

Modern partnerships for a stronger Region

The Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers 2006

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Photos pp. 2, 25, 40: Pictures from “Reflections in the Northern Sky” – the international culture festival for indigenous peoples, held in Estonia. Photos pp. 2, 25 and 40: Kersti Sepper. Inset p. 25: Tiitu Kirsipuu.

Front cover: The Gogmagogs music ensemble (part of the “Disturbances” Nordic music symposium). PR shot. Back cover (small pictures): Burst. Photo: G. Magni Agústsson; Vertebra. Photo: Petri Heikkilä; URGE. Photo: Ulrik Wivel; Polaroid. Photo: © Jo Strømgren Kompani. Photo (right): The Madman’s Garden, Martin Sirkovsky. Photos pp. 1, 3, 28–29: Magnus Frölander (MF). Photos pp. 4, 9: Johannes Jansson (JJ). Photos pp. 16–17: JJ; MF; JJ; MF; MF; MF; MF; MF; MF; MF; MF; JJ; MF.

Nordic cultural co-operation was reformed radically at the end of 2006. Several institutions were discontinued and Nordic Culture Point was set up with a mandate to run multi-national and multi-genre programmes. The annual report features photographs illustrating various aspects of the multi-faceted cultural collaboration that goes on under Nordic auspices or with official Nordic support. The worlds of dance, opera, poetry and the theatre are all portrayed along with a depiction of the Nordic Computer Games programme. The photographs are from the Faroe Islands in the west all the way to Latvia in the east and include a collage from the Annual Session of the Nordic Council in Copenhagen.

Modern partnerships for a stronger Region

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The Nordic Council of Ministers

Store Strandstræde 18
DK-1255 Copenhagen K
Denmark
Telephone (+45) 3396 0200
Fax (+45) 3396 0202

The Nordic Council

Store Strandstræde 18
DK-1255 Copenhagen K
Denmark
Telephone (+45) 3396 0400
Fax (+45) 3311 1870

www.norden.org

Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation, one of the oldest and most wide-ranging regional partnerships in the world, involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands. Co-operation reinforces the sense of Nordic community, while respecting national differences and similarities, makes it possible to uphold Nordic interests in the world at large and promotes positive relations between neighbouring peoples.

Co-operation was formalised in 1952 when the Nordic Council was set up as a forum for parliamentarians and governments. The Helsinki Treaty of 1962 has formed the framework for Nordic partnership ever since. The Nordic Council of Ministers was set up in 1971 as the formal forum for co-operation between the governments of the Nordic countries and the political leadership of the autonomous areas, i.e. the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands.

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We were pleased to note the massive popular support for Nordic co-operation revealed by a 2006 opinion poll commissioned by the Nordic Council. The poll also revealed great expectations, which will drive us forward in the future.

The Nordic Council and Council of Ministers continued the modernisation process in 2006.

The 11 new councils of ministers established in 2005 developed working methods to adapt inter-governmental co-operation to European and international perspectives, and to make co-operation more relevant.

Radical reform was adopted in the culture sector, where co-operation now uses specific themes and time-limited programmes. These new programmes ensure that more resources make their way to every corner of the Region.

Reform of the social, health and labour market sectors continued with appraisals of institutions and committee structures.

In the international arena, the Council of Ministers chaired the Baltic Sea Initiative (BSI), which decided to refine its existing network and exchange programme, NordPlus, turning it into a new framework with the three Baltic States taking part on an equal footing.

A new Russia Programme was launched, as well as an educational initiative to give Belarussian students the opportunity to study at universities in Vilnius (EHU) and Ukraine. The long-planned Council of Ministers' Office opened in Kaliningrad in September. NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region worked even more closely together during the year.

Globalisation issues were high on the Nordic agenda. The annual Nordic Council Session opened with a summit that allowed more political debate than usual. Globalisation was a main theme.

2006 was also the first year of new forms of collaboration with the Baltic Assembly. Committee work on tangible issues intensified, and both organisations discussed policy issues and a joint programme.

Frida Nokken, Director, Nordic Council

Halldór Ásgrímsson, Secretary General, Nordic Council of Ministers



The Lithuanian poet Birute Mar at the Sixth Nordic Poetry Festival in Estonia. Photo: Teet Malsroos.



Photos pp. 6 and 33: Pictures from the opera Í Óðamansgarði ('The Madman's Garden'), performed in the Nordic House in Tórshavn, the Faroe Islands. Photo: Martin Sirkovsky.





The Nordic Region as a Global Winner

A recurring question throughout the year was how the Nordic countries can continue to top international studies of competitiveness, sustainable development and welfare. As a global winner, the Region has been able to provide significant support for democratisation and nation-building in Eastern Europe.

Innovation and co-operation in North Europe

Only a new Nordic Region will be able to face the challenges of globalisation, the Norwegian Presidency of the Council of Ministers decided in 2006. The programme for the year focused on three main areas:

- the Nordic welfare model
- knowledge, innovation and growth
- co-operation in North Europe.

Two main issues were also carried over from previous presidencies:

- cross-border freedom of movement
- renewal and modernisation of co-operation.

At the Session in November, the Norwegian Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Heidi Grande Røys, expressed her government's satisfaction with the way the programme was being implemented. She picked out for particular mention partnerships in the northern areas, the Russia programme, welfare issues and the reform of the Council of Ministers' budget.

The modernisation of cultural co-operation was the major reform in 2006, but it was also decided to revamp the social and health sectors.

The Nordic Summit – a new form of political dialogue

“The Nordic Region is one of the most successful regions in the world. The Nordic countries do well in global competition. This means, for example, that we dare to face the challenge of globalisation without fear of change. A global economy places demands on our level of knowledge, degree of creativity and ability to change quickly,” the President of the Nordic Council, Ole Stavad, said when he opened the Nordic Summit at the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen in October 2006. The theme was the balance between the welfare state and market forces in the Region’s struggle for a leading position in the global arena.

The Nordic Summit (at which all the prime ministers and leaders of the autonomous territories debated with opposition leaders and members of the Nordic Council) was a popular innovation at the Session, the major annual event in Nordic parliamentary co-operation.

The debate revealed strong agreement that the Nordic welfare model has helped make the Region a winner, although views differed about what reforms are needed. Real opportunities to choose private care alternatives, measures against social exclusion and poverty, and contingencies for an ageing population were some of the issues raised.

Summing up the debate, the Danish Prime Minister, Fogh Rasmussen, stressed that the prime ministers had to be committed to the Region retaining its leading position. He identified five action points: promoting freedom of movement; closer co-operation on research and innovation, especially on energy and the environment; boosting business through clusters like Medicon Valley in the Øresund Region; the joint marketing of the Nordic Region; and a Nordic Globalisation Council, provided it does not slow progress down. The ministers for Nordic co-operation will make a recommendation to the prime ministers about whether to set up a Globalisation Council.

Particular attention was also paid to the input of HRH Prince Hassan of Jordan, who attended the Session in his capacity as patron of the project “The Coexistence of

Civilisations” and listened to the Nordic response to the project’s challenges, which includes a steering group for a dialogue forum. The Nordic governments were also exhorted to define benchmarks for integration.

The status of the autonomous territories in Nordic co-operation was the subject of considerable debate, with the three autonomous areas demanding action. No decisions can be made on the issue until Session 2007, however.

Question time threw up a number of obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement. The Dankort credit system that is hindering integration in the Øresund was addressed, as were synchronised application of EU directives and taxation of pensioners. Obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement were an agenda item in their own right. Gay rights on the Faroe Islands were also discussed.

The war on trafficking and hotel prostitution, co-operation on the climate and energy, better health and quality of life, child and youth psychiatry, alcohol policy, language policy and research and innovation partnerships were all discussed at the Session.

Proposals were backed for refugees in the Nordic countries, North-West Russia and the Baltic States, for a joint Nordic action plan to combat trafficking, for a boycott of hotels that offer sexual services and to set up a web directory of hotels that do not promote sexual services.

The Session also passed a member’s proposal about adopting strong measures to improve accessibility and cut waiting lists for children and young people in the psychiatric care sector. The target is to cut the waiting time for initial consultations to 7–10 days and provide all patients with an individual treatment plan.

Decisions were also taken about co-operation on biofuels and measures to accelerate the removal of the remaining obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement.

Finland presented “A Region of Opportunity – close to you”, its programme for the Presidency of the Council



*Nordic Council president
Ole Stavad*

of Ministers 2007, which prioritises competitiveness, welfare, research partnerships, innovation and making Nordic co-operation more visible. Work on the Northern Dimension will continue during the Finnish Presidency of the EU, and other priorities include Baltic issues, sustainable development, sustainable energy policy and freedom of movement.

The ministers of defence and foreign affairs reported back on the campaign against trafficking, co-operation in the northern territories, UN reform and the war on terror. Defence and security, fighting poverty, protecting fish stocks and the Darfur crisis were some of the challenges faced during the year.

The prime ministers held a meeting during the Session, and also met with their Baltic counterparts. They discussed freedom of movement and energy in the Baltic Sea Region. The foreign ministers also met, and discussed relations with Russia and the defence policy situation in Iceland.

The meeting between the Council Presidium and the prime ministers discussed "The Nordic Region as a Global Winner" and the status of the autonomous territories. The meeting between the Presidium and the foreign ministers was dominated by discussion of co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region and cultural co-existence. The Presidium talked about future of collaboration with the Baltic Assembly, signed an agreement with the West Nordic Council and discussed its budget and programme with the Nordic parliaments.

The President of the Saami Parliament in Norway, Aili Keskitalo, submitted a draft Nordic Saami Convention covering Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway.

The MPs, ministers, guests from the Baltic States, Russia and other parts of the world, and the many journalists who attended Session enjoyed a number of other activities, including the award ceremony for the Nordic Council prizes in literature, music, film and the environment in the Tivoli Concert Hall.

Dagfinn Høybråten (Norway) was elected President of the Nordic Council 2007. The outgoing President, Ole Stavad, devoted his attention to developing the welfare model as an instrument of competition in the global economy, closer Baltic co-operation (especially with Russia) and freedom of movement. He also advocated changes in the way Session works to help improve debate. Stavad will remain a member of the Presidium and chair of the Social Democratic Group in 2007.

Nordic synergies – research, innovation and knowledge

Research, innovation and knowledge generation, indispensable elements of the winning strategy, were prioritised by the Council of Ministers in 2006. They were also raised at the Nordic Council Summit, when the Danish Prime Minister proposed investments in the environment and energy, in NordForsk¹⁾ and in the Nordic Innovation Centre²⁾ (NICE).

The Nordic organ for research co-ordination, NordForsk, put out to tender two calls for new Centres of Excellence. A total of NOK 165 million will be invested over five years, 75 million for welfare research and 90 million for food nutrition and health.

The Danish and Norwegian research ministers presented NordForsk's "Nordic Synergies" report at a fringe event during the Session. It contains 40 interpretations of the Nordic synergy concept.

New Nordic Food and environmentally-friendly energy technology

Launched by the Council of Ministers at the 2006 Session, "New Nordic Food" aims to publicise Nordic values and make the Region more competitive in the global market, by linking gastronomy, business development, raw materials and tourism. The initiative targets local and international markets.

Eleven food ambassadors were appointed to spread the message, including celebrity chefs Tina Nordström (Sw), René Redzepi (DK) and Kim Palhus (Fin).

The Council of Ministers earmarked DKK 23 million for the three-year programme, the Nordic Innovation Centre (NICE) NOK 10 million.

Nordic Energy Research earmarked NOK 86.5 million for 16 research projects that will contribute to a European strategy for sustainable, competitive and safe energy supplies. The idea is to make the Region a leading knowledge supplier for environmentally-friendly energy solutions and efficient energy markets. The projects include the Baltic States and North-West Russia.

Five environmental technology projects in Sweden, Denmark and Finland shared NOK 10 million from the Nordic Innovation Centre (NICE). The projects deal with issues such as water purification, nanotechnology, raw materials for manufacturing chemicals, and biofuels, as well as venture capital for environmental technology.

A NOK 10 million investment from NICE helped the creative industries launch projects about funding solutions and clusters, copyright and intellectual capital, industrial design and interdisciplinary initiatives in the digital world.

NICE also announced NOK 22 million in December for projects that develop innovation policy in the fields of regional innovation and user-driven innovation.

Investing in research and innovation

The EU Commissioner for Science and Research, Janez Potočnik, and the Norwegian research minister were among more than 250 delegates from 25 countries who attended the conference "Investing in Research and Innovation – Exchanging European Experiences in a Nordic Context", organised by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU Commission. Potočnik praised Nordic investments in research and development – Sweden and Finland are the only EU countries to invest more than 3% of GDP.

Two reports presented to the conference were used as the basis for governmental co-operation: "Building Nordic Strength Through More Open R & D Funding" and "Nordic Innovation – Strategies and means for increased co-operation between research and business in the Nordic countries".

1

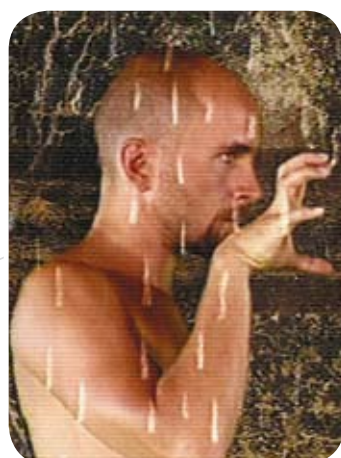
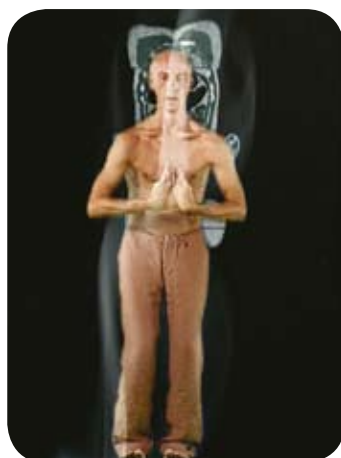
NordForsk is responsible for co-operation on research and researcher training, as well as for co-ordinating with the Nordic Innovation Centre. It concentrates on areas in which Nordic science is particularly strong or already leads the world.

2

The Nordic Innovation Centre promotes knowledge-intensive business and freedom of movement in an efficient Nordic inner market.



The pictures on pp. 11, 22, 36 and 38–39 are from “Ziemeļu pavasaris” (“Nordic Spring”), which in 2006 was held for the second year in a row by the Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Latvia, in collaboration with the Nordic embassies and the Danish Cultural Institute. The joint Nordic cultural programme featured more than 50 different events. Page 36 features young Latvian designers making products for urban environments (“Design for Urban Environment”). The closing event of “Nordic Spring” featured the Skandinieki folk singers celebrating the Summer Solstice, along with the Nordic embassies and the Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Latvia (pp. 38–39). Guests at the closing party each received a gift – a small birch tree to plant. Photo p. 36: Karlina Vītolīņa. Other photo: The Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Riga.



*Vertebra. Still pictures from
"Moving North: 10 Short Dance Films".
Photo: Petri Heikkilä.*

In 2006, a group of researchers compiled a report about the PISA³⁾ process in the Nordic Region for mathematics, natural science and literacy. “Northern Lights on PISA 2003” was presented at a conference in Oslo in May.

Literacy skills are crucial to progress at school as well as in working life. The Norwegian Presidency commissioned a study of literacy in the Region from a gender perspective. “Literacy Skills in the Nordic Region” was published in October to coincide with the Session.

The Nordic Network for Adult Learning (NVL), which was launched in 2005, achieved positive results in 2006 at the juncture between policy and practice. On behalf of the NVL steering group, the Danish University of Education conducted a study of the workplace as a learning environment. The main conclusion was that, “The most effective learning arises when formal and informal learning are integrated, i.e. when learning on courses and learning at work are integrated.”

The education ministers extended the 2006 agreement between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden on access to higher education and training to cover 2007–2009. The agreement includes a payment plan under which countries’ contributions are regulated via the Council of Ministers’ budget.

Baltic Sea Region Innovation Net

A new innovation project was launched in September, covering the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions. The three-year project aims to promote innovation and clusters. The main target groups are businesses and organisations. The project is a tangible European example of cross-national innovation promotion, and an important step in the Region’s fulfilment of the EU’s amended Lisbon agenda. The project is being run by the Nordic Innovation Centre (NICE).

The Nordic welfare model

The Nordic welfare model represents one approach to global competition. The Council of Ministers’ five-year welfare research programme, completed in spring 2006, presented a number of relevant results. Nordic women have children increasingly late in life, risking leaving it too late. In the long term, this can have negative effects on the Nordic model, with each person of working age in 2025 being expected to provide for 0.84 people in addition to him – or herself (compared with 0.65 in 2000). A comprehensive family policy will be

needed to cope with this, as well as measures to keep older workers in the labour market. Couples living in “equality-light” relationships are thought to be more likely to have children.

Leading politicians, researchers, employers and trade unionists contributed to the debate on “What lies ahead for the Nordic model?” Published by the Council of Ministers and the Mandag Morgen think-tank, this looks at the strengths and weaknesses of the model as well as the most important challenges, and formed the basis for a panel debate at a fringe event during the Session, when business representatives stated that the model would not work without well-educated immigrants as well as others willing to work in the care sector.

Early in the year, the Norwegian Presidency set up a 14-strong youth panel. The panel decided to prioritise environmental issues, making it easier to live and study in neighbouring countries and developing the welfare model. It presented its proposals to a meeting of ministers for Nordic co-operation in December.

Gender equality is important in the Nordic welfare model. A new equality programme was launched in early 2006. It focuses on gender and power, gender and youth, and gender, culture and communication. The equality ministers discussed with the youth panel how to involve youngsters in equality work. They also devoted time to combating trafficking and prostitution, and discussed leadership and political decision-making from a gender perspective, a topic the ministers also discussed with their Baltic colleagues.

Work on a welfare portal commenced in 2006. It will include web-based courses and conferences, and news from the welfare sector, and will act as a discussion forum and on-line library. The other bodies behind the portal are: Nordic Co-operation on Disability, Nordic School of Public Health, Nordic Education Programme for Social Service Development and Nordic Staff Training Centre for Deaf Blind Services.

Freedom of movement

Many obstacles still exist to cross-border freedom of movement in the Nordic Region, and new ones are arising. The removal of these obstacles is an important measure in the endeavours to make the Region more competitive. The Nordic Council discussed creating

an Nordic Ombudsman for Freedom of Movement to speed up the process. Session announced funding for initiatives proposed by the Council of Ministers, and stated that, in future, it wanted measures to be linked to deadlines for implementation.

In 2006, obstacles to freedom of movement between Norway and Sweden were mapped out as part of the Council of Ministers' plan to inventory the problems faced by citizens in border regions. The public was exhorted to report any problems experienced when moving, working and studying between Norway and Sweden, to Hello Norden or BorderService. Help was given to people caught up in bureaucracy between the countries.

The ability to receive television programmes in the border districts between Sweden and Norway after digitalisation; the debit card Dankort, which is a problem for cross-border commuters; and tax issues for pensioners – these were some of the issues Council members took up during the year. The governments promised to look into them all.

Information and pro-active measures

Fifteen information seminars were held in the Region in 2006 to train people to deal with inter-Nordic tax, social security and labour market questions. The seminars were run by various border committees and bilateral information services, under the auspices of Hello Norden. Approximately 500 administrative officers improved their competencies as a result.

In 2006, an “instigator” was appointed to promote freedom of movement for businesses. The instigator reports to the ministers for trade and industry, but can also make direct approaches to civil servants. A similar mandate was adopted for the social and health sector in 2006.

A new model to improve administrative procedures for early retirement was adopted in 2006. Countries will now provide clearer information to each other about the documentation required.

A tele-medicine forum was launched in June 2006 to identify and suggest solutions for tangible obstacles to freedom of movement in tele-medicine.

In June 2006, the social and health ministers decided to set up a social security portal and associated virtual office modelled on the virtual Nordic tax office.

Hello Norden was given a new, extended remit in 2006, and now provides guidance for companies as well.

The new personal registration agreement signed by the governments in 2004 has been ratified. New rules about the electronic exchange of personal records when moving between Nordic countries came into force at the end of the year.

The Nordic Region in the world

Throughout 2006⁴⁾, the Council and Council of Ministers focused closely on international co-operation within the Region, as a part of the Baltic Sea Region and in the wider European context, mainly the EU.

Co-operation with Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and North-West Russia has been reinforced and topical projects with other regional organisations developed.

4

The Nordic Council of Ministers publishes an annual account of all its international activities. The Nordic Region in an International Perspective – Nordic co-operation in a European Framework 2006 (ANP 2006:754) is available in Scandinavian and in English on www.norden.org.



*Top: Nordic Resort. NordScen's artist-in-residence programme. Photo: Marianne Lumholdt.
Inset: Xavier Le Roy in Self: Unfinished.
Photo: Katrin Schoof.*

Bottom: "Disturbances" at the Charlottenborg Exhibition Building. Photo: Torben Eskerod.



Nordic Council session in Copenhagen November 2006









Kārlis Vērdiņš from Latvia and Tõnis Mägi from Estonia at the piano during the Sixth Nordic Poetry Festival in Estonia. Photo: Teet Malsroos.

Around the Baltic Sea

The Council of Ministers chaired the Baltic Sea Initiative (BSI) in 2006. The BSI is a “network of networks” promoting competitiveness and sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. Priorities in 2006 included developing a framework, promoting competitive conditions for business clusters, research and innovation, the integration of financial markets and the marketing of the Baltic Sea Region.

The Council of Ministers and the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) financed a mapping exercise of the Baltic Sea Region’s competitiveness, economic development and prosperity, which was published in the 2006 “State of the Region” report. It also looked at the Region’s fulfilment of the EU’s Lisbon agenda.

Closer contacts were forged with Germany and Poland in 2006. Opportunities for the Council of Ministers to co-operate on projects with the North German states and at federal German level were discussed. Co-operation with Poland was addressed, e.g. by opening up the Council of Ministers’ funding programme for NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region, and through the Nordic conference, “Nordic States – Poland’s Perspectives on Co-operation in the Field of EU Eastern Policy” in Warsaw in November.

The Baltic Euroregional Network (BEN), is funded by the EU’s Interreg programme, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the CBSS. The Council of Ministers’ Office in Lithuania is organising the work, which involves 35 partners from nine countries. BEN’s main aim is to build networks of local stakeholders in the Region, and to facilitate exchanges of experience between Nordic border regions and economically weaker regions on the EU’s outer borders.

Early in the year, a further dimension was added to the Council of Ministers’ commitment to BEN. A new project, BEN-EAST, financed by the EU’s TACIS programme, will facilitate the integration of further Russian and Belarussian partners into existing activities and new BEN activities commencing in April 2007. The Council of Ministers’ Office in Saint Petersburg is the leading partner in BEN-EAST.

The Council of Ministers also took part in inter-governmental co-operation to promote sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region (known as Baltic 21).

Co-operation between Baltic MPs

Among the issues discussed by the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) in 2006 were fisheries, the marine environment and the EU’s Northern Dimension. The parliamentarians wanted topics such as energy safety and transport added to Northern Dimension co-operation on the environment and social conditions. Close attention was paid to eutrophication (over-fertilisation) of the Baltic Sea. A special working party focused intensively on this during 2006, and their provisional report was discussed at the Baltic Sea conference in Reykjavik in September.

The Northern Dimension

“The Northern Dimension is an important tool for committing all the countries in North Europe to a constructive dialogue for the mutual benefit of all. Russia’s constructive and positive commitment during the new phase of the Northern Dimension bodes well for European co-operation,” Per Unkel, then Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, said at a conference

in Tallinn about the EU's Northern Dimension in June 2006. The Council of Ministers integrates the Dimension into its own policies.

In 2006, the Council of Ministers focused on the EU's second action plan for the Northern Dimension, as well as contributing input to the new framework document adopted in November 2006. The Council of Ministers ran 94 projects addressing most of the action plan's priorities during 2006. Over 20% of the Council of Ministers' budget of just under DKK 840 million, is estimated to go towards co-operation with Russia and the Baltic States.

Closer co-operation with other regional organisations – the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the Arctic Council and the Barents Council – is also based on the priorities of the new framework, e.g. the environment/ climate and business development.

The CBSS and the Council of Ministers helped develop the Northern Dimension's partnership for public health and social well-being during 2006. The Council also initiated projects in the Baltic States and North-West Russia directed at vulnerable children and youngsters with disabilities and their families, as well as projects involving preventative measures to combat trafficking. The Council of Ministers and the CBSS have also been committed to co-operation on IT within the Northern Dimension, e.g. in the Northern eDimension Action Plan (NeDAP), which drew to a close in 2006.

The Council of Ministers has been active in the Northern Dimension's partnership for the environment, through the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO). In 2006, NEFCO financed 42 projects in North-West Russia covering water and waste treatment, district heating and nuclear waste. Through the Barents Hot Spots Facility, NEFCO is also active in a further 26 projects in North-West Russia.

The Council of Ministers also closely followed the consequences of EU enlargement on the labour market in 2006. At their October meeting in Oslo, the ministers of labour discussed national experiences of immigrant

labour, in particular from the Baltic States and Poland. The subject was also touched on at the conference on "The Consequences of Globalisation for the Labour Markets in the Nordic Region" in November in Oslo.

Fifteen years working with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

The accession of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the European Union heralded the dawn of a new phase in co-operation, in which joint activities will be pursued on an equal footing. The individual ministerial councils now work more closely with their Baltic counterparts. In 2006, Nordic-Baltic meetings were held up to ministerial level in the justice, education, gender equality, fisheries, agriculture, food, forestry, environment and energy sectors.

Specific projects involving the Council of Ministers and its Baltic partners were launched on the working environment, gender equality, plant genetics, media and communications research, bio-energy and industrial research.

The Council of Ministers' mobility programme for knowledge building and networking plans to offer research scholarships to Baltic and Russian civil servants for work experience at Nordic institutions. In 2006, approximately DKK 10 million was earmarked for Baltic participation in the programme.

In 2006, negotiations were concluded with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to include them in the NordPlus programme from 2008. NordPlus is funded on a pro rata basis according to gross national incomes. Planning for Baltic participation in Nordplus 2008–2011 started in 2006 and will continue throughout 2007.

Agreement was reached in 2006 to open up the IT research programme Nordunet3 to Baltic participation.

15th anniversary

Throughout 2006, the Council of Ministers' offices increased their level of co-operation with the Nordic embassies in the Baltic States. The most recent joint activity was a conference on regional branding held in Tallinn in November 2006. The offices facilitate contact between potential partners.

To mark their 15th anniversary, the offices held conferences on growth and welfare in Riga and Tallinn. In Vilnius, the focus was on the issues of integration and identity around the Baltic Sea. The events concluded that there is considerable interest in strengthening and further developing Nordic-Baltic co-operation in specific areas.

*HCA – Prinsessen og Fyrtøjet
(The Princess and the Lighter).
Screenshots from the computer game
developed by Danish games develo-
per Guppyworks. The game received
a development grant from the Nordic
computer games programme and was
named Danish Game of the Year 2006.*





In December 2006, the Council of Ministers' offices hosted a roadshow about sustainable development in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. One of its themes was sustainable production and consumption, particularly of energy.

The Vilnius office plays a pivotal role in supporting the democratisation process in Belarus. The co-operation with the EU Commission to support the European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius would not have been possible without the office.

NGOs play a prominent role in the Council of Ministers' co-operation with the Baltic States and North-West Russia. This is illustrated by a Nordic-Baltic NGO programme, as well as a funding programme for NGO activities in the Baltic Sea Region based on Nordic, Baltic/Polish and Russian/Belarusian tripartite co-operation. The Nordic offices in the three Baltic capitals are also key players in this dynamic form of collaboration.

Joint programme

Nordic and Baltic parliamentarians marked the 15th anniversary of co-operation with a summit in Vilnius in December 2006 involving the Nordic Council and the Baltic Assembly. What will become an annual event included freedom of movement for employees between Baltic and Nordic countries, trafficking, energy and

dialogue with Russia. The meeting also adopted a programme for co-operation in 2007, which prioritises energy issues.

A seminar on trafficking and prostitution held in April 2006 was an example of a new form of co-operation. Representatives of Nordic and Baltic parliamentary committees decided they should work more closely with North-West Russia to combat trafficking and to provide more information to women deceived into prostitution by false promises of work in the West.

Nordic and Baltic politicians met in Palanga, Lithuania in May, to discuss contingencies for emergency situations, organised crime, natural disasters, avian flu, vaccine production and terrorism.

North-West Russia

From the perspective of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the most important examples of co-operation with Russia in 2006 were:

- the opening of the Council of Ministers' Office in Kaliningrad in September
- the mobility programme for knowledge and network building
- the funding programme for NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region.

Networking with parliamentarians from North-West Russia also continued.

Kaliningrad Office

“North-West Russia and the whole of the Baltic Sea Region are developing positively in many ways, and the people of Kaliningrad should be part of that process. The Nordic office will help make that happen. The office will represent the Council of Ministers and will act in the best interests of all the Nordic countries and our partners,” said the Norwegian Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Heidi Grande Røys, when the Council of Ministers officially opened its new office in Kaliningrad in September 2006. Like the Saint Petersburg office, it will co-ordinate local activities.

The new office has already launched a number of initiatives. A conference on social inclusion and handicapped children was held at Kant University in November 2006 in conjunction with the regional government and the Russian NGO “Maria”. Nordic Co-operation on Disability also took part.

Mobility programme

The Council of Ministers intends to invest approximately DKK 22.5 million in long-term knowledge transfer and network development work in North-West Russia as part of the new mobility programme. Approximately 500 Russians will receive scholarships every year to study public administration, education and training, research, business and civic society.

The joint Nordic-Russian programme is being developed by official bodies, universities and organisations, and will provide civil servants, teachers, researchers, politicians, artists, journalists and NGOs in the Nordic Region and North-West Russia with access to training and work experience.

The NGO programme

The Council of Ministers has traditionally enjoyed close relations with the voluntary sector. A new strategy for this co-operation was adopted by the ministers for Nordic co-operation in 2006. It gives NGOs the opportunity to contribute their experience before the Council of Ministers makes important decisions. Regular meetings will be held with the NGO’s Nordic co-ordinating body to address general questions as well as specific themes.

This strategy will be developed in discussions between individual councils of ministers and NGOs. The new strategy was discussed and adopted by the Session in November 2006.

In October 2006, the Council of Ministers introduced a funding programme for NGOs in the Baltic Sea Region, aimed at strengthening civic society in the Region. The part of the programme dealing with co-operation with the Nordic Region’s neighbours to the East is designed to achieve this through cross-border partnerships. To be eligible for funding, a project must have at least one Nordic, one Baltic or Polish and one Russian or Belarusian partner.

The budget for NGO activities is approximately DKK 5 million per annum, of which roughly one million is earmarked for Nordic-Baltic projects.

Networks for MPs

In spring 2006, 13 Russian MPs took part in the Nordic Council exchange programme. They visited Oslo and Stockholm, where they held talks with their Nordic colleagues about parliamentary work, local and regional autonomy, Barents co-operation, innovation and health.

The Nordic Council has also initiated contact with North-West Russia’s parliamentary assembly, which involves 11 regional legislative assemblies, and has discussed potential partnerships on the environment, health and local and regional autonomy.

The North

Prioritisation of Europe’s northern areas entails stressing the importance of existing co-operation with the three Baltic States, North-West Russia, the Barents Council, the Arctic Council, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the EU.

The Barents Council

During 2006, the Council of Ministers engaged in close dialogue with the Barents Council about joint activities on the climate, indigenous peoples and economic development. At the end of the year, they reached agreement on two pilot projects: a climate project to highlight ecological changes in the Barents Region; and a project involving indigenous peoples that focuses on family-based entrepreneurship.

The Arctic Council

Co-operation with the Arctic Council continued in 2006. The Council of Ministers' own Arctic programme dealt with indigenous peoples' living conditions and development opportunities, and research, with an emphasis on International Polar Year 2007–2008, climate change and toxic substances. A new environmental strategy for the Arctic Region, focusing on pollution and the climate, was also approved. The Council of Ministers' involvement in the Arctic Region, and its co-operation with the Arctic Council, are part of the Northern Dimension's new framework.

The environment and disease in the Barents

Early in 2006, a Barents parliamentary meeting was held to follow up on the large Bodø conference in 2005. The environment, health and business development were the main themes. Russia proposed a permanent parliamentary forum for Barents co-operation, and was also interested in a new partnership for economic development in the Region and closer partnerships on health and social issues.

The meeting also discussed climate issues, contagious diseases and indigenous peoples. The Council Session decided to devote greater energy to contagious diseases in the Barents Region, e.g. within the Northern Dimension partnership on health.

Parliamentary co-operation on the Arctic

Eleven countries attended the seventh parliamentary Arctic conference in Kiruna in August 2006. The main topics were International Polar Year 2007–2008, a binding agreement for the Arctic Region and the opening of an Arctic channel. Delegates included MPs from Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the USA and the European Parliament, as well as representatives of the indigenous peoples, other parliaments and governments, and inter-parliamentary organisations.

During 2006, the Nordic Council demanded that the governments ensure clearer focus on Arctic issues within the EU's Northern Dimension, and that the Arctic Council draw up minimum environmental standards for offshore activities.





The West Nordic Region and its neighbours

Throughout 2006, the organisation for North Atlantic border region co-operation, NORA, strove to build networks with the Nordic Region's neighbours in the west. NORA's annual conference was held in Canada in November 2006, on "Creative Solutions for Small Coastal Communities".

The West Nordic countries and their neighbours are involved in three Arctic projects mapping out relationships between lifestyle and pollution, and the health of indigenous peoples in the Atlantic and European parts of the Arctic Region. Thirteen environment projects with a West Nordic focus were funded by the Arctic programme in 2006. For example, a project was launched to increase the use of renewable energy in sparsely populated areas, in the first instance Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

During 2006, the fisheries ministers pushed for the stricter control of illegal fishing. An informal meeting of West Nordic fisheries ministers was also held. A new agreement between the Nordic Council and the West Nordic Council to share resolutions and recommendations was signed in autumn 2006.

Belarus

The Nordic Council of Ministers' and EU Commission project to support democratic developments in Belarus is a prime example of a tangible activity in which co-operation has made a difference. It shows that the Nordic countries act on the basis of common values, guided by democracy and civic rights. It is also a good example of collaboration with the EU.

Along with the EU, Finland and Sweden, the Council of Ministers began funding the Belarussian exile European Humanities University (EHU) in Vilnius in 2005. Combined with another joint project with the EU Commission launched in September 2006, it now facilitates three-year degree programmes for 550 Belarussian students at EHU.



Another scholarship programme provides some 100 Belarussian students with the opportunity to continue or complete their studies, mainly in Ukraine.

At a fringe event during the Session in November 2006, the Rector of the EHU, Anatoly Michailov, and students Anna, Siarhei and Anastasia, emphasised the importance of these projects for progress in Belarus and for the level of education achieved by the individual students.

Coexistence or no existence

In the wake of the Danish cartoons crisis, "The Coexistence of Civilizations" project presented the Nordic Council with five challenges in September. The project was launched by Mandag Morgen to promote dialogue between cultures and religions and encourage multicultural coexistence. The five challenges were: to guarantee freedom of religion; to empower the powerless; to create space for coexistence; to guarantee an independent judiciary; and to balance the security and coexistence agendas.

Inge Lønning took up the challenges on behalf of the Nordic Council, saying that regional co-operation and the absence of conflict between neighbours – i.e. the Nordic norm – constitutes a solid foundation for coexistence. He also said that the Nordic Region's perception of itself had been changed by the Danish cartoon crisis.

*URGE. Stills from “Moving North:
10 Short Dance Films”.
Photo: Ulrik Wivel.*



The Nordic Council discussed the challenges at a meeting in Lahti in September 2006 and the Session adopted the following principles:

- cope with cultural complexity
- interrelationships, not isolation
- security and freedom
- freedom of expression and responsibility
- individuals, not stereotypes.

The Nordic Youth Council contributed to the fifth of these principles with a project based on the notion that cultural understanding starts with one individual at a time.

HRH Prince Hassan of Jordan accepted the Council's response in his capacity as patron of "The Coexistence of Civilizations". The Prince used statistics to paint a sombre picture of the situation in the Middle East. He also stressed that the Nordic Region is capable of playing an important role in promoting world peace, and that Nordic and Baltic co-operation could serve as a model for world peace. He added that the Nordic Region can provide moral support for the Middle East peace process.



*Göran Sonnevi, winner of the Literature Prize,
and Josef Fares, winner of the Film Prize.*



Region of culture

A new structure has been adopted for Nordic co-operation on culture, which is now based on time-limited programmes on particular themes that transcend genres.

Other important events in the cultural sphere included the announcement of the annual prizes, a new language declaration and a new role for NGOs.

Nordic Culture Point

Three new programmes are to be launched by a new institution, Nordic Culture Point, which is based in Helsinki. The programmes will have three-year action plans based on the arm's-length principle and continuous dialogue, and will be politically and artistically relevant. The programmes are: Nordic Co-operation on Art and Culture, the Nordic Game Programme and the Mobility and

Residence Programme. Nordic Culture Point will provide information and advice and process applications.

The Nordic Cultural Fund and the Nordic Film and TV Fund will be retained as part of the new cultural set-up. The Nordic houses of culture and cultural institutions will be beefed up, and serve as new contact points and platforms for co-operation.

Nordic Co-operation on Art and Culture

The programme covers all areas of art and culture. It encourages artists and cultural stakeholders to explore new forms of co-operation that transcend traditional demarcation lines.

The programme is directed at groundbreaking artists and art and culture projects, and at artists, communica-



The President of the Nordic Council, Ole Stavad, awards the Music Prize to Natasha Barrett.

tors and producers from all parts of the culture and heritage industries. The aim is to stimulate new impulses and dialogue with local and national bodies.

Nordic Game Programme

The programme commenced with a pilot project in 2006. It aims to provide access to high quality Nordic games and a streamlined infrastructure for developers, producers and distributors.

A major conference was held, at which the Norwegian Minister of Culture announced funding for five projects.

Mobility and Residence Programme

The programme provides grants for travel, network-building and field trips. It is open to professional

artists, practitioners, communicators, producers and cultural stakeholders from all sectors.

Prizes for The Ocean, Zozo and acousmatic music

“Zozo”, Josef Fares’ autobiographical film about children escaping war-torn Beirut for Sweden, won the Nordic Council Film Prize 2006. Fares shared the prize with producer Anna Anthony. “Zozo” is a poignant and pertinent film about a child’s survival strategy in the face of war, grief and an alien culture,” the judges commented.

Several of the nominated films were about children, tackling themes like the conditions they grow up in and parents who let them down.

The Swedish poet Göran Sonnevi won the Literature Prize for his collection, "The Ocean". The judging panel said, " "The Ocean" is a sea of words in which to submerge and be engulfed. The collection stretches over a life of poetry that is still in progress, probing and dynamic."

The English musician Natasha Barrett, who lives in Norway, won the Music Prize for her acousmatic work "...fettters...", CDs of which were handed out at the Session.

Nordic languages are cool

In a world of increasing linguistic decay, it is important to maintain the ability of the Nordic languages to service a modern society.

A new language declaration adopted in 2006 states that all Nordic citizens should be proficient in the language spoken where they live, and that everyone, irrespective

of background, has the right to use and improve their native language. All Nordic citizens should be able to communicate with each other. Their primary language should be a Scandinavian one but they should also strive to learn at least one major foreign language.

Linguistic communities are basic to Nordic co-operation; they are also a prerequisite of a joint education and labour market. Film, music and literature play an important role in linguistic understanding; conscious use of Nordic cultural output makes youngsters aware that their languages are cool too.

The language declaration is not legally binding but has great symbolic value, and is an important political document.

Culture night with a Nordic taste

More than 2,500 people visited the Council and Council of Ministers event, "A Taste of the Nordic Region" in the Secretariat during Copenhagen's Culture Night in October 2006. The event offered music, literature and food, with a menu featuring New Nordic Food from every corner of the Region. Visitors said it was Michelin class. Athela's Sinfonietta Copenhagen provided the entertainment, along with former winners of the Music Prize, Palle Mikkelborg and Helen Davies Mikkelborg. In the literary salon, the Icelandic author and former winner of the Literature Prize, Einar Már Gudmundsson,





The Polaroid dance performance, Jo Strømngren Kompani. Polaroid had its world premiere in Greenland in 2006. Photo: Bo Kleffel. © Jo Strømngren Kompani.



was to be found in conversation with the critic, Erik Skyum-Nielsen. The President of the Nordic Council, Ole Stavad, the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Per Unkel, and the Director of the Nordic Council Secretariat, Frida Nokken, answered questions about co-operation.

Book fair

The Council and Council of Ministers participated in the Gothenburg Book Fair. Their popular displays presented information about Nordic bodies and publications. Visitors tested their knowledge in a popular quiz about the Region and co-operation.

Göran Sonnevi, the winner of the Literature Prize 2006, attracted a full house with his recital from "The Ocean", which was followed by a debate about poetry's role in the Region during which Eva Bonnier of the publisher

Bonniers stressed the great commercial significance of the prize.

New website for the filmmakers of the future

A new Nordic portal for young filmmakers, "dvoted", was launched in late 2006 by the Council of Ministers, the Danish Film Institute, the Swedish Film Institute, the Norwegian Film Institute, the Finnish Film Foundation and the Icelandic Film Centre.

The portal allows youngsters aged 15–20 to get professional advice, chat about films, work interactively and even post their own films on the site.

"dvoted" is also a forum for entrepreneurs, where young filmmakers are trained in how to cope with the fierce artistic and commercial competition in the film industry.

Sustainability

The report “Nordic Indicators 2006” provides information about the implementation of the Nordic strategy for sustainable development.

Climate change, the Baltic Sea, renewable energy and biofuels, nuclear safety, REACH, toxic substances (especially mercury), endangered seabirds, sustainable fisheries and illegal fishing were all discussed in 2006.

The Nordic eco-label, the Swan, was awarded to a laptop for the first time – a Fujitsu model that uses minimal raw materials and has low energy consumption.

Climate causing concern

The climate was a central theme for the Council and Council of Ministers in 2006. The environment ministers adopted a climate declaration at their Svalbard meeting. They committed to supporting compulsory co-operation at a global level, including China, India and Brazil, at future international negotiations. At the annual climate meeting in Nairobi, the Nordic countries advocated a new agreement to succeed Kyoto in 2012.

Although climate change will have different effects on each of the Nordic countries, it also presents joint challenges. All the countries will experience more extreme weather, higher average temperatures and higher sea levels. The Council of Ministers has commissioned a study into the consequences of a 2 degree rise, and has conducted an analysis of the knowledge and co-ordination needs, and of the prerequisites for continued long-term research investment in climate and environment changes in the Arctic Region.

During the Session debate on the climate, politicians from every corner of the Region bore witness to changes already caused by global warming. Al Gore’s film, “An Inconvenient Truth”, was screened by the Danish Environment Minister, Connie Hedegaard, and the recipient of the annual environment prize, Bogi Hansen.

Environment Prize to Faroese researcher

“I am pleased to receive this prize, and pleased that the Nordic Council is focusing on climate change. But to avoid disaster, we have to act now. It is almost too late,” said the winner of the Nature and Environment Prize, Professor Bogi Hansen.

He won the accolade for his climate research, particularly on the effects of the Gulf Stream and the risk of it changing direction. Hansen made an international impression by being one of the first to prove the impact of climate change on the Arctic environment.

Energy co-operation as an export

The Nordic power exchange, Nord Pool, should be exported, according to the Session debate about the new energy action plan, which will see the Region play a more active role in European energy policy. The transfer capacity stated in the plan is not going to be sufficient, however, so further investment in renewable energy sources and environmentally friendly production will be needed. The Nordic countries must make the most of their position as significant players in hydroelectricity and wind power, geothermal energy and bioenergy. The plan was approved at the Session. It was also decided that the Nordic countries would promote biofuels and lobby the EU to do the same.

The energy ministers and the Nordic Council’s Environment and Natural Resources Committee met during the Session to discuss the liberalised energy market, how to guarantee supplies, new investments in the grid and greater political involvement in renewable energy.

A bioenergy prize was set up by the ministers of fisheries, agriculture, forestry and food, to go to people or organisations in the Region who make a major contribution to the production or use of bioenergy.



Green is great – just not algae!

The use of fertilisers in agriculture around the Baltic Sea is a greater environmental threat than was previously believed, with eutrophication threatening biological diversity. One counter-measure would be to draw up a nitrogen and phosphorus protocol, using Kyoto as a model and allowing emission rights to be traded.

During 2006, the chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee headed a working party for the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC). Its remit was to convince all the countries around the Baltic to focus on the eutrophication problem, e.g. by complying with existing conventions. The working party was also asked to propose measures to get countries to agree on how to tackle the problem.

Achieving the objective of clean water in the Baltic Sea will require better treatment of waste water and sewage, and the use of phosphate-free detergents. Although the situation is serious, the Baltic Sea can be saved provided the right measures are deployed, such as increasing the number of purification plants. A concluding report by the working group will be submitted to the BSPC in Berlin 2007.

In 2006, the Nordic Council adopted a proposal to ban emissions of sewage from passenger and freight shipping in the Baltic Sea and asked the governments to look at ways of monitoring compliance.

More than 10 Council of Ministers projects dealt with eutrophication in the Baltic.

Nuclear safety

On the 20th anniversary of Chernobyl, the Environment Committee urged greater attention to safety at existing nuclear power plants. Russian official bodies must be influenced not to extend the life cycle of old power plants located close to the Nordic Region, and strict safety requirements must be applied to any new plants. The Ignalina plant is still a safety risk, especially its waste handling. The committee visited three facilities Russia in summer 2006 to study safety and storage.

The only Nordic country to opt for a new nuclear plant, Finland, was criticised at the Session. The new reactor caused concern because it is a new, untested model.

A members' proposal calling for a moratorium on the construction of nuclear power plants or storage facilities close to coasts was discussed by the Council during the year. Test drilling for uranium in Karelia, both on the Russian and Finnish sides of the border, was also discussed.

Biodiversity and genetic resources

The loss of biodiversity is one of the biggest global environmental challenges. A new global safety stor-



Burst. Still pictures from "Moving North: 10 Short Dance Films". Photo: G. Magni Agústsson.



*Elías Knudsen in Burst.
Photo: G. Magni Agústsson.*

age facility for seeds has been set up on Svalbard. The seed store, containing more than three million different crops, will serve as a long-term store for duplicates of seeds stored in gene banks in other countries, and will act as a safety net for genetic material lost as a result of disasters. Norway is funding the facility, which is run by the Nordic Gene Bank.

The Council of Ministers and the Gene Bank had a display and ran two fringe events at the Biodiversity Convention in Brazil in spring 2006. Nordic co-operation on biological diversity and genetic resources resulted in the publication “Access and Rights to Genetic Resources – A Nordic Approach”, which attracted a lot of international interest.

Better quality of life

Co-operation focused on various aspects of alcohol, food, exercise and contagious diseases in 2006. The Council and Council of Ministers also turned their attention to the war on trafficking and prostitution.

Healthier food and more exercise

More than 40% of Nordic citizens weigh too much and the number of overweight children and young people is increasing. More than half of the population rarely exercises, and fat consumption is increasing at the expense of fish, fruit and vegetables. This is not only a problem for individuals but also a socio-economic time bomb. A new action plan for better health and quality of life through food and physical activity was adopted in 2006.

Labelling and marketing of food

In May 2006, the Norwegian Presidency of the Council of Ministers and the WHO's Europe office hosted a seminar about the marketing of foods to target children.

A Nordic report about food labelling was also published, based on a seminar held in November 2006. It provides input for the EU Commission's current revision of the labelling rules.

Public Health Prize

The SEK 50,000 Nordic Public Health Prize 2006 was awarded to Stig Wall, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at Umeå University, for the leading role he has played in national and international research for more than a generation. Wall's work is based on the idea of global responsibility and the belief that local and international health problems are linked.

Safer food

Food safety was a central theme in 2006 for the ministers for fisheries, agriculture, forestry and food. The Council of Ministers' 2005 resolution about closer co-operation on veterinary emergencies was followed up with seminars, exchanges of information and joint exercises. The Council of Ministers also adopted a strategy plan for veterinary contingencies, which was followed by a Nordic-Baltic strategy plan in November 2006.

Avian flu and other epidemics

The global threat of animal diseases that can be transmitted from animals to people (zoonoses), such as avian flu, is serious. Discussions were held in 2006 about joint Nordic vaccine production in preparation for potential pandemics. The food sector and the Nordic Innovation Centre (NICE) are taking part in a European pilot project about transnational research into zoonoses.



Alcohol

The ministers of finance agreed to propose that the zero tax rate on wine in the EU be abolished and the minimum taxes on alcohol (including alcopops) be raised. They agreed on the principle of taxation in the country of consumption. They also stressed the importance of regulations stipulating that only goods transported by private individuals for their own use may be considered private imports and, therefore, tax-free. The ministers also called for a European alcohol strategy that focuses on public health.

The social affairs and health ministers would also like a robust EU alcohol strategy, concentrating on young people and on halving import quotas. At Nordic level, they would like to see more research and agreement on joint measures to eliminate drink driving.

Trafficking and prostitution

It is important to focus on the social dimension of trafficking and on closer co-operation with all the countries covered by the Northern Dimension, the ministers of social affairs announced at their June meeting and at a round-table conference on the issue for Nordic, Baltic, German, Polish and Russian ministers in October. Preventative projects in countries of origin, exchange activities for social workers and NGO partnerships were some of the proposals discussed. Ways to improve the situation of the victims, both in their countries of origin and in the receiving countries, were also considered.

The project "Prostitution in the Nordic Region" is part of the Council of Ministers' comprehensive campaign to fight trafficking.

A statement issued by the Nordic Council meeting in Stockholm in April stated that joint measures are needed to combat trafficking. The sex trade was also a main point on the agenda at the meeting in Lahti in September, which was also attended by Sweden's special ambassador in the war on trafficking. He pointed out that what is missing is not legislation or international agreements, but money and political will. Trafficking is organised by people involved in terrorism, the drugs trade and arms trading, so it is also a defence and security issue.

The environment and crime

Nordic citizens want to see co-operation on the environment and on crime. That was the main message of a major new study conducted by the Nordic Council. No fewer than 96% of respondents said co-operation on the environment should be prioritised. A similar number called for a joint campaign against organised international crime. The study reveals massive majorities in favour of closer co-operation in each of the countries. As well as closer relations with each other, Nordic citizens also favour closer co-operation with the EU. Almost half of all Danes also believe it is particularly important for Denmark to maintain long-term co-operation with the USA.

The telephone poll, conducted in October 2006, covered a representative sample of 2,500 adults in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland.



Information and publications

Information

The Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers have a joint website, www.norden.org. It is mainly in Scandinavian (Norwegian, Swedish and Danish) but much of it is translated into Finnish, Icelandic and English.

News in brief about the Nordic Region and Nordic co-operation is updated daily on the website, with stories also emailed to thousands subscribers all over the world. News stories are available in Scandinavian, Finnish, Icelandic and English.

AnalysNorden, a monthly online magazine featuring political analyses from the Nordic countries, is also published on www.norden.org in Scandinavian, Finnish and Icelandic.

Top of Europe is an email newsletter to inform people elsewhere in the world about the Region and about Nordic co-operation.

Nordic News Weekly, a weekly email newsletter, is published every Monday.

Publishing

The Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers publish between 150 and 200 reports and books each year on subjects relevant to Nordic co-operation.

Here is a small selection of recently published titles.

Nordic co-operation. A new survey of the population's knowledge of and attitudes to Nordic co-operation in Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2006. Clearly presented, comparable statistics that shed light on similarities and differences among the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

What lies ahead for the Nordic model? A discussion paper about the future of the Nordic welfare model in the face of global competition. The report sums up the most important results, analyses and messages to emerge from the Nordic Council of Ministers' Welfare Research Programme 2000–2005. It also includes articles by leading politicians and other opinion-formers about the welfare state's strengths and weaknesses, and the important challenges that will be faced in the future.

Nordic Nutrition Recommendations. A book explaining Nordic diet recommendations.

The Nordic Region as a Global Winner. The latest of the Nordic Council and Council of Ministers' annual books of debate, *The Nordic Region as a Global Winner* looks at the future of the Nordic Region. Twenty-seven leading lights from business, the academic world, official bodies and the culture sector describe how they envisage the Nordic countries' strengths and opportunities in the global economy of the future.

Norden har noe å bidra med ("The Nordic Region has something to contribute"). A book designed to encourage debate among Nordic upper-secondary pupils about Nordic identity and the Nordic Region in the new Europe. Five Nordic authors, all past winners of the Nordic Council Literature Prize, interpret what it means to be a Nordic citizen, a European and a citizen of the world.

Further information about all publications is available at www.norden.org/publications, together with details of how to order. You can also register for the email newsletter Publication News, and receive information about new publications on subjects of particular interest to you.



Facts about the Nordic Council and Council of Ministers

Nordic Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers is the forum for formal co-operation between the Nordic governments. Informal consultations and exchanges of information also play significant roles in the Nordic partnership.

The function of the Council of Ministers is to promote closer co-operation and a shared Nordic sense of identity, and to promote Nordic interests abroad. All multilateral decisions are made by consensus.

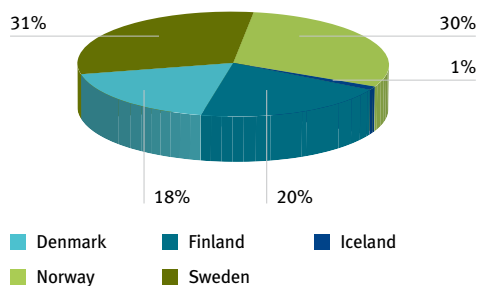
There is a separate council for each sector in which the governments work together. The ultimate responsibility for co-operation lies with the Prime Ministers, but in practice it is co-ordinated by the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation and their representatives on the Nordic Committee for Co-operation. Most councils of minis-

ters meet several times a year. Committees of senior officials and the Secretariat prepare the agenda for meetings, and follow up on issues and decisions.

As of 1 January 2006, the councils of ministers are for:

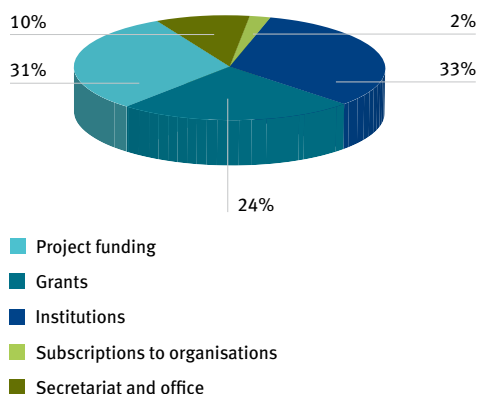
- the labour market and working environment
- business, industry, energy and regional policy
- fisheries, agriculture, forestry and food
- cultural co-operation
- gender equality
- legislative issues
- environmental protection
- social and health affairs
- education, training and research
- economic and fiscal policy.

Nordic Council of Ministers. National budget contributions 2006



The Council of Ministers has a budget of just under DKK 840 million. The individual countries contribute according to a sliding scale based on gross national product. The autonomous territories do not contribute.

Nordic Council of Ministers. Budget posts 2006





Ministers for Nordic Co-operation as of 7 December 2006

Connie Hedegaard, *Denmark*
 Jógvan à Lakjuni, *the Faroe Islands*
 Josef Motzfeldt, *Greenland*
 Jan-Erik Enestam, *Finland*
 Lasse Wiklöf, *Åland*
 Jónína Bjartmarz, *Iceland*
 Cristina Husmark Pehrsson, *Sweden*
 Heidi Grande Røys, *Norway*

Nordic Council

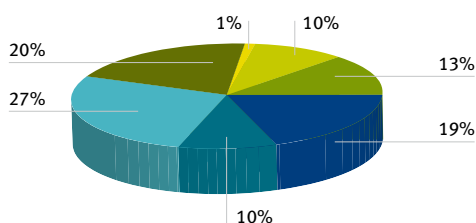
The Nordic Council is a political forum for parliamentarians and governments. It holds an annual Session, at which MPs meet with Nordic ministers. The Presidium and five standing committees deal with the work of the Council during the rest of the year.

The Council acts in a proactive capacity, advises ministers about the direction Nordic co-operation should take and monitors the governments' implementation of the decisions that are taken. The Council identifies annual political priorities, for example, the environment, defence and security, culture, sustainable development, children and young people, consumer affairs, etc.

The Presidium of the Nordic Council as of 7 December 2006

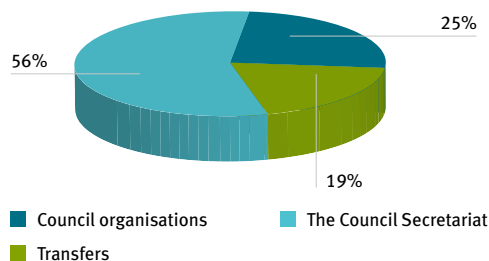
Ole Stavad, *President, Denmark*
 Kristian Pihl Lorentzen, *Vice-President, the Centre Group, Denmark*
 Arja Alho, *the Social Democratic Group, Finland*
 Outi Ojala, *the Left-wing Socialist Green Group, Finland*
 Simo Rundgren, *the Centre Group, Finland*
 Martin Saarikangas, *The Conservative Group, Finland*
 Rannveig Guðmundsdóttir, *the Social Democratic Group, Iceland*
 Jón Kristjánsson, *the Centre Group, Iceland*
 Dagfinn Høybråten, *the Centre Group, Norway*
 Berit Brørby, *the Social Democratic Group, Norway*
 Inge Lønning, *The Conservative Group, Norway*
 Sinikka Bohlin, *the Social Democratic Group, Sweden*
 Gabriel Romanus, *the Centre Group, Sweden*

Nordic Council of Ministers. Budget per sector



- Culture, legal co-operation and gender equality
- Education, research and working life
- Environment and resources
- Growth and welfare
- The Secretariat and other joint activities
- Cross-border regional co-operation
- The structure pool

The Nordic Council. Budget posts 2006



The DKK 30.6 million earmarked for Council of Ministers' organisations covers the costs of the Presidium, the committees and any joint activities that involve both. The Secretariat deals with administration and information. The transfers fund activities by the party groups, the Nordic Youth Council and scholarships for journalists.



Nordic Council of Ministers
Nordic Council

St. Strandstræde 18
DK-1255 Copenhagen K
www.norden.org

