

The Nordic Region in the World – The World in the Nordic Region

Framework programme for the activities of
the Nordic Council



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Nordic co-operation

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

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

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

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Foreword

In a departure from the past, when the Nordic Council drew up programmes annually, the new framework programme will be valid from 2009 until further notice. It will be supplemented by annual programmes for the Presidency of the Nordic Council and each of the five committees.

The aim is to make it easier for the country holding the Presidency to make its mark on the Nordic agenda.

Copenhagen, January 2009



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The Nordic countries work together on issues of mutual interest, for the benefit of their citizens. The partnership is based on a shared Nordic value system, and is designed to improve integration and enhance the impact of the Region in the EU and other international forums.

The Nordic Council sets the agenda for co-operation, in close collaboration with the national parliaments, autonomous territories and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Nordic Council has a duty to maintain a high profile in other interparliamentary bodies and to cultivate relationships with the EU parliament and relevant committees.

Culture has an intrinsic value, and cultural partnerships form one of the cornerstones of Nordic co-operation. Art and culture are a means of spreading knowledge about the Nordic countries, both within the Region and beyond, as well as promoting an understanding of Nordic culture that facilitates multilateral partnerships and global initiatives. Joint investment in art and creative endeavours is therefore of major importance for the Nordic Region as a global pioneer.

Nordic decisions are usually made by consensus, and this makes it easy for the country that is least committed to an idea to exert a disproportionate influence. The Nordic Council favours a more dynamic form of partnership and recommends that the Council of Ministers adopts the “opting-out” principle, which will enable progress to be made even when there is opposition from one of the member states.





Enhancing Nordic welfare

VISION

The Nordic welfare model is one of the Region's great success stories. It has enabled secure societies to be built, based on a sense of solidarity. The model is one of the main reasons that Nordic countries always come top in global comparisons of competitiveness and sustainable development.

The Nordic Council wants to develop the Nordic welfare model and strengthen civic society. We want to confront the challenges posed by globalisation and make sure that the benefits are shared as fairly as possible.

The welfare model must continue to protect basic Nordic values such as democracy, freedom, justice, equality, tolerance and pluralism.

ACTION

The Nordic countries must develop stable, flexible labour markets that guarantee high levels of employment and opportunities for life-long learning.

We will promote education and training at all levels. Education and knowledge are important, not only for individual self-fulfilment but also for the Region's ability to compete at global level.

We will adapt the social infrastructure to reduce social and economic inequality.

We will promote equal opportunities for men and women in industries that are still divided along gender lines, including at top management levels. One precondition for this is facilitating paternity leave.

Migrant labour will be necessary if we are to produce the goods and services needed by our welfare states. We will promote the positive integration of immigrants into Nordic society.

We will promote a proper and dignified care service for immigrants of all ages.



Shaping globalisation

VISION

Globalisation presents both challenges and opportunities for Nordic co-operation. The issues it raises cannot be addressed by single nations working in isolation, so closer integration and partnership are of the utmost importance.

ACTION

The Nordic countries will work together to make the most of international competition in order to enhance Nordic welfare policy. Investments in education and training, research and development, entrepreneurship, innovation and renewal will generate stable and sustainable economic growth.

The Nordic countries will actively try to shape the process so that the benefits of globalisation are distributed as fairly as possible.

The Nordic countries must continue to play an active role in reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. Increased investment in climate and energy research, greater energy efficiency and increased use of renewable energy sources will be priorities.

The globalisation project initiated by the Nordic Council and launched by the Nordic Council of Ministers must be implemented.

Increasing mobility in the Nordic Region

VISION

We will defend the right of individuals and businesses to enjoy freedom of movement in the Nordic Region.

We envisage a dynamic Region without borders, which is capable of meeting the challenges posed by globalisation and safeguarding the competitiveness and welfare of the Nordic countries.

ACTION

We will abolish existing obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement between the Nordic countries and stop new ones being created. This will require closer co-ordination and harmonisation of legislation between the Nordic countries.

We will promote the work the Nordic Council of Ministers is doing to abolish obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement, and we expect tangible and rapid results.



Protecting the marine environment

VISION

We want the Nordic seas to be clean, and rich in biological diversity. We want all industries – both land- and sea-based – to operate in a manner that respects the overall ecological objectives for marine areas. We want to put in place a well-planned infrastructure that enables both locals and tourists to enjoy enriching experiences in marine environments. We want to bring to an end emissions into the sea of hazardous chemicals and radioactive waste.

ACTION

We will actively contribute to the implementation of the HELCOM Action Plan for the Baltic Sea, which is predicated on improving project development and funding in all the Baltic Sea states.

We will encourage the EU Baltic Sea Strategy to focus on the sustainable and beneficial development of the marine environment.

The EU's marine and maritime plans must be tailored to suit local conditions in the Baltic Sea, the North Sea, etc.

We are in favour of restrictive rules for shipping and offshore activity in the sensitive northern sea areas.

The Nordic countries must work individually, together and in regional and international forums to improve the marine environment and decide upon necessary protective measures.





The impact of climate change on marine environments must be analysed and incorporated into both protection programmes and the framework for primary industries such as fisheries, agriculture and forestry. Climate change must also be incorporated into the planning of infrastructure programmes in marine areas.

Receptacles for ships' sewage should be installed in Baltic ports. Traffic volumes are increasing and must be made safer by technological means, e.g. improved navigation systems.

The marine environment and biodiversity must be continuously monitored to plot progress towards clean seas that are rich in plant and animal life.



Providing content for the Northern Dimension

VISION

The EU's Northern Dimension is a joint policy involving four equal partners: the EU, Russia, Iceland and Norway. The Northern Dimension must act as a political platform from which to promote co-operation for sustainable development, prosperity and security in Northern Europe. Partnerships with Russia, especially North-West Russia, are an important part of this process. The Northern Dimension must act as a political and practical framework for close co-ordination and collaboration between various types of stakeholders in Northern Europe. It will also be necessary to co-ordinate the Northern Dimension and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea as closely as possible.

ACTION

We will develop, implement and provide political support for the Northern Dimension by forging contacts and working closely with relevant committees in the European Parliament.

We will further develop practical partnerships with parliamentary bodies and other political stakeholders in Russia, especially North-West Russia, on questions relevant to the long-term priorities of the Northern Dimension.

We want the work done within the Northern Dimension to lead to closer co-ordination and less overlap by the bodies involved in Northern Europe.

We will encourage close and tangible co-ordination between the Northern Dimension and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

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Improving co-operation on language

VISION

As globalisation gains ground, we favour a language policy that provides a boost to the Nordic languages. We want to safeguard the vitality of the Nordic languages and the right of Nordic citizens to communicate in one of the three Scandinavian languages taught throughout the Region. We will promote inter-Nordic linguistic understanding, which will make Nordic co-operation more efficient and interesting.

ACTION

The declaration on Nordic language policy adopted on 1 September 2006 must be followed up and implemented. The education ministers should draw up an action plan that guarantees overarching, long-term and effective input into language policy. The national governments must then implement the plan and reinforce the Nordic language community.

The new NordPlus Nordic Language and Culture Programme will improve both pupils' and teachers' understanding of their neighbours, as well as stimulate interest in and understanding of Nordic culture and languages.

The project "Nordic language pilots in the school/Teacher training in the Nordic Region" will be continued and expanded in order to develop better, more effective teaching in the neighbouring languages.

Teaching in the neighbouring languages will be improved and will start earlier. The emphasis will be on speaking the neighbouring languages.

The languages on which the Nordic societies are based must remain prominent in public affairs, including on TV and in films.

Inter-Nordic dictionaries, both printed and online, must be collated.

Facts about the Nordic Council

The Nordic Council (NC) has 87 members made up of five national delegations from Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Iceland, and three from the autonomous territories, i.e. the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. There are four party groups: the Social Democratic Group, the Centre Group, the Conservative Group and the Left-Socialist Green Group. Some members of the NC do not belong to any party group. The Saami Parliamentary Council has observer status. The Council Secretariat is located in Copenhagen.

The Nordic Council holds an annual Session in the last week of October. The Presidency rotates between the countries.

NC organs:

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

Other bodies involved in official Nordic co-operation:

The West Nordic Council
The Confederation of Norden Associations (FNF)
The Nordic Youth Council

International:

The purpose of the NC's international activities is to promote Nordic values and positions in a wider international context; to act as a driving force behind parliamentary co-operation on the challenges facing Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea Region; and to influence public opinion and encourage initiatives on issues concerning the Arctic Region and the Barents Region. Much of the work contributes to the development of the Northern Dimension and helps to build bridges between the EU and its neighbours to the east.

The Nordic Council works with the Baltic Assembly (BA) and Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), serving as secretariat for the latter and chairing the permanent committee in 2008 ???, as well as the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR) and the Russian Federal Assembly. The NC has worked increasingly closely with the European Parliament in recent years.

International organisations involved in co-operation with the NC:

The North-West Russia Parliamentary Association (NWPA)
The Benelux Interparliamentary Consultative Council (BICC)
British-Irish Interparliamentary Body (BIIPB)
The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)
The Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU PA)
The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)
The Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNWB)
The Council of Independent States Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (CIS-IPA)



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