

Bad climate policies may be worse than none at all, according to researchers and policy makers

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Norwegian climate policies have to be flexible and consider consequences on a global scale. Credit: Thinkstock

The Ministry of Climate and Environment has asked the Norwegian public to weigh in on whether or not it would be an advantage for Norway to have its own climate laws. NTNU's submission contains a clear answer: Yes. But only if they're good.

The submission has been signed by Kari Melby, NTNU's Pro-Rector for Research, and Annik Magerholm Fet, who is the head of NTNU's new Sustainable Societal Development strategic area.

"Good climate laws can give industry the predictability it needs, give the court of law power in decisions about collective greenhouse gas emissions, lead to a more holistic approach to climate change, and ensure that the laws function independently of changes in governments," the statement says.

It has to be flexible

On the other hand, bad climate laws may reduce the flexibility that organizations have to reach their goals in reducing carbon emissions. Bad laws could also make it harder to see different climate measures in a larger context.

"If our climate policies aren't flexible enough to handle the complex nature of the situation, the rewards will most likely be smaller than the costs," the NTNU statement says.

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology is home to some of the best climate researchers in the country, and has sustainability and social development as one of its main focuses.

All of Norway's emissions need to be seen as a whole for any new climate policies to be flexible enough. Giving different quotas to different industrial and societal sectors would work against the purpose of the policies.



Measurements from Storbreen in Oppdal, which is melting quickly. Credit: NTNU SPARC project.

Have to agree

It is absolutely essential that Norway craft new climate policies and laws, NTNU told the Ministry in its submission. NTNU wrote that other measures are more important than national climate laws and policies, but the university nevertheless wants to be a part of the national discussion.

"What Norway needs most is consensus-based multi-party climate policies that allow for flexibility in the system," the NTNU submission says

Multi-party cooperation has been a tradition in Norway for a long time, which is a huge advantage when working in situations like this. Solutions that all parties can agree upon will guarantee that these laws will last a long time, wrote the committee behind the statement. The industry needs to be on the same team as everyone else.

The statement grew out of an official hearing in Oslo in January where NTNU was a participant. An internal group on assignment from Rector Gunnar Bovim put together NTNU's submission. It is therefore heavily based on the university's focus on sustainability.

The group that wrote the statement included Associate Professor Espen Moe, Professors Asgeir Tomasgard, Bente Graae and Edgar Hertwich, postdocs Anders Arvesen and Henrik Karlstrøm, and PhD student Jo-Kristian Bøttereng, as well as Magerholm Fet. Senior advisor Ragnhild Lofthus coordinated the group.

The hearing committee found that Norway's current climate politics aren't very effective. The current solution does a poor job of allowing for long-term solutions that consider different sides of issues in context.

Looking at emissions in perspective

The Ministry also asked if more reporting and communication of information about [greenhouse gas emissions](#) and effects of measures taken within Norway is necessary. Here, NTNU responded that Norwegian emissions need to be considered on an international scale, especially with the rest of Europe. The main point is that Norway needs to be much more aware of the global effects of our local measures, the NTNU statement says.

As well as normal emissions reports, Norwegian authorities need to consider reporting emissions related to import and export. This is important for Norway, as both a large-scale exporter of fossil fuels to the rest of the world, and an importer of large amounts of consumer goods that often are associated with high fossil-fuel consumption.

Thinking about reducing emissions per krone invested is useless, especially if you look at individual goals rather than looking at these

emissions on an international scale. Doing this makes it easy to become blinded, as single measures often seem to be far too expensive, the statement says.

At the same time, it is important to remember that climate policies will always affect industry policies, energy policies, and other environmental policies. The EU's [climate policies](#) are realistic because many of the suggested measures are not directly related to cutting emissions, NTNU's research group concluded.

More reporting between sectors is important, but it needs to be relevant, and needs to consider climate change and [emissions](#) at an international scale.

Provided by Norwegian University of Science and Technology

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