General overview

Akershus County, Norway, borders the capital from the east, west and north and is often referred to as “the green belt of Oslo”. Although its geographic area is relatively small (4918 km²), Akershus is one of the largest counties in Norway comprising 600 000 inhabitants (11.5% of the total population). It is divided into four districts and has 22 municipalities. While some areas are densely populated (nine out of ten people live in urban areas), there are large distances between neighbours in rural areas (1).

The overall health level in Akershus County is high, and the average life expectancy is 82 years (2). The population is young and well educated compared to the rest of the country. Children thrive in their schools, and businesses provide adequate possibilities for young people seeking apprenticeships. Unemployment rates are low, and the general level of income is high; however, health inequality is increasing because of social inequities, for instance, in living conditions.

Akershus County has the highest level of net migration within Norway and attracts many people in the age group 30–39 years from both Oslo and abroad. Over the most recent 20 years, as a result of immigration from abroad and migration within Norway, the County has seen a 35.4% increase in population and a further increase of 200 000 is foreseen by 2040 (2). Young adults attracted to living and working in the capital tend to move to Akershus County when they start a family. They are typically of immigrant background, are in their thirties and have young children. This means that the population of Akershus is becoming more ethnically diverse and multicultural. More than 120 000 people commute daily from Akershus to Oslo and other counties. Housing prices in Akershus have increased by more than 50% since 2010; a record-high number of new houses were constructed in 2017 (1).

Akershus County Council is a democratically elected body with regional responsibilities in areas such as education, transport, dental care and regional development. Using its development funds, the County Council aims to promote public health through all service areas. Norway is currently undergoing a regional reform that may influence the way in which the County will be organized in the future.

The Norwegian health-care system was developed as part of the welfare state after the Second World War to ensure access for all inhabitants to quality
Akershus County, Norway

Akershus County: 9 has a well-funded, well-functioning health-care system; 9 takes a broad, holistic, intersectoral approach rooted in the Norwegian Public Health Act; 9 enforces focus on public health in municipal planning through the Planning and Building Act; 9 applies the precautionary principle and a participatory approach.

Akershus County is aiming to: 9 develop sustainability, for example, through health-promoting urban areas; 9 introduce a systematic public health approach; 9 enhance public well-being.

Strengths

Akershus County:

✓ has a well-funded, well-functioning health-care system;
✓ takes a broad, holistic, intersectoral approach rooted in the Norwegian Public Health Act;
✓ enforces focus on public health in municipal planning through the Planning and Building Act;
✓ applies the precautionary principle and a participatory approach.

Aspirations

Akershus County is aiming to:

✓ develop sustainability, for example, through health-promoting urban areas;
✓ introduce a systematic public health approach;
✓ enhance public well-being.

Akershus County, Norway
Challenges

These include:

- increasing health inequality resulting from social inequities in living conditions;
- the rise in the rate of mental-health issues;
- the sectoral focus on public health;
- a large ageing population.

Potential areas of collaboration

Akershus County is interested in collaborating with other regions on the development of:

- health-promoting urban areas;
- social sustainability;
- preventive measures and life-coping skills.

Working groups

Akershus County is interested in participating in working groups on:

- development goals/equity;
- participatory approaches/resilience;
- the all-of-government approach/intersectoral action;
- health-promoting urban development/sustainable development and well-being.

People active in RHN

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References
