



SUMMARY

Programme for Nordic co-operation on the Environment and Climate 2019–2024

The Nordic countries have worked together in the field of the environment and climate for almost half a century. Over the years, this close co-operation has helped to improve the environment of the Nordic Region and beyond. In the autumn of 2018, the ministers for the environment and climate adopted a new programme that will serve as the framework for co-operation from 2019 to 2024. The full programme can be found here:

www.norden.org/nordpub

The Nordic countries are committed to co-operating on the environment and climate in order to achieve sustainable development in the Nordic Region, within the EU/EEA, and globally. The countries will continue to co-operate in international negotiations and pursue the ambitious implementation of international agreements on the environment and climate, including the Paris Agreement as a key focus. An additional aim of Nordic co-operation is to strengthen EU environmental and climate policy framework.

Rapid changes in the climate and the environment in the Arctic region are a global alarm bell that requires special attention from the Nordic countries.

Circular Economy

Current levels of consumption of raw materials and energy is placing an unsustainable burden on our planet. A circular economy is needed. The Nordic

countries are seeking to close material cycles and make them non-toxic and resource-efficient, reduce the use of finite resources, reduce waste volumes, and increase the use of waste as a resource. Co-operation throughout the value chain is needed. Plastic should form part of a circular economy and not be released into the environment. The Nordic countries will help to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The Nordic countries will reinforce co-operation on instruments for a green transition including the Swan ecolabel, eco-design, public procurement, economic instruments, and green financing.

Climate Change and Air Quality

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing humanity. Global emissions of greenhouse gases must be reduced substantially and rapidly. We need to reach the point of zero net emissions, and even negative emissions. The Nordic countries are pursuing the ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement with regard to mitigation, adaptation, and financing. The Nordic countries will continue to be front-runners by way of their ambitious objectives and actions.

There are strong links between climate change and air quality. These synergies will be highlighted. The Nordic countries will also continue to work in the UNECE and the EU to reduce air pollution that poses a threat to health and the environment.



Chemicals – Environment and Health

Hazardous substances in goods are a growing problem. The Nordic countries are front-runners when it comes to chemical issues and will continue to work together to minimise the risks that chemicals and chemical substances in products pose to human health and the environment. The phasing out substances that are of very high concern by way of substitution is essential. In addition, Nordic co-operation will focus on increasing knowledge in companies and among consumers with regard to the development of methods to assess and manage risks, as well as on raising the level of ambition. The protection of children, fetuses, and reproduction is a particular priority. The risks posed by nanomaterials and hormone disruptors must be continuously monitored.

Biodiversity

Human survival and well-being depends on biodiversity. Consequently, the rapid loss of biodiversity on a global scale poses an enormous challenge. The Nordic countries are working together to halt the loss of biodiversity, reduce fragmentation, and promote the sustainable use of natural and cultural environments. International co-operation will continue to bring about the effective implementation of the Aichi targets in all regions and to develop them into an ambitious global framework beyond 2020. An additional aim of Nordic co-operation is to increase knowledge on the relationship between biodiversity and climate change. Land-based and marine environments have to be managed from an ecosystem perspective. The Nordic countries will contribute to increased knowledge with regard to ecosystem services.

Ocean and Coastal Areas

The current state of coastal waters and oceans is very serious. The Nordic countries – with their long coastlines and proximity to the ocean – are striving to strengthen the marine ecosystem-based management of the oceans. The protection and sustainable use of the oceans and support for new innovative solutions to restore ecosystems are key focus areas for Nordic co-operation. Addressing the relationship between climate change and the marine environment is a priority.

Nordic co-operation is helping to limit marine littering and the release of pollutants and waste into the oceans. A Source-to-Sea approach is necessary, in which the safe handling of waste and chemicals is essential.

Good Examples

Nordic co-operation on the environment and climate has provided instrumental input in EU and international legislation and co-operation. Some prominent recent examples are:

- Nordic input on textiles has been instrumental for the prohibition in the EU of chemicals in textiles, and for the role of textiles in the UN ten-year framework for sustainable production and consumption. The Nordic plastics programme and Nordic projects on plastics in the sea have given input to UNEP and regional sea conventions.
www.norden.org/nordpub
- The Nordic countries have launched joint projects in connection with the Paris Agreement, such as on climate financing and sectoral approaches, and through the project *Nordic Green to Scale*.
www.sitra.fi/en/topics/greentoscale
- The Nordic Swan ecolabel now provides eco-labelling for investment funds, in addition to the more than 10,000 products and services entitled to display the ecolabel.
www.svanen.se
- Nordic environmental co-operation has played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Minamata convention, in EU chemical legislation, in the OECD's efforts relating to chemicals, and through the Nordic SPIN database on substances in products.
<http://spin2000.net>