



# European Green Leaf Award 2021

## Application Form

Please complete your submission for the ECLA 2021 Award in this Application Form. **All sections must be answered** and all questions should be addressed. In the instance that an applicant cannot provide an answer to a question, reasons must be provided in the relevant section.

Text included in square brackets *[EXAMPLE]* should be deleted and replaced with the applicant's response to each respective section. Do not delete the questions in the application form.

Please note, The 'City Introduction and Context' section does not form part of the overall assessment however it is a key component of the application and therefore must be completed. This section sets the scene for the application as a whole in the context of historical, geographic, socio-economic and political constraints, contentious infrastructure/environmental projects and initiatives, and provides the Expert Panel with a clear insight into the factors influencing the city's development and environmental quality.

All six Topic Areas carry equal weight. Within each Topic Area, part a carries 70% of the weight while part b carries a weighting of 30%.

Word exceedances will not be accepted and applicants must complete the Word Count Check at the end of the Application Form to verify that their response is within the word limits set out. This Word Count Check is a tool for cities to check that word exceedances have not occurred and ensure that answers are not left incomplete.

Applicants must read the ECLA 2021 Guidance Note before completing their application and consult this document while undertaking their responses.



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## Section A: City Introduction and Context

**Use this section to provide an overview of the city and provide context to the items that are addressed in Sections B and C.**

Give an overview of your city including its population, surface area, population density, geographical location, some historical and economic background (e.g. GDP, €/capita), notable features and any other factors which have influenced or will influence the environment of the city and its surrounding area.

What are the key environmental challenges the city faces (or has addressed in the recent past)? Make reference to the city's infrastructure (transport, water and drainage, buildings, parks etc.). If appropriate, mention any significant legal proceedings on environmental issues.

Please describe the services provided by the municipality relevant to the Topic Areas in Section B. The aim of this section is to assist in understanding the responsibilities of the city, its controls and the ability of the city to act and effect change.

**Please include an up to date map of the city and a maximum of one additional image i.e. a maximum of two images in total including the map. The map should show the layout of urban areas, geographical and other features, across the city.**

**Before responding to the question please read the ECLA 2021 Guidance Note.**

**(max. 600 words and two graphics or images as detailed above)**

The municipality of Ringkøbing-Skjern (RKSK) is located on the West Coast of Denmark, has approximately 57,000 inhabitants (38.2 per km<sup>2</sup>), and a surface area of 1,489 km<sup>2</sup>, making it the largest municipal area in Denmark. GDP per capita is 59,266 Euro – 23% above the Danish average.

RKSK was formed in 2007, due to the structural reform in Denmark, uniting five municipalities. From the very beginning, green transformation – RKSK as a green growth laboratory – became the uniting force for politicians, communities, and citizens alike, based on a historical interest in energy. RKSK is endowed with a culture of high ambitions, large perseverance and strong communities.

In 2015 the City Council adopted the vision of RKSK as **Nature's Kingdom** (Naturens Rige): "we live by nature and from nature, balancing protection and utilization as the basis for action". The vision grew out of the vision to become self-sufficient with renewables (the Energy2020 plans, Energi2020) as well as a strong adherence to high quality of life in a unique nature.

There are five towns, comprising roughly half of the citizens, and a number of smaller villages and communities – all actively involved in the green transformation. The largest town, Ringkøbing, has almost 10,000 inhabitants. It is situated at the northeastern rim of Ringkøbing Fjord, close to the North Sea, making the city attractive for tourists. The towns, Skjern and Tarm, comprising about 12,000 inhabitants, are situated to the south, adjacent to the Skjern River and Skjern Meadows. Videbæk has 4,200 inhabitants, and Hvide Sande, on the neck of land Holmsland Klit, has about 3,000 inhabitants.



**Figure 1: The municipality of Ringkøbing-Skjern, location for towns, villages, heathland, fjord, lakes, river, creeks as well as road map.**

Balancing utilization and protection is also important vis-à-vis the four business strongholds – food, energy, tourism, and industry – offering both challenges and opportunities. 21% of the workforce is employed in agriculture and the food sector, also securing biomass as a energy source, while simultaneously discharging nutrients into streams and putting pressure on biodiversity.



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The energy sector, comprising 58 companies and approximately 4000 employees, forms an important basis for income as well as a solid support to the green transformation. The sector cooperates with RSKS and the tourism sector to promote energy tourism.

RSKS is the fourth largest Danish tourist destination (based on number of overnight-stays; 3,8 mill.), employing 12% of the local workforce. The 9,600 holiday homes are popular almost all year round, and many tourists come to enjoy the nature. However, tourism poses challenges to waste management – also along beaches – energy consumption, and traffic.

Historically RSKS is endowed with a strong metallurgical industry, which has underpinned wind turbine development and led to a fairly high average income. As a current stronghold, industry also poses concern in relation to transportation and energy consumption.

The rough and varied nature of RSKS, its location at the North Sea and its cultural history has promoted a strong and active community-driven approach and support to the green policies. The DNA of RSKS is deeply entrenched with a 'do-it-yourself' attitude, not waiting for others to initiate transformation. The wind turbine manufacturer Vestas started this way in RSKS. The municipality and citizens continue along the line.

Citizen engagement is ever-present: through hearings, workshops, conferences, events, digital fora reaching out to large groups of citizens and companies, etc. An **Energy Council** (Energirådet) engages experts and volunteers alike in many aspects of the green transformation – from energy over issues within the Agenda 21 and, more recently, the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

RSKS's area of responsibility covers climate, i.e. mitigation and adaptation to handle climate changes' consequences for nature, biodiversity and citizens' lives. Within water and nature conservation, RSKS prioritizes planning for the protection of groundwater and nature sites.



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**Figure 2: Ringkøbing the biggest town in Ringkøbing-Skjern Municipality. Nature is an integrated part of the town.**



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## Section B: Topic Areas

- Please note you must complete ALL topic areas in this Section.
- Section B is used in the evaluation/ranking process. Please read the accompanying EGLA Guidance Note carefully in advance and during the preparation of your EGLA application.
- Please note all six Topic Areas carry equal weight. Within each Topic Area, part a carries 70% of the weight while part b carries a weighting of 30%.

## Topic Area 1: Climate Change and Energy Performance

*Note: Your answers to sub-sections 1a and b together must not exceed a total of 600 and 300 words respectively (i.e. 600 word limit for sub-section a and 300 word limit for sub-section b). A total of six graphics, images or tables may be included in Topic Area 1.*

**Note: It is important to address Climate Change (mitigation and adaptation) and Energy Performance equally in the response.**

Before responding to the questions in Topic Area 1 please read the EGLA 2021 Guidance Note.

### 1a – Current Situation and Strategic Approach



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Please outline the present situation, e.g. the relevant infrastructure and systems that are in place. The aim of this section is to show how the present situation has been achieved and what kind of measures or programmes have been implemented so far. Information on any relevant disadvantages or constraints resulting from historical, geographical and/or socio-economic factors may be included.

Please describe developments that have taken place over the last five to ten years. Comment on which measures have been most effective.

Please add relevant background information, performance statistics, dedicated budgets or innovative forms of financing and key outcomes (e.g. greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to climate change, renewable energy, energy efficiency etc.). Please also state clearly what year the data provided relates to.

**If data or figures are not available at a local level please state this in the application.**

**Where plans/programmes have been developed at regional and national level it is important to provide information on how these are implemented at the city level.**

When outlining your city's overall approach to improve Climate Change and Energy Performance, please include:

### 1. Data and Inventories

- (a) Identify the main sources of data (by sector), distinguishing between national and local;
- (b) Describe **past** trends arising from data presented;
- (c) Quantify **future** estimated reduction in GHG (Greenhouse Gases) and measures.

### 2. Approach objectives and targets

- (a) Outline principles that shaped plans and programmes;
- (b) Demonstrate **past** developments (past 5-10 years) that inform the present situation and comment on which measures have been most effective;
- (c) Describe historical, geographical and/or socio-economic factors that influence or constrain **present** situation; and
- (d) Describe existing **future** targets (short and/or midterm) and long-term objectives.

### 3. Impact

- (a) Describe the impact and outcomes of **past** measures (past 5-10 years);
- (b) Describe budgets or innovative forms of financing influencing key outcomes;
- (c) Highlight proposed impact of **future** projects/measures and expected benefits; and
- (d) Describe any relevant processes underlying the development and implementation of **present** plans, programmes, objectives and targets (e.g. participatory approaches).

### 4. Adaptation

- (a) Describe approach to adaptation strategy (measures to improve adaptive capacity, ability to



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adjust to climate change, to moderate potential damages, and to take advantages).

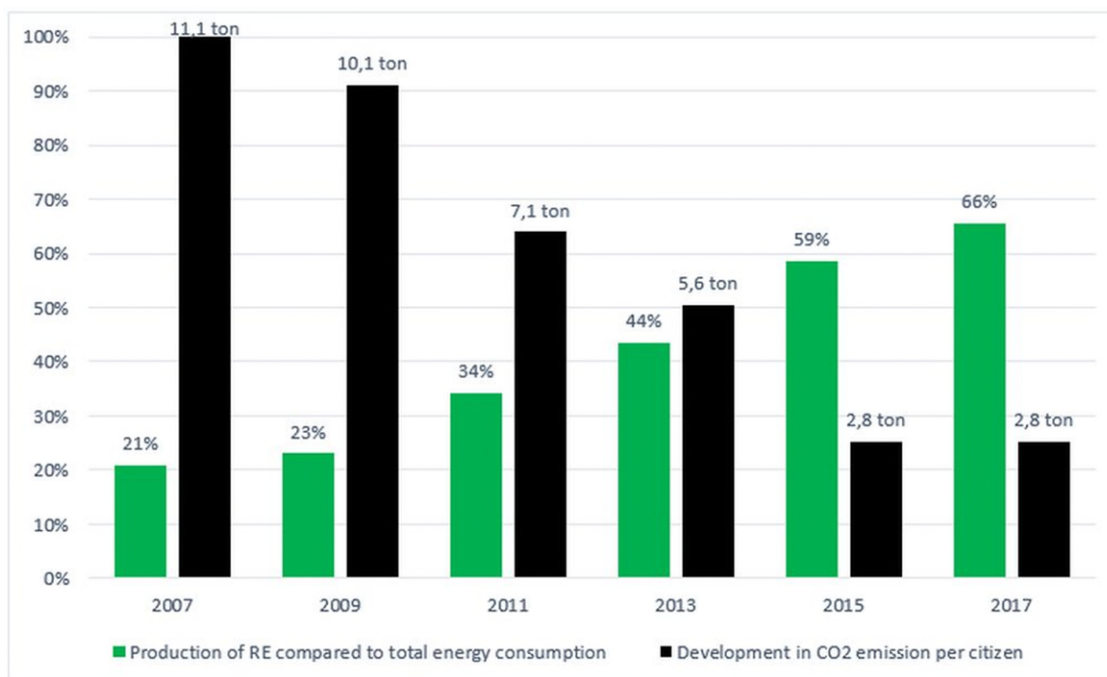
### Where possible, please also include the following information:

- Include specific measures such as Green Infrastructure (GI) solutions, and impact of Emissions Trading System (ETS) installations;
- Distinguish direct emissions (from sources within the city boundary) from indirect emissions (from goods and services originating outside the city but consumed inside the city);
- Describe regional/national plans and how these are implemented at the city level;
- Membership of different initiatives and networks;
- Awards for energy achievements/climate action; and
- Innovative, flagship actions to improve energy performance.

### Word Limit - 600 Words

RKSK's efforts since 2008 to become self-sufficient in RES is expected to happen in 2023. RKSK's energy balance, comprising all households, companies, and transportation, presents the total energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (according to guidelines by the Energy Agency and CoM). RKSK has reduced its CO<sub>2</sub> emission per capita by 75% from 11.1 tonnes in 2007 to 2.8 in 2017.

RKSK is engaged in several networks (Local Government Denmark's Energy Network, SmartEnCity Network's Energy Cities, Danish Electric Vehicles Alliance, etc.) and signed the Covenant of Mayors in 2011.



**Figure 3: Development in production of RE and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per citizen 2007-2017 in Ringkøbing-Skjern Municipality. 75% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction.**





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Through the years, City Council has adopted three Strategic Energy Plans, **Energy2020**: 2011-2014, 2015-2018 and 2019-2023 – all sharing the ambition to make RSKK self-sufficient in RES in 2020. Gradually, new goals have been added – lately to become fossilfree in 2040 (2019). All plans have been supported by concrete initiatives rooted in civic society, the energy sector, supported by solid financial incentives.

In 2008, the **Energy Council** was established comprising industry, policy makers, civil servants, etc. It covers 13 focal areas in the green transformation and advises RSKK's Energy Secretariat, providing inspiration, and sharing best practice.

RSKK has successfully carried out energy saving projects in buildings and industry – primarily through individual, free energy audits based on a 'no cure, no pay' principle: in 2012, **Husets Energi** (100 homeowners), in 2013, **Energilandsby** (two villages outside district heating), in 2016, the Interreg project **COBEN** (1000 audits). As of 2016, 130 companies in Grøn Ressource Optimering (**GRO**) (ref. Topic 5) have been counseled. Now 800 companies in Central Denmark Region will benefit from the GRO method, led by RSKK, supported by ERDF. The ELENA project **CeDEPI** has secured savings in municipal buildings, and holiday house owners have been advised on how to save energy.



**Figure 4: Nørhede-Hjortmose is Denmark's largest on-shore energy park with 22 wind turbines 150m in height and 26ha photovoltaics**



**Figure 5: Wind turbine areas. With 495MW Ringkøbing-Skjern is the municipality in Denmark with the largest production from on-shore wind turbines.**

To reach the impressive 495MW wind power production, 32 particularly well suited areas for large wind turbines were identified in 2009 (**Theme plan for wind turbines**), complemented with ample use of national grant schemes for projects close to newly raised turbines. Furthermore, RSKS has stimulated bio-energy through plans for placing biogas plants, as well as solar energy.



**Figure 6: Biogas plant in Videbæk. Manure becomes biogas, renewable energy supplied to the local district heating.**

The climate change adaptation (CCA) challenges are related to water – stronger precipitation and raising sea levels. The city of Ringkøbing is particularly exposed due to the risk of rising water levels in Ringkøbing Fjord, and Skjern is at risk due to possible flooding from the hinterland.

The first CCA Plan, **Handleplan 2011-2015 for Klimatilpasning**, described the challenges and proposed future action to prevent damaged. It's successor, **Klimatilpasningsplan 2017-2029**, is integrated into the municipal spacial planning and used strategically to plan the development for the city, the wastewater and water areas. A municipal multidisciplinary CCA task force has been established.

To optimise the basis for CCA, a project, **COHERENT**, develops tools and data systems, aimed at preventing loss for citizens, nature and buildings caused by floodings.

The CCA in Ringkøbing includes a large combined nature and residential area, **Ringkøbing K**, where rainwater is utilised for recreational purposes as well as for retaining water. A dyke is being constructed to protect the theme park **Naturkraft** (ref. Topic 3) and large part of Ringkøbing.

In 2014 Skjern was hit by cloudburst and water from the hinterland. Now the town is being secured by stronger dykes along streams, new dykes, and a climate dam to retain water. A broad green corridor and town park is being established along Skjern Å, running through the city making it possible to store water within the city after a cloudburst (**Den Grønne Korridor Skjern**, ref. Topic 3). In Videbæk, similar sinks will store water from the hinterland.



**Figure 7: In 2014 Skjern town was hit by cloudburst and water from the hinterland.**

## 1b – Citizen Participation and Public Awareness

Please mention any public awareness, citizen engagement or stakeholder participation undertaken in the city in the areas of Climate Change and Energy Performance.

Focus on campaigns, events or activities such as:

- (a) Public awareness: awareness raising activities including advertising and media, campaigns and events;
- (b) Stakeholder/citizen participation: public consultation, school education, open dialogue, stakeholder groups/forums, working groups, implementation partnerships, joint ventures with local businesses, etc.;
- (c) Systematic planning to improve citizen participation and public awareness;
- (d) Innovative, flagship actions on citizen participation and public awareness.

Where possible show the connection between this section and the previous section i.e. 1a and 1b.

Please identify the target audience and any achieved or expected benefits.

### **Word Limit - 300 Words**

Through the years, the green transformation has built on strong involvement from communities, companies and associations. The Energy Secretariat in RSKK engages with citizens through the internet ([www.energi2020.dk](http://www.energi2020.dk)), meetings, various media, 'energy days', workshops, conferences, presentations and cooperation projects. The strategic Energy2020 plans have been adopted on the basis of work

done in workshops and the input from citizens, experts and the energy sector. In 2015 and 2018, three and one workshops were held respectively (125 participants in total). Dedicated individuals and experts in eight '**village energy groups**', make use of municipal grants to promote energy savings.

RKSK has conducted several campaigns, events and arrangements: in 2011 to stimulate solar panels, in 2015 to encourage energy savings in holiday homes. As a result of such campaigns, the number of oil boilers has fallen significantly, from 4,388 boilers in 2007 to 2,322 in 2017.



**Figure 8: Juni 2011, a green festival was organised in Ringkøbing during which the Covenant of Mayors was signed by the mayor.**

In 2011, a green festival was organised in Ringkøbing during which the Covenant of Mayors was signed. In 2014, Al Gore and Hans Blix met 600-700 guests during a debate on energy – the largest meeting of its kind in the decade.

For 10 years, RKSK has engaged in a unique form of tourism – energy tourism (**Energi2020-Tour**). Residents, tourists, and foreign delegations visit and learn the green transformation in RKSK: Denmark's largest energy park, RES companies (e.g. Vestas), etc. On top of this, Naturkraft is being built as a theme park with an emphasis on communicating the powers of nature (ref. Topic 3).

CCA is more recent in relation to citizen engagement, but has been steadily increasing. **Den Grønne Korridor Skjern** (ref. Topic 3) is the result of public engagement and involvement. Furthermore, RKSK participates in the nationally funded **COHERENT** project that develops tools and information and communication strategies tailor-made to involve citizens in case of flooding.



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### Topic Area 2: Sustainable Urban Mobility

*Note: Your answers to sub-sections 2a and 2b together must not exceed a total of 600 and 300 words respectively (i.e. 600 word limit for sub-section a and 300 word limit for sub-section b). A total of six graphics, images or tables may be included in Topic Area 2.*

**Note: Before responding to the questions in Topic Area 2 please read the EGLA 2021 Guidance Note.**

#### 2a – Current Situation and Strategic Approach

The aim of this section is to outline the current situation in the city and make it clear how this has been achieved. The response should mention relevant strategies and plans (including a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) or equivalent (in force or in revision)), measures that have been implemented and any tangible results. The application should include where possible data on the percentage of journeys undertaken by each mode of transport.

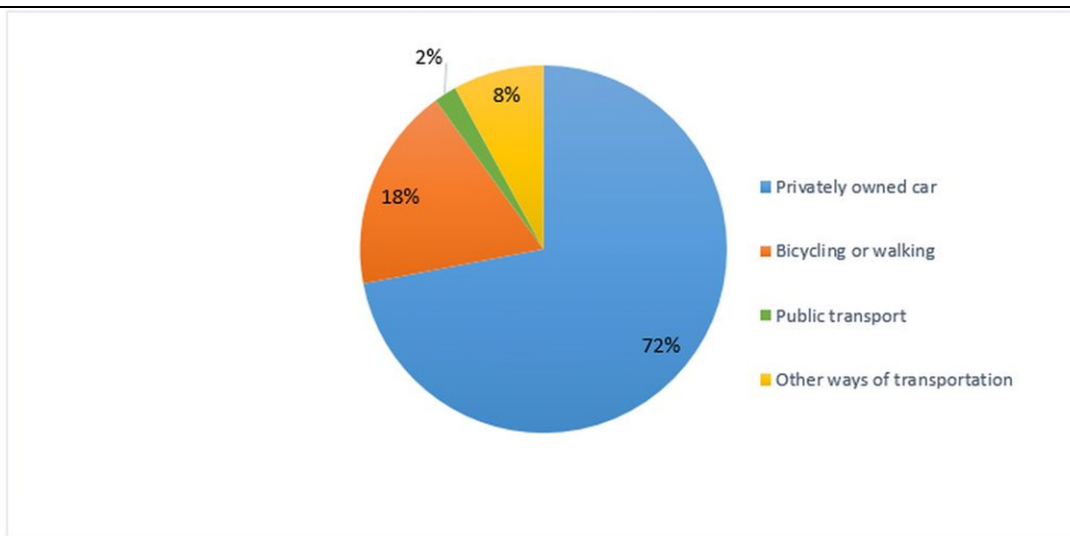
Please make clear the relevant principles that underlie any plan or strategy. Where plans/programmes have been developed at a level above the city level i.e. regional, national etc. it is important to provide information on the plans/programmes and how they impact on the city and/or are implemented at the city level.

Please ensure the response mentions the following measures that:

- (a) Promote and encourage public transport, cycling and walking;
- (b) Promote and encourage reduced car usage;
- (c) Improve the environmental performance of freight (including diverting trucks from the city centre and urban freight deliveries);
- (d) Promote the use of shared mobility and alternatively-fuelled vehicles.

#### **Word Limit - 600 Words**

All of RSKS **Energy2020** plans (2011-2014, 2015-2018, 2019-2023) have aimed at greening the transport sector. However, RSKS is a large municipality with big distances and low population density. The workforce commutes due to large distances (1,940 km road), tourists travel to holiday homes, and industry and agriculture transport their products on the roads.



**Figure 9: Modes of transportation to and from home and workplace in Ringkøbing-Skjern Municipality.**

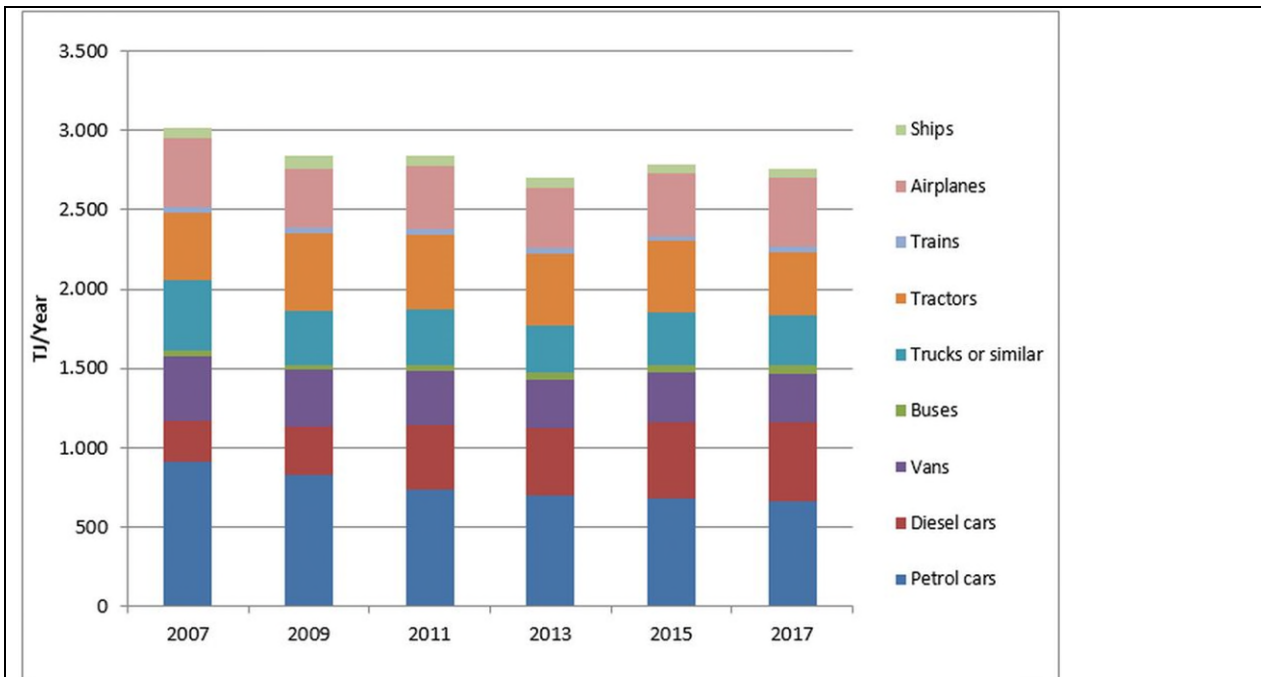
Today, RSKK is already more than 150% self-sufficient with green electricity. RSKK focuses on greening transportation, carsharing, carpooling, and biking in order to diminish the use of the car and contribute to the goal of a fossil-free transport in 2040.

In the Energy2020 plan from 2011-2014, RSKK aimed at having municipal hydrogen cars and stations (the first Danish public hydrogen station was established in Ringkøbing in 2008) and that public and private transport should be converted to electricity, hydrogen or biofuels.

According to RSKK's Energy Account, the transport sector accounted for 22% of the total energy consumption in 2013 and was difficult to reduce. In the 2015-2018 plan, RSKK aimed at reducing energy consumption in the transport sector by 10% by 2020 introducing more green public transport, energy efficient fossilfuel vehicles, gas for heavy transport and more electric cars.



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**Figure 10: Gross energy consumption of transport by mode of transportation.**

In the 2019-2023 Energy2020 plan, the ambition is to make transport fossil-free by 2040, e.g. through increased use of the produced RES.

The municipality has a strong focus on promoting the use of the bicycles and a vision of being 'the cycling tourist and leisure municipality'. The bike should be the natural access to **Nature's Kingdom** and an alternative to the car on short trips. Almost 30% of RSK's citizens commute up to 5 km to work and 11% 5-10 km. A target of the mobility plan, **Mobilitetsplan for 2018-2021**, is to increase cyclism by 10% in 2020. Therefore, new bicycle paths must be established to connect towns and nature.

The municipality is leading the transition to green mobility owning 8 electric cars. In 2019, RSK set the target to base its entire vehicle fleet on RES by 2025.

In 2014, the municipality conducted a survey indicating that 40% of the citizens could replace their fossil fuel cars with electric cars. In the carsharing and carpooling project **Elektrisk Vestrum**, seven villages share one minibus, four fossil cars, three electric cars and six electric bicycles.

The municipal public transport controls 10 local bus routes. In addition, 17 school bus routes can be used free of charge by all citizens. Due to the long distances, the 'Flextur' – taxi or bus service on demand – is offered in areas where there are few or no buses.

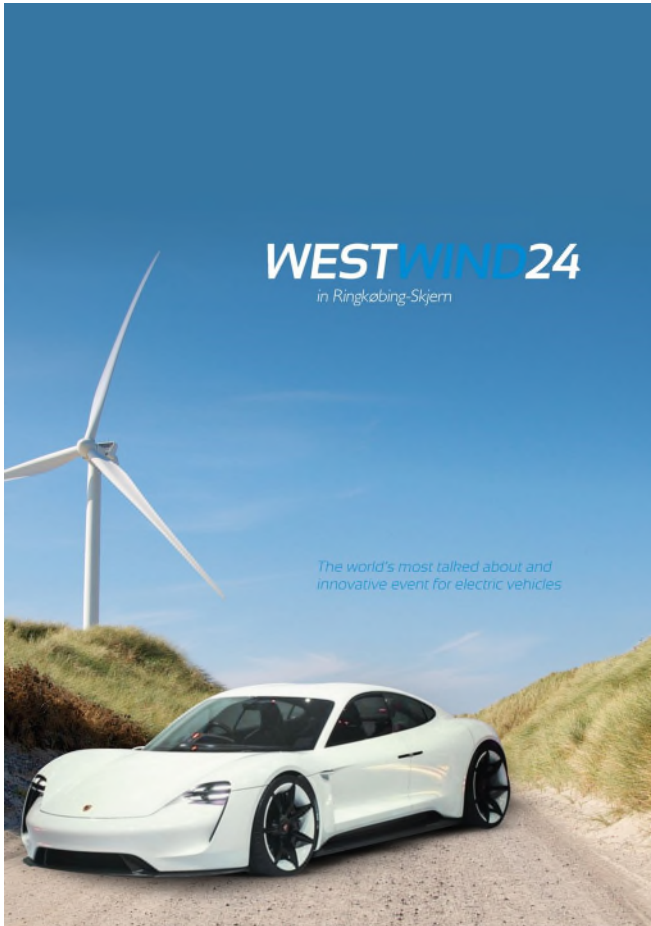
An area of intervention of Energy2020 (2019-2023) is to have buses and trains to run on electricity or hydrogen. RSK are currently investigating the possibility of establishing an electric local bus route.

To promote bicycling, several path projects have been completed since 2009, which has resulted in almost 270 km bicycle path in RSK in 2017. The current **Stiplan for 2016-2020** focuses on school paths, commuter paths, recreational path routes and accessibility. And to promote biking and walking,



**Fjorden Rundt** has been developed— a cycle route around Ringkøbing Fjord of approximately 100km.

RKSK has focused on diverting transportation of wind turbine parts and agricultural products from the city centers onto the sea via Hvide Sande Harbour. Finally, the modular rail network has been expanded to reduce transportation by truck.



**Figure 11: WestWind24. The world’s most innovative event for electric vehicles.**

**WestWind24** is an ambitious project to make RKSK leading in green electric mobility. The core being an EV competition, and the long-term goal being to create an international program to encourage individuals, organizations, and society to take active part in the development of a fossil-free transport sector.

## 2b – Citizen Participation and Public Awareness

Please mention any public awareness, citizen engagement or stakeholder participation undertaken in the city in the area of Mobility.

Focus on campaigns, events or activities such as:

- (a) Public Awareness: awareness raising activities including advertising and media, campaigns,

events, and school education;

- (b) Stakeholder/Citizens Participation and engagement in decision making: public consultation, open dialogue, stakeholder groups/forums, working groups, implementation partnerships, joint ventures with local businesses etc.

Please identify the target audience.

### **Word Limit - 300 Words**

The **Energy2020 Plans** have been prepared with contributions from 4 workshops giving 150-200 participants the chance to provide input on achieving transition to fossil-free mobility in 2040. RKSJ has also used the digital Citizens Panel and Business Panel to investigate mobility patterns.



**Figure 12: Workshop in Ringkøbing, where citizens and experts provide input to a new strategic energy plan.**

In 2018 and 2019, the Association of Danish Electric Vehicle Drivers (in collaboration with the transport group under the **Energy Council**) organized a 102 km trip around Ringkøbing Fjord. 19 electric cars participated.

In 2017-2018 citizens and associations could apply for up to 3,348 euros for projects to make more people cycle. RKSJ received 15 applications, 10 of which received support. Many bicycle paths have also been established as local initiatives, e.g. landowners who have gave part of their ground to the construction of paths.

One of the sub-goals of **Fjorden Rundt** is to develop information and campaigns targeted both tourists and locals. As part of the project, 12 guided tours have been completed and 500-600 citizens have participated. Furthermore, maps of paths, new information boards, mapping solutions on the internet, as well as an app have been developed.



**Figure 13: Guided tour by Ringkøbing Fjord.**

**Elektrisk Vestrum** (presented as a 'local event' at EU Green Week 2019) is a local initiative in the cluster of villages 'Vestrum' for citizens to share cars and electric bicycles. The aim is to improve e-mobility and quality of life in rural areas by creating solutions that can supplement public transportation and serve as an alternative to a second family car. The initiative is popular with a rising number of registered users – 124 in Vestrum.



**Figure 14: Elektisk VestRum, a bottom-up citizens initiative focused on car-sharing, electric cars and electric bicycles.**

Elektrisk Vestrum is a collaboration with the carsharing operator **Byensbil.dk**, which started as a local initiative with the purpose of supplementing the public transport sector. Byensbil has 11 cars in RKSK.



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## Topic Area 3: Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use

*Note: Your answers to sub-sections 3a and 3b together must not exceed a total of 600 and 300 words respectively (i.e. 600 word limit for sub-section a and 300 word limit for sub-section b). A total of six graphics, images or tables may be included in Topic Area 3.*

**Note: It is important to address Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use equally in the response.**

Before responding to the questions in Topic Area 3 please read the EGLA 2021 Guidance Note.

### 3a – Current Situation and Strategic Approach

Please outline your city's approach to Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use. What are the key objectives and targets of the city for Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use? These may include:

- Conservation and protection measures;
- Green infrastructure;
- Plans of projects to support the conservation of wild bees and pollinators;
- Increase and improvement of parks and green spaces;
- Sites of special interest for biodiversity,
- Connectivity of green and blue areas;
- Integrated planning and managing city expansion and growth; and
- Dealing with contaminated land etc.

Where plans/programmes have been developed at regional and national level it is important to provide information on how these are implemented at the city level.

Please provide details of the percentage of the population living within 300 metres of a green area open to the public and percentage of green areas open to the public in the city.

#### **Word Limit - 600 Words**

**Nature's Kingdom** is home to approximately 57,000 nature loving citizens of all ages, 90 % of whom are estimated to live within 300 meters of green areas. The nature is endowed with sea, fjords, rivers, meadows, heathland, marsh and dunes, 22,936 ha of protected sites (15 % of the surface) and large Natura 2000 sites.

It is state responsibility to monitor species, habitats, and the Natura 2000 sites, and RKSJ to propose action on Natura 2000 sites and input to the map, **The Green Map of Denmark**. The map serves as a planning tool for RKSJ, and nature protection is integrated into local spatial and environmental planning. Management of contaminated soil is shared with the Region.



**Figure 15: Green map of Ringkøbing-Skjern.**

The Natura 2000 plans and the River Basin Management Plans form the legislative framework for RKSJ's nature protection projects. There are 650 km of public streams and rivers, and RKSJ has completed more than 125 watercourse restoration projects since 2007 (ref. Topic 6).

The area adjacent to **Skjern Å** is a major natural asset. The river is 95 km long and drains 11-12 % of the whole of Jutland. During the 1960s the watercourse was straightened to ensure as much arable land as possible - 4.000 ha in total. This had serious consequences for wildlife and water quality. The river restoration, supported by LIFE grants (e.g. re-meandering and reconnection of wetlands; 1999-2003) is one of the largest restoration projects in Europe.

The restoration has turned the area into an important feeding and roosting site for migratory birds. More than 105 new species of birds have been registered (e.g. the Eurasian spoonbill and the white-tailed eagles). The number of species of breeding water birds increased from 7-9 species in 2000 to 31 in 2003, and both the Atlantic salmon and the otter thrive. The uniqueness of the Skjern Å river valley and the surrounding heaths and marshes, the nature protection efforts, Natura 2000 sites, form the backdrop for endeavours to having Skjern Å recognized as a **National Park**.



**Figure 16: The Skjern Å river delta – after restoration.**

To halt the loss of biodiversity and ensure sustainable land use, RSK is entering into negotiation with landowners of low-lying arable land, which is hard to cultivate. The initiative, 'multifunctional land use', balances natural values with socio-economic objectives. A pilot project around the Natura 2000 site Lønborg Hede, 2016-2018, provided the first results regarding the transfer of arable land from intensive farming to nature. Multifunctional land use is an important element in establishing National Park Skjern Å.

The plantation of flower strips emerged as an initiative to increase biodiversity in the farmland. Farmers, in collaboration with green organizations and RSK, established habitats for insects and

wildlife by sowing wild plants in less productive land. As of May 2019, 22 km flower strips have been created in RSKS.

The urban area **Ringkøbing K** demonstrates how to balance modern, energy-efficient homes with nature in order to keep residents and attract new ones. Previously an agricultural area, it was transformed in 2015-2016 into nature with meadows, lakes, orchards, paths, and forest. RSKS is also enabling afforestation projects to ensure ample access for town dwellers to forests, protect the groundwater, secure biodiversity, and green corridors. A total of 330 ha is being established under the name Ringkøbing Forest.



**Figure 17: Ringkøbing K integrating urbanity and nature.**

**Den Grønne Korridor Skjern** and its surrounding urban areas are the result of RSKS's effort to introduce green and blue wedges as well as nature into the cities. The project strengthens the recreational opportunities in Skjern and brings the city closer to the nature by Skjern Å. Apart from recreational purposes, the project contributes to climate protection (ref. Topic 1) and educational purposes.





**Figure 18: The Green Corridor in the town of Skjern. (Den Grønne Korridor)**



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### 3b – Citizen Participation and Public Awareness

What public awareness, citizen engagement or stakeholder participation campaigns are undertaken in your city to foster Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use? These may include:

- (a) Campaigns, events or activities such as advertising and media, campaigns and events;
- (b) Public consultation, school education, dialogue, stakeholder groups/forums, working groups, implementation partnerships, joint ventures with local businesses etc.;
- (c) Who is the target audience and what benefits have been achieved or are expected?

Please show the connection between sections 3a and 3b.

#### **Word Limit - 300 Words**

RKSK prioritizes dissemination of nature to citizens, which takes place in the form of organized tours with nature guides, through debate meetings, information via websites, facebook, apps, etc. Social work like **Mi-Tri** offer companionships on excursions.

The app “**Naturens Rige**” and the facebook page “**Natur i verdensklasse**” provides citizens with information regarding activities, paths, recreational areas, etc., encourage them to upload own activities (ref. Topic 2) and thus reinforces the local green nature identity.

A unique theme park is being constructed for children and adults, residents and tourists, revealing the forces of nature and natural phenomena in West Jutland. **Naturkraft** was conceptualized locally and the project is now run by a non-profit fund. Naturkraft is a 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> adventure park with an 2000 m<sup>2</sup> indoor area. Naturkraft provides families, schools classes and nature lovers with knowledge, scientific experience, and entertainment in an innovative, new way and is also disseminated through a facebook page.



**Figure 19: Naturkraft – a unique theme park revealing the forces of nature and natural phenomena in Wesj Jutland – will open June 2020.**

**Den Grønne Korridor Skjern** was established by local forces, now taking responsibility for part of the maintenance. Skjern Development Forum (formed in 2011) took the initiative, and the green corridor was finally designed through extensive citizen engagement process during 2015. 4 workshops were held with approximately 300 participants. The Development Forum has documented the citizen engagement process and put together recommendations for others to use when making green urban projects.



**Figure 20: Workshops – The Green Corridor – Den Grønne Korridor Skjern.**

RKSK offers, in 2019, for private landowners to apply for grants for nature conservation projects that contain particularly valuable nature or vulnerable species of plants and animals.

In the process of getting **Skjern Å** on the list of national parks in Denmark, a committee has been set up



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consisting of politicians, union representatives and citizens.

Several working groups have involved citizens to develop ideas for e.g. utility gardens, playgrounds, etc. in connection with **Ringkøbing K.**



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## Topic Area 4: Air Quality and Noise

**Note:** Your answers to sub-sections 4a and 4b together must not exceed a total of 600 and 300 words respectively (i.e. 600 word limit for sub-section a and 300 word limit for sub-section b). A total of six graphics, images or tables may be included in Topic Area 4.

**Note:** It is important to address Air Quality and Noise equally in the response.

Before responding to the questions in Topic Area 4 please read the EGLA 2021 Guidance Note.

Please note, Tables 1 and 2 in this section are compulsory and should not be included in your word count.

### 4a – Current Situation and Strategic Approach

Please outline the present situation regarding Air Quality in your city by completing the following table:

**Table 1: Benchmarking Data - Air Quality**

Air Quality	Answer		
What air quality zone does the city belong to?	RKSJ belongs to DK0003		
Is there an air quality monitoring station(s) in the city? - <b>Yes or No.</b>	No.		
<b>If Yes:</b>		<b>Unit</b>	<b>Year of Data</b>
Mean annual data of NO <sub>2</sub> concentration.	-	µg/m <sup>3</sup>	-
Mean annual data of PM <sub>2.5</sub> concentration.	-	µg/m <sup>3</sup>	-
Mean annual data of PM <sub>10</sub> concentration.	-	µg/m <sup>3</sup>	-
Provide any historic data for those pollutants.	-		
Provide information of the type of stations used to monitor pollutants?	-		



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<b>If No:</b> Describe briefly the latest air quality assessment available for the air quality zone the city belongs to.	DK0031R Accumulated number of days (past 100 days as of 4 OCT 2019) 46.9 % 'good' 42.9 % 'fair' 10.2 % 'moderate'  DK0031R does not measure PM2.5 og PM10. The latest map is from 2012 and is based on modelling. PM2,5: 7.7-8.5 PM10: 15-19
---	---

Please outline the present situation regarding Noise in your city by completing the following table:

**Table 2: Benchmarking Data - Noise**

Noise	Answer
Year the last strategic noise map was produced.	Locally, in 2016, integrated into RKSK municipal spacial plan 2017-2029  Nationally (2017) by Environmental Agency: road noise (day and night, 1.5 and 4 m above surface)
Year the last noise action plan was prepared.	Municipal spatial planning 2017-2029 (though not required by law)
% implementation of the last noise action plan.	Municipal spatial planning 2017-2029 (in relation to noise from businesses)
Does the city have an inventory of quiet areas?	No
Does the city have acoustic zoning?	No
Which limits or reference value does the city apply to residential areas? (Ld/Le/Ln).	-
In the last year, how many noise complaints did the city receive related to leisure or recreational activities?	None
How many noise experts does the city have?	None

The aim of this section is to make clear how the present situation has been achieved. Please outline related measures, projects and initiatives that have been put in place. Information on any relevant historical, geographical and/or socio-economic factors or constraints which have had an impact on air



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quality and the acoustic environment should also be described. Please describe trends in terms of pollutant emissions and ambient air concentrations of pollutants and noise that have taken place over the last five to ten years. Any trends which have been identified and any measures which have been most effective should be discussed.

Please support information by providing relevant background information, including any performance statistics, dedicated budgets or innovative forms of financing and key outcomes. Highlight why the project/measure/initiative is needed and any achieved or expected benefits from its implementation.

Specific measures such as air pollution reducing actions and noise management tools such as noise maps, acoustic zoning, noise exposure data, management of quiet areas etc. are of interest.

**If data or figures are not available at a local level please state this in the application.**

Describe the short and long term objectives for air quality and noise and the proposed approach for their achievement. Emphasise to what extent plans are supported by commitments, budget allocations, and monitoring and performance evaluation schemes.

Please include:

- (a) Background (include principles that have governed the development of the plan/programme);
- (b) Key objectives and targets (e.g. city's contribution towards reducing NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations, noise action plans, foreseen reduction in the share of population exposed to noise, actions to maintain, extend, or improve urban quiet areas etc.);
- (c) Information on the air quality in relation to the EU air quality standards (e.g. days/per year) and EU noise exposure standards.

Where plans/programmes have been developed at regional and national level it is important to provide information on how these are implemented at the city level.

### **Word Limit - 600 Words**

In general, air quality is good and the level of noise low in RSK. There are very few sources of air and noise pollution. This is a very clear impression from residents and tourists alike.

The main sources of air pollution come from outside the municipality. There is a monitoring station at Ulfborg (Ulfborg monitoring station, 'background', 'rural', DK0031R) located some 10 km from RSK frontier and 22 km from Ringkøbing. DK0031R measures NO<sub>2</sub>, is representative for air quality in rural areas, thus also RSK. This measuring station documents the good air quality. During summer 2019, the air was 'good' 46.9 % of the time, 'fair' 42.9% of the time and 'moderate' the remainder of the summer (measured 100 days prior to 4 October). Likewise, NO<sub>2</sub> concentration was low: 6.6 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (4 Oct 2019).

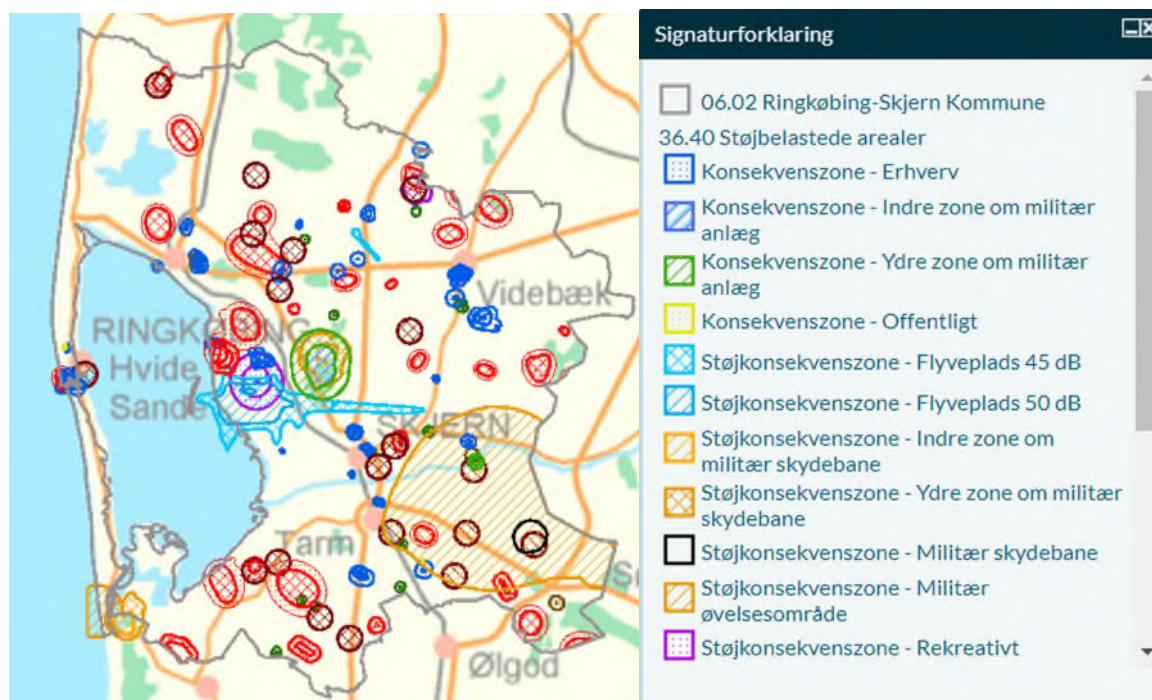
Technically, RSK is 'rural area' and the strong western wind dilutes any air pollution. RSK is thus very far from the Danish and European limit values of NO<sub>2</sub> of 40 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

There are other explanations for the low air pollution. Increasingly, energy consumption by dwellings as well as industry is based on RES, emitting very little CO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, nor particles. One source of air pollution is the burning of wood (for heating and 'hygge' in the holiday homes). But holiday homes are

spread out in the open, diluting what may come from there. Transportation of industrial and farming products as well as tourists is diverted outside the cities. Finally, manure is spread during spring, leading to periodically higher concentration of ammonia. However, this is far from endangering the health.

Eventually, RSKK policy and vision to become **Nature's Kingdom** has and will in the future improve what may be of air pollution. Especially efforts to make transportation fossil free will diminish emissions. Increased utilisation of biogas as RES will eliminate particles from ammonia. Furthermore, the abolishment of half of all oil boilers from 4388 to 2322 and as well as the transition to more than 60 % RES in district heating will also affect air quality positively.

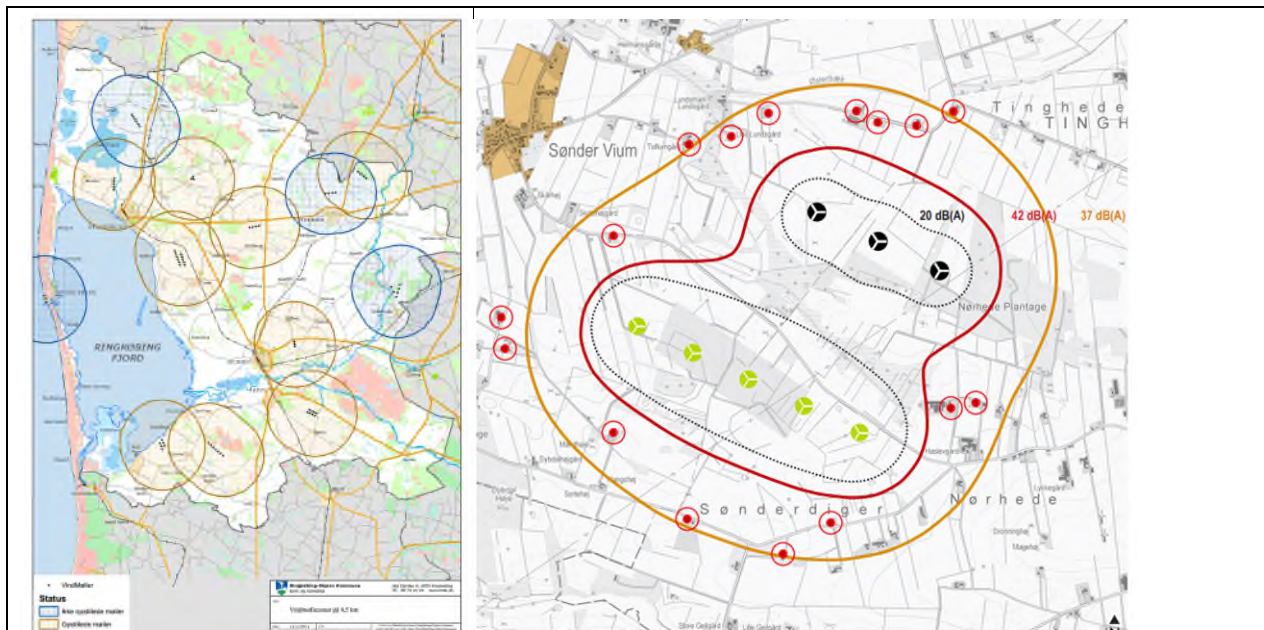
Apart from the western wind, there are very few sources of noise pollution, and neither residential areas nor leisure areas register any bothering noise. Those sources that may give rise to noise pollution are: Stauning Airport (which only serves very small air crafts and rescue helicopters), military shooting ranges (which are seldom used) and areas with wind turbines (see picture below). It is the objective of the city council to prevent noise and environmental inconveniences in residential and other areas through spatial planning and other planning – also for the location of wind turbines.



**Figure 21: Noise-laden areas in Ringkøbing-Skjern Municipality.**

In 2017, RSKK measured road noise, and measurements revealed very low levels of noise – both during the day and the night. At 1.5 m and at 4 m, it measured 55-60 db. during the day and 50-55 db during the night, respectively.





**Figure 22: Maps purposes regarding wind turbines and citizen consultation zones of 4,5 km, to the right, planning for local noise zones.**

The environmental effects from wind turbines comprise other aspects than noise (e.g. visual, shadow, effects on nature). Since all wind turbines are placed on shore or close to the sea, RKSJ is very attentive to the noise pollution from the turbines. Apart from national regulation regarding the location of the turbines, the Government also introduced support schemes to private, or community, turbine owners more than once, which citizens in RKSJ have made ample use of (ref. Topic 2). Eventually, the ongoing modernisation and substitution of older turbines will lead to less noise, since new turbines produce much less noise than earlier generations from the 1970s and 1980s.

## 4b – Citizen Participation and Public Awareness

Please mention any public awareness campaigns, citizen engagement or stakeholder participation undertaken in your city related to Air Quality and Noise.

Focus on campaigns events or activities such as:

- (a) Public awareness: awareness raising activities including advertising and media, campaigns and events;
- (b) Stakeholder/citizens participation: public consultation, school education, open dialogue, stakeholder groups/forums, working groups, implementation partnerships, joint ventures with local businesses etc.

Where possible show the connection between this section and the previous section i.e. 4a and 4b.

Please mention the target audience and any achieved or expected benefits.

### Word Limit - 300 Words

Each time, wind turbines have been erected and wind parks created, public hearings have been carried out among citizens, and complaints have been received, evaluated and dealt with. Politicians are aware of the delicate balance between reaching the energy goals and endorsing green identity on the one hand and citizens' concerns on the other. Thus, in some cases, projects have been altered to meet citizens' needs to secure the environment close to their homes.



**Figure 23: Wind turbines successfully integrated with tourism at the beach in Hvide Sande.**



**Figure 24: Less noise and better air quality with EVs. The Mayor himself leads all the EVs on a day trip around the Ringkøbing Fjord.**

Efforts to support the greening of energy consumption, which also improves air quality, RSKK has conducted several campaigns to make homeowners outside district heating replace oil boilers with renewables. During the period 2007-2017, the number of oil boilers has been reduced from 4388 to 2322. This number has been accomplished through information material, individual counselling and meetings. Citizens are also involved and engaged via the digital citizens' panel (mobility studies), just as they are invited to provide inputs into strategic energy planning. Several thematic events such as an EV Day and e-bike competitions have also organized.



Figure 25: “Flyer” from campaign to raise awareness on renewable energy alternatives to oil boilers.

## Topic Area 5: Waste and Circular Economy

**Note:** Your answers to sub-sections 5a and 5b together must not exceed a total of 600 and 300 words respectively (i.e. 600 word limit for sub-section a and 300 word limit for sub-section b). A total of six graphics, images or tables may be included in Topic Area 5.

**Note:** It is important to address Waste Management and Circular Economy within the response.

Before responding to the questions in Topic Area 5 please read the EGLA 2021 Guidance Note.

Please note, Table 1 in this section is compulsory and should not be included in your word count.

### 5a – Current Situation and Strategic Approach

- (a) Please complete the following table providing the most recent data available to your city. If city data is not available, please provide a brief explanation and use regional or national data. If no data is available, please state this and indicate the reason why.



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**Table 1: Benchmarking Data - Waste and Circular Economy**

Indicator	Type of Data (City/Regional /National)	Unit	Year of Data	Answer
Amount of Municipal Waste Generated Per Capita.	City	Kg/capita/year	2018	906
% Municipal Waste recycled (including composting and digestion of waste).	City		2018	58 %
% Municipal Waste sent for Energy Recovery.	City		2018	39 %
% Municipal Waste Sent to Landfill.	City		2018	2 %

(b) Outline your city's current waste management system describing prevention activities, collection and treatment infrastructure in place.

Data which demonstrates and supports the progress made should be included in the response.

(c) Briefly describe the city's strategy or plan for the management of waste and the transition to a circular economy providing an outline of key objectives and targets and interactions with other city plans or programmes.

### **Word Limit - 600 Words**

While waste management has been regulated for years, circular economy is a relative newcomer in RSKK green transformation.

RSKK develops a waste management plan every 6 years. The current plan covers 2015-2024 (**Affaldshåndteringsplan for 2015-2024**), and its successor will follow the adoption of a new national waste plan in early 2020. RSKK expects to place greater importance on the separation of waste, in particular organic waste, and circular economy is expected to play a greater role.

The waste management plan prescribes maximum recycling and minimum incineration: 50 % recycling of focus materials from households by 2022, optimization of waste sorting in municipal institutions, and better – and greener – handling of construction waste. The vision of RSKK as **Nature's Kingdom** sees 'waste as a resource', and the business policy, **Erhvervspolitikken for 2019-2023**, shares the vision of having Denmark's greenest business sector.

Being responsible for handling waste from households, workplaces, and companies, RSKK collects

household waste for recycling through the municipality's 11 waste recycling centers – open also to companies - and through 106 environmental stations where citizens hand in their waste. The centers and stations are sorting waste into 30 and up to 9 categories, respectively. Biweekly, the residual waste is collected at the households and transported for energy recovery by incineration.



**Figure 26: Environmental station at the beach in Hvide Sande.**

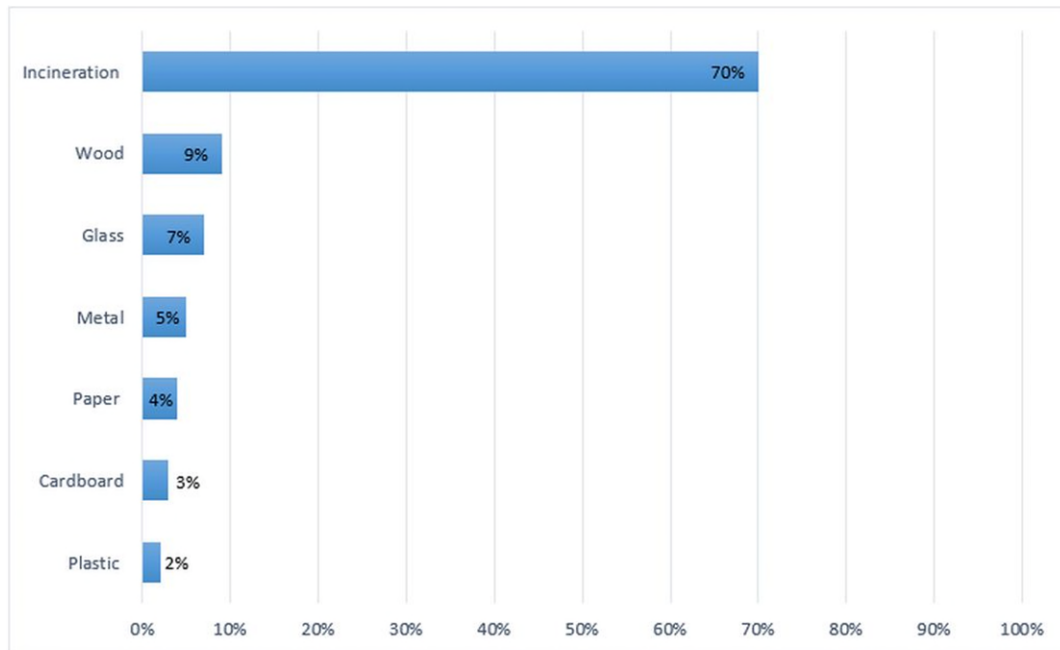
RKSKs recycles approximately 30% of the focus materials of household waste. To reach the goal of 50% recycling, a new waste scheme will enter into force in November 2020, demanding households to separate food waste and residual waste. RKSK expects to reach a recycling rate of 44-49%.

With the new European recycling requirements, the scheme to deliver waste at centers and stations may not remain adequate. Therefore, a scheme of household collection of glass, metal, paper, cardboard and plastic will be disclosed in autumn 2019. The design of the eventual household collection is expected to be clarified when elaborating the new local waste plan.

The waste left at the recycling sites, after citizens have sorted for reuse, recycling and hazardous waste, is delivered at two incineration plants to produce electricity and heat from the waste.



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**Figure 27: Recycling percentage of focus materials in Ringkøbing-Skjern Municipality.**

The Energy2020 plan (2019-2023) introduced Circular Economy to enhance sustainability in all sectors, engage citizens and companies. The **Energy Council** has created a sub-group to work with circular economy and sustainability. RSKS participates in the Circularity City network together with other municipalities and companies in the Region.

RSK's collaboration with companies on sustainable waste management and circular economy comprises several approaches. Among other things, it cooperates with developers on sorting construction and demolition waste during demolitions and renovations to ensure proper recycling and reuse.

RSK has also launched **Grøn Ressource Optimering (GRO)** to make the production industry more energy efficient and sustainable. GRO offers individual counseling to help companies with energy optimization and introduce green business models focusing on stable raw material supply, waste as a resource, extended use, increased utilization rate and products as a service. The project's results and methodology now continues in a regional project (2019-2021) with RSK as coordinator. 200 companies are expected to develop a green business model, and 75 of them will receive grants for purchase of machinery and equipment to implement the model.

One of the goals of **Energy2020** is efficient biomass use. RSK will, in collaboration with knowledge institutions, agricultural and food companies, investigate and promote biomass processing so that RSK gets most value out of locally produced biomass.

RSK works with Green Public Procurement as part of **Indkøbsstrategien 2019**. RSK works to reduce the environmental impact focusing on products that are least environmentally harmful and resource consuming in production, delivery, use, disposal and possible recycling.

## 5b – Citizen Participation and Public Awareness

Describe the following activities undertaken in your city in the area of waste and circular economy (include details for **both**):

- (a) Public activities such as campaigns, events and advertising which raise awareness of waste issues; and
- (b) Stakeholder activities such as citizens participation, school education programmes, forums, engagements with local businesses etc.

### Word Limit - 300 Words

Waste on the beaches and marine waste from the sea is a major problem for the Danish west coast. RSKS has therefore placed approximately 130 waste bins and 60 bins for marine waste on the beach. An inventory of the quantities in 2018 shows that respectively 25 and 42 tons have been collected from the bins. Collecting waste has become a joint effort and the initiative has met great support from locals and tourists.



**Figure 28: Citizens and tourists engaged in keeping beaches clean.**

RSKS offers tours at the municipal recycling sites for businesses, kindergartens and school classes. Around 700-800 school children a year get a tour at the sites.

To make it easier for citizens in terms of which fractions to sort in and where to deliver them, RSKS has joined the national pictogram system developed by the Danish Environmental Protection Agency and the Danish Waste Association. RSKS has run an information campaign to draw attention to this and to



encourage citizens to sort the waste.



**Figure 29: Campaign material: SORT YOUR WASTE!**

RKSK has also developed a map of recycling sites and environmental stations in the municipality, so it is easy for both citizens and tourists to dispose of their waste. In the app “**Naturens Rige**” you also find an overview of recycling sites.

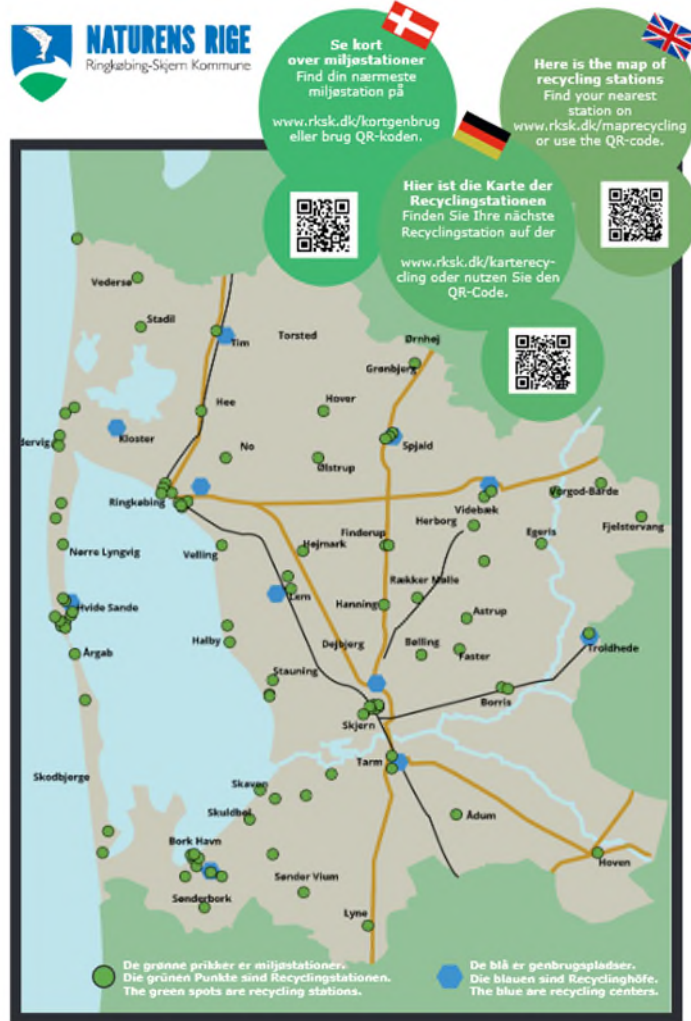


Figure 30: The map shows recycling sites for citizens and tourists in Danish, German and English

**GRO** has led to voluntary initiatives among companies on waste recycling. One example is Makerspace, which offers school classes the opportunity to work innovatively and creatively in development, design and production. The materials used are derived from a company's waste materials.



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## Topic Area 6: Water

**Note: Your answers to sub-sections 6a and 6b together must not exceed a total of 600 and 300 words respectively (i.e. 600 word limit for sub-section a and 300 word limit for sub-section b). A total of six graphics, images or tables may be included in Topic Area 6.**

**Note: It is important to address Water and Waste Water Management equally in the response.**

**Before responding to the questions in Topic Area 6 please read the EGLA 2021 Guidance Note.**

**Please note, Table 1 in this section is compulsory and should not be included in your word count.**

### 6a – Current Situation and Strategic Approach

Please outline the present situation of the relevant infrastructure and systems that are in place by completing the following table:

**Table 1: Benchmarking Data – Water**

Indicator	Unit	Answer
Urban and domestic water consumption.	Litres per capita per day	115
Proportion of water losses from the distribution network.	%	3,4 (2018)
Proportion of urban drinking water supply subject to water metering.	%	100
Compliance with DWD - Drinking Water Directive 98/83/EC.	Yes/No - %	Yes
Population connected to the waste water collecting system and waste water treatment plants.	%	74
Treatment rate of central waste water treatment plant for parameters: BOD <sub>5</sub> , COD, N, P.	%	COD: 93 BOD: 98 N: 85 P: 92
Compliance with the requirements of the UWWTD 91/271/EEC.	Yes/No	Yes
Ecological status of water bodies - WFD status.	Status	(2019) Streams: moderate or – in the majority of cases – unknown. Coastal waters: moderate (along the North Sea) and bad (Ringkøbing Fjord).
Water reuse.	Yes/No - %	No data available. Households: no reuse. Industry: considerable reuse.

**If data or figures are not available at a local level, please state this in the application.** Data available



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from (public/private) water service companies should be provided.

The aim of this section is to make clear how the present situation has been achieved. You may include information on any relevant disadvantages or constraints resulting from historical, geographical and/or socio-economic factors. Please describe the developments that have taken place over the last five to ten years. Comment on which measures have been most effective.

Highlight relevant projects/measures/initiatives and any benefits from their implementation. Provide a brief outline of your city's Water and Waste Water Management Plans and Programmes, such as priorities in water and waste water management plans, principles that have governed the development of the plan/programme or key objectives and targets (describe/specify measures to be implemented in future). Where plans/programmes have been developed at a level above the city level i.e. regional, national etc., it is important to provide information on the plans/programmes and how they impact on the city and/or are implemented at the city level.

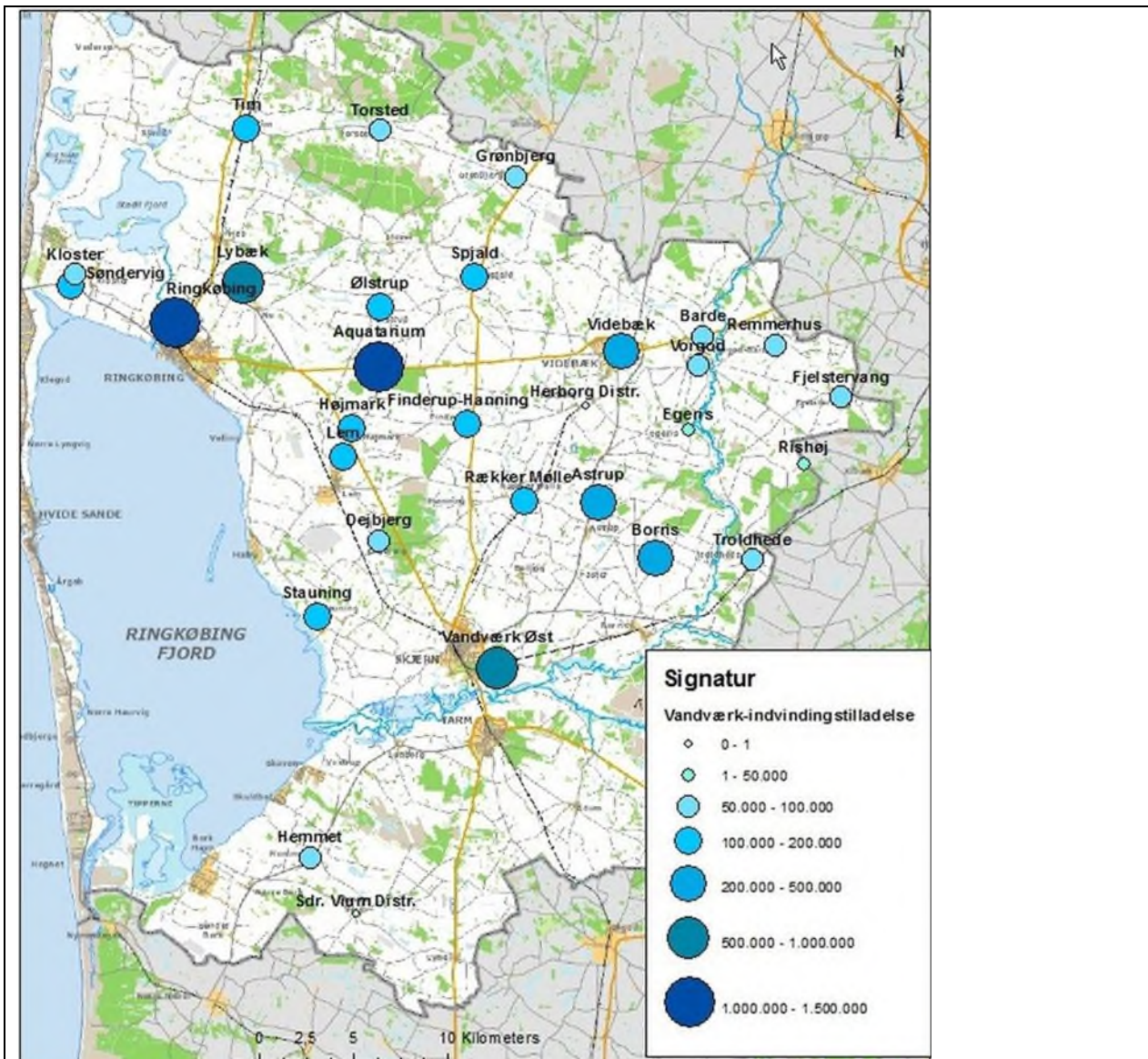
Where possible please outline the objectives and targets set/proposed and compare against the figures provided in this section describing the present situation (i.e. expected improvements in water consumption, water losses, etc.).

### **Word Limit - 600 Words**

Protection of water resources is highly prioritised in RKSK, ensuring a healthy groundwater and high quality of drinking water to citizens as well as healthy ecosystems in watercourses.

Protection of groundwater and drinking water, wastewater treatment and protection of the water environment is subject to EU and national regulation. The water infrastructure is regulated in the municipal Water Supply plan, **Vandforsyningsplan for 2017-2023**, and wastewater in RKSK's Wastewater Plan, **Spildevandsplan 2019-2027**. RKSK has elaborated action plans based on the government's River Basin Management Plans (2009-2015 and 2015-2021).

The majority of the area is covered by public water utilities. 28 public water utilities and 1,325 big individual installations provide water to companies and irrigation. In addition, some 1,050 small individual pumps provide 1-2 households with water from private drillings or wells.



**Figure 31: Water abstraction permissions in m3 per year.**

Drinking water is highly prioritized. To protect it, RSK has reserved the deep and well-protected aquifers for drinking water, while the sites located closer to the surface provide water to industry and irrigation in fields and gardens. In principle, new seepings of wastewater are prohibited within a distance of 300 meters from drinking water drillings, ensuring that unutilized drillings and wells are not destroyed.

Looking into the future and to adapt to challenges from climate change, RSK wants to treat wastewater more efficiently, improve wastewater treatment in the open land, and optimize rainwater collection. Clean surface water from roofs must be diverted into seeping, collected for irrigation purposes, or merged into green, recreational areas in the cities – particularly in new urban areas.



**Figure 32: Rainwater collection by Ringkøbing K.**

75% of wastewater is being treated in public sewage treatment plants. Large part of the households outside the drainage system also have approved seeping systems. The treated wastewater is led into streams, lakes, the sea or seeps into the ground. The sludge from the treatment plants and the septic tanks is utilised as fertilisers in the fields. The treatment plants are so efficient that no action is needed according to the River Basin Management Plans.

Recently, RSKS decided that all 9,600 holidayhomes previously outside the public water treatment system should be included within the next 25 years, whereas water from roofs and surface continue to seep into the ground.

RSKS has decided to establish retention basins and transform low-lying areas into wet meadows in order to remove nutrients and environmentally detrimental substances from surface water. Heager Å is an example of a huge wetland project, and there is an ongoing effort to identify areas suitable for similar projects with the active support of landowners. The low-lying areas will help protect against excess nutrients in streams, lakes, Ringkøbing Fjord as well as Stadil Fjord in particular, and ensure improved or restored biodiversity in areas adjacent to the streams as well as improved connectivity in nature areas.



**Figure 33: Successful watercourse restoration. Bypass flow by Hoven Watermill.**

RKSK has carried out more than 125 watercourse restoration projects within the framework of the WFD and spent an additional DKK 4-6 mill./year on top of what is required by the state: among others straightening out streams, placement of spawning gravel, removal of ochre, as well as elimination of dammings. As a consequence, the physical and chemical state of the streams has improved considerably, and need for action is little in relation to requirements in the River Basin Management Plans (compared to other Danish municipalities).

Water levels in Ringkøbing Fjord are expected to have risen by more than one meter by 2100 with the risk of severe flooding. RKSK is establishing local retention basins to prevent congestion of streams and drainage systems. Retention basins also forms part of the green and blues structures in cities (ref. Topics 1 and 3).

## 6b – Citizen Participation and Public Awareness

Please mention any public awareness, citizen engagement or stakeholder participation undertaken in your city in the areas of Water and Waste Water Management.

Focus on campaigns, events or activities such as:

- (a) Public awareness: awareness raising activities including advertising and media, campaigns and

events;

- (b) Stakeholder/citizens participation: public consultation, school education, open dialogue, stakeholder groups/forums, working groups, implementation partnerships, joint ventures with local businesses etc.

Where possible show the connection between this section and the previous section i.e. 6a and 6b.

Please mention the target audience and any achieved or expected benefits.

### **Word Limit - 300 Words**

RKSK, Central Denmark Region, and 11 other municipalities have financed an animation film explaining how all citizens can protect drinking water. The film is called '**Fumle og det ædle grundvand**' and shows citizens what to do to prepare the garden during spring without using pesticides. In addition, an online game focuses on ground water.



**Figure 34: “Fumle” shows homeowners how to do gardening without using pesticides.**

**Aquatarium** is owned by Ringkøbing-Skjern Forsyning A/S and is the most modern water supply company in Denmark. In addition to being a water company, Aquatarium is also a development platform and a tool in the development of new technologies. The water company offers great possibilities to learn about water and cutting edge water technology. The rooms and production facilities is offered for teaching primary schools and high-schools.





**Figure 35: Aquatarium – the cutting edge water company.**

In order to raise conciousness regarding water supply and water consumption in RKSK, a campaign to make home owners use rainwater in stead of groundwater for gardening. All inhabitants have received a 'Green Garden Calender' providing methods to harvest rainwater, produce own natural fertilisers, and advise on how to design a garden to avoid unnecessary irrigation.

## Section C: Good Practices

- Please note that the Good Practice section is not taken into consideration during the evaluation process.
- This section is for additional information only and will help in the compilation of any European Green Leaf 2021 Good Practice Factsheets or Case Studies, as appropriate.
- Please note that at least one good practice must be completed.

**Note: The descriptions of your good practices must not exceed a total of 450 words and nine graphics, images or tables.**



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Please summarise up to three good practices that demonstrate how your city is improving its environmental record and is committed to generating new jobs linked with producing a better environment.

The Good Practices nominated should already be briefly mentioned in the corresponding topic areas in Section B of the application form. Please describe the proposed Good Practice in more detail here.

Please also explain why you have selected the good practice described.

### **Good Practice 1**

Word Limit 150 words & 3 graphics, images, tables etc.

Topic area: Climate Change and Energy Performance (Topic Area 1)

**Ambitious goal, entrenched organization, strategic energy planning and support from City Council are cores practices worth mentioning.** The historical focus on RE – Vestas is from the area – that is engrained in the ethos of RSK, forms the backbone of RSKs continued perseverance in green transitions. In 2008 City Council formulated a vision of becoming self-sufficient with RE and established an Energy Council in an advisory role, involving stakeholders from industry, policy-makers, grass-roots, etc. Since 2008 the Energy2020-vision has been fully supported by City Council and three strategic energy plans have been adopted by City Council. Wind energy continues to play an immense role. The Theme Plan for Wind Turbines identified 32 particularly well suited areas for wind power production (495MW capacity), many of which are now locally owned. This innovate organizational and planning approach has ensured translation from vision to strategy to meaningful execution from a local and environmental perspective.



**Figure 36: Wind turbines in Hvide Sande owned by local citizens/companies, supplying the heat pump in the district heating with green electricity.**



**Figure 37: Locally owned wind turbines ensured the extension of Hvide Sande Harbour and strengthen the industry and tourism in the area.**



**Figure 38: Ringkøbing-Skjern arrange inspirational Green Energy Tours for foreign delegations regarding strategic energy planning, wind turbines, biogas and district heating etc.**



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### Good Practice 2

Word Limit 150 words & 3 graphics, images, tables etc.

Topic area: Nature, Biodiversity and Sustainable Land Use (Topic Area 3)

**RKSK has gained valuable experience and expertise on watercourse restoration through the years.** It took almost 20 years to restore Skjern Enge (wetlands) and bring Skjern Å (river) back to its original meandering course. The decision to restore the river delta in the 1980s resulted in one of the largest restoration projects in Europe in 1999-2003. This has once more turned the area into an important site for migratory birds, as well as an area where the Atlantic Salmon thrives (The House of the Salmon, an information and knowledge center, is situated just a few fly casts from the river). In recent years more than 125 water restoration projects have been completed since 2007. The areas adjacent to Skjern Å continue to be a major natural asset. The Skjern Å river delta and surrounding areas form the backdrop for current actions towards having Skjern Å recognized as an official national park.



**Figure 39: The Skjern Å river delta from high above Ringkøbing Fjord.**



**Figure 40: Fishing at Skjern Å river.**



**Figure 41: “Borgmesterhavnen”, “the Mayors Harbor” – the view from town hall in Ringkøbing.**



## Application Form for the European Green Leaf Award 2021

### Good Practice 3

Word Limit 150 words & 3 graphics, images, tables etc.

Topic area: Waste and Circular Economy (Topic Area 5)

**An approach engaging expert knowledge, ensuring relevant decisions and investments.** Since the formulation of the Energy2020-vision in 2008 there has been a strong emphasis on the efficient use of resources. At the onset, the emphasis was on the efficient use of energy in private households. Several projects based on the premise of providing free-of-charge energy audits to private homeowners has already been implemented with encouraging results. These experiences have led to the initiation GRO (Green Resource Optimization). At the inception of GRO the primary focus was on the efficient use of energy and resources in the SME segment. However as the project has progressed, a stronger emphasis been placed on furthering green business models in local businesses, including those related to circular economy. The GRO projects methodology now also exists in a region-wide project targeted SMEs in all 19 municipalities in Central Denmark Region, with RSK as lead partner.



Figure 42: Biogas refuse truck at the biogas filling station in Tarm.

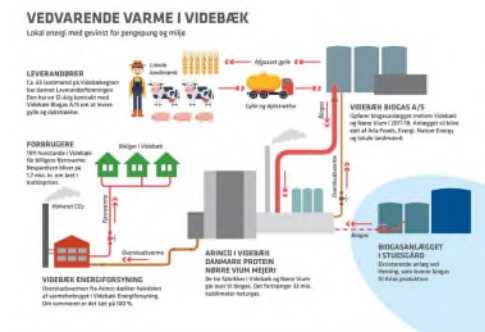


Figure 43: Circular Economy in Videbæk. Manure heating homes via biogas plant and surplus process energy to district heating.



Figure 44: Innovativ Center Innovest in Skjern is a new sustainable circular building with heat pump running on water.



## Application Form for the European Green Leaf Award 2021

### Application Form Word Count Check

Please complete the below word count check for Sections A, B and C of the Application Form.

As per the Guidance Note (Annex 4 of the Rules of Contest), the word count includes text in graphics/tables and the body of text. The word count excludes text found in the original application form (i.e. question text etc.) and captions (within the given limit of 20 words).

Section A	Number of words in graphics/tables	Number of words in body of text	Total number of words in graphics/tables and body of text	Max. words
	0	599	599	600
Section B	Number of words in graphics/tables	Number of words in body of text	Total number of words in graphics/tables and body of text	Max. words
1a	0	594	594	600
1b	0	299	299	300
2a	0	600	600	600
2b	0	287	287	300
3a	0	600	600	600
3b	0	298	298	300
4a	0	582	582	600
4b	6	170	176	300
5a	0	599	599	600
5b	37	240	277	300
6a	0	598	598	600
6b	0	177	177	300
<b>NOTE: Please ensure you have completed the 'Benchmarking Data' tables in Sections 4a, 5a, and 6a. The text in these tables should not be included in the word count.</b>				
Section C	Number of words in graphics/tables	Number of words in body of text	Total number of words in graphics/tables and body of text	Max. words
1	0	150	150	150
2	0	150	150	150
3	0	149	149	150





## Application Form for the European Green Leaf Award 2021

### Application Form Checklist

Did you complete Section A?

Yes

Did you complete Section B?

Yes

Topic areas:

1. a and b? Yes

2. a and b? Yes

3. a and b? Yes

4. a and b? Yes

5. a and b? Yes

6. a and b? Yes

Did you complete Section C? Yes

At least one good practice must be completed.

Did you complete the 'Word Count Check'? Yes

**A response must be included for all of the above. If all of the items are not completed the application will be invalid.**

Did you adhere to the word limit for all sections?

Yes

Did you adhere to the image limit for all sections?

Yes