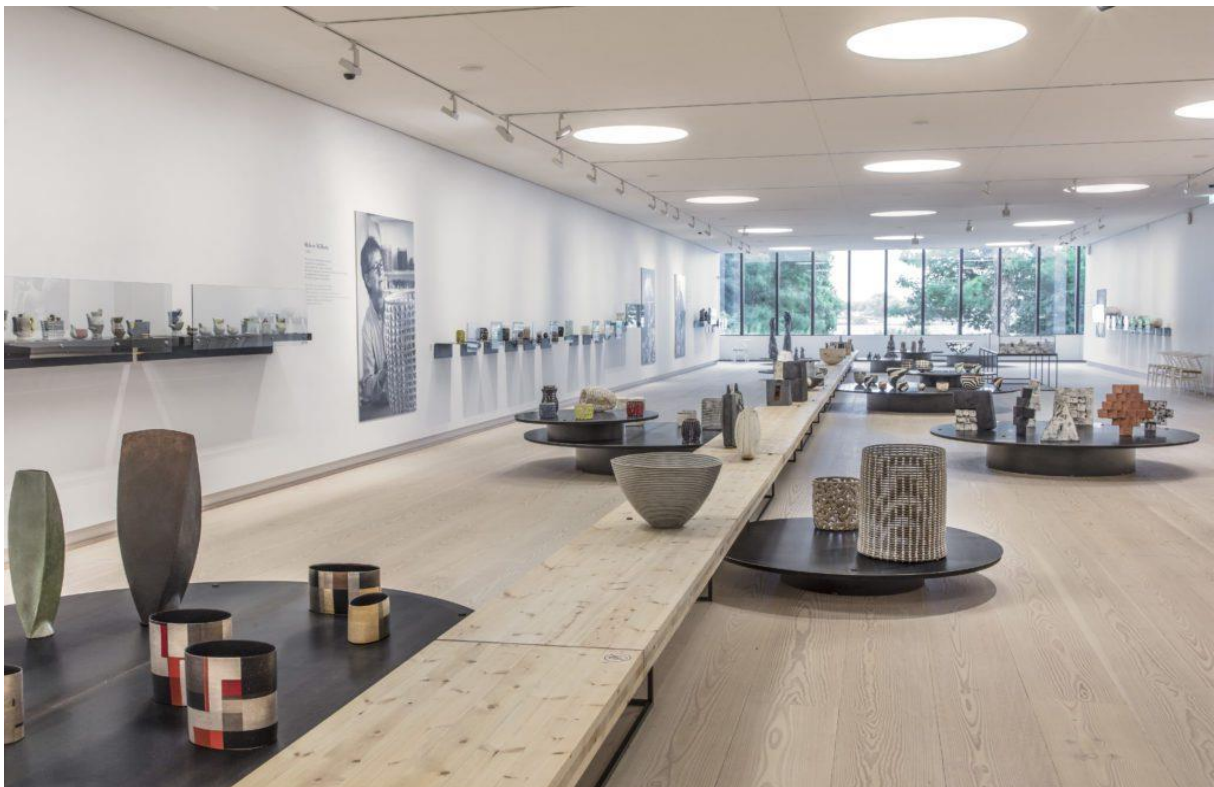
Cultural workshop at the Clay Museum, November 2023

We decided to find a well-known local cultural institution that might be interesting to visit. That is why we included a tour in the program so everyone got to know the institution and it could be easier to collaborate with the institution afterwards.

Next, we decided to get inspiration from the outside. By getting a different set of eyes on our municipality, we can shine a light on the places in our area, we ourselves have become blind to - because we see them in our daily work. There is a lot of learning and dialogue in this. You must be aware of hitting something that is both relevant for the amateur cultural associations

and the more professional cultural institutions with employees. The subject must therefore be very well considered.

Finally, we decided to place great emphasis on conversation - that all participants can offer their perspectives. This applies both to the other cultural actors, but also to the politicians. The politicians were involved and had to give feedback on what they moderated in the workshops, so that the participants also experienced a political responsiveness to them. Therefore, it was also the politicians who were responsible for the various stations in our workshops, which were divided according to teams such as: youth and cultural life, communication, culture, movement/sports, and more.



Clay Museum in Middelfart

Learning points

It is important to do a good job of researching who to invite. Everyone must feel welcome, while at the same time it can be difficult to define, when exactly you are a cultural actor.

Based on our experience, we would recommend making these cultural workshops part of the work to develop the Micropolis concept, because it brings the local actors together in a space, where you can exchange ideas and development opportunities with each other. Finally, we would recommend that this also happens with a strong involvement of the political levels, as they are of great importance in supporting the initiatives that come out of the workshop and that they at the same time get a good knowledge of what is going on in the cultural area.

Pilot work 5: Erasmus+ mobility for new knowledge, inspiration and networking

Background and objectives

We have many volunteers in our municipality, both in our associations, in community centres and in various councils. Based on a questionnaire survey in the Micropolis project, we became aware of some areas where the volunteers are generally challenged. This being inclusion and diversity, sustainability, and new technology.

It seems the board members have similar ethnicity, professional and social background. It is usually men who hold the position as chairperson. At the same time, it is difficult for the associations to attract citizens with a different cultural background, also because it is difficult for associations to signal a room for diversity when you look at the boards and their members.

We would like the volunteers to get more inspiration, experience, and knowledge, which they can then share with other associations in the municipality and implement in their own associations. We want tools and knowledge on how we can best attract, include, and retain all kinds of people in our associations, to optimize sustainability in the associations, and gain knowledge about how to use special IT programs more effectively.

To achieve this, we need more knowledge and inspiration from other European countries by participating in international training courses and developing new international contacts and networks for further European activities. Here, a strengthening of local identity and sense of community goes hand in hand with a strengthened feeling of being part of a common EU and sharing common European values.

The aim is to strengthen the co-creation between civil society and the municipality by finding inspiration from Europe together.

Pilot activity

We have therefore, in collaboration with local associations, applied for an Erasmus short-term project for mobility of learners and staff in adult education. The mobility plan focuses on co-creation between volunteers and public employees with the objectives to gain more knowledge and new inspiration for the associations in the voluntary sector, including:

- How associations in other EU countries attract different target groups and people with different cultural, social, educational, and economic backgrounds.
- How the volunteers are retained in the associations and maintain interest, because all citizens who want to be part of an association and become a volunteer must feel included and part of the community.
- How the volunteers can gain more knowledge and skills to handle, implement, and communicate environmental sustainability and the importance thereof, to their members and the wider community.

- How the volunteers can utilize the digital solutions that already exist for improving the communication and planning in the associations, both to work in a more sustainable manner and to be more efficient and gain more time for planning and implementing the key activities of the associations.

We think the European mobility courses can give inspiration and promote local networking and help to gain more volunteers in the associations, so different people become part of the community, and more become better at inspiring and sharing experiences and ideas with each other.

An example of the need for networking could be Østergades Forsamlinghus, which is a nice and spacious civic culture center in the middle of the city, which is available for associations to rent for events, meetings, activities etc. Unfortunately, the house is often empty, even though we have many associations in the municipality. Maybe, because many associations already have fixed places to meet, but still, they could gain new eyes and perspectives on their activities by getting out of their familiar framework and meet other associations by also using the community centre as a supplement.

The same applies to the 14 other community centres, which are run by volunteers, where we also want more citizens of different ages and social and cultural backgrounds to be included, and who want to use the premises in the community centres. We also hope to be better to open the sports halls, for new people. We also have several smaller libraries around the municipality, which would also benefit from some more life and initiatives from volunteers having small events there.



An Erasmus+ course lesson at the Fishing Museum in Palamos, Spain, during the Eco-literacy course, March 2024, provided by the course provider, Learn-To-Teach.

Sustainability and climate are at the top of the agenda across the EU. There is always new knowledge in the area and therefore we would like to have more knowledge from other countries in the EU about this as well. When the associations get together, just like when you are alone and in your own home, it is important to think about sustainability. Waste sorting, reuse of materials, minimize food waste, etc.

Last but not least, the digitization courses for the volunteers can help to optimize a lot of the communication and planning in the associations. This is an essential thing, since we are talking about volunteers, who put a lot of time into the associations. That time could be better spent, if they learned more about and utilized the digital optimization solutions that already exist.

Learning points

Based on our work with the Micropolis concept, we would therefore recommend that we continue to consider the European dimension in the local work. Partly because it contributes to local cohesion, but also because volunteers and employees in the municipality can have a common third to be together about - together we can learn and be more inspired. This is a sustainable way to create the strong local communities that the Micropolis project is about.



From the second partner meeting in the Micropolis project, October 2023 in Cagliari, Sardinia

Pilot work 6: Transfer the ESG-framework to NGOs

Objectives

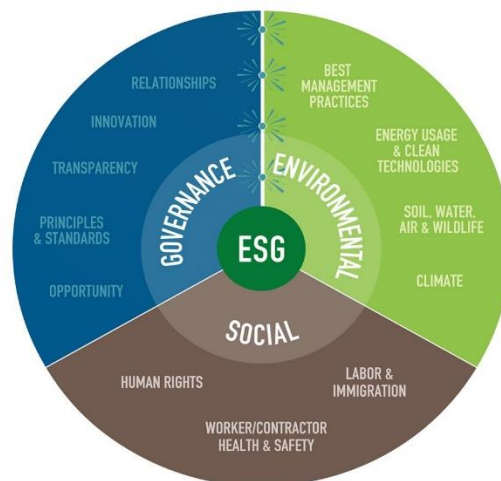
To adapt and transfer the new ESG framework (Environment, Social, Governance) to NGOs in the civil society context to improve the planning, evaluation and reporting of their activities. The ESG framework for has initiated by the EU Commission as legislation in 2023 for bigger private and public organisations.³

Pilot work

The survey in WP 5 disclosed a need among civil society associations to get new methodologies to provide more sustainable activities both in an environmental, social, and cultural sense, where the aim of sustainability extends beyond just environmental issues.

During the pilot work in WP 8 the Danish team started to examine, if the new ESG framework promoted by the EU Commission can be transferred and adjusted to NGOs in the civil society context. EU initiated July 2023 new legislations and directives for bigger private and public organisations to evaluate and report their activities in the ESG frame.

We expect that this new ESG method will spread to more and more areas through new national legislation, and it will probably also soon be integrated as quality criteria for good NGO practices in the many private, national, Nordic, and European funding programmes.



Transfer of the ESG frame to the NGO sector

Currently only few Danish civil society associations, mainly in the sport sector, have been aware of the potentials of the ESG methodology and have started to transfer and use it for the planning, evaluation and reporting of their own activities. However, we see many potentials for this holistic approach to sustainability if we can manage to adapt and transfer a simpler framework to the civil society sector.

³ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/agenda/briefing/2022-11-09/5/new-eu-sustainability-reporting-rules-for-multinationals>
https://finance.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-adopts-european-sustainability-reporting-standards-2023-07-31_en

For a civil society association, implementing ESG principles can involve:

- **Environmental considerations:** Associations can adopt policies and practices that reduce their environmental footprint, such as waste management, energy efficiency, and the use of recyclable materials. They can also choose suppliers and partners who share their environmental values.
- **Social considerations:** Associations can ensure that their activities and programs respect human rights, diversity, equality, and inclusion and supports local communities and takes responsibility for the social consequences of its actions. They can work to create positive social effects through e.g. educational programmes, health promotion activities, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for members, and support for vulnerable population groups.
- **Management considerations:** Good management and transparency are essential for associations. They can implement effective governance structures, ethical codes of conduct and policies to ensure integrity and accountability in their decision-making processes. They can avoid cooperation with companies that conflict with their values or have negative environmental or social consequences.

A stepwise development plan

To implement ESG methods to an association, we see several steps that can be taken to ensure a successful and efficient process. Here is an indicative stepwise plan, associations can follow:

1. Understanding and Commitment

- **Education:** Start by educating the board, management, and members about what ESG is and why it is important. It will help to create a common understanding.
- **Engagement:** Create commitment and buy-in from all key roles in the association, including managers, members, and stakeholders.

2. Assessment and Objective Setting

- **Current Practice:** Make an initial assessment of where the association may already meet certain ESG criteria and identify areas for improvement.
- **Set Goals:** Develop clear, measurable goals for each of the ESG components. These goals must be in line with the association's mission and strategic plans.

3. Strategy and Planning

- **Develop Strategies:** Develop concrete strategies and action plans for how the association will meet its ESG goals. This can include everything from reducing CO2 emissions to improving the diversity of the association.
- **Responsibilities and Resources:** Establish responsibility for the implementation of the plans and ensure that the necessary resources (time, personnel, finances) are available.

4. Implementation and communication

- **Implement Initiatives:** Start the implementation of the planned initiatives and projects developed in the strategy. This can include to initiate innovative development project funded by national, Nordic or EU programmes.

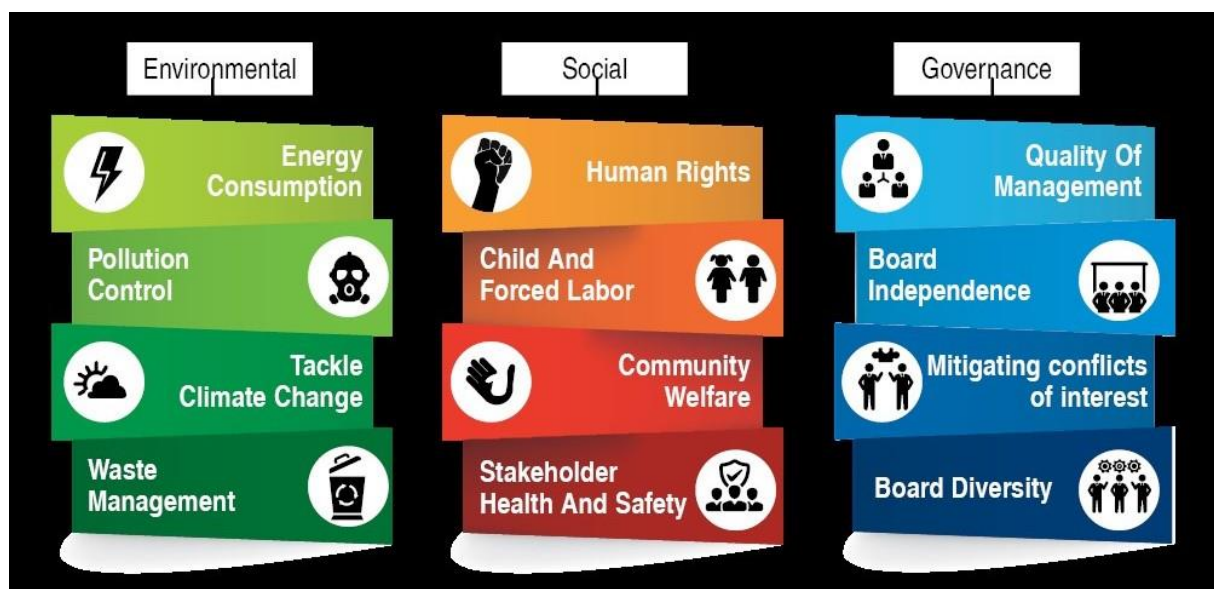
- Education and Communication: Ensure ongoing education and communication to members to promote understanding and support for ESG measures.

5. Monitoring and Reporting

- Monitoring: Continuously monitor progress against established goals and adjust strategy if necessary.
- Reporting: Prepare regular reports on the progress towards achieving the ESG objectives. This may include environmental improvements, social initiatives, or improvements in management practices.

6. Reassessment and Adjustment

- Feedback: Collect feedback from members and other stakeholders to understand what is working and what can be improved.
- Adjustment: Be ready to adjust ESG strategies and measures based on performance, feedback and any changes in the association or its environment.



Learning points

By implementing ESG principles, we expect that associations can not only strengthen their integrity and reliability and improve their social impact, but also strengthen their reputation, engage members and volunteers, and attract partners who value accountability. It can also help them meet demands or expectations from donors and the communities they operate in. Furthermore, it can contribute to a more sustainable and responsible development, which can have positive long-term effects for both the association and the wider society.

Getting started with ESG can seem like a big task, but by taking small steps and gradually improving practices, associations can make an important difference to the environment, society, and their own sustainability and success.