



Nordic
Co-operation

Nordic Co-operation

© Nordic Council of Ministers, Copenhagen 2011

ANP 2010:792

ISBN 978-92-893-2179-2

Redaktion: Klaus Munch Haagensen,

PUB/Communications Department

Layout: Jette Koefoed,

PUB/Communications Department

Translation: Tam McTurk

Cover photo: Karin Beate Nøsterud

Copies: 5000

Print: Arco Grafisk, Skive

Printed on environmentally friendly paper

This publication can be ordered on www.norden.org order

Other Nordic publications are available at

www.norden.org/publications

Printed in Denmark



Nordic Council of Ministers

Ved Stranden 18

DK-1061 Copenhagen K

Phone (+45) 3396 0200

Nordic Council

Ved Stranden 18

DK-1061 Copenhagen K

Phone (+45) 3396 0400

www.norden.org



Nordic Co-operation

Affinity

Education, research and innovation

Climate, environment and energy

Welfare and culture

International commitment



FACTS

Formal co-operation between the Nordic countries is one of the oldest forms of multilateral political partnership anywhere in the world. Rooted in the geographical, historical and cultural affinity between the five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) and three autonomous territories (Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland), it is one of the most comprehensive and popular forms of regional partnership in the world.

The work of the Council and of the Council of Ministers revolves around a common understanding of democracy and shared social values.

Affinity

The unique Nordic welfare model is based on cultural affinity and on a set of shared values, which it is our duty to uphold. The prime ministers have reasserted a strong desire to maintain this affinity and to further enhance it in the globalised economy. They hold regular meetings with MPs from throughout the Region to discuss how their countries can best respond to the challenges posed by globalisation and benefit from the potential it offers.

The PMs have put their political weight behind a closer focus on Nordic partnerships. The main priorities are: climate, environment and energy; education and research; and welfare and culture. These core

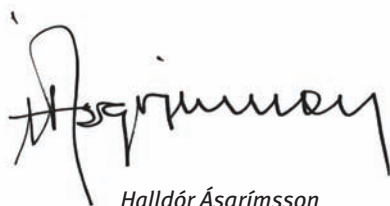
issues serve as the foundation for the strong international commitment shown by both the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Working together does not just put core Nordic values on the international agenda, it also helps to make the Region more visible and highlights the unique nature of our partnership, which provides benefits for citizens and users – both in the Region and beyond.

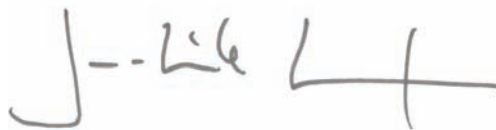
Inter-governmental co-operation is the remit of the Council of Ministers, inter-parliamentary work the remit of the Nordic Council. The ministers for Nordic co-operation and elected

MPs spearhead the work, which is funded by taxes from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The autonomous territories (Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland) also play an important part. Official co-operation costs approx. DKK 35.00 per citizen p.a.

The work of the Council and of the Council of Ministers revolves around a common understanding of democracy and shared social values, which help to maintain and foster dynamic development, to promote freedom of movement and to enhance skills, competitiveness and cohesion throughout the Region.



Halldór Ásgrímsson
Secretary General
Nordic Council of Ministers



Jan-Erik Enestam
Director
Nordic Council

Education, research and innovation

Although the national education systems and business and industry sectors differ, the Nordic countries work together in many spheres, learning from each other's experiences. This collaboration includes support for joint projects and activities, the publication of reports and the establishment of networks. The general aim is to achieve results that the individual countries would be incapable of accomplishing on their own.

From primary school to university

Nordic co-operation on education focuses on promoting creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship, and on improving retention rates. One priority for the Nordic Council Culture & Education Committee is to stress the importance of creative subjects, while the Council of Ministers works on a range of initiatives from primary school to university level.

The Council of Ministers runs the educational programme Nordplus, which also covers the Baltic countries. Each year, Nordplus provides thousands of schoolchildren, students and adults with the opportunity to learn more about the society, language and culture of

the other Nordic and Baltic countries. The Council of Ministers has also launched the Nordic Masters Programme, which links university courses from at least three countries, facilitating the creation of elite study programmes that would not otherwise be available.

The freedom to study anywhere in the Region, an achievement which has helped create a joint education area and facilitate the free flow of knowledge between the countries, is one very tangible outcome of co-operation.

Research

Broad-based co-operation on research includes the Nordic Top-level Research Initiative, the largest-ever research and innovation programme in the Region, which involves the best elements of Nordic research, business and industry in the search for global climate, environmental and energy solutions. The first of a series of programmes under the auspices of this initiative commenced in 2010.

Other priorities for the Council of Ministers include e-science – one tangible example being the optimisation of computing power via fibre-optic networks – greater

mobility for researchers and raising the Region's profile in European research partnerships.

Innovation

The main priority for Nordic globalisation work is to strengthen the countries' global competitiveness. Council of Ministers' publications include Nordic Innovation Monitor and Nordic Globalisation Barometer, which show how the countries are faring in the global economy.

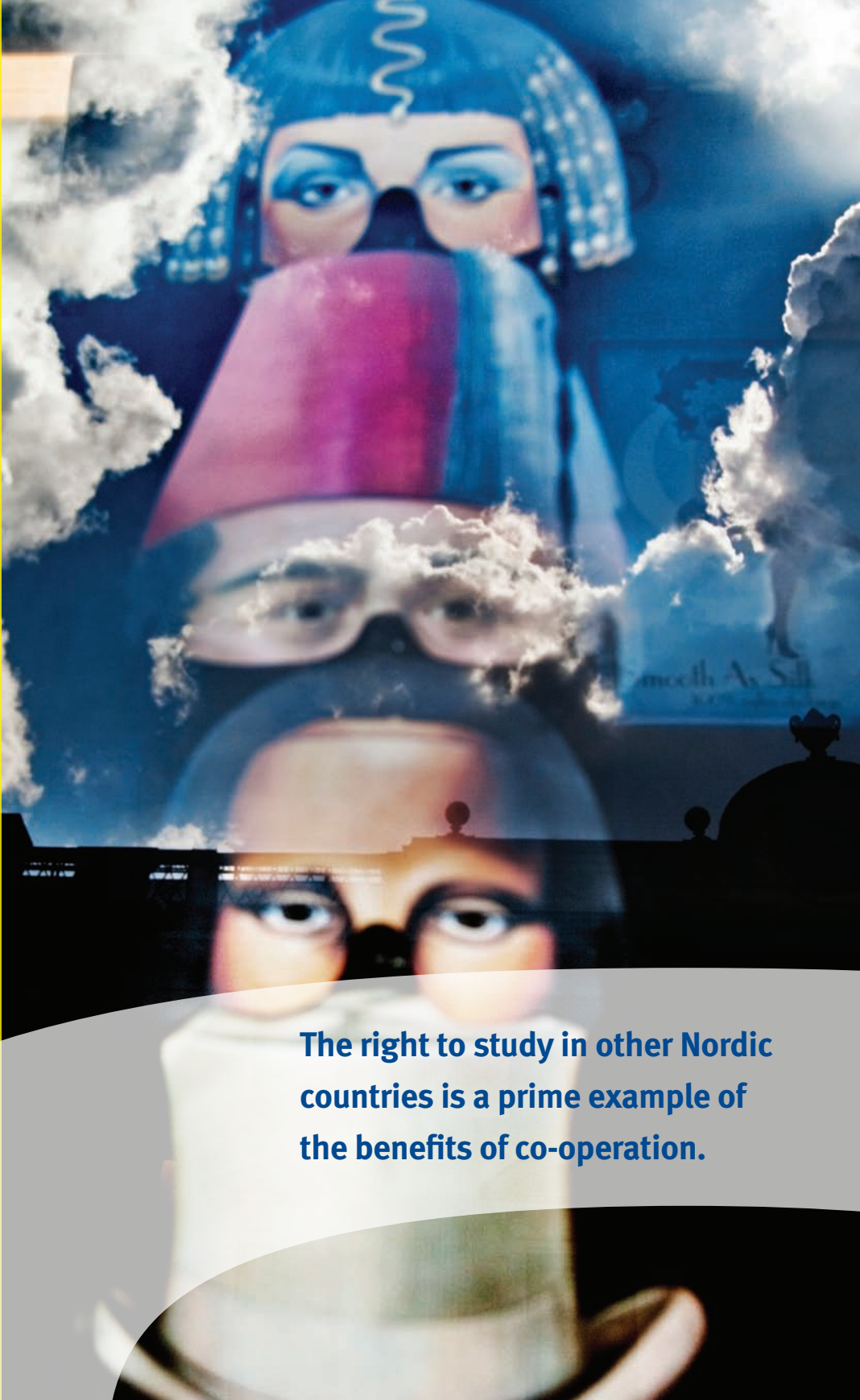
In general, both the Council and the Council of Ministers endeavour to improve growth conditions for entrepreneurs, mainly through efforts to promote freedom of movement in the Region. Supporting user-driven innovation is another top priority.

On the whole, the Nordic countries strive to ensure that both the education and business sectors are well-positioned for the future – by swapping information and discussing experiences, benchmarking against each others' performances and launching collective initiatives and activities.

FACTS

Nordic Council

The Nordic Council is the official inter-parliamentary body. Formed in 1952, it has 87 elected members from Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as the three autonomous territories (Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland). The members are all national MPs nominated by the party groups in their home parliaments. There are no direct elections to the Council. It is run by a Presidium and convenes for an annual autumn meeting called the Session, which passes recommendations to the national governments. The ongoing political work is conducted in committees and party groups.



The right to study in other Nordic countries is a prime example of the benefits of co-operation.

FACTS

Nordic Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the official inter-governmental body. The prime ministers have overall responsibility for its work. In practice, this responsibility is delegated to the ministers for Nordic co-operation and the Nordic Co-operation Committee, which co-ordinates the day-to-day work. Despite its name, the Council of Ministers, which was founded in 1971, consists of several councils. These councils meet a couple of times a year. At present, there are 11 of them, including the co-operation ministers. Decisions taken by the Council of Ministers must be unanimous. Individual cases are prepared, processed and followed up by various committees of senior officials from the member states.

The Helsinki Treaty: the cornerstone

The Helsinki Treaty regulates official co-operation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. It was signed on 23 March 1962 and came into force on 1 July 1962. The purpose of the agreement is described as follows:

“The High Contracting Parties shall endeavour to maintain and develop further co-operation between the Nordic countries in the legal, cultural, social and economic fields, as well as in those of transport and communications and environmental protection. The High Contracting Parties should hold joint consultations on matters of common interest which are dealt with by European and other international organisations and conferences.”



In the longer term, several of the Nordic countries aim to free themselves from dependency on fossil fuels without compromising standards of living or competitiveness.

Climate, environment and energy

The Nordic countries have a long and fruitful tradition of working together on climate, environment and energy issues. The Council and the Council of Ministers both prioritise these areas strongly. The climate, the environment and energy are intersectoral issues that permeate work in other sectors, e.g. research and innovation.

Ambitious targets

In the longer term, several of the countries aim to free themselves from dependency on fossil fuels without compromising standards of living or competitiveness. Green growth, energy efficiency and ambitious climate targets combine to keep the Region at the forefront of sustainable development.

Partnerships in this sphere have produced solid results not only at national level but also regionally and globally, e.g. through the EU and UN. The focus is on combating climate change and air pollution; making energy supply and the transport sector more efficient; developing new forms of energy; regulating the use and emission of hazardous chemicals; protecting marine ecosystems; and preserving biological diversity. For obvious reasons, the Baltic Sea and the

Arctic have been important areas for collaboration, but activities now extend beyond Nordic frontiers.

Several of the globalisation initiatives address environmental and energy issues. Indeed, working on these issues is the very *raison d'être* of many Nordic institutions, e.g. the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), NordForsk, Nordic Energy Research, the Nordic Innovation Centre and the Nordic Development Fund.

The Swan

One of environmental co-operation's flagship projects is the Swan Ecolabel, which makes it easier for consumers to choose environmentally friendly products. Launched in 1989, the label now appears on nearly 70 product groups and some 6,000 different products and services – from paper and detergents to toys, hotels and biofuels.

The electricity market

The harmonisation of the Nordic electricity market is another real-life example of a successful partnership. Work is fully underway and is already a shining example of how to create added value through cross-border collaboration. Many experts consider the Nordic electric-

ity market to be one of the best in the world.

Climate change

The Nordic countries assume a great deal of responsibility in the global fight against climate change, especially for the ongoing work under UN auspices. Co-operation also takes more direct forms, e.g. the Nordic Development Fund (NDF), which funds green projects in the poorest countries, e.g. in Africa and Asia.

Welfare and culture

The Nordic welfare model and the cultural affinity in the Region are both unique. Further developing the welfare model to cope with global competition, while maintaining that very affinity and cohesion, is an important aspect of co-operation.

The welfare model and core values

Work in the social and health sector is based on the common values that form the foundation for the Nordic welfare model – i.e. equal rights, equal opportunities, social solidarity and social security for all.

For decades, the countries have pursued proactive welfare policies, e.g. through conventions and formal as well as informal partnerships between public-sector bodies and service providers. As a result, the people of the Region enjoy a high level of service based on core Nordic principles and values.

A prime example of collaboration on global challenges is the globalisation initiative on health and welfare issues. Seven sub-projects focus on two themes: 1) *health (a healthy workforce and quality of life)*; and 2) *welfare (getting more people into work, skills enhancement and social inclusion)*.

Culture

Culture is one of the main components of co-operation, and has long acted as a bridge between the countries, improving understanding of the neighbouring peoples and shared values.

In recent years, the culture ministers have significantly modernised the structure for co-operation, making it more open, transparent and flexible, and ready to face the challenges posed by globalisation. The ministers have a clear vision for the future: “The objective of Nordic cultural co-operation is to preserve, encourage and showcase quality, creativity and diversity as part of a healthy and global cultural sphere.”

In practice, this entails making art and culture more visible on the global stage. The ministers’ first globalisation initiatives have already attracted international attention, e.g. the profiling of Nordic film in Toronto in 2009; Nordic landscape architecture at Expo 2010 in Shanghai; and literature in Paris in 2011.

The Nordic countries enjoy good reputations in film, music, new media, literature, architecture and design – areas that all have a long tradition in the Region and are

driven by creativity, knowledge and talent. The Region has what it takes to play a leading global role in the development of creative industries. The KreaNord project serves as the focus for work on the new experience economy.

The Region is also a world leader when it comes to democracy and dialogue. The contribution made by official Nordic co-operation on culture to international dialogue, as well as dialogue within the Region itself, will continue to play an important role in the interaction between different cultures and in the profiling of core Nordic values.

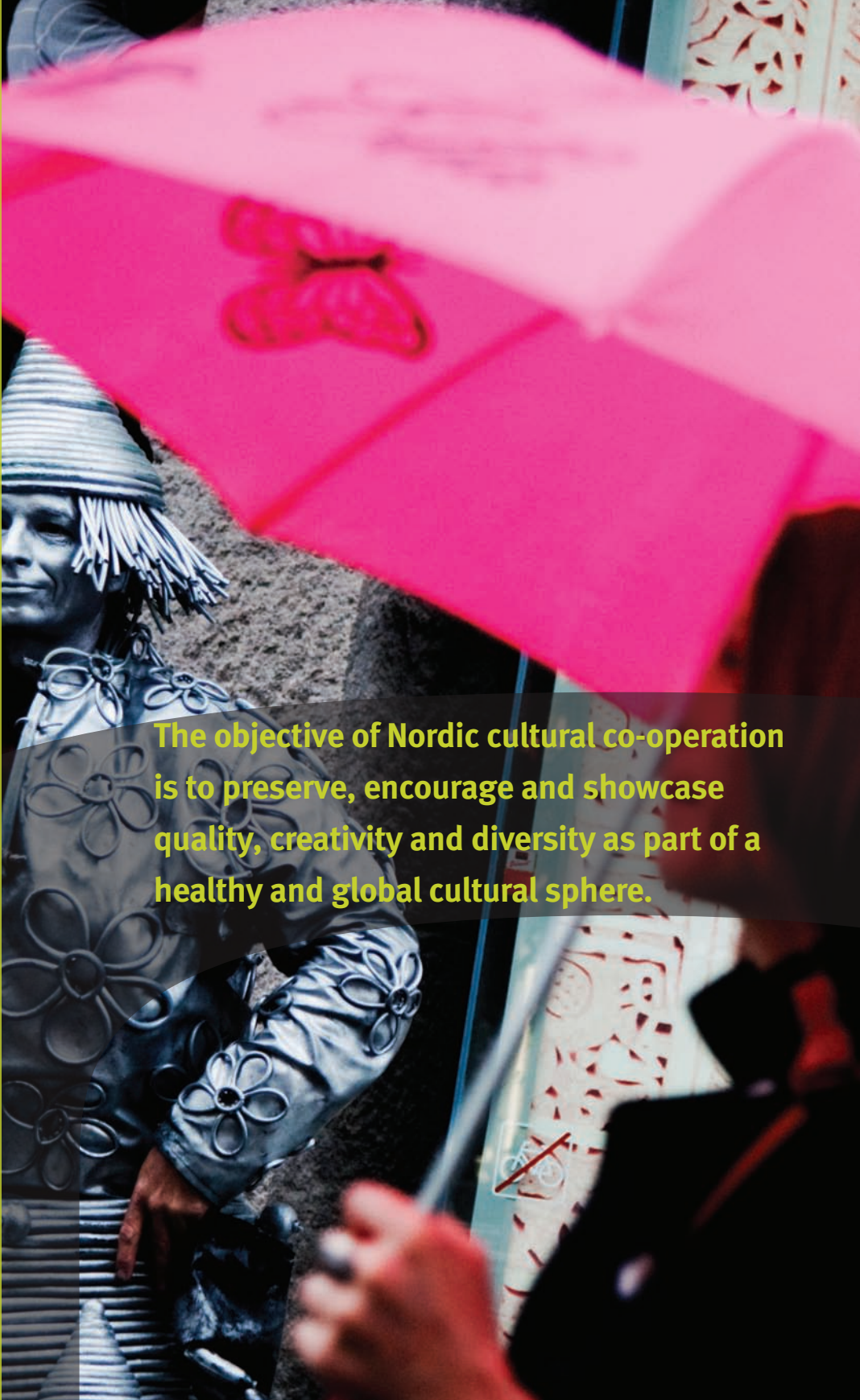
FACTS

Nordic institutions

In addition to the Council and the Council of Ministers, there are more than 20 official Nordic institutions – and about the same number of unofficial ones. The Nordic Innovation Centre (NICE), NordForsk, Nordic Culture Point, Nordic Project Fund (NOPEF), the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues and the Nordic School of Public Health (NHV) are full Nordic institutions, as are the Nordic houses in Iceland and the Faroe Islands. One of the main institutions in the second category is the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), which has been jointly owned by the five Nordic and three Baltic states since 2005. Another key organisation is the Nordic Cultural Fund, which supports culture in the Region as well as Nordic projects elsewhere in the world.

The Swan Ecolabel

The Swan is the official Nordic eco-label. The aim is a voluntary Nordic label that helps reduce the environmental impact of everyday consumption. The Swan certifies goods and services based on their environmental impacts throughout their life cycle, from raw material to waste. As well as strict climatic and environmental criteria, requirements are also placed on function and quality. The vision is of a sustainable society based on sustainable consumption.



The objective of Nordic cultural co-operation is to preserve, encourage and showcase quality, creativity and diversity as part of a healthy and global cultural sphere.



Partnerships are forged
with individual countries
and international stake-
holders at parliamentary
and governmental level
in areas of common
interest.

FACTS

Funding programmes

Nordic co-operation includes a number of funding schemes, for people and for businesses, covering a wide range of interests. One example is Nordplus, a framework programme for lifelong learning, in which the Baltic countries also take part. More than 10,000 people in the Nordic Region benefit from the programme each year. Nordplus funds, e.g. school visits between Nordic countries, development projects and the establishment of networks. Another example is the Council of Ministers' Arts and Culture Programme, which supports, e.g. production and skills enhancement in all art forms.

Nordic Council Prizes

The Nordic Council awards annual prizes in literature, music, and film to promote Nordic culture, and in nature and the environment to honour people or organisations for displaying particular initiative. The prizes are worth DKK 350,000 each.

International commitment

From Canada and the North Atlantic in the west to the Baltic and Russia in the east – the Nordic Region has wide-ranging international commitments, including partnerships with individual countries and international stakeholders at parliamentary and governmental level in areas of common interest.

The Baltic states and Russia

In 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell, the Nordic Council forged official relations with the parliaments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In 1991, the Council of Ministers opened offices in the capitals of the three Baltic states. Nowadays, the collaboration is formalised to the extent that a range of ministers from the Nordic and Baltic countries meet every two years to discuss matters of common interest.

Human trafficking is one example of a joint challenge on which the Nordic countries, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia all work together. The foundation was laid in 2001, when the Council of Ministers initiated the successful *Nordic-Baltic Campaign against Trafficking in Women*.

Efforts to improve the marine environment in the Baltic Sea are

another example of positive collaboration with the Baltic states and Russia. This work also involves other countries around the sea. Formal forums include bodies such as the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC).

One of the reasons for working with Russia is to promote democracy, open up pluralistic interrelationships across borders, and create conditions for economic partnerships and trade. The Council of Ministers has also set up offices and contact centres in Russia, which play an important role in projects involving local and regional Russian stakeholders.

Belarus

The Nordic countries are committed to democracy in Belarus. For example, the Region helps provide young Belarusians with access to higher education by working with the EU Commission to support the Belarusian university in exile, the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius, Lithuania. EHU gives approx. 1,500 young Belarusians access to humanities and social-science programmes where they enjoy full academic freedom. The Nordic Region, working hand in hand with the Baltic states, has also

helped to create a unique neutral platform for debate between opposition politicians and representatives of the ruling party in Belarus.

The Arctic

A great deal of the land mass and waters of the Nordic Region are in the Arctic. Protecting the vulnerable Arctic environment, improving living conditions and supporting indigenous people's social and cultural development are top priorities. The Region has joined forces with Canada, which also has a large Arctic area, to improve international understanding of the challenges faced by its people.

Useful websites

Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers	www.norden.org
Nordic Cultural Fund	www.nordiskkulturfond.org
Hello Norden	www.hallonorden.org
Nordic eTax	www.nordisketax.net
The NORDPLUS Framework Programme	www.nordplusonline.org
Nordic Investment Bank	www.nib.int
NordGen	www.nordgen.org
NordForsk	www.nordforsk.org
Nordregio	www.nordregio.se
Nordic Innovation Centre	www.nordicinnovation.net
Nordic Gender Institute	www.nikk.no
Nordic Project Fund	www.nopef.com
Nordic Environment Finance Corporation	www.nefco.fi
Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Estonia	www.norden.ee
Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia	www.norden.lv
Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Lithuania	www.norden.lt
Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in St. Petersburg	www.norden.ru
Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Kaliningrad	www.norden39.ru
Nordic House in Reykjavík	www.nordice.is
Nordic House in the Faroe Islands	www.nlh.fo
Nordic Institute in Finland	www.nifin.helsinki.fi
Nordic Institution in Greenland	www.napa.gl
Nordic Institute on Åland	www.nipa.ax







norden

Nordic Council of Ministers
Nordic Council

Ved Stranden 18
DK-1061 Copenhagen K
www.norden.org

ANP 2010:792
ISBN 978-92-893-2179-2

