

CASE STUDIES REPORT //

**Territorial impacts of
COVID-19 and policy answers in
European regions and cities**

Region Skåne and Malmö Municipality (Sweden)

Case study // August 2022

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Disclaimer

This document is a final report.

The information contained herein is subject to change and does not commit the ESPON EGTC and the countries participating in the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme.

The final version of the report will be published as soon as approved.

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Introduction

This case study report examines the policy response to Covid-19 within Region Skåne and Malmö Municipality. The report explores which 'proactive' policies have been introduced in response to the pandemic and assesses whether the crisis presented a 'window of opportunity' for regional and local authorities to promote specific spatial planning and territorial targeted policy agendas. The case report is structured around the following core sections:

1. **Regional Characteristics:** Outlines the key socio-economic and governance characteristics of the region.
2. **Impact of Covid-19:** Highlights the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic on the region.
3. **Covid Policy Response:** provides an overview of the regional policy response in relation to three core policy thematic areas - the just transition (social policies), green transition (climate policies) and smart transition (innovation policies).
4. **Covid Policy Impacts:** assesses the main socio-economic, governance and financial impacts of the policy measures introduced.
5. **Future Policy Directions:** examines the medium- and long-term direction of policy in the region and analyses whether the policies identified can be upscaled to other EU regions.
6. **Policy Recommendations:** provides policymakers and practitioners with policy, governance, territorial and financial recommendations.

Research methods

The present case study has been conducted following a two-step approach. In a first step, desk research has been conducted with the aim of 1) documenting the main characteristics of the area, 2) assessing the impact of the pandemic on local society and economy according to various national and local statistical sources, and 3) documenting the policy responses as reflected in policy documents and online media outlets. In a second step, six semi-structured digital interviews have been conducted with eight representatives for regional and local public institutions. The purpose of the interviews has been to further document the impact of the pandemic, the policy responses, the impact of the policy responses, as well as the future of local and regional policies.

Table 1 lists the stakeholders that have been interviewed as part of the current research between November 2021- January 2022.

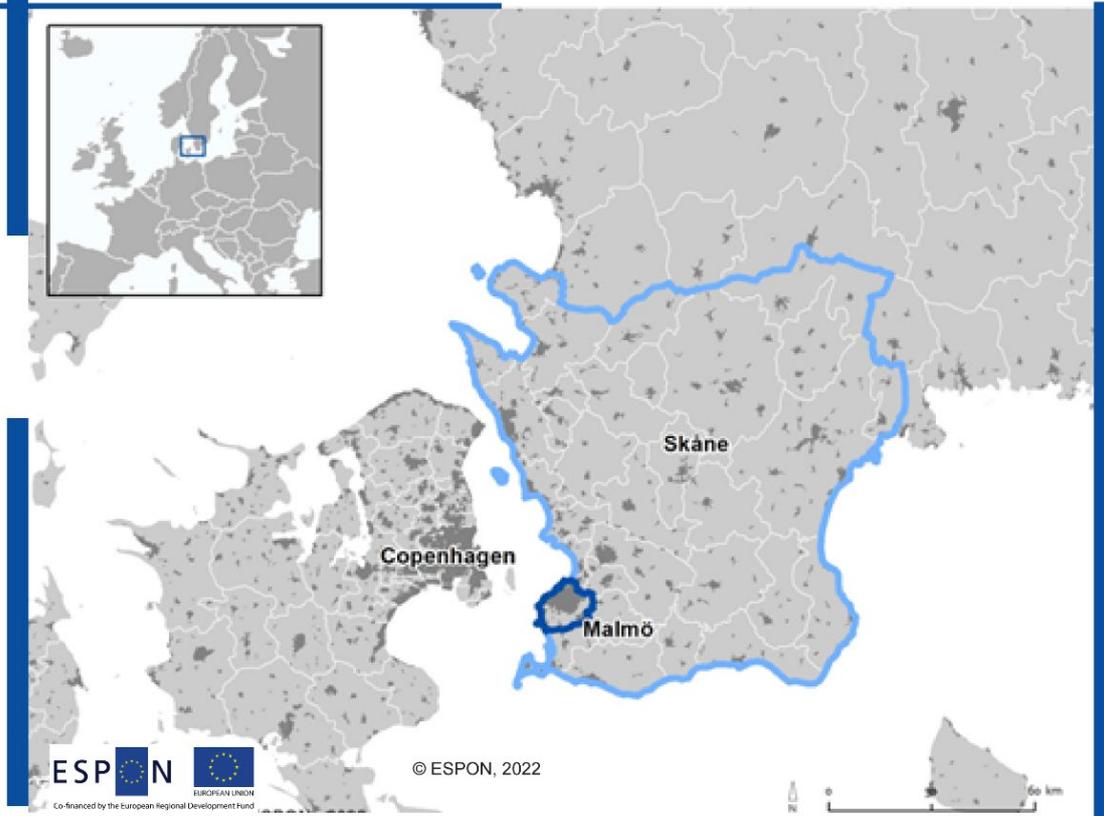
Table 1 Interviews conducted within the scope of this report

Number	Interviewees	Organisation
1	Civil servant from the Labour Market and Social Care Department	Malmö Municipality
2	Civil servant from City Council – HR department	Malmö Municipality
2	Civil servant from City Council – HR department	Malmö Municipality
3	Civil servant from the Labour Market and Social Care Department	Malmö Municipality
3	Civil servant from City Council – Crisis management	Malmö Municipality
4	Civil servant from City Council - HR	Malmö Municipality
5	Civil servant from the Environmental Department	Region Skåne
6	Civil servant from Businesses and Competence supply	Region Skåne

Map 1 shows the case study area Skåne within the light blue lines and the City of Malmö within the dark blue lines. The square in the upper left corner shows where the case study area is located in Europe.

Map 1 Case study areas of Malmö municipality

Malmö/Skåne case study area



Regional level: NUTS mixed levels (LAU & NUTS3-2) | Data version: 2021

Source: Territorial impacts of COVID-19

Origin of data: ESPON COVID-19, 2021

© UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

1. Characteristics of the Case study region

2.1 Economic characteristics

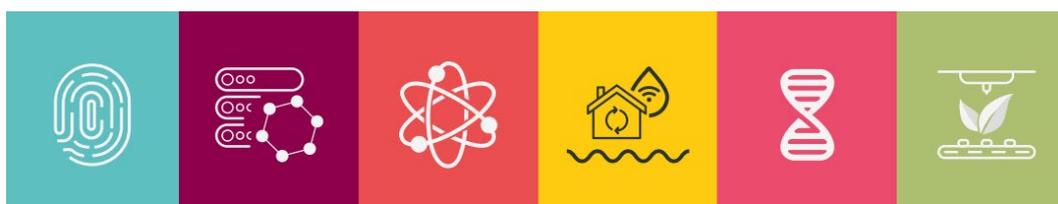
Main economic activities and GDP before the pandemic:

In 2019, Region Skåne conducted an analysis of regional strengths for the Regional Growth and Innovation Strategy. The identified strengths presented in the strategy are packaging, chemical industry, ICT, Life Science, engineering, food and construction. These sectors are characterized by high production level, critical mass, strong connection to research and development, high knowledge level, capacity for renewal and export, albeit to a varied extent. The largest sector in the Scanian economy is the building and construction sector, which has developed greatly in later years, particularly since 2014. Sectors that have a low productivity level are usually not identified as strength areas but remain very important for the economy due to their employment rates. A large number of people are employed in these sectors, which encompass retail, business services, logistics & transport, tourism and hospitality and local food industries. These sectors have grown significantly due to the population increase in the region (Region Skåne, 2019a). Although they do not contribute to the overall regional innovation potential, they remain important occupational sectors.

The final areas for Smart specialisation are listed in the new Innovation Strategy for Skåne and are Tech, Life science and health, Food innovation, Advanced materials and manufacturing, Smart Sustainable Cities, ESS¹, Max IV² and the Innovation Ecosystem Science Village Scandinavia (FIRS, 2020). Although small companies are large employers, it is mainly the large companies that have the resources to invest in Research and Development (R&D), innovation and new technologies. Companies with the highest levels of innovation between 1990-2013 are Ericsson, Alfa Laval and Tetra. Sectors with the largest number of big companies are logistics & transport, ICT, food industry and the building and construction industry. Of these, ICT, food and the building and construction industry are particularly interesting because of their high productivity level. Large national and international companies within the food industry are, for example, Pågen, Scan and Lantmännen. Within the ICT sector, Sony Mobile, Ericsson, CGI and UbiSoft are large players, while the building and construction industry have large international players such as Peab, Skanska and Bravida (Region Skåne 2019).

Figure 1 show the specialisations Tech, Life science and health, Food innovation, Advanced materials and manufacturing, Smart Sustainable Cities, ESS, Max IV and the Innovation Ecosystem Science Village Scandinavia.

Figure 1 Smart specialisations in Skåne



Source: FIRS, 2020

To capture the Scanian business environment dynamics, it is important to understand and capture the number of newly established businesses and other fast-growing companies. The sectors with the greatest number of employees in fast-growing companies in 2016, were companies in areas such as building materials, vehicle industries and in the steel and metal industry. Sectors where newly established companies (or/and start-ups) account for a large share of the added value are often characterized by their lower

¹ European Spallation Source is a multi-disciplinary research facility based in Lund

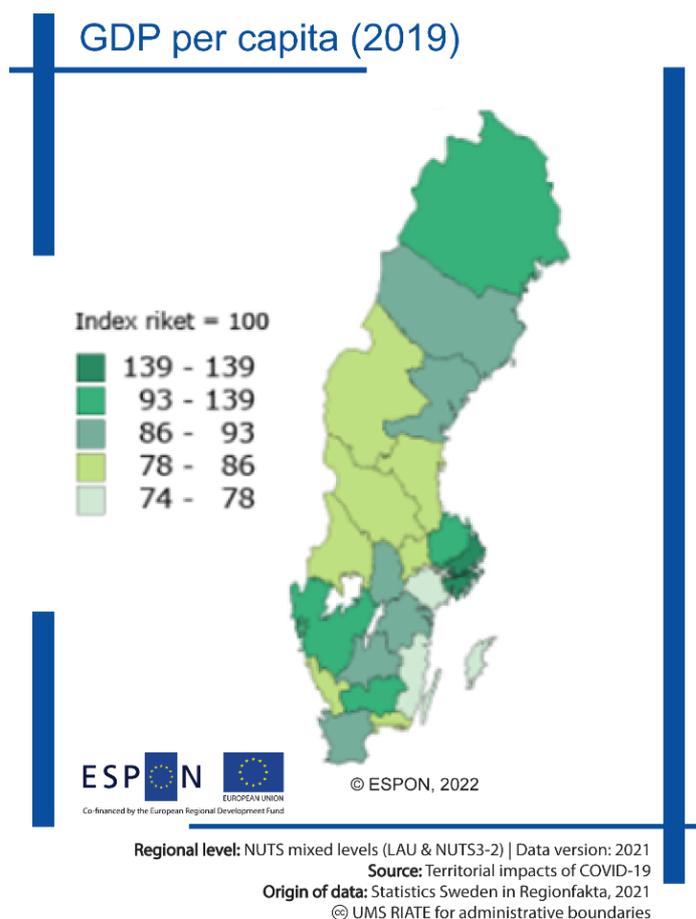
² A next-generation synchrotron radiation facility

entrepreneurship threshold or lower threshold for starting a business. These sectors are generally seen in the arts and culture sector, tourism and advanced business services (Region Skåne, 2019a). Highly productive sectors also characterized by great business dynamics are e.g., advanced business services, ICT and other manufacturing industries (Region Skåne 2019a).

In 2019, Region Skåne had a GRP (Gross Regional Product) of 423 000 SEK per capita compared to the Swedish average of 491 000 SEK (Regionfakta, 2021), or approximately 41 300 EUR and 48 000 EUR, respectively. In figure 2 you can see the difference between the Swedish regions. European data only exist on NUTS2 level, in which Southern Sweden (Skåne and Blekinge Regions) has a GDP of 31 500 EUR per capita, which is consistent with the national figures - a little lower than the average in Sweden. However, it is worth noting that Stockholm region is an outlier and is pulling up the average with 51 900 EUR GDP per capita in 2019 (Eurostat, 2019, economy). Skåne is among the top three regions in Sweden as regards exports in 2019 (Region Skåne, 2021a), accounting for around 8% of Sweden's total export³.

Skåne is characterised by being a cross-border region and the bridge to Denmark, Öresund bridge, goes from Malmö to Copenhagen. Skåne and Malmö are part of Greater Copenhagen, which is a collaborative organisation promoting growth and development in Southern Sweden and Eastern Denmark. The collaboration is the largest Nordic metropolitan area encompassing 4.4 million citizens. When looking at statistics from Skåne and Malmö, it is important to understand the data in relation to the cross-border characteristics of the area and its implications. In general, it is difficult to share statistics over borders and for Malmö and Skåne, it makes it more difficult to fully understand the dynamics of the economy and the labour market. In the sections below we will find several examples of this.

Map 2 Gross Regional Product per inhabitant 2019



³ Stockholm and Västra Götaland top the export list: The Stockholm region accounted for 28.7%, and the region of Västra Götaland accounted for 22.7% of total exports in 2019 (Region Skåne, 2021a).

Innovation and research and development

Figures from the new Innovation Strategy for Skåne (FIRS, 2020) show that Skåne has had a decrease in private investments in Research and Innovation in previous years. Moreover, several large companies such as Ericsson, Sony Mobile and AstraZeneca have downsized or closed their operations in Skåne since the financial crisis in 2008-2009, which has had implications on the innovation ecosystem and the general research and innovation capacity of businesses in the region (Region Skåne, 2019a). In 2017 private business investments in Skåne were around 13-14 billion SEK (ca 1.3 Billion EUR), while Stockholm region had over 30 billion SEK (ca 3 billion EUR), Västra Götaland around 25 billion SEK (ca 2.5 Billion EUR). Not looking at regions with larger metropolitan areas, the average business investments in other Swedish regions also exceeded that of Skåne, at 21 billion SEK (FIRS, 2020). As previously stated, Skåne is home to big companies in sectors such as logistics & transport, ICT, the building and construction sector, and in the food industry, but most companies in the region are small, and are not as prone to work with research, development and innovation. At the same time, Skåne is among the regions in Sweden with the highest percentage of new companies, even though most of them are not in knowledge intensive sectors and as such, are not requiring the same level of business investments for Research, Development and Innovation purposes (FIRS, 2020).

Despite low investment levels in Research and Development, Skåne is also home to globally leading companies and research and is known for its innovative milieu (FIRS 2019). The region is home to several large universities and research actors, of which Lund University is the biggest and most influential with 84 % of all published scientific articles in Skåne and can show to the highest number of patents issued in Sweden per capita, over time. Other important research actors are Region Skåne, Malmö University, SLU Alnarp, the University college Kristianstad University, ESS, the World Maritime University and the Swedish Forest Agency (FIRS, 2020).

Economic challenges pre-pandemic

Since the financial crisis in 2008-2009, Skåne has experienced a slower economic growth in comparison to its Swedish counterparts (FIRS, 2020). According to the Innovation Strategy FIRS (2019), productivity has slowed down across most western countries, and it is generally seen as a hurdle to overcome to keep up current levels of societal development; general welfare and tax levels, infrastructure, and competitiveness, to ensure growth through employment and productivity.

As mentioned above, the FIRS Innovation Strategy (2019) point to already existing issues regarding low productivity and low investment levels in research and development in the private sector. However, another, albeit closely interlinked issue identified in 2019 was access to competence and sufficient competence supply, which is key to continuing the development of Skåne's economic strength. Competence development is also one of the objectives in the regional development strategy, *An Open Scania 2030* (Det Öppna Skåne). In 2017 approximately 62 000 students were registered in Skåne (Ramboll, 2019) however, few remain in the area to work when they graduate, and the general education levels in the region remain moderate in comparison. Looking at the Regional Innovation Scoreboard for 2021, Skåne outperforms most European regions when it comes to lifelong learning (Regional profiles, 2021), which may indicate a positive and ongoing change process. Finding ways to capitalize on Skåne's potential following the existing global leaders in innovation and research, depends on the region's ability to balance social and economic development, as well as factors such as energy supply and adequate infrastructure (FIRS 2019). In addition, a large part of the population remains outside the labour market. Finding ways to increase labour market participation may help increase the overall productivity of the region.

The labour market in Skåne is part of a larger functional labour market, stretching across two other southern Swedish regions such as Halland and Blekinge, but also the capital region of Denmark, Copenhagen. The dynamics seen in widening a functional labour market is seen as a positive contribution to balance labour market gaps, by ensuring access to competence or to workforce working in lower-competence jobs (State of the Nordic Region, 2022, forthcoming; Ho & Shirono, 2015). Ensuring labour mobility in the Nordic Region has been on the agenda in collaborative governmental organisations, such as Nordic Co-operation since the establishment of the passport union in 1954, spearheading free movement of people. With the introduction of the Öresund Bridge, linking Skåne and Copenhagen, in 2000, the labour market dynamics have increased. This has also led to the establishment of the Greater Copenhagen cross-border committee, as well as several other information services, which work to promote regional growth for the binational Öresund region,

which is home to 4.4 million people. This is of great importance to Skåne, and particularly Malmö, as the municipality has a great development potential in their labour market (FIRS, 2020).

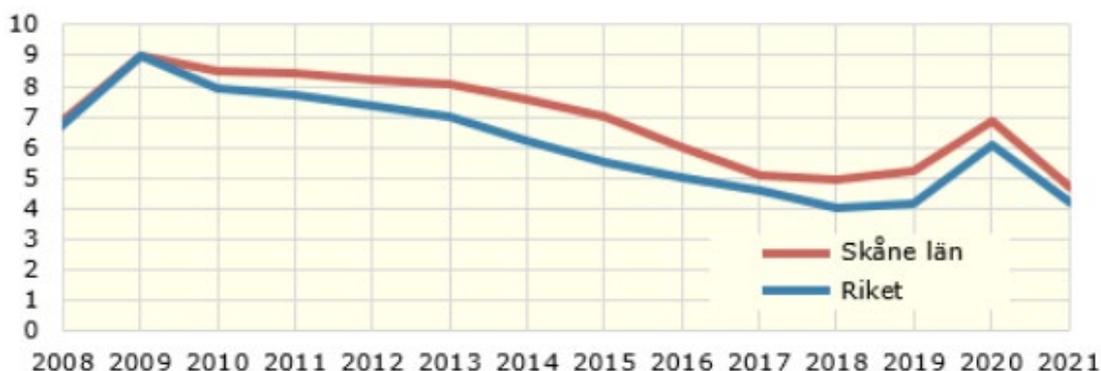
However, the Nordic labour market is not without its challenges and issues such as transport and communication, taxes and social benefits, and integration between the labour markets remain. Information services such as Info Norden, ÖresundDirekt and the Freedom of Movement Secretariat in the Nordic Council of Ministers are continuously trying to solve cross-border barriers as they emerge. Free movement in the Nordic region has also been challenged in later years. Since the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 and the subsequent passport controls imposed due to a sudden upsurge of Swedish organised crime in Copenhagen in 2019, and finally, the present COVID-19 pandemic starting in 2020. The latter has contributed to unprecedented low levels of Swedish-Danish commuting, and Nordic mobility overall (State of the Nordic Region, 2022). The long-term effects of the border restrictions remain to be seen, however.

2.2 Social characteristics

Pre-pandemic social challenges:

The population in Skåne is heterogenous with regards to education and is generally split across those who have higher levels of education and those who have lower levels of education. In fact, Skåne has the largest percentage in Sweden of people with low levels of education. This has great implication for sectors requiring higher levels of education, where there is a chronic labour force gap. Although there are big employers, such as retail and services, that do not require the highest level of education, a high degree of unemployment remains in some parts of the population (FIRS, 2020). Looking at young people that were neither in employment, education nor training (NEETs), the figure for Skåne was in 2019 5,3 % in comparison with the country level at 4,2 %. The unemployment for young people was high during the financial crisis and has since then gone down with exception for 2020 (see figure 2).

Figure 2 Openly unemployed 18-24 yearly average 2008-2021



The red line represents Region Skåne and the blue line represents the national average. Source: Swedish Public employment Service, 20214

Skåne has the lowest employment rate in Sweden and unemployment among young people and people born outside of Sweden is high. In 2019 the employment rate for ages 20-64 in the region was 77% compared to the Swedish average of 80%. However, this is nothing new, as Skåne has been struggling with the lowest or second lowest employment rates in Sweden for several decades (FIRS, 2020). The southwestern part of Skåne, home to Malmö municipality, has the lowest rate in the region, but it should also be seen in relation to their population increase of people of working age in the municipality (Region Skåne, n.d).

⁴ From Regionfakta, 2021 <https://www.regionfakta.com/skane-lan/arbete/oppet-arbetslosa-efter-aldersgrupp/>

On NUTS2 level, the figure for employment in the Southwest of Sweden was 77.2% in 2019 (Eurostat, 2019). Comparatively to the rest of Europe however, Skåne is merely performing the “worst of the best”: Sweden had the highest employment rate in Europe in 2019, placing Skåne region as number 111 of 311 European regions. The high employment levels in Sweden can be attributed to the high employment levels of women in the workforce, made possible by progressive equality politics and family policies including childcare and parental leave (FIRS, 2020). The high employment rates may also be seen in relation to a relatively high retirement age, and the early introduction of individual taxation rates in 1971 (FIRS 2020).

However, the composition of the labour market in Skåne shows that country of origin plays a role when it comes to employment. Of people in Skåne ages 20-64 born in Sweden, 83,1% of men and 82% of women were employed in 2018. The corresponding values for the population born outside Europe living in Sweden were 51.8% and 44.8%, respectively (Region Skåne, n.d). This shows that it is necessary to continue working to integrate foreign-born onto the Swedish labour market and work to reduce segregation as well as remove barriers for foreign born on the labour market. Looking at Malmö municipality before the pandemic, the employment figures for people ages 20-64 was estimated to 67.8%, in comparison to the national average of 79.5% (SCB, 2020; (Malmö stad, 2021). One reason for this may be the high percentage of foreign-born people, which is significantly higher in Malmö at 34,6% in comparison to the Swedish average of 19,7% (SCB, 2020). It is also worth noting that statistics regarding cross-border commuters from Sweden to Denmark are not considered in the Swedish Employment Agency’ registry, and that this may negatively affect the unemployment rates, particularly in Malmö (State of the Nordic Region, 2022).

Level of inequality, segregation and poverty:

Skåne’s Vision 2030 *An Open Scania* has ambitions to focus on and improve equality and welfare (Region Skåne, 2021a). According to Skåneanalysen from 2019, the general income level in Sweden as well as Skåne, has increased over the past decades. However, it is noted that the disposable income in Skåne is somewhat lower than the national average, leading to a larger group of people living in relatively poverty in the region (Skåneanalysen, 2019, p. 1). There are also large differences within the region (Skåneanalyse, 2019). Malmö municipality had the lowest income in the region in 2016, even if Malmö is considered one of three key cities contributing to regional growth. Skåneanalysen explains this by showing to settlements, as many people work in Malmö but rather live in municipalities close by, which skews the picture somewhat: people’s incomes are registered where they live and are taxed, even if they generate value elsewhere (Skåneanalysen, 2019).

Statistics of income is a multifaceted, complex field. Skåne is home to a large number of foreign-born, who generally have more difficulties integrating on the labour market. They may struggle with having their foreign qualifications verified or have lower levels of education from abroad or Sweden, ending up with lower paid jobs (Skåneanalysen, 2019). Even here, it is wise to keep in mind that many people living in e.g., Malmö and other coastal towns work in Denmark are not registered, as they are paid, taxed, and registered in Denmark in accordance with the Öresund Agreement (see e.g., (Swedish Tax Authorities, 2020). In a new report from Swedish Statistics (2021) it is stated that border-regions, primary Skåne, Västra Götaland, Stockholm and Värmland, have higher household income than accounted for in the official statistics. For Malmö with 11 000 commuters to Denmark it is calculated that between 4 and 5 billion SEK (aprox. 400-500 million EUR) earned by people living in Malmö are not accounted for since the money is earned and taxed in Denmark (Swedish Statistics, 2021a). However, even though this increases Malmö’s household income with 4,5 %, Malmö still has a high percentage of people with low economic status. In 2022 this number was 22,8 % in comparison to the national average of 15 % (Grosshög, 2022).

Demographic structure:

The southwestern part of Sweden has been the fastest growing region in Sweden for decades, in terms of population increase (Region Skåne, 2021a). Skåne has since 2016 seen a great population increase, coupled with a balanced demographic age structure (Region Skåne, 2021a). Looking at Malmö municipality, for example, the average age in 2020 was 38.5 years old in comparison to the Swedish national average of 41.4 (SCB, 2020), which may be due to the large number of foreign-born in the population. Near half of the approximately 1.4 million inhabitants in Skåne, live in the southwestern part. Looking at the prognosis for Skåne in the period 2020-2029, the population is expected to grow by approximately 8.8% - a little above the expected national average increase (Region Skåne, 2019b). The number of immigrants from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq are expected to decrease, though these migrant groups constitute the largest migrant groups in recent years (Region Skåne, 2019b). Region Skåne suggests that this decrease in number will

primarily be due to stricter migration policies both in the EU and in Sweden in years to come, though this remains to be seen. The Skåne region is a net migration region (Region Skåne, 2021a).

2.3 Governance characteristics

Sweden has a decentralized system in which regional and local public authorities play a central role in delivering public services to citizens. Sweden has three administrative levels, the national level, the regional level, and the local/municipal level. The administrative system in Sweden is usually described as an hour-glass (OECD, 2017) with a strong central government, considerable autonomy for the 290 municipalities, and rather limited responsibilities granted to the 21 regional authorities. Even though the regional responsibilities have increased over the last years. Other important public actors are the National Agencies and the governmental representatives in the regions The County Administrative Boards.

Table 2 Administrative levels of Sweden

European	European Commission
	The Parliament and Government
National	National Agencies <i>The National Agencies are responsible for implementing the decisions made by the Parliament and the Government.</i>
	County Administrative Boards <i>National authorities operating at county level, responsible for the state administration in the county (in those areas where no other authority is responsible for special administrative tasks). The County Administrative Boards shall work to ensure that national goals have an impact in the county, while also taking into account regional conditions.</i>
	Regional Authorities <i>Led by political assemblies with responsibilities for e.g. health care and social care, public transportation and regional development. Counties and regions cover the same geographical area.</i>
	Region Skåne (Regional Development Department)
Local	Local authorities (Cities and municipalities) <i>Local government responsible for e.g. primary and secondary school, preschool activities, elderly care, physical and comprehensive planning, roads, water and sewage issues and energy issues. Also issue different types of permits, such as building permits.</i>
	Malmö municipality

***The Regional Development Department and the Malmö Municipality are marked dark grey because they are the actors in focus of this study.**

The regional level is responsible for Healthcare, Dental Care, Public Transport and Regional Development. It is also voluntary for the regions to engage in issues such as Culture, Education and Tourism. The latest restructuring of the regional administrative system was finalised in 2019 when all former Counties became self-governing County Districts called "Regions". Regional Development was prior to this change the responsibility of the County Administrative Boards or the Regional Associations. The aim of this change was partly to sustain a more democratic anchoring closer to the citizens in the region. Skåne was one of the pilot regions and the first County to merge the responsibility of Regional Development and Health Care into one organisation in 1999. It also meant that the small Department for Regional Development was merged with an organisation with several different Health Care department. Only 0,5% of all employed at Region Skåne work with Regional Development.

The National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development constitutes the direction for the regional development politics. In the new strategy (Regeringskansliet, 2021), the previously used 'regional growth' is replaced by 'regional development' and the fields welfare and public health are included where previous strategies have mostly focused on business development. The inclusion of welfare and public health implies more synergies between regional activities and municipal work with welfare and sustainability and can present more opportunities for collaboration.

On the local level, municipalities are self-governing entities with extended jurisdictions. The municipal self-government is protected in the constitution, which, among other things, provides

the municipalities' right to taxation through income tax. The municipalities are responsible for Social Services, Elderly Care, Primary Education and Adult Education, Planning and Building, Environment and Environmental Health Services, Cleaning and Waste Management, Water and Sewer System, Emergency Services, Emergency Preparedness and Civil Defence, Libraries and Housing. The municipalities are also free to engage in questions surrounding Leisure and culture, Energy, Employment and Business development. (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2021).

Even though municipalities and regions are self-governing in Sweden, the state influence has in recent decades increased in both scope and level of detail in most policy areas (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, 2020). The arguments for this are mainly to ensure that municipalities have more equal financial conditions to provide equivalent service to its residents regardless of tax rate and structural costs. The 2020 municipal inquiry's report proposes measures to make sure that the state can secure the municipalities' financial conditions. And to implement measures that facilitate the supply of skills within the municipalities (SOU 2020: 8). In relation to this, the equalization system, a structure that distributes money from wealthier municipalities to municipalities with lower economic resources, has also been adjusted and is still under discussion (SOU 2020: 8). Hence, the municipalities (and regions) in the Swedish decentralized system are affected by different geographical, structural, and economic conditions which influence their ability to realize regional development and provide services to their citizens (Tillväxtanalys, 2021).

Skåne, has a strong support system for companies and entrepreneurs to develop and commercialize ideas for innovations and runs various forms of development and innovation projects. Key players in this system are universities, research institutes, cluster organizations, and in some cases municipalities. The region also has several research and technology parks such as Ideon Science Park, Krinova, Medeon and Medicon Village and incubators and accelerators such as Ideon Innovation, Innovation Skåne, LU innovation, Minc, SmiLE Incubator, Think (FIRS, 2020).

Region Skåne is financing eight cluster initiatives. Two of them have connections to ICT: Media Evolution and Mobile Heights. Media Evolution engage companies on a broader scale within digitalization, and among the 400 member companies are global companies such as IKEA and Hövding. The cluster *Mobile Heights* focuses on developing the Internet of Things, which includes wireless communication and mobile services, and host members as Sony Mobile, Ericsson and E-on. Other clusters are the Danish-Swedish life science cluster *Medicon Valley Alliance*, the food cluster *Livsmedelsakademin*, the industrial development cluster *IUC Syd*, Packbridge for a growing packaging industry ecosystem, Sustainable Business Hub that revolves around issues of energy and environment, as well as a cluster for the tourism industry (Region Skåne, 2019b).

A lot of the cooperation between actors are facilitated by the Research and Innovation Council in Skåne (FIRS). FIRS is a forum for key stakeholders working with research and innovation. It is not a traditional decision-making body, but a forum for discussing and acting together on opportunities as they arise. FIRS' role is to find ways to drive common issues forward, and initiate processes deemed necessary. FIRS consists of representatives at the management level from Region Skåne, the region's universities and colleges, municipal representatives from Malmö, Lund, Kristianstad and Helsingborg, the Association of Local Authorities, and the business sector (FIRS, n.d).

As mentioned above, Region Skåne is also characterised by being a cross-border region with a close-knit community organically developed and oblivious to the national border. Backed by their decentralised powers, many local authorities have made important decisions jointly with neighbouring municipalities, and across national borders. Some of these constitute long-term investments in infrastructure and public services (Giacometti & Wøien Meijer, 2021).

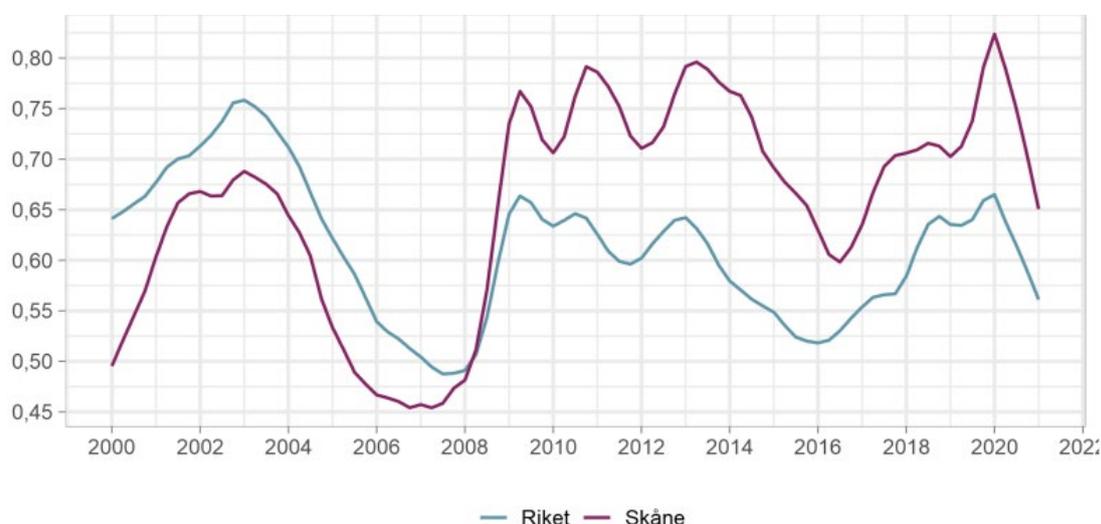
2. Impacts of COVID-19 on the region

3.1 Economic impacts

The main short and mid-term economic impacts of COVID-19:

The prognosis for the pandemic was overall very negative for Sweden, with a predicted reduction in GDP at around 7-8%. It ended up being a decline of a little less than 3% (Region Skåne, 2021a). Overall, it was noted that during 2020, the pandemic had a higher impact on GDP than on the general employment rate. Skåne has generally had higher share of bankruptcies and slower economic growth than the rest of Sweden since the financial crises in 2008-2009 (Region Skåne, 2021a; Innovationsstrategi FIRS 2019). During the pandemic, the average of bankruptcies for Skåne was 0.65 per 1000 companies, as opposed to 0.56 for the county at large. As seen in figure 3 the peak was in 2020, however the absolute numbers for January 2021 showed a positive trend compared to both figures from December 2020 and pre-pandemic numbers from January 2020 (Region Skåne, 2021a).

Figure 3 Number of company bankruptcies in Skåne and the Country per 1000 companies, January 2000- January 2021



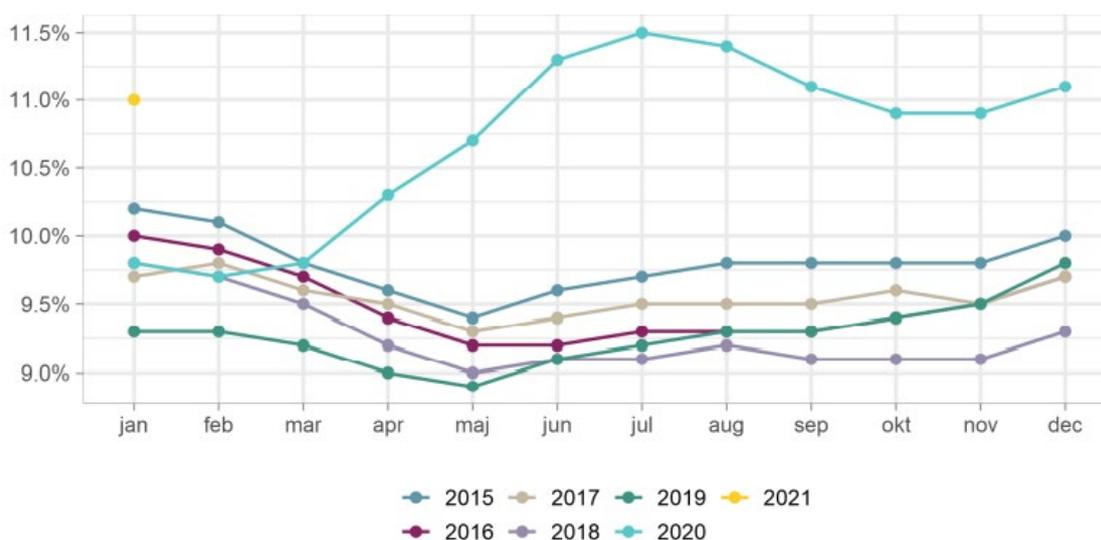
*The blue line represents the numbers for the country and the purple line represents the number for Region Skåne.

Source: Swedish statistics from Region Skåne, (2021a)

Skåne's Gross Regional Product showed a steady increase from 2008 – 2019, with a dip in 2009 (Regionfakta, 2022), but Statistics Sweden (SCB) shows a lower increase in GRP in Skåne per employed in 2020 compared across the period 2015-2020 (Statistics Sweden, 2022). The figures for 2021 are not available yet on SCB. The growth in GRP in Skåne has also been lower than for the rest of the country at large in 2021 (Region Skåne, 2021a). Region Skåne believes that this may partially be explained by a steady population increase while economic development has remained the same in this period.

Looking at the labour market, it performed better than expected during the pandemic, though limited growth in employment is expected here (Region Skåne, 2021a). The unemployment figures for people between 16-64 years old in Skåne were above the national average (8.8%), at 11% in January 2021, although unemployment figures steadily improved despite the high infection rates at the end of 2020, as seen in figure 4. According to Skåneanalysen (Region Skåne, 2021a), this is due to government support packages, for short term contracts and furloughs. Malmö municipality experienced the highest levels of unemployment in Skåne (15.8%), while the lower figures are found in municipalities surrounding the larger cities, towns and regional centra.

Figure 4 Share of unemployed people in the labour force 16-64 in Skåne January 2015-January 2021



Source: Arbetsförmedlingen in Region Skåne, (2021a)

It should be noted again however, that unemployment statistics differ with regards to their inclusion of cross-border commuters (Region Skåne, 2021a). Öresund is the busiest border crossing in the Nordic Region (Creutz et al., 2021). Following stringent regulations with regards to border crossing, labour mobility in between Nordic countries (State of the Nordic Region, 2022, forthcoming) despite the border remaining open for commuters between Sweden and Denmark during the pandemic. Many frontier workers either worked from home, were furloughed, left or lost their jobs altogether (Creutz et al., 2021).

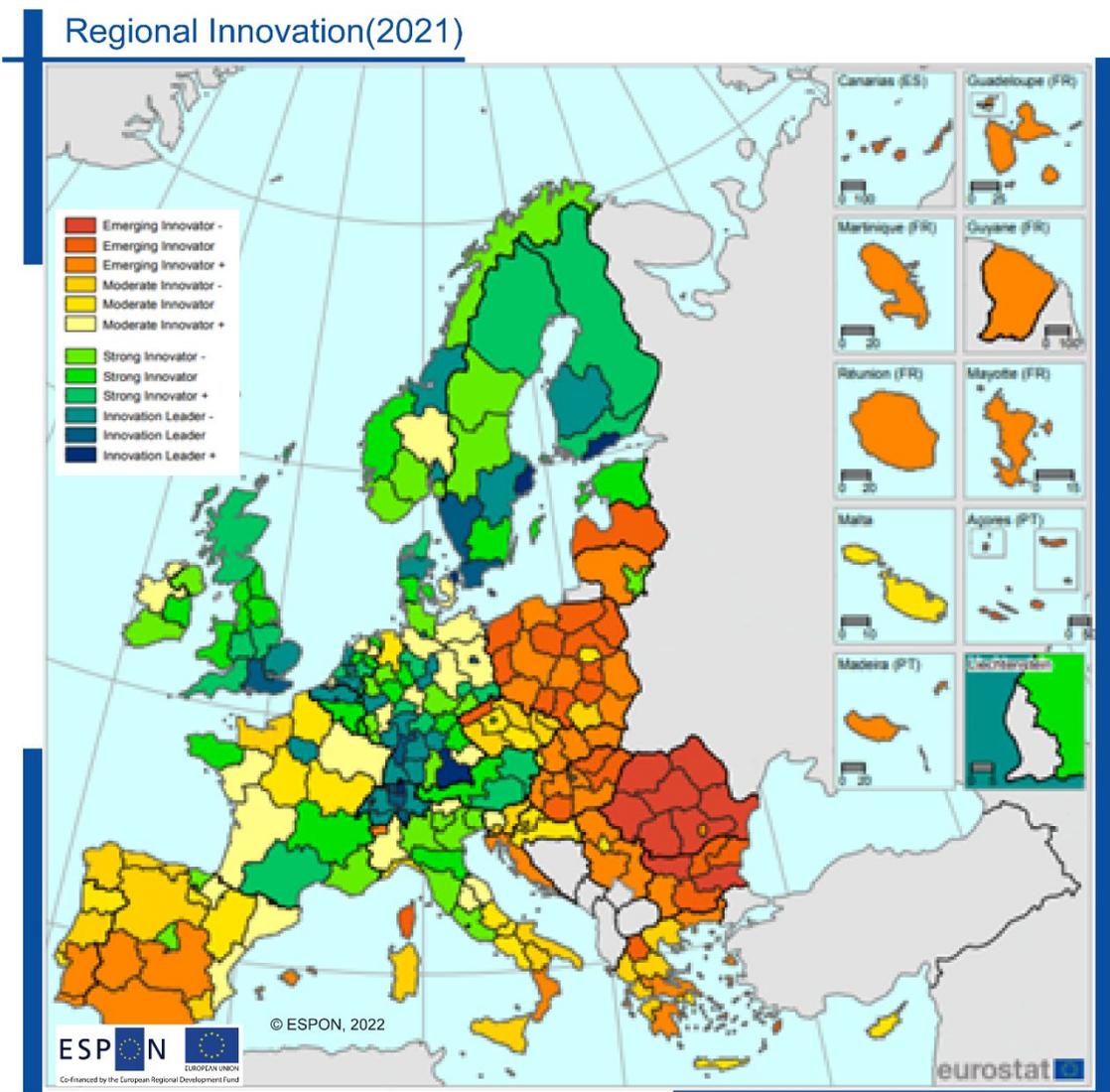
Emerging economic trends following COVID-19:

The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing, and it is therefore difficult to say whether there are strong indications of emerging economic trends. However, Region Skåne continues to monitor the Action plan for regional development through their tool 'How are things developing in Skåne?'⁵, which is a 'living document' (Region Skåne, 2021a). The development of this living document indicates a dedication to continued regional development, despite the pandemic. Even though the figures available do not include 2020 and 2021, but ends with 2019, the ambition remains to be a sustainable driver for growth with a globally competitive economy (Region Skåne, 2021a). However, with Agenda 2030 laying the land for approaching growth, Skåne is incorporating goals and actions founded in the sustainable development goals, with indicators pertaining to climate and environment, health and sustainable business development.

According to the EU Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2021, despite the pandemic, Southern Sweden is considered Innovation Leader, the second highest level (Skåne and Blekinge regions). This ranking places Skåne on par with regions like Västra Götaland, but behind capital regions such as Stockholm and Copenhagen (European Commission, 2021). However, the long-term effects of the pandemic are hard to ascertain. Personal relations and ability to establish trust across borders in a mega-region such as Öresund, in which Skåne is part, should not be underestimated as regards business and regional development (Creutz et al., 2021).

⁵ Hur har det gått i Skåne? Indicator report. Link: <https://utveckling.skane.se/publikationer/rapporter-analyser-och-programmer/hur-har-det-gatt-i-skane/>

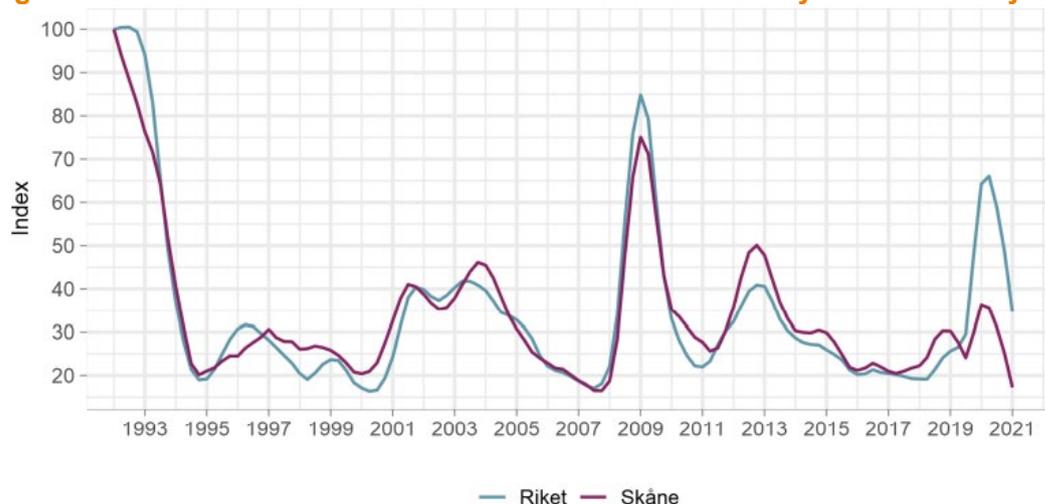
Map 3 Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2021



Regional level: NUTS mixed levels (LAU & NUTS3-2) | Data version: 2021
 Source: Territorial impacts of COVID-19
 Origin of data: European commission, 2021
 ©UMS RIATE for administrative boundaries

3.2 Social impacts

As stated in the economic impact section above, it is clear that the employment rate did not take a negative turn as it was expected. The main impacts have been seen on the global economy, as well as for the Swedish economy. From the fourth quarter in 2019 to the fourth quarter in 2020, the number of employees was reduced with 71 000 people, or around 1,4 %. One reason for the more manageable levels of unemployment may be explained by the fact that around 600 000 Swedish employees were granted support, and companies were able to furlough people for shorter periods of time in the spring of 2020 (Region Skåne, 2021b). In Skåne, the figure was approximately 55 000 people (Region Skåne, 2021a). This also indicated that many of the economic policies administered from the national level were essentially social in nature, as the government's ability and willingness to support businesses had social outcomes, stepping on the breaks to reduce the number of unemployed. This strategy was employed across the Nordic Region, as the consequences for long-term unemployment often impact on people's ability to re-enter the labour market (Wøien Meijer, 2022). As seen in figure 5 the determination notice during 2020 was higher in the country average than in Skåne, and that both those numbers are lower than in the financial crisis in the beginning of the 1990s and during 2008-2009.

Figure 5 Determination notices in Skåne and Sweden January 1992 – January 2021

* Index (jan. 1992= index 100). Blue line is the Swedish average, and the purple line is the Skåne average.

Source: Arbetsförmedlingen in Region Skåne, (2021a)

According to The Swedish Public Employment Service one of the biggest repercussions of the pandemic is the growing divide on the labour market. While those furloughed or short-term unemployed have re-entered the workforce, the group of long-term unemployed people (>12 months) are trapped. The group of long-term unemployed now includes around half of all unemployed people in Sweden (Swedish Radio, 2021). Although the first half of 2020 shows an increase in unemployment rates, it is important to keep in mind that there were signs of Sweden slowly heading towards an economic recession before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ekonomifakta, 2021).

Malmö municipality is home to a large percentage of the unemployed people in Skåne. In January 2021 the percentage of unemployed people in Malmö municipality was 15,7%. This is an increase of 1,9% since January 2020 (Region Skåne, 2021a). The Swedish average during the same year was 8,8%. Youth unemployment in the age group 18-24 years was already high in Malmö in January 2020 at 14,6% and had increased to 17,3% by January 2021 (Region Skåne, 2021a). The pandemic also increased the difference between unemployment for people born in Sweden and people born outside of Sweden. In 2015 – 2019, the difference in unemployment rates was around 10-11%, but the percentage increased to 13,7% in 2020 (Swedish Statistics, 2021b).

The Social progress index show that countries with higher indexes were more resilient to wider social impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. In 2020 Skåne and Sweden scored the highest in Europe on Social Progress Index (over 80) together with Finland, most parts of Denmark and some regions in the Netherlands. Skåne however ranks lowest in Sweden at 81.55, short after Region Stockholm - 81.85. Sweden's scores are highest on Nutrition and Basic Medical Care (98.9) and Water and Sanitation (98,35), the lowest on inclusiveness (79,84) and access to advanced education (82,24). Basic human needs scores 94,5, foundation of wellbeing 91,85 and opportunity 87,26 (Social Progress, 2020, 2021).

Social services in Region Skåne and Malmö Municipality during the pandemic

According to regional representatives, the pandemic did not change anything dramatically for the day-to-day operations within the organisation. The Region primarily works with structures and not individuals and apply a long-term perspective in strategies and measures. What the pandemic has done, was emphasising the necessity of public services and functions. Both regional and municipal representatives mention that the pandemic has made already existing problems increasingly evident and especially showed how vulnerable groups become even more vulnerable in a situation of crisis. It is also mentioned that civil organization play an important role in reaching these groups and gaining their trust.

All interviewed representatives emphasise that there are very few evaluations finished and few conclusions to be drawn when the interviews are conducted. The Labour Market and Social Care Department at Malmö municipality however did an internal follow up on the pandemic's effect on the activities of the department (Arbetsmarknads och Socialnämnden, 2021). The report concludes that the department has been able to deliver the established services but that these services have been delivered in different forms due to containment restrictions. High-priority activities such as protection assessments, housing activities, emergency care and payment of financial assistance have continued without serious impact. The pandemic has not affected waiting times significantly. The activities that have not been able to proceed during the pandemic are foremost physical meetings. This also includes groups meetings such as therapy, parent groups, support groups and social group activities. These activities have instead been conducted in other forms. There have also been less opportunities for internships provided by the Labour Market and Social Care Department. The report states that it is difficult to draw conclusions about the long-term effects of the pandemic. It is stated that there are indications that groups, who were vulnerable even before the pandemic such as families with domestic violence, unemployed or people with substance abuse have been negatively affected by the increased isolation. The need to support these groups will probably increase in the long run, why it is important to continue to follow the developments.

In terms of social trends, we can see that there are growing divides on the labour market. The youth unemployment has increased more than the overall employment and the difference between people born in and outside of Sweden has increased when it comes to unemployment. We can also see that those furloughed or short-term unemployed have re-entered the workforce while the group of long-term unemployed people (>12 months) are trapped. According to representatives from the Region and the Municipality, the pandemic has also visualized existing inequality in society and the extra vulnerability of certain groups in a crisis, such as older people, homeless people, people in crowded households, some groups of people born outside of Sweden or people with disabilities. If these trends will continue in the long term is difficult to say.

3.3 Governance impacts

There are mixed thoughts on how governance was affected by the pandemic. On the one hand, the pandemic required a lot of resources in the beginning with significant focus on reducing the spread of the virus. On the other hand, the crisis brought by the pandemic, also required increased multilevel- and cross-sectoral cooperation. The pandemic had effect on all parts of society which made actors come together and cooperate more. An example is presented from a municipal representative who says that the pandemic led to increased cooperation between the Region, the municipal social services and the civil organisations around work with vulnerable groups. The municipal representative perceived that the regional Health and Health Care Department's knowledge about vulnerable groups was increased because of this cooperation.

According to another representative, the opposite is true for the cross-border cooperation with Denmark. The pandemic lowered the level of cooperation because of border obstacles, but also because of protectionism. The fact that Region Skåne is a cross-border area is significant. In a recent report about the effects of the pandemic on Nordic cross-border regions it is concluded that cross-border regions have been more effected than other regions because of the closed borders (Giacometti & Wøien Meijer, 2021). The Nordic Region has since the 1950s experience a freedom of movement which has been severely interrupted by the pandemic and the solution to close borders between the countries. According to the report, the immediate effects of the pandemic include social unrest and jobs losses, which constitute a considerable impact on the population in the area. In addition, families are divided, trust in the authorities and between people has deteriorated, and nationalism has surged. Additionally, significant job losses in municipalities along the borders are clearly connected to border closures and to the halting of border trade and tourism. There is also a significant imbalance in levels of dependence upon border customers and cross-border trade, which is often one-sided. Border municipalities that have more diversified economies have therefore been more resilient to restrictions. However, the social effects of this are significantly more severe in areas where family ties and social bonds traverse national borders.

When digital services were used on a daily basis, interviewees mention that cooperation was easier than before. More people showed up for digital seminars and networking events. Even though governance was not changed dramatically, and most cooperation took place in already established networks, the pandemic created a new situation to discuss and solve in the networks which strengthened and increase the frequency of some networks, at least in the short term. How this will progress in the long term is difficult to say.

3. Policy response to COVID-19

4.1 Policy context

A window of opportunity:

It is not easy to assess whether the pandemic has presented policymakers and practitioners with a window of opportunity to put forward policies or strategies that promote a green, smart or social transition. Several of the interviewees from the Region and the Municipality emphasize that the pandemic is still ongoing and there has not been any room to do any evaluations or assessment, in particular not on large structural or systematic changes. In addition, the underlying reason for establishing a policy and how politicians or civil servants package and present that policy is not always the same. In this study we rely both on what is written about the policies and on the knowledge and experience of the interviewees.

The interviewees state that they do not perceive a significant window of opportunity for a just, green and smart transition on the municipal or regional level. Neither is this something that has been broadly discussed in the organizations nor has been an argumentation for the implementation of policies or strategies to a large extent. It is important to keep in mind that last years have been unknown territory for the organisations who have struggled to keep their ordinary activities ongoing while at the same time provide more support to groups and individuals in society. At times part of the personnel was also working in other department to help out where it was needed, for example in the Health and Health Care Department.

There are a few exceptions where a possibly window of opportunity can be discussed. In the presentation of the budget for Regional Development in 2020, the need to use green infrastructure and green growth to survive the crisis and increase employment was highlighted (Allians för Skåne, 2020). To what extent the inclusion of 'green transition' in the budget is a consequence of the pandemic is not clear. An interviewee reflects on the facts that all political parties use the pandemic to get their normal agenda through and that the changes are not substantial. The pandemic has had effect on policy, internal organisation, governance, and future direction in both the Region and the Municipality, even though the interviewees and strategies do not specifically mention "window of opportunity". The pandemic has foremost strengthened or fastened already on-going processes and facilitated the implementation and acceptance of policies. Most of the identified policies regarding the just, smart, and green transition are however policies implemented to solve an acute problem of the crisis and not implemented with the argumentation of transition. One exception mentioned by a regional representative is that the pandemic has been discussed at a strategic level as an opportunity for a digital transition.

There are some examples of how the pandemic altered already existing policies. A policy that was agreed upon during the pandemic is the adoption of the Travel and Meeting policy in Malmö Municipality. The decision to create a new policy was taken by the Municipal Council already in 2019 and the work was finalised just before the pandemic started in 2020. The policy has a particular focus to reduce the number of flights and travel with private cars within the organisation.

When the policy was written it was considered progressive with statements promoting digital meetings over physical ones, to reduce travel. So, when the policy went out for consultation the responsible civil servants were prepared for both criticism and revisions. However, the policy was approved without significant comments in the summer 2020 and the civil servants working with the policy believe it was a consequence of the behaviour change that the pandemic forced.

In connection with the Travel and Meeting Policy, a policy to lease bicycles for municipal employers were put forward. During the pandemic the request for bicycles increased significantly because of recommendations to avoid public transport. During the work with the Travel and Meeting Policy the Municipality started a project to increase the digital competence within the organization (REDI). In the beginning there was very little engagement for the project, but when the pandemic hit the competence level increased in just a few months.

Several representatives from the municipality say that the pandemic resulted in changes in internal work structures. One example of this is the initiative "The Future Workplace". The initiative is described as a new direction in the internal organisation that states that missions and activities should guide when and how the

employees work. The initiative is a step towards a more flexible and trust-based employment. Municipal representatives mean that even though the initiative started before the pandemic, as part of the new long term HR strategy, the pandemic altered the direction and created a “golden opportunity to create momentum”. The initiative gained in priority from being started and owned by HR, to directors eagerly wanting to take over and continue the work. During 2022 the directors of the different departments will decide on how to continue the work. Currently it is discussed whether the initiative should be transformed to a network with all directors of departments, where complex and intersectoral questions such as distance work and long-term strategies can be discussed.

Municipal representatives observed that the cultural change that happened during the pandemic was essential for the momentum of this initiative. Even though digitalization is an important tool for the initiative, the focus is on an overarching and forward-looking discussion about how we structure work and life. The municipality has previously investigated the possibility of working outdoors and realized that the most difficult part to change is the culture. The pandemic has also placed more importance on the needs of the organization and to a higher extent allowed for the application of different regulations and rules for different positions and competences. This was mentioned in one interview as a significant change for Malmö and Malmö Municipality. Malmö has long roots in social democracy and a history of strong unions and an ideal of “equal for all”, which has been permeated throughout the organization. Some argue that the pandemic has started a situation where “equal for all” is deprioritized for more flexible contracts and employments.

Reflections from the Regional Development Department:

The representatives of the regional level that were interviewed do not perceive that the pandemic has had a large impact on produced policies and strategies. The mission of the Regional Development Department is to change behaviours and structures in a long-term perspective, which means they have worked with a transition perspective for a long time. The consequences of the pandemic, such as unemployment and struggling businesses (especially in the tourism and hospitality sector) made visible the need to strengthen already existing policies and support. The Region therefore put extra effort into refining and scaling up activities such as competence training, seminars, networking and introducing actors to each other. One of these efforts was to arrange seminars and meetings between municipalities where they could take inspiration from each other on how to counter the crisis. These networks existed before the pandemic but was further strengthened.

The regional politicians presented a “transition package” (covid package), to support companies to take the opportunity to transition during the crisis. The package was focused on digitalisation, green transition, export support for new markets and financing. Some of the funds from the European Regional Development Fund were also transferred to the transition package. The argumentation was that other strong funders, such as the Government and the Agency for Economic and Regional Growths, were already supporting companies to prevent bankruptcy (with financing and furlough) why the Region decided to compliment with aiming at long term change and support companies that wanted to make a transition. Transition activities included digital competence, innovated solutions for water use and local crisis coaching in forms of networks and seminars.

Other policies were implemented to address the indirect consequences of the pandemic. The confinement restrictions encouraged people to meet outside and avoid public transport which resulted in increased numbers of visitors in forests, hiking trails and parks, which put pressure on nature and brought up the need for utilities, such as garbage disposal and toilets. The region therefore provided extra funding to extend and protect the bicycle and walking paths in the region.

Reflections from Malmö Municipality:

Civil servants from Malmö Municipality state that few new policies were created during the pandemic, but current visions and policies were strengthened. The increased emphasis on the needs of vulnerable groups during the pandemic resulted in additional funding for civil organisations to continue their work with vulnerable groups. The municipality has also coordinated meetings between civil organisations to support each other during the pandemic. These networks existed before the pandemic but was now started again to discuss the pandemic.

The Social Services altered several of their daily activities during the pandemic to mitigate the spread of the virus. They introduced protective clothing and masks, securing isolation of homeless people as well as transport to testing facilities to limit the spread of Covid-19. During the pandemic they also continued the work to digitalise their services. The digital social services include both the possibility of applying for social support digitally as well as having digital meetings, calls and chat functions with citizens to reduce contact between people.

4.2 Proactive policy overview

This section will present the proactive policies that have been identified in this study on regional and local level. A proactive policy is in this project defined as a ‘policy action driven by the unique contextual and socio-economic circumstances of the pandemic in order to advance specific regional and local spatial planning and territorial policy goals related to the green, just and smart transitions.’ (Case study guidelines, 2021). E.g., policies that were developed or altered due to the pandemic and with aim for a just, green or smart transition. The policies are divided into three sections, the just, the green and the smart policies.

Just transition policies and actions

Poverty, inequality, and social exclusion have been addressed through different measures during the pandemic. Firstly, the welfare state in Sweden provides a security system that will support you to some extent if you lose your job, need financial aid or become sick. In addition, the Government and other national authorities have also provided other forms of support to businesses and people affected by the pandemic and its consequences, such as furlough, compensation for sick days and support to organisations and businesses.

At the local level, the municipality is responsible for social issues. Some of the measures that they have implemented are related to creating information centres about Covid in socioeconomic vulnerable areas covering different languages, support to civil organisations who work with different vulnerable groups, collaboration with civil organisations to provide the possibility for isolation and transport to testing for homeless people, for example. Civil organizations have also received funding to continue their work on mental health issues during the pandemic. The Regional Development Department mainly work with social issues in a preventive and long-term perspective. However, they have both supported businesses and the business community and civil organisations, sport clubs and leisure activities that everyone can attend.

Table 3 Identified policies and actions within the Just transition

Policy area(s)	Focus area(s)	Policy description	Target group(s)/ Beneficiaries	Responsible level of governance / Financing	Stakeholders involved in policy implementation	Timing of policy	Duration
Just transition Smart transition	Communication and knowledge sharing	Creation of a digital platform to promote dialogue between 35 non-profit organisations within social work to handle common challenges that came to light during the Pandemic. It was coordinated by the municipality since they saw the need to collaborate more to reach vulnerable groups.	Public stakeholders Vulnerable groups	Municipal level	Civil organisations Vulnerable groups	Pandemic	Short term
Just transition Smart transition	Social support	Digital activities have been arranged at several youth centres in Malmö. The youth centres have been open with restrictions during the pandemic to still reach out to young people.	Children and youth	Municipal level	Children and youths	Pandemic	Short term
Just transition	Education and training	Additional educational activities were introduced during holiday breaks for pupils that were struggling with digital education. The aim of this activity was to reduce the risk of these children falling behind.	Children and youth	Municipal level	Children and youth	Pandemic	Short term

Just transition	Communication and knowledge sharing	An information centre was opened at Lindängen. This centre had multilingual people employed so citizens could come and receive information about Covid-19 in different languages.	General population Immigrants	Municipal level	General population Immigrants	Pandemic	Short term
Just transition	Social support	Civil organizations received extra funding from the municipality to continue their work during the pandemic. According to interviewees the pandemic highlighted the extra susceptibility of vulnerable groups during a crisis. It also emphasized that civil organisations have expert knowledge on how to reach these groups and could therefore work as a complement to the Municipality in supporting these groups during the pandemic.	Public stakeholders Vulnerable groups	Municipal level	Civil organizations Vulnerable groups	Pandemic	Unclear
Just transition	Mental health services	The regional development board delivered approx. 150 000 euro (1,5 million SEK) to civil organisations to work on improving mental health issues during the pandemic.	Public stakeholders	Regional level	Civil organisations General population	Pandemic	Unclear
Just transition Smart transition	Physical activities Social support	Extra funding to sports and leisure organisations to keep them staying open and to start digital activities. These organisations play an important role in reducing unwanted isolation of people. Many children, especially teenage boys, have left organisations during the pandemic and the region want to draw the people back.	Public stakeholders General population	Regional level	Sports and leisure organisations General population	Pandemic	Unclear
Just transition	Business support	Funding for municipalities to work more with local businesses in the municipality during the Pandemic. This policy also included strengthening the network with municipal representatives in the Region.	Businesses	Regional level	Businesses Municipalities	Pandemic	Unclear
Just transition Smart transition	Digital access and competencies Social support	IT support was introduced for people over 70 years old, in their homes. Since many physical social meeting places were closed during the Pandemic, it was important that people had the possibility to attend the digital calls or meetings that were offered instead.	Elderly people	Municipal level	Older people	Pre-pandemic	Medium/Long term
Just transition	Communication and knowledge sharing	The action was implemented to increase multilingual informants in Skåne. The purpose is to provide information in selected languages to increase the vaccination level and reach out with information.	Immigrants General population	Regional level	Immigrants General population	Pandemic	Short term
Just transition	Education and training	The start of a technical college in Region Skåne. The aim of the initiative was to reduce the competence gap in the region. The background is based in the growing unemployment during the Pandemic and the need to increase education within the population.	Children and youth	Regional level	Children and youth Businesses	Pre-pandemic	Medium/Long term

Green transition policies and actions

Even though several policies have been introduced and strengthened during the pandemic with aim to reduce climate change and reach environmental goals, most were not introduced as a consequence of the pandemic. Sweden has had ambitious climate and environmental goals for a long time and both Region Skåne and Malmö Municipality are working actively for a green transition. The green transition is mentioned

a few times as way to recover from the crisis. It is highlighted in the Regional Budget for 2020 and is also mentioned in the Transition Crisis Package. In the aim of the Climate City Contract 2030⁶ for Malmö by it is stated that “*The purpose of this Climate Contract is to increase the pace of the climate transition in cities within the framework of Agenda 2030 and at the same time contribute to the recovery of the Swedish economy in the wake of the corona pandemic.*” (Malmö stad, 2020:4). This is a clear connection between the pandemic and the green transition, however the climate contract was signed in December 2020 and had been under progress long before the pandemic started. If and how the content of the contract was changed because of the pandemic is unclear. We have no other examples of policies under construction that was altered due to the pandemic. However, this does not mean that they do not exist. The green transition is otherwise mostly mentioned in relation to digital services which have and will reduce our need to travel.

Table 4 Identified policies and actions within the Green transition

Policy area(s)	Focus area(s)	Policy description	Target group(s)/ Beneficiaries	Responsible level of governance / Financing	Stakeholders involved in policy implementation	Timing of policy	Duration
Green transition	Travel and mobility	An initiative to extend and protect the bicycle- and walking paths because of an extended pressure in these areas. This was implemented during the pandemic as a result of the increasing number of people using the paths and the extended pressure on the environment.	General population	Regional level	Municipal staff	Pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Green transition Smart transition	Business support	A Transition Crisis Package to support the businesses transition to become more climate friendly and digitally competent. It also included support for export to new markets and financing and local crisis coaching which includes business development, networks, seminars, and outreach activities.	Businesses	Regional level	Businesses	Pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Green transition	Travel and mobility	A meeting and Travel Policy was introduced before the pandemic and it is stated that the implementation was facilitated by the pandemic. The policy states that travel in the municipality should be reduced and that the digital meeting should be considered before travelling to a physical one.	Municipal staff	Municipal level	Municipal staff General population	Pre-pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Green transition	Climate mitigation and adaptation	Climate City Contract 2030 – Viable Cities. It is an agreement between cities, public authorities, and Viable Cities where all parties sign a contract where they state their intention to increase the pace of climate mitigation. The process was underway Pre-pandemic, but the contract was signed in December 2020.	Municipal staff	Municipal level	Municipal staff General population	Pre-pandemic	Medium/ Long term

Smart transition policies and actions

The largest and most structural change has happened within the digital transition. Digitalisation of the public sector has off course been a priority for several years, but interviewees suggest that the ongoing change

⁶ Climate City Contract 2030 – Viable Cities. It is an agreement between cities, public authorities and Viable Cities where all parties sign a contract where they state their intention to increase the pace of climate mitigation

would have taken 10-15 years without the pandemic. The digital transition in this case, refers both to the digital services that are provided to citizens and the internal digital competences and tools for the Region and the Municipality. Several of the digital services mentioned in table 5 refer to efficiency of the public administration and the increased accessibility for citizens. Several of the services can however also be perceived as social policies since they were adopted to provide social care during the pandemic. The Regional Development Department worked with digitalisation in the Transition Crisis Package and with the Regional Digital Scorecards. The regional scorecards are a way for businesses to measure their own digital maturity to understand where they are lacking in competence. This work started before the pandemic, but interviewees say that the pandemic drove the process forward.

Table 5 Identified policies and actions within the Smart transition

Policy area(s)	Focus area(s)	Policy description	Target group(s)/ Beneficiaries	Responsible level of governance/ Financing	Stakeholders involved in policy implementation	Timing of policy	Duration
Smart transition	Digital access and competencies Education and training	Education package for teachers to increase competence in digital education. The pandemic highlighted the need for teachers to receive more knowledge about digital education. The package was aimed at teachers in high school and adult education.	Teachers	Municipal level	Teachers	Pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Smart transition	Digital access and competencies Communication and knowledge sharing	Introduction of digital platform for digital education called "Nätbaserad 2.0". The aim of the platform is that teachers can use it to communicate and inspire each other in their work with digital education.	Teachers	Municipal level	Teachers	Pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Smart transition	Education and training	Introduction of digital education for primary school, high school and upper secondary school in the municipality.	Children and youth Teachers	Municipal level	Children and youths Teachers	Pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Smart transition	Multi-locality working Research	New project that will investigate the aspects of "the future workplace". This was started during the pandemic and includes discussions about work space, insurance, contracts, taxes etc.	Municipal staff	Municipal level	Municipal staff	Pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Smart transition	Business support Digital access and competencies	Almi Digital Score Card was used for businesses in the region. The tool is for businesses to measure their own digital maturity and to understand where they are lacking in competence.	Businesses	Regional level	Businesses	Pre-pandemic	Medium/ Long term
Smart transition	Digitalisation of public services	Digitalisation of social services. Social services used digital meetings and phone calls instead of physical meetings and group meetings. This was an immediate response to the Covid-19 restrictions. The digital meetings will however continue after the pandemic for those that request it.	General population	Municipal level	General population Municipal staff	Pre-pandemic	Medium/ Long term

Smart transition Just transition	Digitalisation of public services Social support	Several different digital support services have been implemented. Such as: web site to facilitate for families who have questions about sick family members, digital support for people exposed to violence.	General population	Municipal level	General population	Pandemic	Medium/Long term
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Were the proactive policies introduced during the first wave maintained during the second and third wave? Why, why not?

Most of the policies introduced are policies that were implemented to solve an acute crisis. When the policy had served its purpose, it was removed. An example is the platform for civil organisations that was coordinated by the Municipality to support communication between civil organisations. The meetings started when there was a need for extra cooperation and was dissolved when contacts between organisations had been made.

However, there are policies and actions that, even though they were a solution to an acute problem, continued through the pandemic and probably also will have an after effect. This is the case with the digitalization of social services. In a first evaluation done by the Labour market and Social Department, it is stated that even though some people say that they have experienced a decrease in the quality of support using digital services during the pandemic, some have the opposite experience and appreciate the flexibility of provided by digital services. Civil servants expressed in interviews that some people appreciate the privacy digital services provide when in contact with social services. Because of these responses, and because of the efficiency of digital services, the social services will provide both digital and physical meetings after the pandemic. The flexibility the increased digital competence has provided can be adopted also in schools who can have distant education when the premises are being renovated, elderly people can join activities online and municipalities can gather networks in online seminars.

The identified proactive policies for the green transition are a bit different than the just and digital policies, since many of the green policies are policy documents and not actions per se. Both the Meeting and Travel Policy and the Climate City Contract 2030 will continue to exist after the pandemic, and the issue is rather about how the documents are complied.

The main advantages and challenges of the proactive policies introduced

The general advantage of the implemented policies from both the Region and the Municipality is that they are building on already existing activities and networks. Malmö continued to work closely with citizens and civil organisations but in new forms and the Regional Development Department gathered actors while trying to maintain a functioning and productive regional system. A representative from the Regional Development Department emphasized the importance of working long term and not have too many short-sighted campaigns.

Most of the implemented policies, even the proactive ones, were not introduced with the argument of transition or structural change, but to reduce the spreading of the virus and support those affected by the crisis while at the same time continue with the day-to-day activities. It is possible that the policies could have had a stronger focus on transition if the connection between the pandemic and transitions were highlighted and discussed more throughout the organisations. It is a shortcoming that these discussions have not been taken place to a larger extent. A disadvantage mentioned by a representative from the Municipality is that an extensive amount of the funding was decided on by the state. In some cases, the representatives felt that the Municipality themselves had more long term and effective ideas on how to use the money, since have the local knowledge and a big local network. On the other hand, the funding system with many different funding actors is also mentioned as beneficial since the crisis can be met from different angles and perspective.

A back lash to the implemented digital services is the increasing digital exclusion. Representatives from the Municipality express how civil organisations are concerned about the distant education and how that affects newly arrived children and youths to Sweden who are already struggling in school. It is not only an issue of digital competence but also of having a computer and a quiet place where you can study from home.

Main enablers and challenges in implementing these policies

The representatives indicate that the beginning of the pandemic was a difficult period, when fast responses were needed without having a full understanding of the situation. In the opinion of some representatives from the Municipality the increased number of internal meetings between departments were important to get an overview of capacities and synergies within the organization and thereby also helped the implementation. A mentioned challenge is the lack of collaboration between the Region and the Municipality, which could have been improved according to the Municipality. A representative implies that it took a long time for the Region to collect the existing information about how to work with vulnerable groups during the pandemic and that misunderstandings could have been avoided if networks already existed before the pandemic.

A representative from the Regional Development Department says that time and resources were a challenge and that it was difficult to even administer their normal activities since personnel from their department was borrowed by other departments to support the emergency in the Health and Health Care Department. Another issue that is mentioned when it comes to implementation is the fact that Skåne and Malmö is a border region. During the pandemic a lot of resources was spend on delivering a fast and effective way of testing of commuters to and from Denmark. Regional representatives also felt that the national level in Sweden and Denmark did not make substantial efforts to facilitate the functioning of border regions.

Are policymakers developing crisis management and resilience plans as a result of Covid-19?

In 2020, City council developed a group to support the steering group in Malmö municipality, with the aim to make coordinated decisions during the pandemic. Several functions were implemented to, among other things, ensure a local focus and a better coordinated effort overall. A management support to prepare documentation was created as well as a coordinating function to ensure that the pandemic was handled holistically. In addition, an operational management support was developed for, among other things, work with coordination issues, external monitoring, reporting and implementation of investigative assignments.

4.3 Policy finance

Financial measures, actions and instruments introduced to deal with the crisis:

In the table below (table 6) you find some of the financial measure, actions and instruments that was introduced by the Regional Development Department and Malmö Municipality to deal with the crisis. This list does not include all ordinary funding or funding from the primary sources such as the government and other national authorities. This list is focused on the proactive policies identified in this study.

Table 6 Some of the financial actions introduced by the Regional Development Department and Malmö Municipality during the pandemic.

Level	Type
Regional	Transition crisis package
Regional	More funding to extend and protect the bicycle- and walking paths
Regional	Municipalities could apply for funding to support businesses during the pandemic
Regional	Extra funding to sports and leisure organisations
Regional and municipal	Extra funding to civil organization

4. Policy impacts

The policies discussed in this report have only been in place for a short amount of time when this report is written. Evaluations to measure impact of the implemented policies have been limited and the interviewees express difficulties in concluding anything. Causality is very difficult to assess, especially when the pandemic has altered many situations simultaneously and resulted in a new playing field. Even though some of the implemented policies are (probably) temporary or a one-time funding, other policies have made a noticeable mark.

One internal evaluation can be found. It is conducted by Labour Market and Social Care Department at the municipality to understand how the activities of the department have continued during the pandemic. As mentioned previously, the report concludes that the department has been able to provide established services but that these services have been delivered in different forms due to containment restrictions. Granted services have, when it has been possible and reasonable, been delivered as digital services. This includes both digital applications for various kinds of social support as well as digital therapy sessions and contact with social secretaries. The follow up evaluation shows that some citizens who has been in contact with social services have experienced a lack of accessibility because of restrictions of drop-in activities, i.e. activities without having to book in advance. However, many has also expressed that the digital services have increased the accessibility since the citizens didn't have to move to a physical place.

Interviewees from Malmö municipality expressed that there are discussions in the social department about the consequences of the pandemic and the use of digital services. Some of the social secretaries are worried that they lose insight into families and homes that need support and that they miss signs they would have seen if the meeting was physical. These reflections are still only concerns and there are no evaluations in Malmö to say that this would be the case.

Some representatives also say that they are noticing a difference in the internal structures at the workplace because of digitalisation. They express that hierarchies are not as apparent with a screen and the transparency is increasing with shared folders and documents easily accessible online. Other interviewees in the municipality express that the implementation of digital services is not exclusively positive. There are civil society groups that do not have the infrastructure or resources to work with digital services, or whose target groups such as homeless people, older people, people who do not read or write or people with disabilities, find it difficult. It is the same case of distant education in schools.

6.1 Governance impact:

Governance impacts are generally difficult to measure because it is about relationships between people and even though governance processes exist it does not mean that they have impact. As mentioned before, the field where you can see a significant change without thorough evaluations is within digitalisation. The interviewees agree that cooperation has been facilitated by increased digital competence and digital services. It is much easier to gather many actors and join seminars and training. Some representatives from Malmö Municipality also mean that the internal cooperation has been improved because it is easier to contact other departments and directors, which results both in time efficiency and increased knowledge about each other. This is expressed to be the result of digital services, but also due to the crisis of the pandemic which required increased cooperation between departments. The pandemic had effect on all parts of society which made actors come together and cooperate more. The opposite is true for the cooperation with Denmark, mentions one regional representative. The pandemic lowered the level of cooperation because of difficulties such as border obstacles, but also because of protectionism.

Another new cooperation process is relating to the two extra missions that the Regional Development Department received to support the Regional Health and Health Care department. The missions included working with strategies to increase the vaccination level in Skåne, in particularly among vulnerable groups, and to work with Covid-19 testing for commuters between Sweden and Denmark. This was done in cooperation with the Country Administrative Board and with the civil organisations in the region. One representative says that the pandemic made it more visible for the Health and Health Care Department that the Regional Development Department has competences that can be complementary in several of their own processes. Some representatives from Malmö Municipality also think that the collaboration between Civil Society, the

Municipality, and the Region, resulted in the Health and Health Care Department learning more about how to work with vulnerable groups and realising the advantage of using experience from civil society to reach this group. The representatives hope that this experience will make the Regional Health and Health Care Department consider these questions in a different light and cooperate more with other actors in the future.

Importance of cross-sectoral and multi-level governance structures in responding to the pandemic

All interviewed representatives agree that both cross-sectoral and multi-level governance structures were crucial during the pandemic. Both representatives from the Municipality and the Regional Development Department say that the governance processes have not changed a lot during the pandemic but some processes, networks and relationships were strengthened and developed. The Regional Development Department have extended the already existing network between Directors for business in the region's municipalities. In this network municipalities have been able to learn from each other as well as gain information on how they can apply for funding to support the local businesses in their municipality. The Regional Development Department has also cooperated with the industry cluster organisation IUC⁷ who is a strong player in the region and is supporting industries who want to transform their production to something useful in the pandemic. Another example is the network for HR directors in Malmö Municipality which existed prior to the pandemic but grew during the pandemic and became more established. Another important collaboration is the one between civil society groups and Malmö Municipality, which was proven to be important in protecting and supporting vulnerable groups during the pandemic.

When it comes to engaging multilevel governance to meet the crisis, it is mentioned that cooperation at times was difficult because of the difference in mission between organisations and departments. Some representatives from the Municipality express difficulty in cooperating with the Health and Health Care department of the Region because of its size and because of their focus on the state of emergency in health care. Even though the interviewees express understanding of the fact that the priority of the Health and Health Care Department is providing health care to sick people, the Municipality wished that the Health and Health Care Department would have taken the opportunity to include a perspective of more "equal health" in their work especially when trying to reach vulnerable groups and trying to increase the degree of vaccinations.

Key stakeholders involved in formulating and implementing proactive policies identified:

Several stakeholders were important in formulating the proactive policies. Malmö Municipality and the Regional Development Department of the Region are the most important ones for the policies gathered in this report. Other important actors are the Government that provided a lot of funding to the Municipalities and the Regions during the pandemic, the municipalities in Skåne; the business sector and the industry cluster such as IUC and the project Almi Digital Score card; civil society and all civil society groups; the County Administrative Board and the Cross-border committee Greater Copenhagen.

6.2 Financial impacts

This study did not have sufficient data from interviewees or documents to evaluate the financial impact of the implemented policies. Most of interviewed representatives believe that the implemented policies are and have been important. However, they could not estimate the financial impact of them. When this study was conducted, we were still in the pandemic and the representatives mean that it is still too early to evaluate the measures. In the future, this is an interesting topic to further research.

⁷ <https://iucsyd.se/>

5. Future policy direction

An increase in the use of digital services in public administration

The implementation of digital services in social care has shown that it is possible to use digital services also in sectors in close contact with citizens or with people in need of support. The digital transition will allow for better access of public services for citizens and more effective public administration. The acceptance will probably continue to grow with the new generations. More evaluations of the use of digital services in social services needs to be done. Digital services in public administration can be especially beneficial for rural areas and in areas where large distances make it difficult for citizens to access public services.

Less Travel and reduced CO2 is possible due to digital tools

In general, the interviewees stated that the pandemic has not affected the ambition to work towards a green transition. The ambition to mitigate climate change was high on the agenda already before the pandemic. However, the pandemic has shown that we do not need to travel, and especially fly, to cooperate with each other. The pandemic has also shown that it is possible to reduce emissions of Co2, which can impact future policy discussions.

A new policy narrative and the initiative “the future workplace”

A consequence of the new work situation where employees are asked to work from home, is the discussion about how the workplace will look in the future. Municipal representatives say that the pandemic resulted in changes in internal work structures which can be explained as policy change. The initiative “the future workplace” is described as a new direction in the internal organisation that states that missions and activities should guide when and how the employees work. It’s a step towards a more flexible and trust-based employment. This will however also lead to an increased divide on the labour market since this flexibility is not possible in all professions.

Inclusion of resilience into strategies and creation of resilience plans:

Interviewees mention that the increased visibility of our society’s vulnerability has highlighted resilience. Strategies and plans about crisis management and resilience, for example regarding food supplies and hospital material, will probably be a priority in coming years. This also includes other security issues such as shortening of production chains to secure material and supply.

A hope and believe of increased cross sectoral and multilevel governance:

According to interviews the cooperation within public sector and between public sector and other stakeholder was increased during the pandemic because of the use of digital tools. The divergent competence and knowledge of public actors and civil society has proven to be important during the crisis. The belief is that this will continue and develop to be part of the resilience structure.

More digital support will be needed to reduce digital exclusion

The increase of use of digital services can be excluding to people who do not have digital competence or tools, it can be older people, homeless people, people with neurological dysfunction or other disabilities or people who recently arrived in Sweden with limited reading and writing abilities. It is important that these groups are not forgotten and that analogue services are still available when contacting public administration. The increase in digital services will also increase policies focusing on improving digital competence in form of training and education.

Increased visibility and discussions about cross border challenges

The pandemic has shown that there are still many challenges for people living in border regions, and that the Nordic cooperation is not prioritised during a national crisis. These questions will be discussed for in the future to secure the commuting and cross border labour market regions in the Nordic countries.

6. Regional recommendations

This final section will present regional recommendations targeting policymakers and practitioners. The recommendations are developed from the material presented in the report which is based on interviews with regional and municipal representatives and documents.

Most of the policies presented in this report could be upscaled and used in other EU regions. Since many of the policies are digital the requirement would be that the region have sufficient broadband connection and digital infrastructure as well as citizens and public administrations with digital competence and tools. As we have seen during the last two years, digital competence and tools can be developed relatively fast.

6.1 Policy recommendations

To increase the impact of public funding, it is important that public authorities strengthen their presence in the region and gather companies and civil organisations in networks and platforms.

Both Region Skåne the Malmö Municipality did this during the pandemic and functioned as a meeting place for companies and civil society to reach as many people as possible.

Good practices from Skåne and Malmö are:

- The creation of a digital platform to promote dialogue between 35 non-profit organisations within social work to handle common challenges that came to light during the pandemic. It was coordinated by the municipality since they saw the need to collaborate more to reach vulnerable groups.
- The strengthening of the network for municipal representatives of business in the Region. The Region coordinate the network which during the pandemic to share knowledge and support companies in the region.

To reduce the risk contagion and the negative effects of isolation during the pandemic, funding is important to support vulnerable groups and work to improve mental health.

The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of some groups. This vulnerability refers both to the risk of contagion and death, but also to the effects of isolation. Good practices from Skåne and Malmö are:

- Extra funding from the municipality to civil organisations to continue their work with vulnerable groups, for example with helping homeless people isolate during contagion or to get vaccinated.
- Extra funding from the Region to civil organisations to work with mental health issues.
- Extra funding from the Region to sports and leisure organisations which is an important preventive step and improves public health in the Region.
- Digital activities in youth centres.

It is important to work to increase the digital skill among excluded groups while at the same time make sure that analogue services exist for those that need them and establish communication in several languages. Because of the increased use of digital tools, the pandemic also deepened digital exclusion and the “digital divide”. When social contacts are limited, people become more dependent on digital tools.

Good practices from Skåne and Malmö are:

- IT support for older people in their homes.
- Increased multilingual informants in Skåne and information centres in socioeconomic vulnerable areas.

6.2 Governance recommendation

By collaborating more with civil society, public authorities can increase the contact and the relationship with some of these vulnerable groups. The pandemic has brought forward the vulnerability of already vulnerable groups, such as homeless people or people who recently arrived in Sweden. Some people in

these groups do not have trust in public authorities, which makes it difficult for the Region or the Municipality to reach them.

One way to strengthen the relationship between public organisations and departments is to increase their day-to-day interaction and thereby also their knowledge about each other. When actors understand the mission, assignments, and incentives of each other it is easier to understand why some actions are taken. This will also increase the understanding of how they can support each other and increase the sharing of competence and resources between organisations. The pandemic has exposed the limits of co-operation between administrative levels in Sweden.

There is a need for more cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation between the different administrations within the Region as well as between the Region and the municipalities regarding Health Care and Public Health. The importance of discussing Health Care and Public Health at the same time has been emphasised during the pandemic. Even though, the method and time scale are different, the themes are closely related to each other and there is space for more synergies.

6.3 Territorial recommendations

It is important to speed up the development of harmonised data and statistics between the Nordic countries and particularly in cross-border regions. At present, there are not sufficient statistics on border commuting, and national statistics often fail to include cross-border commuters in labour market statistics. For cross-border regions, such as Skåne and Malmö, the accessibility of data and information are crucial to understand what is happening in the area as well as understand how it was affected by the pandemic and in which direction it will develop in the future.

Recovering from this crisis will require further investigation into the status of cross-border regions and purposes of Nordic co-operation. The pandemic revealed the cross-border regions' sensitivity to national decisions. The national decisions to close borders had great impact on Skåne and Malmö. The cross-border regions however, had little say in the communications or decisions, neither were their substantial efforts to facilitate for cross-border commuters. Since the Nordic Region aims to be the most integrated Region in the world in 2030 citizens need to know that it is possible to live in a cross-border region also in a crisis.

6.4 Financial recommendations

The local level has the best knowledge about their area and should be able to implement the measures that they believe would work best. A big amount of the funding to counter the crisis during the pandemic came from the state. It would have been beneficial if the local level to a higher extent could decide on how to use the funding.

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