

**Guidance for mainstreaming
sustainable development,
gender equality,
and a child rights and
youth perspective**

Contents

Introduction	3
Description of the horizontal perspectives	5
Mainstreaming in practice – a step-by-step guide	8
How to get started	19
In depth	21
Sustainable development	22
Gender equality	26
A child rights and youth perspective	29
Intersectionality	32



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Introduction

The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers affects the lives of people throughout the Nordic region. We pursue initiatives that make day-to-day life easier for those living in the Nordic region, we bring Nordic stakeholders together to engage in mutual learning, and we develop knowledge and solutions that support development in the Nordic countries. Consequently, it is important that we ensure that our work is sustainable, gender-equal, inclusive, representative, and accessible.

In *Our Vision 2030*, the Nordic Council of Ministers has set the bar high when it comes to the cross-sectoral matters of sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective. [Nordic Council of Ministers policy for mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective](#) (hereinafter referred to as the "policy") applies to everyone working within or on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The policy states that sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective must permeate the Nordic Council of Ministers' work as a whole. Integrating these perspectives is a prerequisite to achieving the vision of becoming the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' ambitions for mainstreaming

The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is based on international obligations such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The Nordic Council of Ministers is a forerunner with its high ambitions for mainstreaming. It is one of the first organisations to link the three horizontal perspectives in a single policy.

What does the policy mean in practice for the staff and partners of the Nordic Council of Ministers? This guide will support you, regardless of your starting point or role, by helping you to get started, develop your work, or else confirm that you are headed in the right direction. In this guide, the Nordic Council of Ministers will:

- Place integration efforts into a broader context and demonstrate their importance to the Nordic Council of Ministers' work as a whole
- Show step-by-step how to integrate the perspectives into your day-to-day work as an employee or partner of the Nordic Council of Ministers
- Provide an opportunity to delve deeper into sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective, as well as offer specific examples of what the integration of these perspectives may involve

What does the mainstreaming of horizontal perspectives involve?

Mainstreaming involves continuously analysing your work in terms of sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective and then allowing this analysis to influence the decisions you make.

The horizontal perspectives must have a systematic effect on our activities and be included in all stages of planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.



Description of the horizontal perspectives

Sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective are closely linked to each other. As an example, sustainable development requires a greater emphasis on gender equality and children and young people. But what are these horizontal perspectives and how should they be integrated into the Nordic Council of Ministers' activities?

Sustainable development

The most common definition of sustainable development is *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*.¹ Work with sustainable development takes into account all three dimensions of sustainability – the ecological, social, and economic – which are both integrated and interdependent. The premise of sustainable development is to apply all three perspectives to the development of society, with each perspective always being set in relation to the others. Agenda 2030 and the 17 SDGs serve as an international framework for the Nordic Council of Ministers' contribution to a more sustainable society. Although we in the Nordic countries are leading the way in our pursuit of sustainability, we still face several common challenges.



1. The definition by the Brundtland Commission from 1987.

How do you integrate sustainable development?

Integrating sustainable development into the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers means understanding and taking into account the impact on society of initiatives and decisions in terms of the social, economic, and ecological dimensions of sustainable development. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs show the way forwards, mainly by providing an overall picture but also by way of separate goals and sub-goals.²

Gender equality

Gender equality is achieved when all women and all men have the same rights and opportunities. Gender equality involves the fair distribution of power, influence, and resources. CEDAW and its 30 articles serve as an important starting point for this. [SDG 5](#) of Agenda 2030 further states that gender equality between women and men is a prerequisite for sustainable and peaceful development. The strategic priorities in relation to social sustainability in the Nordic Council of Ministers vision for 2030 clearly stress that we must strive to achieve gender equality in the Nordic region. Although the Nordic countries are leading the way internationally in the pursuit of gender equality, further efforts are needed to bring about a gender-equal society.



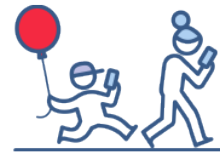
How do you integrate gender equality?

Integrating a gender equality perspective into the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers involves understanding and taking into consideration how women and men are affected by the decisions you make and the initiatives you introduce. In your work, this means that you must help to empower women, men, girls, and boys equally so that they can shape society and their own lives.

2. When working with sustainable development, it is important to take into account the Nordic Council of Ministers' 12 objectives from its action plan for achieving its vision, as these steer its activities as a whole. There is a clear link between the 12 Nordic objectives for achieving the vision and the 17 SDGs.

Children and young people

A child rights and youth perspective involves protecting children's rights by ensuring an emphasis on the best interests of the child. This also means involving children and young people in various ways and giving them a say in our activities. The strategic priorities in relation to social sustainability in the Nordic Council of Ministers vision for 2030 clearly stress that we must strive to be an inclusive region. This means that the Nordic Council of Ministers must give Nordic civil society, and especially children and young people, a louder voice and a greater opportunity to participate in Nordic co-operation. Children and young people are priority groups because improving their wellbeing and their ability to exercise their rights and be heard are prerequisites for achieving our vision.



How do you integrate a child rights and youth perspective?

Integrating a child rights and youth perspective into the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers involves understanding and taking into consideration how different children and young people are affected by the decisions you make and the initiatives you introduce. Decisions must always be based on the best interests of the child. This also means that you must include the knowledge and perspectives of children and young people in your work. Where children and young people are directly affected by our work, it is important to involve them every step of the way.



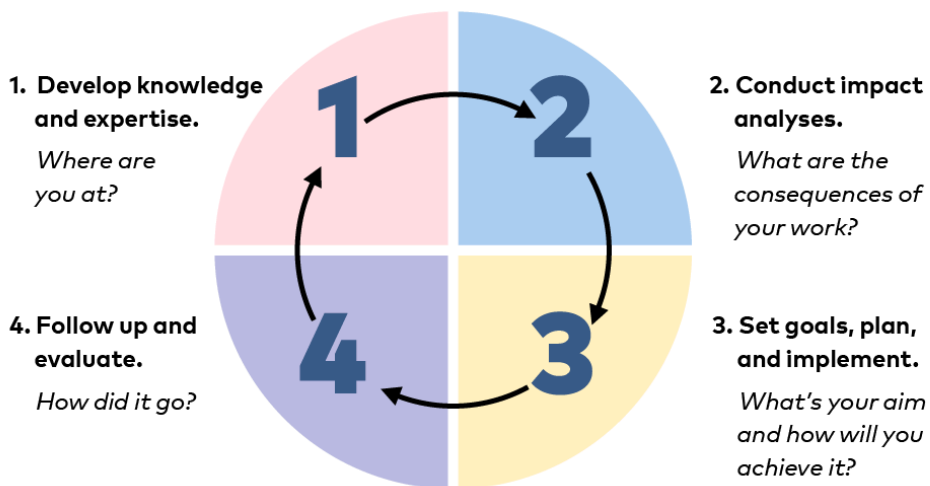
Mainstreaming in practice – a step-by-step guide

The Nordic Council of Ministers works with mainstreaming in order to translate sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective into policies and practice. These perspectives must be a natural component of all the work carried out within and on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers. For this to be sustainable, integration efforts must always be pursued as an integral part of day-to-day work and never as a sideline or separate project.

What this involves varies from one subject area, task, or assignment to another. Mainstreaming as a principle and this guidance are based on the fact that you are best positioned to identify relevant perspectives on sustainable development, gender equality, and children's rights and youth issues within your subject area and for your own tasks.

Through the policy, the Nordic Council of Ministers has established common principles for integration. This guide offers a more detailed description of how you can work in accordance with these principles by way of a step-by-step approach (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Model for mainstreaming the horizontal perspectives in the activities of the Nordic Council of Ministers.



The Nordic Council of Ministers' principles for integration

By way of the common principles for integration, the Nordic Council of Ministers states that all sectors and institutions must:

- Ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to work in accordance with the policy
- Conduct impact assessments and formulate performance and operational objectives
- Systematically integrate all perspectives into their governing documents and tools in a way that supports their day-to-day operations
- Act consciously and help to strengthen sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective
- Plan to include time and financial resources so as to ensure good integration
- Strive to achieve an equal distribution of women and men in different types of committees, steering groups, and reference groups (40 to 60 percent) and strive for well-thought-out representation based on other relevant diversity criteria
- Where children and young people are involved in the work, follow the Nordic Council of Ministers' principles and approaches when involving children and young people
- When holding meetings and other events, ensure that they are universally accessible
- In the procurement and use of products and services, endeavour to make ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable choices

Success factors for well-functioning integration efforts:

- Strong, explicit, and clear managerial support for prioritising the perspectives
- A common knowledge and value base for the mainstreaming efforts shared by employees, partners, and managers
- Support for staff working with integration in practice
- Perspectives being made part of the ongoing governance and quality systems
- A clear connection between one's own work and any mainstreaming efforts so as to ensure integration is perceived as relevant and creating value

Developing knowledge and skills

As an employee or partner of the Nordic Council of Ministers, it is important that you have the requisite knowledge and skills to support your efforts to integrate the horizontal perspectives.

First and foremost, you need to understand what integration means and how it differs from working with the perspectives as subject-specific policy areas.

Integration requires that you and your colleagues identify how the perspectives are linked to your work. Your role defines your influence, so it is important that you identify the issues that are relevant to your specific tasks.

Checklist:

- Read the [Nordic Council of Ministers policy for mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective](#)
- Ensure you have a basic understanding of the horizontal perspectives. You can start by reading this guide's in-depth chapter on the horizontal perspectives.
- Supplement your knowledge and skills on the horizontal perspectives on an ongoing basis by studying and participating in training
- Familiarise yourself with the model for mainstreaming the horizontal perspectives in practice. Formulate for yourself what your responsibility for integration may be in your work – be specific and give examples wherever possible.
- Take ownership of the horizontal perspectives by analysing how they relate to your subject area. It may be a good idea to work

on this together with your colleagues. Put into words how you can contribute through your role and tasks.

Example: Virtually all of the ministerial councils have now adopted co-operation programmes or strategies with a clear reference to the SDGs or sustainable development. The Co-operation Programme for Fisheries, Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry has, for example, adopted a position on which SDGs are most relevant to its work. The Arctic Co-operation Programme also relates to Agenda 2030 on a concrete level, with clear links between its initiatives and the various sub-goals.

Example: Nordic Forest Research and the [Forest Bioeconomy Network](#) have announced funding for [networking activities with a thematic focus on gender equality in tomorrow's forestry industry](#).

What kind of support is there?

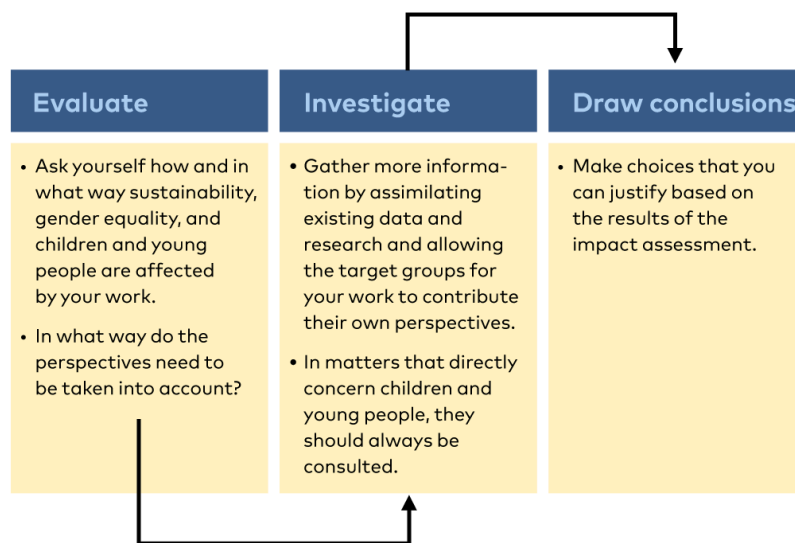
There are different types of support within the Nordic Council of Ministers. These are described in more detail in the in-depth chapters. For a current picture of existing support, you can always consult the advisors in the areas of sustainability, gender equality, and children and young people. They can point you towards suitable support materials and training opportunities and, if needed, refer you to other stakeholders or resources.

Conduct impact assessments

Integration is about analysing your work on an ongoing basis, using the horizontal perspectives as your starting point and letting your decisions be steered by these analyses. Work is analysed by way of an impact assessment.

An impact assessment specifies how your work both contributes to and hampers sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective. Impact assessments can be conducted for future, ongoing, and completed assignments. In some roles, you will act as someone who commissions work or sets requirements in relation to external stakeholders. For this reason, it is important to request impact assessments when preparing an order, tender or project.

Figure 2. Components of an impact assessment



In respect of gender equality and a child rights perspective, the impact analyses look at how different groups of women and men and of children and young people are affected by your work. The target group often needs to be consulted directly in order to obtain a comprehensive basis for the analysis. It is only when we concentrate on the different circumstances of women, men, children, and young people that we can uncover the differences in living conditions and the unequal distribution of power and influence. It is on the basis of this analysis that you can identify how to further gender equality and children's best interests.

With regard to sustainable development, the analysis relates to how the three dimensions of sustainable development are affected by your work. It is important to analyse how your work affects sustainable development both positively and negatively from different perspectives. Here, you may wish to use Agenda 2030 and

the 17 SDGs as the framework for your analysis, possibly based on the SDG closest to your subject area.³ It is only once we know how our work relates to the various dimensions of sustainable development and the SDGs that we can consciously work to make development more sustainable.

Checklist:

- Look for any impact assessments for the horizontal perspectives that already exist for your subject area and familiarise yourself with any existing conclusions and lessons learnt
- Analyse how work in your subject area affects sustainability, gender equality, and children and young people by identifying its positive and negative consequences for the subject area's work as a whole or for specific activities
- Find ways of counteracting the negative consequences and supporting the positive effects as these relate to each perspective

Example: The Council of Nordic Co-operation on Disability, the Disability Council, has developed a model for raising a child rights and youth perspective in its meetings. The model consists of two components: inviting representatives for children and young people with disabilities to the meetings, and including points of reflection as one of the first points on the meeting's agenda where the members of the council discuss a child rights and youth perspective in relation to the meeting both generally and with regard to its relevance and what has or has not been done, for example. In addition, each major point or topic of discussion should conclude with reflection on the following four issues:

1. How does the work help to facilitate children's rights?
2. How are children and young people affected by the issues we work with?
3. Which children and young people are or are not affected?
4. Which children and young people are excluded and why

Why conduct an impact assessment?

Integration presupposes that you analyse your work with "perspective glasses" – a kind of filter through which you look at your work. By conducting an impact assessment of your work in relation to the horizontal perspectives, you gain information on how to better integrate them.

3. There is a lot of material about the synergies and links between the various SDGs and sub-goals that can be used for this. Here is an example: <https://www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/sei-brief-2019-sdg-synergies-2.pdf>

Set goals, plan, and implement

Once you have conducted an impact assessment, you will have insight into how your work affects the pursuit of sustainability, gender equality, and a stronger child rights and youth perspective. On the basis of the impact assessment, you can set goals for your results and activities. This is about specifying how you will take account of the conclusions you have drawn in the impact assessment and establishing a reasonable level of ambition for the work.

At the organisation level, the [policy](#) formulates such a goal. It states that integration shall take place, when it shall take place, and who is responsible for the work. At the sector, programme, and project levels, other types of goal specifications are required. To this end, it is a good idea to avoid formulations that are too general and instead be more detailed in how your own work takes the horizontal perspectives into consideration (e.g. when you plan conference X, you must ensure Y).

In the next step, objectives and goals for results and activities that have been set need to influence your actions and choices. The objectives become useful only once they have practical consequences in the form of a change in what is done. Creating space for sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective takes time and costs money. There is a great need for conscious action that strengthens the three perspectives. You therefore need to be able to justify your reasoning and how you have acted in relation to the perspectives.

Your role determines which part of a chain of changes or which parts of an organisation you can influence. Sometimes, your actions may be several steps from having a direct impact on a target group or project. When you make overarching policy decisions or set the framework for a programme that awards grants, for example, the distance from the target group you want to influence may seem great. At other times, it is your direct action that strengthens one of the three perspectives. How you travel for your work is one such example. Whatever cog your role may represent, that cog is important to the whole. Everyone needs to work together in order for the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision for 2030 to be achieved.

Checklist:

- Set an overall aim for your work with integration: discuss with your colleagues and superiors what would be a reasonable level to focus on
- Based on the impact assessment, set goals for your work on integration that indicate what you want to achieve
- Formulate ways to follow up and measure your achievements;

these may be qualitative and/or quantitative methods and indicators

- Make time to work on integration; this is not just for those in managerial or commissioning roles but also for you in your self-leadership
- Make sure that there is a budget with scope for working with integration. Certain initiatives and processes may require more time, or resources may need to be in place in order to choose more sustainable options when making purchases and in procurement processes

Example: One way of including a child rights and youth perspective is to give children and young people a seat at the table: offer them direct representation in various committees or other decision-making groups and thus an opportunity to influence and participate in decision-making. The Nordic Expert Group for Sustainable Development has two youth representatives on its committee, for example. The representatives rotate in accordance with the rotation of the presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The expert groups of the Volt language and culture programme and the Norden O-30 funding programme have youth representatives who are involved in making decisions regarding grants.

Example: The Nordic House in Reykjavik encourages its partners to apply the horizontal perspectives of gender equality, children and young people, and sustainable development. In the autumn of 2020, the Reykjavik International Film Festival (RIFF) was held. In advance of the festival, RIFF organised a week-long workshop, Stelpur Filma, at The Nordic House for eighth- and ninth-grade girls from various schools around Reykjavik. Within a woman-dominated environment, the girls learnt from prominent film-industry mentors how to produce their own short films, which were shown at Bíó Paradís.

Example: In its funding notice for 2021, Nordregio has goals that are clearly linked to gender equality. It states that Nordregio must work systematically in order to integrate gender equality into its operations, within both its programmes and projects, and internally within management and among employees to increase the quality and relevance of its work.

What kinds of objectives?

Objectives and goals for results and activities can be included in co-operation programmes, in programme and project descriptions, in work plans, and in orders for external parties.

Some objectives have already been established through the policy for mainstreaming the horizontal perspectives. One such example is the aim to achieve an equal distribution (between 40 and 60 percent) of women and men in different types of committees, steering groups, and reference groups.

Follow-up and evaluation

An important prerequisite to being able to act consciously is regularly following up on and evaluating how the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is affected by mainstreaming the three perspectives into the organisation.

The [policy](#) states that mainstreaming is to be evaluated as part of the ongoing follow-up and evaluation of the Nordic Council of Ministers' work. This means that the perspectives need to be included as part of the organisation's overall quality system. They must be an integral part of the follow-up of individual initiatives and activities. The perspectives must also comprise a dimension of reports to the Nordic Council and of the regular reports to the responsible ministers within the various sectors.

It is also important to develop measurable indicators that can show the extent to which the goals have been achieved. In the field of gender equality, sex-disaggregated statistics are an important piece of the puzzle, while age-disaggregated statistics can be important in relation to children and young people.

The choice of follow-up and evaluation method must be tailored to the nature and scope of the task or activity. A follow-up may involve:

- Discussions with colleagues about something that you have done
- Measuring various parameters – participants, speaking time, or social media visibility
- Surveys or interviews with the target group of an initiative, such as different groups of children and young people

Follow-up versus evaluation

A follow-up involves gathering, or tasking an external stakeholder with gathering, data on how well something has gone. An evaluation uses the data from the follow-up in order to draw conclusions and assess how well something has gone and to try and map causal relationships.

It is important to consider how an initiative will be followed up and evaluated before you embark on it. Integration will fail if the perspectives are merely tagged on at the end of a work process. If a report on a funding programme, for instance, asks how a project has taken the gender equality perspective into account without first stating that it is expected, it will often result in afterthoughts and responses that do not correspond with how the project has been structured.

Example: NordForsk has produced its own overview of the SDGs to which its funding relates. This creates an opportunity to work more purposefully and decide whether there are goals that should be given more attention in the funding programmes.

Checklist:

- Be thinking about how an initiative will be followed up on and evaluated as early as the planning stage.
- Apply follow-up methods that are tailored to the nature and scope of the activity you are to follow up on.
- Based on the aims and goals that have been set, follow up on how successful the work has been in promoting sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective.
- Require that efforts based on the three horizontal perspectives are included in project and initiative reports.
- Assess how well the work with integration has been implemented in relation to the objectives that have been set. Determine what has been done better or worse and analyse why things went as they did.
- Draw conclusions about what you can develop on next time and use these conclusions in your continued planning



How to get started

You now have information on what mainstreaming means in practice and a step-by-step guide on how to go about it. Although it may feel overwhelming to start working with integration if you haven't done so before, what matters most is to start integrating it as part of your day-to-day work. One suggestion is to start using the guidance for a specific task that you are working on right now. The specifics of this depend on the kinds of tasks you are working on. They may relate to:

Policies and political counselling

- Developing a new co-operation programme or governing document for the subject area
- Planning an agenda and subject-specific presentations in advance of a committee, ministerial council, or working group meeting
- Nominating or appointing participants to a committee, working group, or panel with a view to strengthen a gender equality and age perspective

Project and budget management

- Formulating a project or programme description with associated activities, governance, and budget
- Developing criteria, structures, applications, or reports for a funding programme or other types of calls
- Preparing a procurement process or order for an assignment to be carried out by an external actor
- Allocating financial resources as part of the subject area or project budget

Communication

- Formulating texts and producing images and videos for the Nordic Council of Ministers' communication and press material for social and online media
- Planning the content and structure of conferences, seminars, debates, or other events

Administration and co-ordination

- Planning the logistics for a committee, ministerial council, or working group meeting
- Budgeting for and paying honorary fees in connection with meetings and conferences for youth representatives or participants
- Purchasing and selecting products and services in connection with meetings and conferences (sustainable alternatives)
- Choosing spaces or premises in connection with meetings, conferences, or similar (sustainable and universally accessible alternatives)

Leadership

- Using staff, departmental, and team meetings to support, discuss, and practically work with the integration of the horizontal perspectives in the organisation
- Management and evaluation of the organisation
- Including the horizontal perspectives in employee development interviews

You can then gradually develop your work with integration to include more of your work processes. Over time, the integrated perspective will become a natural component of your work. It will come naturally to take into account sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective.

How do you make time for mainstreaming?

A good way of ensuring that mainstreaming is given prominence in your work is to set aside time once a month or every six months to focus on integration, either on your own or with others. Use the guidance to support you in your evaluation and development of your work.

In depth

- ▶ Sustainable development in the Nordic Council of Ministers
- ▶ Gender equality in the Nordic Council of Ministers
- ▶ A child rights and youth perspective in the Nordic Council of Ministers
- ▶ Intersectionality in the Nordic Council of Ministers





Sustainable development in the Nordic Council of Ministers

Objectives

The Nordic Council of Ministers vision for 2030 is to become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world. Being a pioneer in the pursuit of increasingly more sustainable development is thus central to the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. [The Action Plan for 2021 to 2024](#) for the vision states, for example, that the Nordic Council of Ministers will go further than Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement.

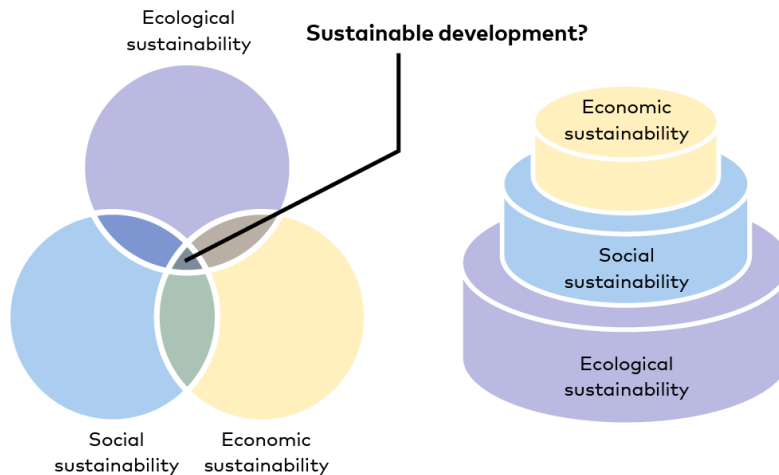


"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

*Definition of sustainable development from the 1987
Brundtland Commission.*

Sustainable development consists of three dimensions – economic, social, and ecological – that are integrated and interdependent. There are different ways to try to illustrate how the three dimensions are connected. One way is by a so-called Venn diagram, where the three dimensions are given equal weight and value. Another way of describing sustainable development is through a hierarchy in which ecological sustainability is weighted greater than and seen as a prerequisite to social and economic sustainability. However, both ways of illustrating the dimensions are based on their clear interdependence.

Figure 3. The three dimensions of sustainable development are integrated and interdependent. The Nordic Council of Ministers uses the graphic to the right, which shows an integrated sustainability perspective.



The Nordic Council of Ministers uses the second option to define sustainable development, i.e. an integrated sustainability perspective. An integrated sustainability perspective means that the economic dimension should support the social dimension so that society as a whole can develop within the boundaries of ecological sustainability. This is a way of creating a lasting ecosystem that safeguards social welfare and green economic development.

When it comes to sustainable development, the emphasis in the Nordic region is on ecologically sustainable development, as the Nordic countries are particularly challenged in this area by their unsustainable consumption and production, by climate change, and by the biodiversity crisis. The emphasis on ecologically sustainable development should not, however, be at the expense of social and economic sustainability.

Organisation

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) are ultimately responsible for sustainability issues in the Nordic Council of Ministers. To support them, there is also a [Nordic Expert Group for Sustainable Development](#). The expert group is tasked with supporting the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation in the implementation and follow-up of Our Vision 2030 and cross-sectoral efforts relating to sustainable development in the Nordic Council of Ministers.⁴ The expert group consists of members representing the ministries and youth organisations of the Nordic countries and has close ties to national efforts relating to sustainable development and Agenda 2030.

Outlook

Agenda 2030 and the 17 SDGs create a cohesive international framework for sustainable development. Agenda 2030 is a document that the world's heads of state and governments agreed on under the auspices of the UN in September 2015. Its objectives are ambitious and seek to eradicate extreme poverty, reduce inequality and injustice in the world, promote peace and justice, and solve the climate crisis (Figure 3).

Sub-goals have been formulated for each of the 17 SDGs. These sub-goals address more specifically how the overarching SDGs are to be achieved. Indicators for all SDGs have been prepared that can be used to measure how the different countries' efforts on the goals are progressing. You can test your knowledge of the SDGs [here](#) (available only in Swedish).

Figure 4. Agenda 2030's 17 SDGs were adopted in September 2015.



The Paris Agreement, adopted in December 2015, is another important international step in the efforts to improve sustainable development. This is a climate agreement agreed upon by countries around the world for the purpose of limiting global warming by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Paris Agreement requires the increase in global temperature to be kept well below 2 degrees and ideally be limited to 1.5 degrees. The commitments made by the countries of the world will gradually become more stringent and be reconciled globally every five years by way of a global review. A key principle of the climate agreement is that the countries with the best conditions should take the lead. This means that industrialised nations must support developing countries.

4. The mandate of the Nordic expert group for sustainable development for the period 2021 to 2024: <https://www.norden.org/en/information/nordic-expert-group-sustainable-development>

Publications and supporting material

- Nordic working plan for sustainable development 2021-2024 (available only in Swedish)
- Nordic Council of Ministers' sustainability report 2020 (available only in Swedish)
- Sustainable Development Action – the Nordic Way. Implementation of the Global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Nordic Cooperation (2017)
- Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals at local level. Checklist and inspiration for getting started (2020) (available only in Swedish)

Information on the SDGs is available in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, and Icelandic.



Gender equality in the Nordic Council of Ministers

Objectives

The Nordic countries' intentional efforts to achieve gender equality are a cornerstone of the modern Nordic welfare societies. There has been extensive co-operation within the Nordic region in this area, and this co-operation has helped make it the most gender-equal region in the world. However, much remains to be done to improve gender equality in the labour market, in the home, and in decision-making bodies.



Key questions for project and programme development:

- Are there systematic differences between women and men, girls and boys? Are their circumstances or the roles they have or are given different? These differences may involve work and occupations, opportunities, influence, health, and finances. Try to problematise the differences and provide support for your claims through previous research and statistics.
- Would this be a good opportunity to seek support from organisations or stakeholders who work with or specialise in gender equality in the sector?
- What obstacles are there to women's and men's participation, influence, and impact?
- Are gender- or sex-disaggregated statistics available or a possibility?
- How can you achieve a balance between men and women participants? For areas dominated by one gender, it is especially important to try to find new channels and networks in which to expand this issue. One way may be to allow participants to reflect on why gender distribution is the way it is and to discuss solutions.

Organisation

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI (MR-JÄM) is ultimately responsible for gender equality matters in the Nordic Council of Ministers. [Nordic Information on Gender \(NIKK\)](#) is the gender equality sector's co-operative body. It gathers and disseminates knowledge about policies, practice, facts, and research in the field of gender equality.

Since 2020, co-operation on equal rights, treatment, and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic region has been included in the work of the ministers for gender equality. LGBTI is an acronym of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex.

Outlook

CEDAW and the Beijing Platform: In 1979, the UN adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, often abbreviated as CEDAW. This convention has been ratified by all the Nordic countries, which have therefore agreed to abide by it. In 1995 the UN adopted an action plan for its work with gender equality, known as the Beijing Platform.

CEDAW and the Beijing Platform are key international documents on gender equality. CEDAW consists of 30 articles in three main groups, the first two being the so-called rights articles.

- Articles 1 to 5 define and clarify the nature and scope of gender discrimination, as well as the responsibility of states to counteract gender discrimination. Among other things, articles 2 and 3 clarify the fundamental obligation to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women.
- Articles 6 to 16 oblige states to fulfil more specific obligations. They regulate rights in areas where gender discrimination takes place and clarify the measures that the states are obliged to take.
- The remaining articles deal with the work and reports of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the ratification of the convention, and disputes over its interpretation.

[UN Women](#) is a unit within the UN that promotes gender equality efforts by way of information, training, political influence, and fundraising. An important starting point is increasing awareness of the central international gender equality documents: CEDAW and the Beijing Platform.

Work to promote gender equality is also ongoing at the European level. The European Institute for Gender Equality ([EIGE](#)) collects, analyses, processes, and disseminates data and information on

gender equality issues. An important element of this work involves making data from the different EU countries comparable, reliable, and relevant to users.

Publications and supporting material

- Nordic Co-operation Programme for Gender Equality 2019-2024
- Supplement to Nordic Co-operation Programme on Gender Equality 2019-2024: Equal rights, treatment and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic region
- Nordic Gender Equality in Figures 2021
- The Nordic Gender Effect at Work. Nordic experiences on parental leave, childcare, flexible work arrangements, leadership and equal opportunities at work (2019)
- Nordic road towards Beijing+25 (2020)
- Declaration of Support towards the role of the UN Women in the realisation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- Gender mainstreaming at the Council of Europe



A child rights and youth perspective in the Nordic Council of Ministers

Objectives

In the [Action Plan for 2021 to 2024](#), which concretises the Nordic Council of Ministers' work on Vision 2030, the focus of objective 11 includes the importance of giving children and young people "a greater voice and a greater opportunity to participate in Nordic co-operation, as well as increasing their knowledge of the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries". The action plan also states the following:



"Children and young people are priority groups because improving the well-being of children and young people and their ability to exercise their rights and be heard are prerequisites for achieving our vision. Nordic co-operation will strengthen co-operation with civil society and plan and implement more projects in co-operation with children and young people."

Within the Nordic Council of Ministers, the children and young people target groups cover those aged 0 to 25, which is somewhat broader than the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which only covers people up to the age of 18. It is important to bear in mind that children and young people are far from being a homogeneous group. Characteristics such as disability, gender, gender identity or expression, ethnic background, religion or other expression of faith, sexual orientation, or age can all influence children and young people's experiences, circumstances, and needs.

Integrating a child rights and youth perspective into the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers involves understanding and taking into consideration how children and young people think about and are affected by the decisions you make and the initiatives you introduce. A key principle is to always directly involve children and young people in the processes that most affect them.

Organisation

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) and, thereunder, the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK), have overall responsibility for co-ordinating Nordic co-operation on matters relating to children and young people within the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Nordic Committee for Children and Young People (NORDBUK) is the Nordic Council of Ministers' advisory and co-ordinating body for issues relating to children and young people.

Outlook

The CRC leads the way in efforts to integrate a child rights and youth perspective into the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. It was adopted on 20 November 1989 by the UN General Assembly. All the countries of the world, apart from the United States, have ratified the convention, meaning that they have undertaken to abide by it. Norway was the first of the Nordic countries to incorporate the CRC into its legislation. Since then, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden have also given the CRC the same status as law.

There are four guiding principles in the CRC that apply to everyone under the age of 18. These are as follows:

- **Article 2:** The principle of combatting discrimination, that all children have the same rights.
- **Article 3:** The principle that the best interests of the child be taken into account in all decisions concerning children.
- **Article 6:** The principle of the right to life, survival, and development.
- **Article 12:** The principle of respect for children's opinions and that all children have the right to express their opinion.

The children's ombudsman is a function that exists in every country and area of the Nordic region. The ombudsman is tasked with monitoring children's rights and youth issues on the basis of the CRC. The ombudsman operates at a general level and does not get involved in individual cases.

Publications and supporting material

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Unicef information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child
- When involving children and young people in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers: Principles and approaches
- Are you wearing the right glasses? A guide to integrating a child rights and youth perspective in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers
- Do Rights! Nordic perspectives on child and youth participation
- Nordic Children and Young People in Figures 2021



Intersectionality in the Nordic Council of Ministers

Background

The principle to “leave no one behind” has guided the design of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs. When working with mainstreaming, it is therefore important to be aware of additional power structures that affect people’s lives. In the pursuit of a more sustainable and equitable world, it is crucial to consciously strive to [improve the inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups](#). A common denominator of vulnerable groups is that they face particular barriers to participation and are at risk of being marginalised socially, economically, and politically. Factors such as age and gender have further consequences in terms of the degree and type of marginalisation.

Intersectionality is a term used to describe how different power structures interact and affect people’s conditions. Characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, religion, class, and disability affect people’s opportunities in different situations. In all work with integration, it is important to bear in mind that both women and men and children and young people are not homogeneous groups. Rather, they are groups made up of people who live in varied conditions. Through an intersectional analysis, we can explore how different power structures interact to prevent and mitigate multifaceted discrimination or lead to initiatives being pursued based on the wrong assumptions.

Below is an introduction to Nordic co-operation in the areas of LGBTI, disability, and integration of refugees and immigrants. These areas shed light on some of the key perspectives on power that need to be included in an intersectional analysis.

Intersectionality in the Nordic Council of Ministers

Objectives

LGBTI

LGBTI is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex. The Nordic ministers for gender equality within the Nordic Council of Ministers have commenced formal co-operation on the equal rights, treatment, and opportunities for homosexual, bisexual, trans, and intersex people. The co-operation covers three focus areas: freedom and openness, quality of life and living conditions, and networks and civil society.

Work with LGBTI issues must be conducted across sectors and be based on relevant knowledge and facts. Nordic co-operation must take into account that LGBTI people is a diverse group. There are differences between homosexual, bisexual, trans, and intersex people, and within the individual group there may be further differences related to socio-economic background, ethnicity, religion, disability, asylum status, age, and other identity categories. An intersectional perspective ensures that the Nordic co-operation benefits not only the individual but also society as a whole.

Disability

Nordic co-operation on disability aims to contribute to the effective inclusion of people with disabilities in all areas of society. Co-operation covers everyone with a disability, regardless of their gender, gender identity, age, ethnicity, religion, or other grounds for inclusion or discrimination. Accessibility is a prerequisite to people with disabilities being able to participate in a wider context. The Nordic Council of Ministers' action plan for co-operation on disability for the period 2018 to 2022 has three focus areas: human rights, sustainable development, and freedom of movement.

More information on Nordic co-operation on disability can be found at <https://www.norden.org/en/disability> and <https://nordicwelfare.org/en/disability-issues/>.

Integration of refugees and immigrants

The co-operation programme for the integration of refugees and immigrants is linked to the strategic priorities for a competitive and socially sustainable Nordic region. A gender perspective and a child rights and youth perspective are integrated into this work both as independent focus areas in relation to this minority group and as overall perspectives in research reports, projects, and network collaboration.

For examples of this, please see <https://nordicwelfare.org/integration-norden/en/>.

Organisation

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI (MR-JÄM) is leading efforts in the LGBTI area within Nordic co-operation. In addition, Nordic co-operation supports stakeholder networks and initiatives in the field. Consequently, a Nordic LGBTI Fund has been set up that is managed by [Nordic Information on Gender \(NIKK\)](#).

The Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs (MR-S) is responsible for efforts relating to disabilities within Nordic co-operation. The advisory body, the Council for Nordic Co-operation on Disability, is a resource for Nordic co-operation as a whole and, in accordance with its mandate, it monitors how this perspective is integrated within Nordic co-operation. The council's secretariat is located with the [Nordic Welfare Centre](#), an institution in the social care and healthcare sector which has disability as a focus area and pursues projects, supports networks, and gathers and disseminates knowledge about this area.

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation (MR-SAM) and, thereunder, the Nordic Committee for Co-operation (NSK) have overall responsibility for co-ordinating Nordic co-operation on integration of refugees and immigrants.

Publications and supporting material

- Realizing the SDGs for All: Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality for Every Person, Everywhere
- Mapping and Analysis of the LGBTI Area in the Nordic Region (available only in Swedish)
- No child or young person may be excluded. A child rights and youth perspective in Nordic disability co-operation
- Nordic Co-operation Programme for Gender Equality 2019-2024
- Supplement to Nordic Co-operation Programme on Gender Equality 2019-2024: Equal rights, treatment and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic region

About this publication

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Shared Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

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Mainstreaming sustainable development, gender equality, and a child rights and youth perspective is a prerequisite to attaining the Nordic Council of Ministers' vision that the Nordic region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.