



International strategy for Oppland County Municipality 2009-2014

The strategy was approved by the County Council on 21 October 2008. The complete version is available in Norwegian at www.oppland.no

English summary

Vision for Oppland County Municipality's international policy:

- Oppland – an active partner in a world of possibilities!

Strategic aim:

- To develop a region that is able to make use of the possibilities and challenges that increasing globalisation represents.

Operative aim:

- Develop a more international region by motivating, mobilising and enabling municipalities, institutions, enterprises, organisations and individuals to achieve successful international engagements.

The county municipalities and regions aim at being active in European organisations that have substantial influence on EU institutions. Since Norway is not member of the EU, it is important to make use of all the available channels to promote Norwegian interests. The development in the EU affects Norwegian regional authorities in many ways. 73 % of the decisions made by Norwegian municipality councils are directly influenced by the EEA¹ agreement.

Oppland County Municipality's international strategy is focused on how to use internationalisation in a constructive and efficient manner. Included in the vision and the aims is also the ambition that Oppland will use international relations to improve the quality of services offered in the county.

Internationalisation in policymaking and services

The County Municipality has various roles and functions: as regional developer, service provider and public administrator. The political work includes setting goals in these areas and distributing available resources. Politicians also have an important task in influencing other decision makers on the national and international level in matters that are important to the regional development in Oppland.

¹ The EEA agreement is a treaty between all countries in the European Union and Norway, Liechtenstein and Iceland, which establishes the European Economic Area (EEA) as a free-trade area. The EEA Agreement contains essentially the same competition rules as the EC Treaty.

- Oppland County Municipality will follow up on the policy development in Europe within relevant areas (e.g. competition legislation, innovation, research, support of agriculture in less favoured areas, etc.) and contribute to the national policymaking in these areas.
- Oppland County Municipality will actively contribute to finding efficient solutions in infrastructure. Maritime transport corridors and Trans-European Networks are of particular relevance.
- Oppland County Municipality will follow up on international conservation interests, consequence analysis rules, EU's water directive, etc.
- Oppland County Municipality will participate in European cooperation on spatial planning.
- Quality and cost efficiency in service production will be improved through active use of international experiences.
- International experiences will be disseminated within the organisation, by establishing a system for the transfer of knowledge between departments.
- Internationalisation will be used actively to attract and keep competent staff.
- Internationalisation will be used as a tool to reach the aims in the overall strategic plan of the county and the regional action plan.
- International experiences will be used to create a better foundation for political decisions.
- Internationalisation will contribute to increased quality of services and regional development processes.

International participation

- Available channels for gathering information about development, programmes and possibilities will be actively used.
- By participating in organisations and networks, Oppland County Municipality aims to have an influence on issues and developments that are important to the region.
- Oppland County Municipality should have access to and participate actively in networks to exchange experiences and new ideas.
- Competence in the field of international cooperation will be enhanced.
- Oppland County Municipality will assist the business sector in the county in their internationalisation efforts, in close cooperation with Innovation Norway.
- Oppland County Municipality will support international activities carried out by other regional participants.

Nordic cooperation

- Oppland County Municipality will be an active participant in measures of cooperation in the Nordic Sea and Baltic Sea regions designed to promote stability and safety in this part of the world.
- The agreements with Valmiera county in Latvia and Kronoberg in Sweden will be further developed.

European networks

- Oppland County Municipality will be an active member of Assembly of European Regions (AER), Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC) and Euromontana, and use these organisations to exchange experiences and information, as well as influence the policymaking within areas that are important to Oppland.

- Oppland County Municipality aims at being represented on the boards of the international member organisations and will work actively to obtain these positions.

Cooperation with the world outside Europe

- Oppland County Municipality aims at starting cooperation projects with partners in Namibia. This will be done in cooperation with the Norwegian Namibia Association and Hedmark County Municipality.
- Oppland County Municipality will look into the possibility of starting projects in China, in cooperation with the local business sector and Gjøvik University College.

Norwegian interaction in international relations

- Oppland County Municipality will contribute to the municipalities' international work by providing information, competence, support and access to networks.
- Oppland County Municipality will be an active participant in the Eastern Norwegian County Network.
- Oppland County Municipality will be an active co-owner of the Oslo Region European Office.
- Oppland County Municipality will cooperate with other institutions and organisations in Oppland, as well as Hedmark County Municipality, to exchange competence, experiences, contacts and networks.

International competence and knowledge

- Politicians and employees in Oppland County Municipality will increase their competence in culture and cultural differences, languages, network building, etc.
- County Municipality employees will increase their competence with regard to programmes, projects and application procedures – a competence that will also be used to assist the municipalities in their internationalisation efforts.
- Oppland County Municipality will recruit employees with good language skills.
- Oppland County Municipality will actively spread information about internationalisation.
- The County Municipality's international web pages will contain updated and relevant information in Norwegian and English.

Target groups

Oppland County Municipality has defined three main target groups for its international work:

- Youth
- Municipalities
- Business sector

Oppland's youth is the key to the county's successful future. It is important to ensure that young people get international experience and competence. The municipalities in Oppland are facing great demographic challenges (decrease in the number of inhabitants, an aging population and difficulties in recruiting staff). International activities contribute significantly to solving these

problems. The business sector faces tougher competition in an international market and has to increase the focus on the impact of globalisation.

- Oppland County Municipality will give young people the possibility to gain international experience.
- The Youth County Council will participate actively in international youth networks.
- The upper secondary schools will give pupils the possibility of participating in exchange programmes and agreements.
- Oppland County Municipality will assist the university colleges in Oppland in attracting more international students by awarding scholarships.
- Oppland County Municipality will contribute to lowering the municipalities' threshold for participating in international work.
- The County Municipality and the municipalities will have a special focus on the six regional profiles² in an international perspective.
- In cooperation with Innovation Norway and local business associations, Oppland County Municipality will use the access to information, competence and networks to stimulate internationalisation measures in the business sector and the industry.

Aims within the different policy areas

Cross-disciplinary aims

- Internationalisation will be an integrated part of regional development policies and processes.
- New measures for information dissemination and competence building will be implemented.
- Close cooperation among municipalities, the business sector, schools and R&D institutions in Oppland will be developed.
- Oppland County Municipality will cooperate closely with the Eastern Norwegian County Network, other county municipalities and central authorities to ensure efficient interaction in matters of common interest.
- Oppland County Municipality will follow up on the possibilities provided by being member of the Oslo Region European Office.
- Oppland County Municipality will participate in Interreg and other European programmes.
- Oppland County Municipality will make full use of the potential that memberships in international organisations represent.
- Oppland County Municipality will continuously evaluate international trends and developments and their consequences for the county and its international commitments.

² The municipalities in Oppland are divided in six regions, and each region has defined a prioritised field; Hadeland: Bioenergy; Gjøvik: Industry and high technology; Valdres: Develop Valdres as a brand; Lillehammer: Experience-based businesses and education within film/media and other cultural expressions, sports and tourism; Midt-Gudbrandsdal: culture based business development connected to the Peer Gynt festival, Dale Gudbrands gard and Ringebu prestegard; Nord-Gudbrandsdal; National parks.

Competence

- Upper secondary education in Oppland will contribute to making young people prepared for an international education and labour market. Pupils and apprentices will have opportunities to develop international competence by participating in exchanges, e.g. through the International Service Office for apprentices.
- There will be an increased focus on multicultural understanding and improved language skills.
- More international students should be encouraged to choose the university colleges in Oppland as study destinations. Oppland County Municipality will contribute to this by awarding scholarships to incoming students.
- The county library will have an increased focus on being an arena for lifelong learning, in cooperation with the municipal libraries, with international projects as an integrated part.

Innovation

- Innovation and profitability in the business sector will be increased through international interaction. The research centres in Oppland will be strengthened through international cooperation, and Oppland County Municipality will contribute to a closer interaction between enterprises, municipalities, research institutes and educational institutions, both on a regional, national and international level.
- International projects will enhance and strengthen the efforts within industry, tourism, bioenergy, culture and information security. There will be an increased use of programmes through Innovation Norway and participation in Interreg. Small and medium enterprises in Oppland will have a stronger international focus in competence development and network cooperation.
- Oppland County Municipality will contribute to the development of a university in the inland region, in cooperation with the university colleges and Hedmark County Municipality. Participation in international programmes will be a key to success.
- Oppland will be among the most visited counties in the country, and international marketing and profiling will contribute to reaching this goal.
- Oppland County Municipality will support projects that aim at making Oppland an attractive place to live and work. Oppland County Municipality will cooperate with partners that will market the regions in Oppland internationally with the aim of increasing the population and encouraging the establishment of businesses. Oppland County Municipality will collect experiences from other regions with similar challenges.

Culture, environment and health

- Nature and the environment will be used in a sustainable perspective, and participation at international arenas will contribute to promoting this perspective.
- Oppland will have a varied cultural life with a distinct international dimension that will provide added value as well as a better foundation for developing business connected to culture.
- Public health work will partly be based on international experiences and best practice, with an emphasis on the diet, activities and habits of children and youth.
- Efforts to reduce emissions of climate gases will be seen in the context of international aims and participation in European networks.

Transport

- The emission of climate gasses through road traffic will be reduced by 20 % by the year 2020.
- There will be an increased focus on alternative fuels. 10 % of used fuel will be environment friendly by the year 2010.
- Measures to improve traffic safety will be implemented. Collecting international experiences and best practice will be a part of this work.
- International experiences and best practice will contribute to better planning, organisation and more efficient solutions for public transport.
- Cooperation between the fields of transport and tourism will be strengthened. Public transport will be made more tourism friendly.
- Oppland County Municipality will work actively to develop important transport corridors in an international perspective.

Area planning

- International cooperation will be actively used in area development and planning aimed at attracting more inhabitants, in particular young people.
- Oppland County Municipality will have planning and administration models that secure sustainability in the use of natural and cultural heritage for business purposes. The development of these models will be based on international experiences and participation in international projects and programmes.

Working methods and resources

- Internationalisation will be an integral part of all activities in Oppland County Municipality, and international measures will be included in all policy areas. All departments must allocate resources for international work.
- International engagements will be actively used to enhance the County Municipality's legitimacy and attractivity as a partner.
- Oppland County Municipality will have an international department with sufficient resources to fulfil the County Municipality's international ambitions.