

Meeting change

Nordic Council Programme 2008



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Nordic parliamentary co-operation aims to promote political, economic, environmental, social and other developments in the Nordic countries and in northern Europe.

The Nordic Council works in partnership with the Nordic governments on issues which create added value for the individual countries.

One such area is globalization, because all the five Nordic countries and the autonomous territories must successfully tackle a completely new competitive and production model. This is an area in which Nordic co-operation takes on new importance and creates new results for the benefit of the Nordic people. The Nordic countries have clear common positions of strength that can best be exploited on the global market through a co-ordinated strategic effort.

Counteracting climate changes will be one of the main challenges for Nordic co-operation in the coming years. The Nordic countries have every chance of succeeding in reducing the emission of greenhouse gases, despite increased energy production, by taking advantage of modern environmental technology, the use of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. However, on its own the Nordic Region has only marginal influence on the climate and its changes. This problem is very much of global proportions, and for that reason is a shared problem. Thus the solution should also be global and joint. The Nordic Council will focus on the planning of the UN's Climate Change Conference 2009 in Copenhagen to guarantee that the necessary decisions on the environment and the climate are made at the meeting.

The Nordic Council will work purposefully to ensure that the Nordic Region becomes a leader with regard to global responsibility, so that the ideas of solidarity which permeate Nordic society also come to direct the Nordic countries' actions globally. Today the Nordic countries play a central role in humanitarian work around the world. Nordic commitment to foreign and security policy matters which, amongst other things, include civil crisis management and public security, aims to strengthen the common Nordic capacity for crisis and disaster management. The Nordic countries have many years of experience and a broad expertise in these matters. Strong Nordic co-operation contributes to improving achievement capabilities both at home and internationally.



Climate and environment

If the Nordic Region is to become a global leader, industry and households must have access to secure energy supplies which are produced and distributed in a sustainable manner. Therefore energy policies must be drawn up that satisfy the environmental and climate goals on the one hand and the distribution and supply goals in the Nordic countries on the other. This demands a reduction in the use of fossil fuels and investment in a number of different environmentally-friendly and emission-free energy sources. Thus Nordic co-operation should invest in developing and using renewable energy to a much greater extent than today. It is in the common interest of the Nordic countries that the management and storage of radioactive waste takes place in accordance with the strictest imaginable security requirements.

Environmental awareness and high ambitions for the protection of the environment are important foundation stones in the Nordic winner concept. In this connection the Nordic Council will continue to co-operate with the other countries in the Baltic Sea Area to fight against, for example, the indefensibly huge discharge of nitrogen and phosphorus into the Baltic Sea. In the Nordic Council's work to further develop the Nordic Region as an influential region, Nordic branding of the environment and energy technologies, as well as the export of environmental systems, plays a very important role.

The Nordic Region as a centre for innovation and competitiveness

The Nordic Council will be focusing on the main commercial political conditions in regard to the global challenges which confront Nordic industry on a daily basis. It is a fundamental prerequisite that Nordic industry and the research institutions have the necessary global competencies. But this means knowledge and experience of new competency requirements, trade models, financial methods and inter-cultural forms of social intercourse. The Nordic Council will be co-operating with the Nordic governments to work towards globalisation issues being successful.

In addition, it is the objective of the Nordic Council to create economic resources across Nordic borders so that both new and established businesses can have easier access to start-up and investment capital. The Nordic Region should make use of its regional co-operation to a much greater extent than before, to optimise the employment of existing capital and at the same time to develop further capital for this purpose.

Education and research are crucial factors which will determine how the Nordic countries will cope in the global competitive situation. The Nordic Council will bring initiatives in this area to the fore, in particular in relation to the continued work with globalisation ventures.

Finally it is crucial for the Nordic Region to continue with development in area of innovation. This can occur through improved teamwork between scientists and innovation environments as well as between innovation environments and industry. User driven innovation is a key word in this field.





The Nordic Region and regional co-operation

As a consequence of increasing international co-operation the Nordic countries must focus to a much greater extent on regional collaboration. This is in relation to the regional dimension's growing strength in European co-operation. Therefore the Nordic Council will play an active role in the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Co-operation, in the West Nordic Region, in the Arctic and the Barents Co-operation as well as active collaboration in relation to the European Parliament. It is imperative for the Nordic countries to create an understanding of the most important challenges and co-operation issues in these regions. It is the ambition of the Nordic Council to involve its neighbours in active participation in regional co-operation.

The Nordic Welfare State

There is a clear connection between good public health and a society characterised by economic and social security. People should be able to and dare to make a career change or change job when necessary to keep abreast in the labour market. Economic stress and social insecurity cause ill health. Health, economic and social security are important factors of success if the Nordic Region is to take the lead in global competition. In this regard the Nordic Council will be focusing this year on the Nordic welfare model.

Social policy reforms are today often linked to altered economic and social structures. The Nordic countries must act so that important advances such as the eradication of poverty, the reduction of social divides and the increase of women's freedom of action are not jeopardised. An important challenge for the Nordic Council and Nordic co-operation will therefore be to draw up reform strategies which will make it possible to reconcile the commitment that applies to people's social security with an exposure to an increased integration economy.



Cultural solidarity

Cultural co-operation plays an important role in the development and preservation of regional solidarity in the Nordic countries. Cultural co-operation is one of the cornerstones of Nordic co-operation, and therefore the development of this has a high priority. In 2008 the Nordic Council will follow up this new structure for Nordic cultural co-operation and, if required, will revive necessary proposals for change. During the coming year special attention will also be directed at the opportunities for development which arise when links between culture and the business world are strengthened. Language and language comprehension are central issues in this perspective and therefore language policy matters will be important.

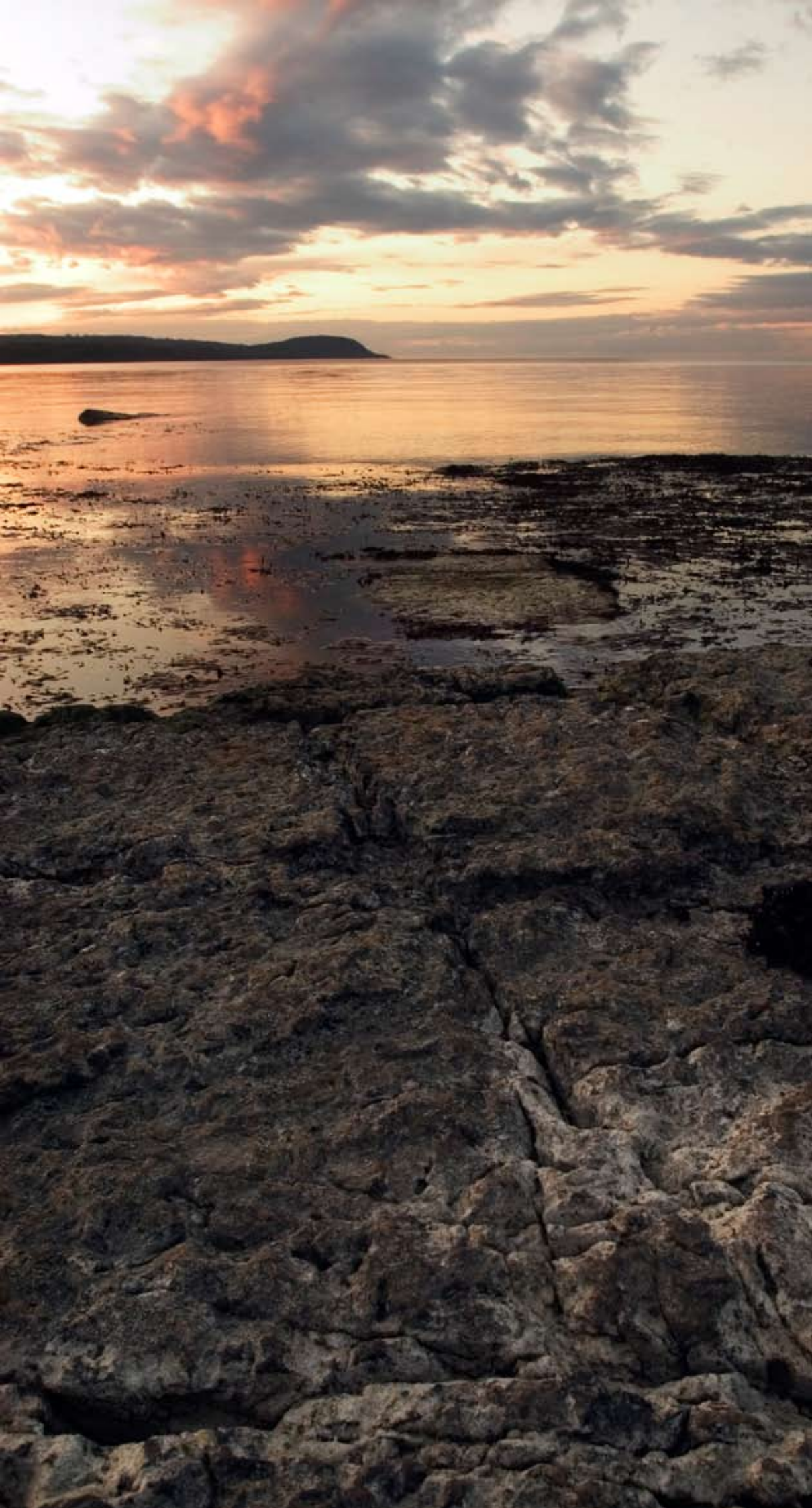
Freedom of movement in the Nordic Region

The fact that all businesses and private individuals can move around and work freely in the Nordic countries without being confronted by cross-border obstacles is a basic prerequisite for the Nordic Region being able to develop and maintain its position as a competitive region.

As the consequence of a well developed welfare system and a large public sector there are many regulations, laws and directives in different areas of society in the Nordic countries. It has been shown that these rules and laws do not always fit well between the Nordic countries. In line with the fact that Nordic people and businesses are operating more and more in two or more Nordic countries these problems are being brought to a head.

It is, however, not enough to repeal existing border obstacles. New ones arise in connection with new national legislation and in connection with national implementation of EU Directives. It is of paramount importance that there is Nordic co-ordination for these processes.

In collaboration with the Nordic governments, the Nordic Council will carefully follow the ending of the main obstacles to freedom of movement in the Nordic Region. In the same way the Nordic Council will direct special attention towards an evaluation of the new structures which are created by the Nordic governments, to see if they serve their purpose.





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Facts about the Nordic Council

In 2008 the Nordic Council will hold three joint Council meetings – in January, April and September – as well as the Council's Session in the last week of October. In addition to these the Nordic Council's committees hold separate meetings with their own theme at the end of June. The Presidency will be held by Finland in 2008.

The Nordic Council has 87 members, organized into five national and three autonomous territories' delegations. There are four party groups: The Social Democratic group, the Centre group, the Conservative group and the Left-wing Socialist Green group. Seven members in the Nordic Council do not belong to any party group. The Sami Parliamentary Council

has observer status in the Nordic Council. The Nordic Council's Secretariat is in Copenhagen.

The Nordic Council's bodies:

Presidium
Culture, Training and Education Committee
Citizens' and Consumer Rights Committee
Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Welfare Committee
Business and Industry Committee
Control Committee

Nordic Co-operation organisations:

West Nordic Council
Federation of the Norden Associations
Nordic Youth Council

International The Nordic Council's international co-operation will promote Nordic values and standpoints in the broad international context, to be a driver for parliamentary collaboration around the challenges in northern Europe and the Baltic Sea Region and contribute to influencing public opinion and initiatives around the Arctic and the Barents Regions' issues. Part of the co-operation contributes to the development of the Northern Dimension and contributes to building bridges between the EU and their eastern borders.

The Nordic Council co-operates with the Baltic Assembly (BA), Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), in which the Council is responsible, amongst other things, for the Secretariat function and holds the chairmanship of the permanent committee in 2008, the Arctic Parliamentary Committee (SCPAR) and the Council of the Russian Federation. Co-operation with the European Parliament has increased in recent years.

The Nordic Council's international contact net also covers, for example, the following organisations:
Parliamentary Assembly of Northwest Russia (PANWR)
Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council (BICC)
British-Irish Interparliamentary Body (BIIPB)
Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA)
Assembly of the West European Union (WEU PA)
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNWB)
Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS-IPA)