

The Danish regions' strategy for sustainable hospitals

In January 2024, Danish Regions published a new strategy for sustainable hospitals. With this strategy, the five Danish regions set a common goal:

The regions will reduce hospitals' consumption-based CO₂ emissions by 50 percent in 2035 compared to 2022.

Before 2050, it is also the regions' ambition to become CO₂ emission-free.

The regions aim to lead the green transition of the Danish healthcare system. Achieving this goal is a complex task, as the main part of the regions' CO₂ emissions come from the products and services we purchase and use at the hospitals. Thus, most emissions stem from global suppliers and occur throughout the entire value chain, and not solely in Denmark. The regions procure and purchase a wide range of products covering approximately 150,000 different categories; they diagnose and treat millions of patients; treatment processes involve many professionals and several types of waste; hospital and healthcare facilities require heating, cooling and energy; and patients and samples need to be delivered from one location to another. Furthermore, healthcare services must meet high patient safety standards that cannot be compromised.

To achieve a rapid and cost-effective green transition, resources and competences must be used efficiently and in a coordinated manner. This is the main purpose of the common regional strategy.

The strategy consists of three paths of action and five supporting initiatives (next page) to ensure progress in the green transition.

Three Paths of Action

1. Procurement

Through targeted procurement activities, the regions will stimulate and encourage suppliers and markets to deliver green and sustainable products. This includes pharmaceuticals, medical devices, instruments, textiles, services, food etc. To ensure reductions throughout the entire supply chain, regardless of whether the climate footprint occurs in Denmark or abroad, the regions will establish partnerships and develop green criteria to be applied in public tenders.

2. Circular economy & behaviour

For the regions to succeed with the green transition of the Danish healthcare system, it is crucial that hospitals manage to consume less and embrace

a more circular approach. For instance, it is important that health professionals and other members of staff have the knowledge and support to adopt a more critical stance in their consumption and start using less, use products longer, and choose greener alternatives. It is also important to reduce waste from pharmaceuticals, equipment, food etc.

3. Energy, transport & buildings

The regions are close to phasing out oil and gas for heating, and they are implementing energy-efficient solutions, improving logistical efficiency, and transforming energy consumption towards renewable sources. They are setting up solar cells and converting fossil-powered vehicles to electric ones.

Five Supporting Initiatives

1. Climate competences & staff engagement

Education, knowledge sharing and engagement will ensure that employees can see themselves and contribute to the green transition. This involves creating the right conditions so that it is easy for the employees to contribute, while they can be sure that it does not affect patient quality. Examples from the Danish regions are green networks and ambassadors, manager programs, e-learning, and green academies. Medical schools and other health education institutions are also developing new classes focusing on the climate crisis also being a health crisis, and how to contribute to the green transition.

2. Emissions monitoring model

The regions introduce a so-called Emissions Monitoring Model, which can show reduction potential across different areas. The model will also be used to calculate the effect of specific climate actions so that actions with a proven effect can quickly be disseminated across all five regions. Increased transparency about the climate effect of actions can also help to strengthen local commitment.

3. Regional lead areas

All regions and the regional procurement organization Amgros are lead in 1-2 areas with innovative potential for reducing the climate footprint. A lead-region collects relevant knowledge, identifies existing solutions and barriers and is the primary driving force for developing and testing solutions that can be implemented in all five regions afterwards. With the strategy, the following 10 lead areas were identified, and new lead areas will be appointed in the future.

- Laboratories and diagnostics (Capital Region of Denmark)
- Sustainable construction (Capital Region of Denmark)
- More and better waste sorting (Region Zealand)
- Sustainable medicines (Region of Southern Denmark)
- Sustainable food procurement and meals (Region of Southern Denmark)
- Resource-efficient management of medical equipment (Central Denmark Region)
- Reduction of CO2 emissions and waste from surgery (Central Denmark Region)

- Digitalization and virtual treatment (North Denmark Region)
- Medicines – green criteria (Amgros)
- Hearing aids (Amgros)

4. Model for dissemination & scaling of climate solutions

The regions establish a model to ensure the rapid dissemination of solutions with a proven climate effect. The model implies that the five regions annually and together decide to implement specific actions, which are tested and documented in one or more regions. In the strategy's first year, the regions have approved 13 actions, which all hospitals are now obliged to implement. Many of these actions fall into the categories of using less or changing disposable equipment to reusable equipment.

5. Public & private partnerships

Partnerships and dialogue with authorities and the market can contribute to developing greener products and business models, as well as ensure greater cooperation on standards and criteria in tenders. The regions are very much interested in new partnerships across the Nordic countries and the EU that can strengthen the market for greener products.