



10 NORDIC POLITICIANS



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10 Nordic Politicians 2011

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p. 16,17 Karin Beate Nøsterud

p. 19 Lillian og Lena www.krf.no

p. 20,21 Magnus Fröderberg

p. 22 Johannes Jansson & Magnus Fröderberg

p. 27 Leiff Josefsen

p. 28,29 Silje Bergum Kinsten

p. 30 Johannes Jansson

p. 33 Karin Beate Nøsterud

p. 35 Cata Portin

p. 36,37 Image Select

p. 38 Magnus Fröderberg

p. 41,43 Karin Beate Nøsterud

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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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INTERVIEWS WITH 10 POLITICIANS ABOUT THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY NORDIC CO-OPERATION IN 2010

6	JONAS GAHR STØRE Towards closer co-operation on foreign and defence affairs
10	HELGI HJÖRVAR The future is European
14	KAREN ELLEMANN Excellent raw material
18	DAGFINN HØYBRÅTEN More power to the politicians
22	SONJA MANDT AND JESSICA POLFJÄRD Stop the cheats – database to enhance patient safety
26	PALLE CHRISTIANSEN Greenland: The Nordic frontline in the Arctic
30	LINE BARFOD Taking to the barricades to fight slavery
34	VILLE NIINISTÖ No more deportation of Nordic citizens
38	MAUD OLOFSSON Pushing for a greener Europe



TOWARDS CLOSER CO-OPERATION ON FOREIGN AND DEFENCE AFFAIRS



Jonas Gahr Støre

“CLOSER CO-OPERATION ON FOREIGN AND SECURITY ISSUES IS A MORE VIABLE OPTION THAN EVER BEFORE,” SAYS JONAS GAHR STØRE, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN NORWAY.

○ JONAS GAHR STØRE HAS BEEN NORWEGIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SINCE 2005. HIS PREVIOUS POSITIONS INCLUDE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE NORWEGIAN RED CROSS AND CHIEF OF STAFF IN THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION.

PARTY: THE NORWEGIAN LABOUR PARTY (A)

TOGETHER, THE NORDIC countries are among the world’s ten biggest economies and among the largest contributors to the UN and other international organisations. With this in mind, Støre argues that the Nordic countries should have a seat at the G20, a proposal that has struck a chord with many other politicians in the Region.

“Let’s be clear: We are not averse to the G20. It played a crucial role in stopping the financial crisis from developing into a full-scale world-wide economic depression. The G20 is a more accurate reflection of the

realities of power in today’s world than the G7/G8, and also reflects the need for effective global collaboration on questions that cannot be solved by a single country or by a few countries working in concert. But Norway has a number of concerns about the G20’s organisation and legitimacy. We think it needs to be opened up to make it more representative, so we’ve suggested a seat for the Nordic–Baltic countries, as well as seats for other countries and regions.”

The Norwegian foreign minister believes that the Region would benefit from direct access to G20 meetings.



“We already have a strong tradition of joint representation, co-operation and co-ordination in the UN and other organisations – not least, the co-operation between first the Nordic, then the Nordic and Baltic countries in the IMF, World Bank and regional development banks.”

“Combined with admitting other countries, Nordic membership would also benefit the G20, making it more legitimate and facilitating more effective global governance.”

STRONG TRADITION OF NORDIC REPRESENTATION

According to Støre, if a Nordic or Nordic–Baltic seat on the G20 were to become a reality, it would not place extra demands on Nordic co-operation.

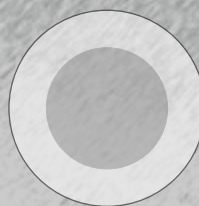
“We already have a strong tradition of joint representation, co-operation and co-ordination in the UN and other organisations – not least, the co-operation between first the Nordic, then the

Nordic and Baltic countries in the IMF, World Bank and regional development banks. Having said that, a Nordic–Baltic seat on the G20 is not very realistic. It’s more realistic to envisage co-operation between the Nordic and Baltic countries and other smaller European countries that are not currently represented in the G20 either. We also have to make sure that the G20 doesn’t overshadow legitimate, representative international organisations.”

Støre would also like to see closer Nordic co-operation on foreign and defence policy, for which the follow-up work on the Stoltenberg Report might serve as a prelude.

“The various Nordic foreign ministries are now systematically following up on the proposals contained in the report. As far as partnership on civil and military crisis management is concerned, we are working towards joint training for international deployments. In terms of digital security, we’ve agreed to set up a joint communication and competence network to protect against digital attacks. With regard to closer co-operation between our foreign services, the foundations are being laid for more joint embassies and for diplomats to be stationed in other Nordic embassies. Guidelines are being drawn up for honorary joint consulates, and joint





procedures are being devised for applications for travel documents and for the registration of Nordic citizens living abroad.”

The minister also points out the progress being made in defence co-operation in terms of training, planning and procurement.

“In some areas, e.g. collaboration on air exercises, co-operation has already extended beyond the proposals in the Stoltenberg Report.”

SOLIDARITY DECLARATION STILL TOPICAL

Thorvald Stoltenberg’s proposal for a Nordic declaration of solidarity has

not been shelved, and remains up for debate.

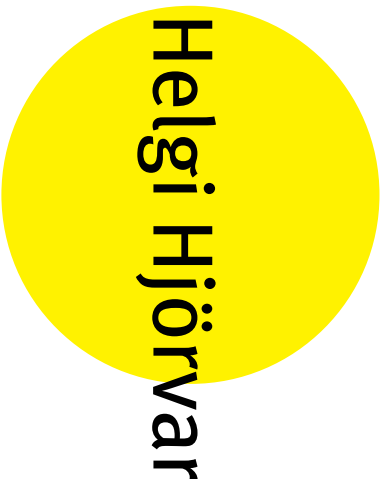
“The proposal is interesting because it challenges our concept of what Nordic solidarity really entails. I expect further discussion on this in the spring. It is beyond any doubt that the Region faces defence challenges that call for reorientation and greater solidarity. But at the same time, any declaration of Nordic solidarity must be realistic, feasible and not encroach upon EU or NATO commitments.”

However, even if Støre has great faith in closer co-operation on foreign and security issues, he doesn’t think Gunnar Wetterberg’s idea of a United

Nordic Federation is particularly plausible.

“It isn’t realistic. We might be advocating Nordic representation on the G20, in the UN and in the EU, but we should never lose sight of the fact that there has never been, and never will be, a successful Nordic union. Having said that, I would venture that we are better placed than ever to work more closely together on foreign and defence policy, as illustrated by the follow-up to the Stoltenberg Report.”

THE FUTURE IS EUROPEAN



Helgi Hjörvar

THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO TRENDS AND EVENTS IN EUROPE IS FOR THE NORDIC COUNTRIES TO WORK MORE CLOSELY TOGETHER, ACCORDING TO HELGI HJÖRVAR, PRESIDENT OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL. HE CITES NORDIC CO-ORDINATION OF WORK ON EU MATTERS, THE NB8 REPORT AND THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE STOLTENBERG REPORT AS EXAMPLES OF SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES ON THE NORDIC COUNCIL AGENDA IN 2010.



HELGI HJÖRVAR IS AN ICELANDIC MP AND CHAIR OF THE ICELANDIC PARLIAMENT'S ECONOMY AND TAXATION COMMITTEE. HE IS A MEMBER OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL. HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL SINCE 2007 AND SERVED AS PRESIDENT IN 2010.

PARTY: SAMFYLKINGIN (A)

It is 22:00 before Helgi Hjörvar emerges from a meeting of the Economics and Tax Committee in the Icelandic parliament, ready to be interviewed. Given that he only returned the night before from a meeting of the Presidium of the Nordic Council in Finland, and has spent the whole day in meeting after meeting, you might wonder how the Icelandic Social Democrat has the energy – but he treats it all with good humour. He does, however, point out that his faithful guide dog, Mr. X, is exhausted and has gone home.

Looking back on the work of the Nordic Council in 2010, Hjörvar

identifies three prominent themes. The first is the Council's work on EU issues. In June, a Council delegation headed by the President travelled to Strasbourg to talk with Nordic MEPs about the revision of the EU Consumer Rights Directive. The message that emerged from this meeting was that the Nordic countries need to coordinate a joint position in order to guarantee strong consumer protection in the future. This signalled the start of the implementation of the Nordic Council's EU strategy.

"EU affairs affect all of the Nordic countries, and this year the revision of the consumer directive was



“EU affairs affect all of the Nordic countries, and this year the revision of the consumer directive was particularly high on our agenda. Other reasons for working together on this issue were to learn how to maximise our influence at EU level, and to learn how to benefit from Nordic synergies in that context.”



particularly high on our agenda. Other reasons for working together on this issue were to learn how to maximise our influence at EU level, and to learn how to benefit from Nordic synergies in that context.”

Hjörvar envisages this way of working becoming increasingly important.

“The Stoltenberg Report on security and foreign affairs has also accounted for a great deal of our attention. It was followed by the NB8 report, which has also been discussed with our Baltic colleagues, including at the meeting of the Presidium in Finland in December 2010.”

Hjörvar is particularly pleased with the progress made in collaboration on sea rescue in the North Atlantic, and thinks that the Nordic countries will need to work more closely together in order to cope with the increased volume of shipping in new areas.

The third area he cites is the efforts to make the organisation more efficient.

“Streamlining is designed to make co-operation even more relevant. We want to empower Council members to get current debates on the agenda as soon as possible. For political debate to be as relevant as possible it has to be topical.”

Looking to the future, he thinks the Council needs to do more to involve the national parliaments in Nordic work.

“It’s important that our work is more deeply embedded in the national parliaments. Co-operation among MPs should also be more closely related to the day-to-day work of the national parliaments. That would really be a boost to the political co-operation. Of that, I am convinced.”

Asked why co-operation is important for Iceland, he is in no doubt.

“For all sorts of reasons. But I don’t think it has ever been as important as it is right now. Iceland finds

2

itself in a very special situation – we are rebuilding a society that collapsed. When the crisis struck in October 2008, we discovered that only the Nordic Region and our friends in Poland were ready to support us in our hour of need. Not only did the Nordic Region and Poland offer financial assistance, but they also provided really high-powered professional expertise in the financial and economic sector, which helped us make the right decisions.”

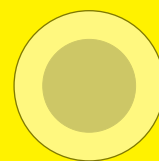
In particular, he thinks it is vital that Iceland learns from the other countries how best to build a welfare state strong enough to survive crises

like the economic storm that broke over the world in 2008.

He does not dare predict when a United Nordic Federation might become a reality.

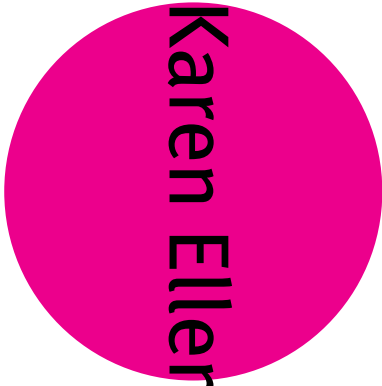
“In foreign and defence policy, I think we’ll see closer co-operation. Trends and events in Europe require us to work even more closely together. Individually, the Nordic countries are relatively small in an international context – but together we exert greater influence. We’ve proven that often enough in the past but may need to do so more often in years to come. But will this lead to a joint monarchy and national anthem?

It might, but I wouldn’t dare set a date for it.”





EXCELLENT RAW MATERIAL



Karen Ellemann

NORDIC CO-OPERATION IS A MULTI-FACETED CONCEPT. SAFELY STEERING FIVE NORDIC GOVERNMENTS AND THREE AUTONOMOUS TERRITORIES THROUGH MODERN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WATERS IS NO MEAN FEAT. THE COUNTRIES TAKE TURNS AT THE HELM, FOR ONE YEAR AT A TIME.

○ **KAREN ELLEMANN**
DOUBLES AS DEN-
MARK'S MINISTER OF
THE ENVIRONMENT
AND MINISTER FOR
NORDIC CO-OPERATI-
ON. SHE CHAIRED THE
NORDIC COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS IN 2010.

PARTY: VENSTRE
(LIBERAL).

ON 1 JANUARY 2011, the Presidency of Nordic Council of Ministers passed from Denmark to Finland. The Danish Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Karen Ellemann, sums up 12 intense months at the political rudder:

"The Presidency went as planned. We had set clear priorities: Globalisation and freedom of movement. We stuck to them and the other countries backed us."

"I also think the progress made in restructuring co-operation will help bring about a more sustainable Region that has greater potential and impact in a globalised world. But we have to keep an eye on whether we're doing the right thing as well. Co-operation needs to keep on providing people and businesses with added value," Ellemann points out.

Holding the Presidency gives countries a chance to shape the political agenda, but the minister deflects the

question of what was particularly Danish about the 2010 Presidency, preferring to stress continuity and long-term strategy instead.

"Continuity is a positive starting point, and one we can all share. If we want results, we need a clear, long-term strategy. Denmark has, of course, pursued key issues, such as globalisation, and I think we made our mark," explains the minister, before identifying highlights of the Presidency in 2010.

"We covered a lot of ground, but I'll stick to two things: The Top-level Research Initiative and freedom of movement. Co-operation was in need of rejuvenation and the globalisation initiative certainly did the trick. The Region has plenty of excellent raw material. The population is well educated, adaptable and enterprising. The 25 million inhabitants comprise an ideal basis for generating significant

synergies. And we must, of course, take advantage of these. We also have to work together in areas where we can make a difference in the world.”

Karen Ellemann highlights globalisation work as a prime example of how, by pooling resources, it is possible to achieve different and more visible results than if funding is spread across a large number of small projects that duplicate each other in different countries.

“The Nordic Top-level Research Initiative is the biggest globalisation project. It got off to a good start, providing a boost to joint endeavours to develop new knowledge, technologies and solutions. It paves the way for more of our companies to take a global lead in climate and environmental technology, which is exactly what will form the basis for sustainable green growth, job creation, competitiveness and export opportunities,” she says.

She also identifies freedom of movement as a top priority.

“We’ve removed a great many obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement in the Region. It is of paramount importance that it’s easy to cross borders – whether to work, study or do business. We’ve worked hard to push this issue higher up the political agenda. But there’s still some way to go before every obstacle has been cleared out of the way. Joint solutions are the answer, as well as preventing new obstacles from arising, of course.”

In 2007 and 2008, the prime ministers broke through the Nordic sound barrier with their demand that co-operation be more visible and have greater impact. What does the Minister think of the challenges this has thrown up?

“I keep on saying it – co-operation needs to be capable of rejuvenation. We need to evaluate it constantly. And have the nerve to prioritise so we make a difference. People need to see that co-operation works,” she explains.

“Visibility is important – but not always easy! Co-operation enjoys

widespread support from politicians and the people alike, and widespread consensus rarely sells newspapers. The most recent polls show that co-operation still enjoys huge popular support. Fortunately, it’s still possible to sell good-news stories.”

“The absence of conflict is also a Nordic selling point sometimes – so much is based on our shared values. One of my favourite examples in relation to visibility and awareness is the Swan. The eco-label has great legitimacy and is useful to consumers. As Minister of the Environment as well as Nordic Co-operation, I’m really pleased about that. Visible projects create added value and lay the foundations for strong, forward-looking partnerships,” she adds.

In the autumn, the Swedish historian and social commentator Gunnar Wetterberg sparked fierce debate with his book United Nordic



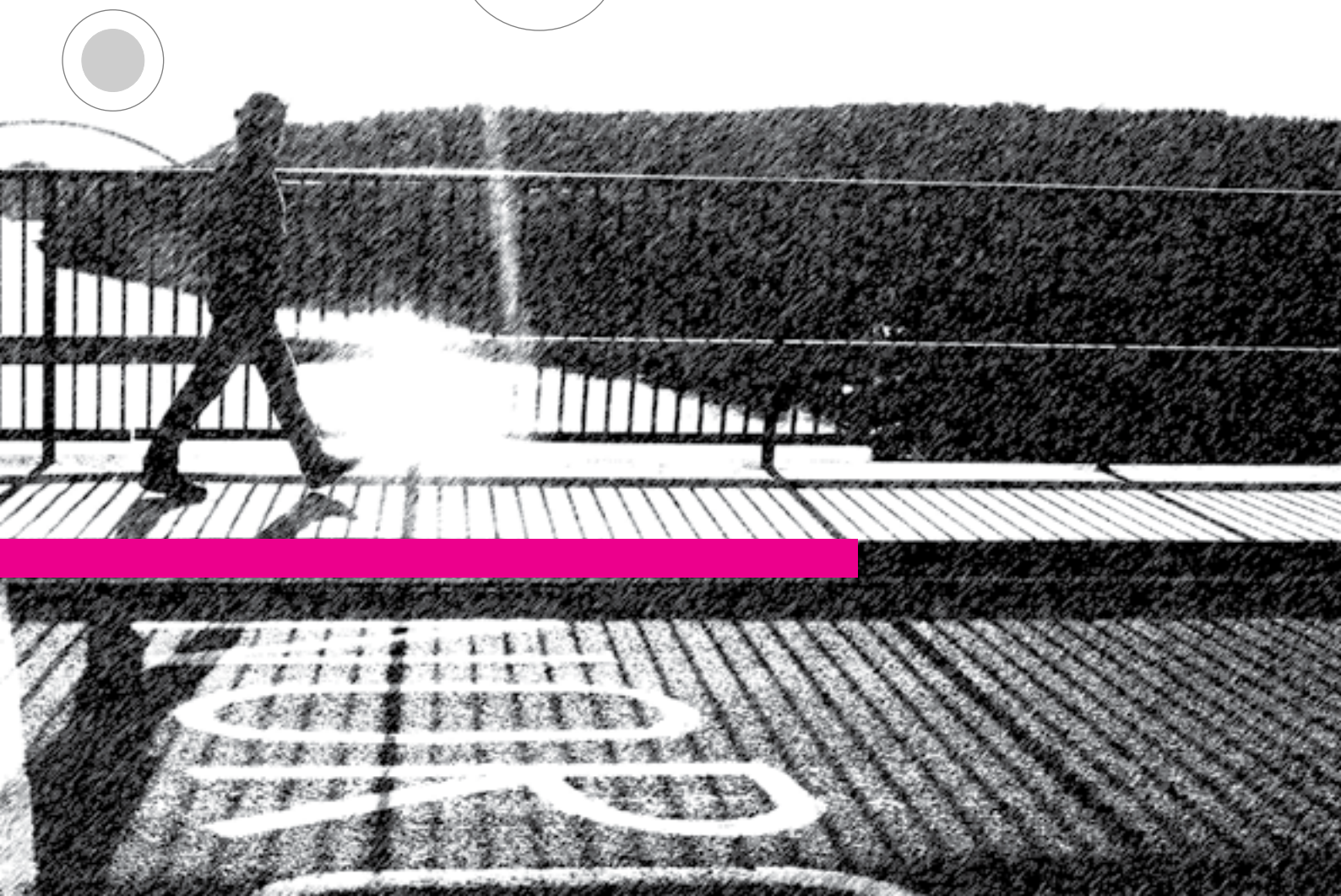
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“I also think the progress made in restructuring co-operation will help bring about a more sustainable Region that has greater potential and impact in a globalised world. But we have to keep an eye on whether we’re doing the right thing as well. Co-operation needs to keep on providing people and businesses with added value.”

Federation. The idea of a real political federation attracted a great deal of attention from the media and political pundits, both in the Region and beyond. Ellemann’s reaction to the book, and to when the federal state might come about, is more cautious:

“Debate about co-operation is a good thing. And Wetterberg’s United Nordic Federation provided valuable input – but I wouldn’t go that far myself. Co-operation doesn’t need to be made more formal to make it better. We already have plenty of examples of how well the Region works! The Top-level Research Initiative. The Swan. Climate co-operation in the UN and EU. But we have to keep asking whether our efforts are directed where they’re needed. Co-operation should be more than meetings and conferences – it should make a difference. But we don’t need a federal state,” she concludes.

“For me it’s about seeing the results of the resources we put in. For example, a barrier to freedom of movement removed, TRI and the eco-label.”



MORE **POWER** TO THE POLITICIANS

“POLITICIANS NEED TO PUT THE POLITICS BACK INTO NORDIC CO-OPERATION,” SAID DAGFINN HØYBRÅTEN IN AUTUMN 2010. THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL BELIEVES THAT POLITICIANS NEED TO ASSUME GREATER RESPONSIBILITY IN ORDER TO COUNTERACT THE DEPOLITICISATION AND BUREAUCRATISATION OF THE COUNCIL AND OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

IT WAS AT THE SESSION of the Nordic Council 2010 in Reykjavik that Høybråten made a deeply committed speech about the need for the politicians involved in Nordic co-operation to assume greater responsibility. His speech sparked off a debate and led to tangible initiatives to make co-operation more effective.

“At the core of Nordic co-operation is the political interaction within the Council and the Council of Ministers. The political dynamic has, in my view, been weakened in favour of wide-ranging bureaucratisation. Too much power has been ceded to committees

of senior officials to make decisions and stop political initiatives in their tracks.”

Høybråten believes that the politicians can regain power, primarily by ensuring that the Council’s agenda more accurately reflects the issues that are of greatest concern to ordinary people.

“Polls show that people want more co-operation, not less. This calls for stronger political commitment. The political processes would benefit from being simplified and endowed with greater substance.”



Dagfinn Høybråten

DAGFINN HØYBRÅTEN IS A NORWEGIAN MP. HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS FOR SOCIAL AND HEALTH AFFAIRS 1997–2000 AND 2001–2005, AND A MEMBER OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL 2005–2010. HØYBRÅTEN IS LEAVING THE PRESIDIUM IN 2011, HAVING ACCEPTED A POSITION AS CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF GAVI, WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, SUPPORTS VACCINATION PROGRAMMES IN POOR COUNTRIES.

PARTY: THE NORWEGIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (KRF)





4



POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLITICIANS

The Norwegian MP does not think that responsibility for the current state of affairs rests solely with civil servants. Politicians also have to accept a share of the blame.

“We have a responsibility to make the Council’s own work more attractive and effective. Changing both the President and Vice-President every year means there is a lack of continuity in the way the Council is run. Issues take too long to deal with and procedures are too complicated. In

addition to the main annual Session, the Council should convene special sessions to speed up its work tempo and make it even more topical.”

“We should take a good look at the deadlines for responses, make it easier to process proposals right away and simplify procedures,” emphasises Høybråten, who has long experience of co-operation as both a minister and an MP. His ideas have led to a review of the Council’s rules of procedure.

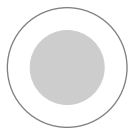
As well as enhancing the political impression made by co-operation,

Høybråten thinks the Council should focus on issues that concern people the most.

“Freedom of movement is an area in which, unfortunately, work still remains to be done. We enjoy increasingly close co-operation on foreign and defence policy, including co-ordination on EU matters where the Nordic countries share common interests. We also have an ongoing cultural role to play as custodians of our shared Nordic heritage, in terms of history, culture, language and social models.”



“We have a responsibility to make the Council’s own work more attractive and effective. Changing both the President and Vice-President every year means there is a lack of continuity in the way the Council is run. Issues take too long to deal with and procedures are too complicated. In addition to the main annual Session, the Council should convene special sessions to speed up its work tempo and make it even more topical.”



QUANTIFYING HAPPINESS

Another issue that Høybråten put on the agenda in 2010 is a Nordic target for gross domestic national quality of life. He believes that politicians need to know what makes people happy in order to devise good policy.

“This is one of the proposals to bring the political agenda more closely in line with people’s priorities. If we, as politicians, measure social progress exclusively in terms of economic targets, then we’ll get it all wrong. People value their family,

relationships, health and the environment more highly than a lot of other things, including prosperity. It would be good if the Nordic countries took a lead and drew up targets for happiness and wellbeing. The nature of political debate would be transformed and choices could be based on different values.”

Høybråten sees two alternatives for Nordic co-operation a decade down the line.

“It will either continue its decline into a solely technical-bureaucratic

collaboration with neighbouring countries, or the Region will use its strong sense of affinity to provide inspiration to the rest of Europe and develop a more human society, co-existing in harmony with the environment and in solidarity with the poor of the world.”

However, he does not hold out much hope of a United Nordic Federation.

“Not in my lifetime, at any rate. I think the whole idea will be filed away in the museum of academic curiosities.”

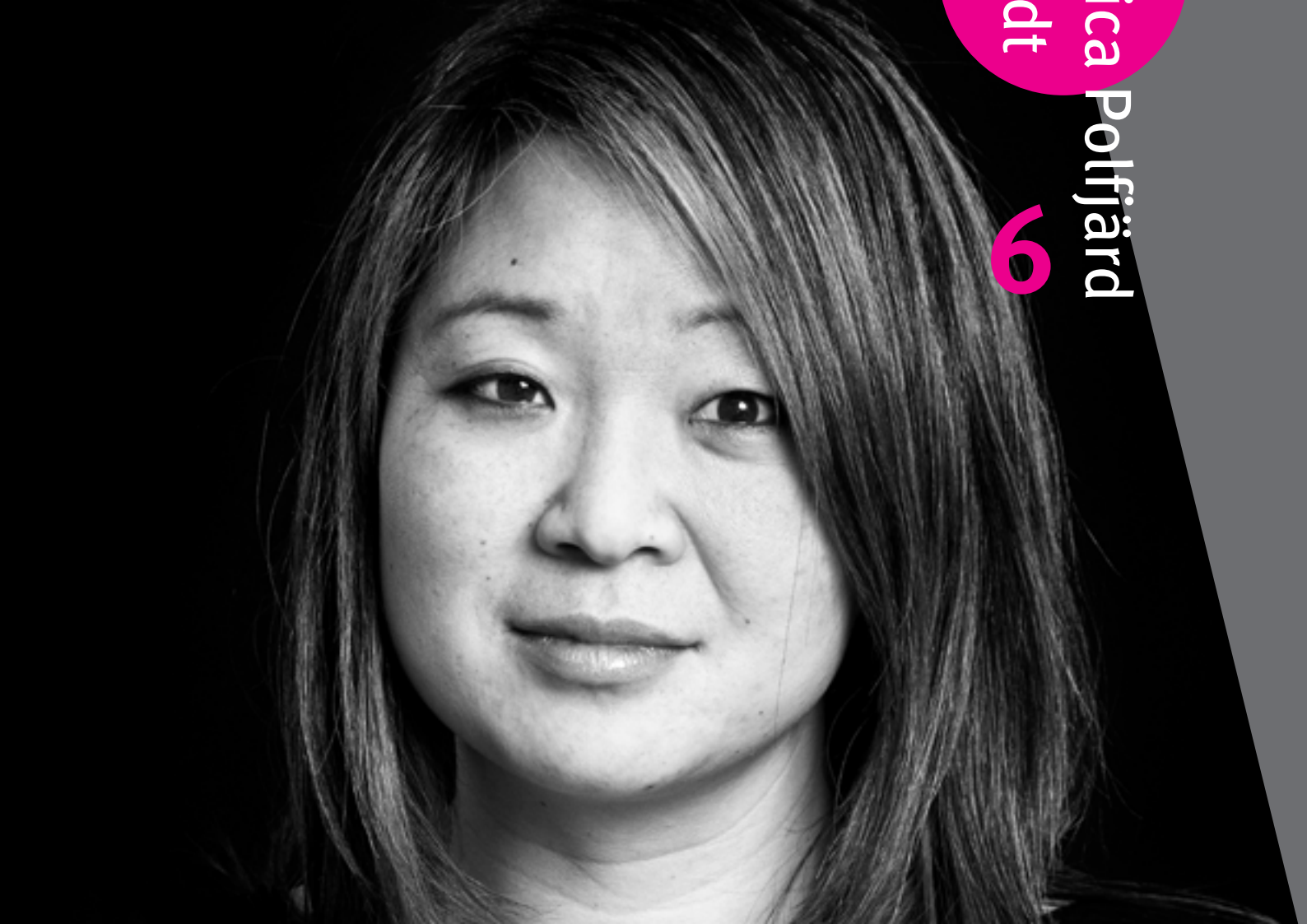


5
Sonja Mandt



9

Jessica Polfjärd



STOP THE CHEATS!

– DATABASE TO ENHANCE PATIENT SAFETY

○ SONJA MANDT MP
(NORWAY), MEMBER
AND DEPUTY CHAIR OF
THE NORDIC COUNCIL
WELFARE COMMITTEE.

PARTY:
THE NORWEGIAN
LABOUR PARTY (A)

○ JESSICA POLFJÄRD MP
(SWEDEN), MEMBER OF
THE NORDIC COUNCIL
WELFARE COMMITTEE
(UNTIL AND INCLUDING
2010). FROM 2011
ONWARDS, CHAIR OF
THE NORDIC COUNCIL
BUSINESS AND INDU-
STRY COMMITTEE.

PARTY:
THE SWEDISH
MODERATE PARTY (M)

**IS IT REALLY TRUE THAT DOCTORS WHO MAKE
SERIOUS MISTAKES AND CAUSE SUFFERING IN
ONE NORDIC COUNTRY ARE ABLE TO WORK IN
ANOTHER? IS IT REALLY TRUE THAT THERE IS
NO SIMPLE WAY FOR POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS TO
CHECK A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL'S RECORDS?
REGRETTABLY, BOTH ARE TRUE.**

“DESPITE SERIOUS COMPLAINTS against them in one Nordic country, doctors and other health-care professionals are free to take up new jobs elsewhere in the Region,” explains Jessica Polfjärd, a Swedish MP (M) and member of the Nordic Council Welfare Committee.

The outside world often thinks of the Nordic Region as a place where welfare is in focus and good health care is a top priority. Most of us in the

Region also identify with this – indeed, it is a source of pride. Problems do arise from time to time, however – and when they do, public outrage usually leads to demands for action by elected politicians. In late 2010, the Nordic Council Welfare Committee submitted a tangible proposal to the Nordic governments to improve patient safety in the Region.

A Nordic database will make life safer for patients.

At present, doctors are able to move to another Nordic country and work even if they are guilty of repeated serious mistakes, have received official warnings and, in some cases, had their authorisation withdrawn. There is little control over doctors who make serious errors of judgement, and it is the patients who suffer. Exactly how many cases there have been in recent years is difficult to determine.

One example is the Danish doctor who had been reported to the Norwegian Patients' Injury Compensation Board 42 times for providing patients with the wrong treatment. Twenty-nine cases resulted in compensation totalling more than NOK 10 million. After losing the right to practice as an orthopaedist in Norway, the doctor in question was employed at a hospital in Sweden.

"It's totally unacceptable that human life is put at risk. With a labour

market as integrated as the Nordic one, a database is needed to enhance patient safety," says the mover of the proposal, Sonja Mandt MP (A) and member of the Nordic Council Welfare Committee.

The database proposal met with total agreement – irrespective of nationality and party groups – when it was raised at a meeting of the Welfare Committee. The annual Session of the Nordic Council in late 2010 decided to forward the proposal to the governments for implementation. The database will include doctors, dentists, nurses and other health workers.

"Co-operation between the countries is not working satisfactorily. I don't think patient safety can be guaranteed without a database that records serious cases such as doctors who have their specialist authorisation rescinded," Mandt continues.

WORK ALREADY UNDERWAY

The June 2010 meeting of health ministers resolved to improve the flow of information about professionals who seek authorisation in other Nordic countries.

Most of the information needed for a database is already available at national level, but co-operation between countries is poor. The Scandinavian countries have now started work on a solution.

The Welfare Committee would like to go a step further, and has proposed a database of all health-care staff in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland, as well as the autonomous territories of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland.

"Nobody who wants to contribute to welfare in the Region, or to benefit from it, should be in any doubt that it's a good place to live. We need to be a region that focuses on good healthcare and puts patient safety

One example is the Danish doctor who had been reported to the Norwegian Patients' Injury Compensation Board 42 times for providing patients with the wrong treatment. Twenty-nine cases resulted in compensation totalling more than NOK 10 million. After losing the right to practice as an orthopaedist in Norway, the doctor in question was employed at a hospital in Sweden.

at the top of the agenda. A database is an example of Nordic synergy in practice. It will make us a pioneering region for other countries to follow," Polfjärd stresses.

SERIOUS ERRORS TO BE RECORDED

"We have fantastically skilled health-care personnel in the Region. But that doesn't mean serious mistakes aren't made, or that doctors and other staff are never debarred or have their authorisation rescinded," she continues.

The Welfare Committee thinks that the database should focus on serious transgressions, i.e. where authorisation has been, or is about to be, removed, and on individuals who are the subject of multiple complaints. It is also calling on the countries to engage in discussions about the criteria for inclusion.

"Only doctors who commit serious mistakes will be debarred, of course.

The focus will be on the patients," Mandt underlines.

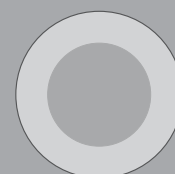
The Committee proposal states: "Access to the database will be restricted to those who need the information for recruitment purposes. It's important that it is not public."

"The database will make it easier for employers to assume full responsibility during the recruiting process, and will put patients' needs first," Mandt explains.

The proposal is backed by the Swedish Medical Association and has received widespread coverage in the Swedish media.

"It's hard to argue against something that enhances patient safety and benefits all of the Nordic countries," Polfjärd concludes.

It is now up to the Nordic Council to make sure that the governments actually implement the proposal.



GREENLAND: THE NORDIC FRONTLINE IN THE ARCTIC

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES NEED TO BECOME MORE DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE ARCTIC, ACCORDING TO GREENLAND’S MINISTER FOR NORDIC CO-OPERATION, PALLE CHRISTIANSEN, WHO ADVOCATES A JOINT NORDIC SEAT ON THE ARCTIC COUNCIL. MAJOR POWER STRUGGLES ARE ENVISAGED AS THE ICE CAP MELTS, AND HE FEELS THAT THE NORDIC COUNTRIES OUGHT TO STICK TOGETHER. HOWEVER, CHRISTIANSEN DOES NOT THINK THAT A UNITED NORDIC FEDERATION IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER.



PALLE CHRISTIANSEN arrives for his interview, at the Greenland Representation in North Atlantic House, Copenhagen, straight from recording a television documentary about Greenland’s response to the climate crisis. The world’s largest island may only be home to 55,000 people, but the Greenlanders are accustomed to global attention after many years as witnesses to the advance of climate change.

In May 2011, Nuuk and its 15,000 inhabitants will play host to the Arctic Council, as well as the most powerful men and women from both the USA and Russia. Christiansen, who is also the Minister of Finance, would prefer to see the Nordic countries acting as one at the negotiating table.

“The Nordic countries have a lot to offer in relation to climate and environment, so we should work far

○ **PALLE CHRISTIANSEN**
DOUBLES AS MINISTER
OF FINANCE AND
MINISTER OF NORDIC
CO-OPERATION IN
GREENLAND.

PARTY: THE DEMOCRATS
(D)

7





more closely together. Especially in the Arctic, where these two themes are particularly important,” Christiansen says.

As Minister of Finance, he also stresses the importance of sustainability. However, it is about more than sustainability. It is also about power.

“In geostrategic terms, Greenland is where things are happening. We would like to present a united Nordic front, but that would require much closer co-ordination between the countries. It’s great that the Arctic features prominently and regularly on the agenda for the annual Session of the Nordic Council. It helps focus

minds, but much more needs to be done.”

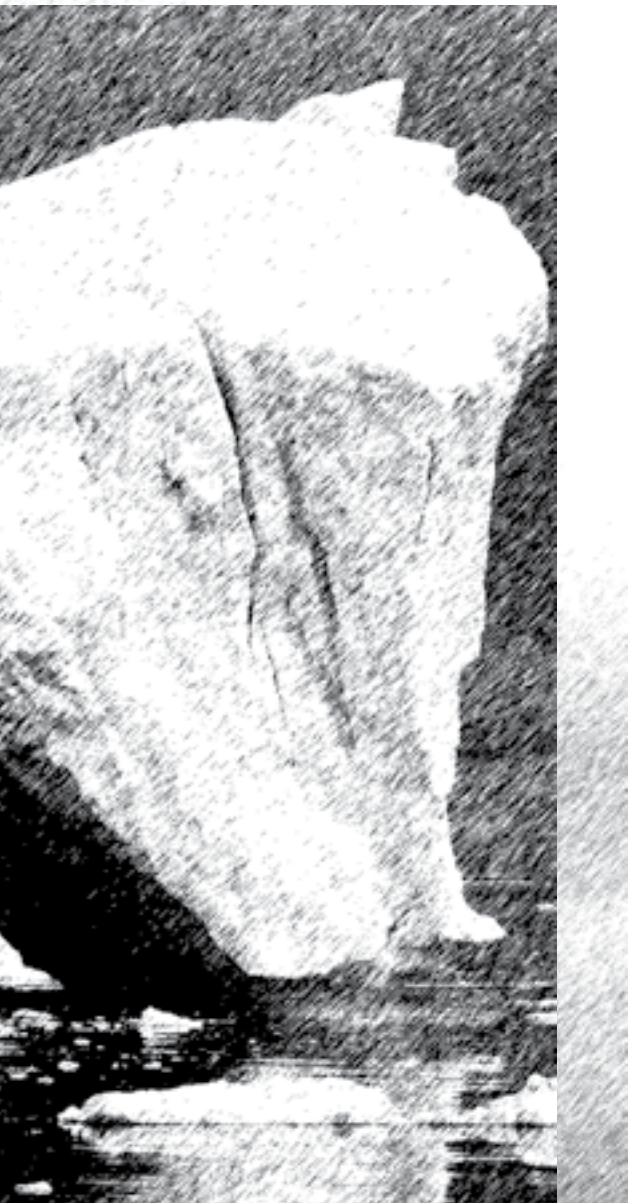
Climate change does not just lead to power struggles. It also provides plenty of new opportunities, especially in terms of business.

“If, as expected, it becomes possible to navigate past Greenland via the north-west and north-east passage, then we’ll have to come to terms with a whole new reality. We’ll need to draw on Nordic experience of shipping in general and safety at sea in particular,” he adds.

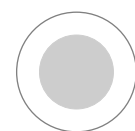
Christiansen also thinks that interaction between Greenland and the rest of the Nordic Region represents a

prime example of how industrialised nations can lead by example and help the developing countries tackle the multiple challenges thrown up by development. Despite lingering scepticism about Denmark as the former colonial power, attitudes to the other Nordic countries are entirely positive.

“People have realised that the Nordic Region is a unified labour market and a common marketplace. For example, ten of our IT professionals have just found jobs in Skellefteå [a northern Swedish town with a large number of multimedia companies – ed.] and that made an impact in Greenland.” Sharing experiences with the Nordic



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countries is a cornerstone in Greenland’s development.

“We have closely observed Finland’s work on sustainability. And, directly inspired by Norway, all our initiatives on oil extraction and mining are subject to the most stringent requirements.”

On the whole, Christiansen sees the Nordic approach to sustainability as one of the Region’s great strengths.

“The fact is that Greenland may now have to undergo a complete shift in the way that we interact with nature – and this will place great demands on sustainability. Development must go

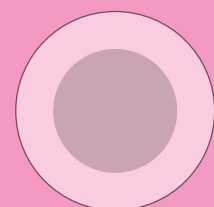
hand in hand with the needs of the local population, and we have to make sure that we train our young people to work in the new industries. It’s a credible approach which – both economically and in human terms – looks to the future,” he says, with great conviction.

According to Christiansen, there is no shame in learning from the other Nordic countries where solutions that work have already been found.

Asked if co-operation could ever develop into a real political union, he hesitates.

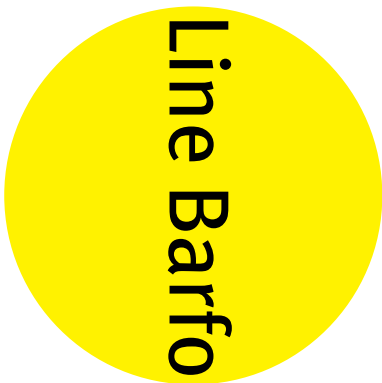
“It would take a long time. But a federation is an interesting idea. We could start off on a small scale, with

closer co-ordination of the most appropriate issues. A common environmental policy and an Arctic policy, for example. That way, Greenland would prove its worth as the Nordic frontline in the Arctic,” he concludes, with a smile.





TAKING TO THE BARRICADES TO FIGHT SLAVERY



Line Barfod

“IF WE REALLY WANT TO, IF WE DEPLOY SUFFICIENT RESOURCES, WE CAN BEAT THE TRAFFICKERS,” SAYS LINE BARFOD, WHO SEES PLENTY OF SCOPE FOR ACTION BY THE NORDIC GOVERNMENTS.



LINE BARFOD IS A DANISH MP. SHE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL SINCE 2001, FIRST ON THE WELFARE COMMITTEE AND THEN IN THE PRESIDUM. SINCE 2009, SHE HAS CHAIRED THE LEFT-SOCIALIST GREEN GROUP IN THE NORDIC COUNCIL.

PARTY: THE RED-GREEN ALLIANCE (EL)

LINE BARFOD sees trafficking as more than just a huge problem for the victims, who are forced to live like slaves, humiliated and regularly subjected to violence and rape. She sees it as a threat to democracy too.

“If we look at it from society’s point of view, the worst problem is that trafficking undermines the very foundations of democracy. Allowing slavery to go on brutalises society. Allowing organised crime to flourish leads to corruption, violence, threats and so on.”

At every recent Session of the Nordic Council, the Danish politician from the Red-Green Alliance, who also chairs the Working Group on Trafficking for the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), has asked the Nordic ministers what they are doing to combat trafficking.

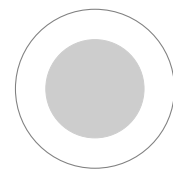
“I get the impression that many Council members are concerned about trafficking. We thought we had mandated the governments and they’d just get on with it. But I guess we’ll have to push them a bit harder to stop the issue falling off the bottom of the political agenda,” she says.

TRAFFICKING IS MODERN SLAVERY

Barfod is currently working on a new member’s proposal calling on the Nordic, Baltic and Russian authorities to redouble efforts to combat what she calls slavery.

“The victims of trafficking aren’t free. They don’t get to make decisions about their own lives. It’s slavery when you don’t get to decide for yourself what you’re going to do;

Trafficking in human beings is a problem that transcends national borders in the Baltic Sea region. Many of those shipped to the Nordic Region come from the Baltic countries, Poland and Russia. According to Barfod, this is precisely why countries need to work together to help the victims.



when somebody threatens you with violence if you demand higher pay or say you don't want to sell your body any more. When someone takes your passport and papers from you, that's slavery."

It is often the most vulnerable who are exploited in this way.

"Sometimes it's because they're poor and just need money, a fact others cynically exploit. Often they are women or members of ethnic minorities. The Roma are among the most vulnerable to trafficking in Europe. Young people in trouble of one sort or another are ripe prey for traffickers."

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tries, Poland and Russia. According to Barfod, this is precisely why countries need to work together to help the victims.

"Trafficking is an international crime. People cross borders to get here. So we need to work together across borders to help the victims and stop the trade. Police and social workers need to work together to learn all about the trafficking and help each other to help the victims. All parties involved must share whatever knowledge is needed to convict the perpetrators."

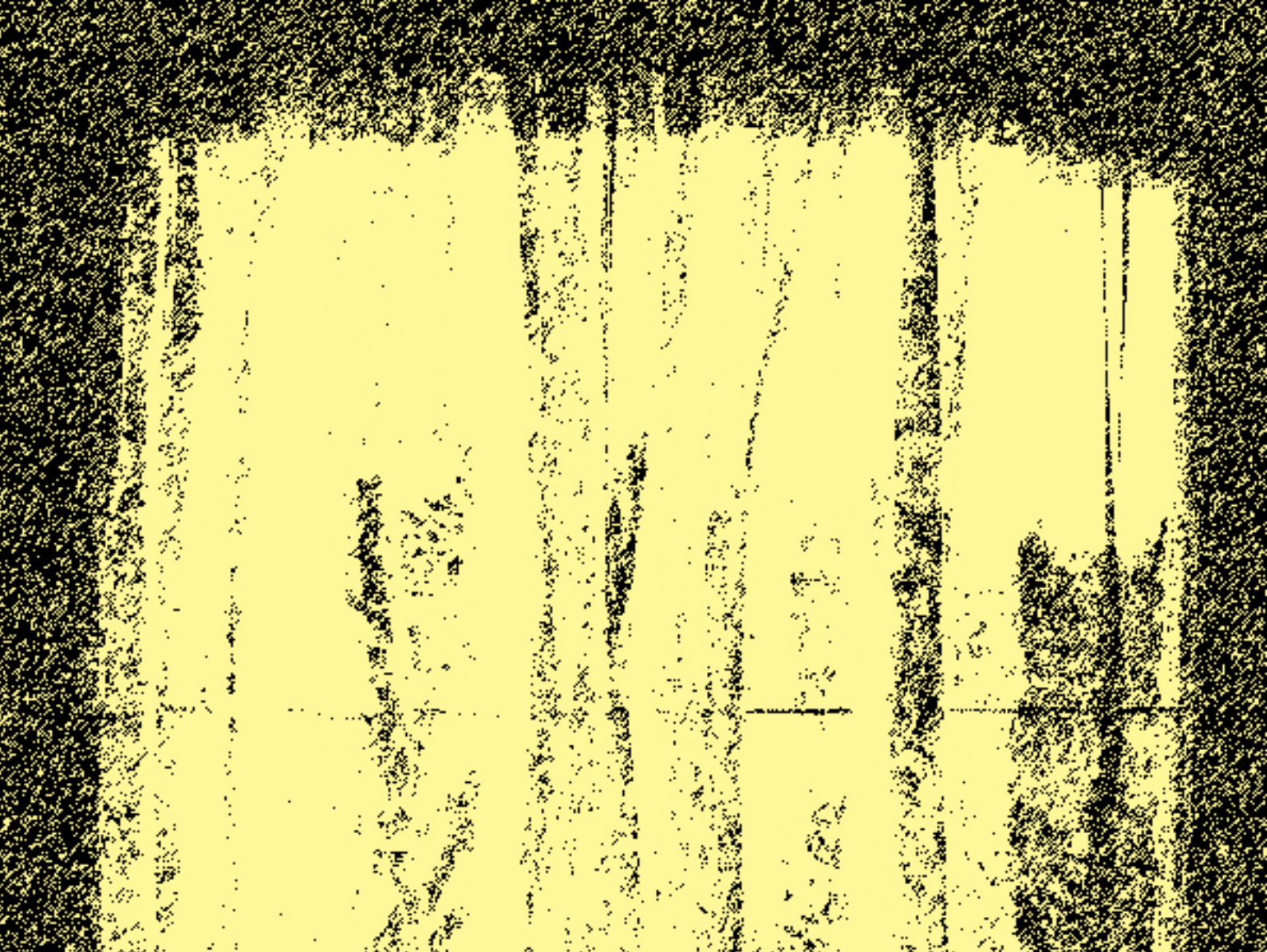
The Working Group on Trafficking in the BSPC will make a tangible proposal about what the governments in the Baltic Sea Region should do to combat trafficking.

"We think it's important that politicians show commitment – they



need to keep on discussing anti-trafficking initiatives, keep on demanding that funds are earmarked, keep on pushing the issue up the political agenda."

"Trafficking has slipped down the Nordic agenda and is no longer included in the programme for the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. If we want to make things happen, we need to push it back up the agenda. It's important that people from different countries come together and exchange real-life experiences. It's a big job, especially for a Task



Force that's about to lose its funding. We have to make it quite clear that we need to ringfence the funding. It's a small amount, but it has a huge impact."

A MATTER OF WILL AND RESOURCES

Unfortunately, trafficking is on the increase, and Barfod says that few of those who need help are receiving it. She stresses that much more needs to be done at government and individual level.

"To a great extent, it's a question of earmarking sufficient resources and making sure that everybody is concerned about the issue and starts doing something about it."

According to Barfod, the actual selling of humans is the least of the problem: "The biggest problem, and

the big money, is in the way they are exploited by other people." She is adamant that huge amounts of money are made from owning and exploiting slaves.

"One of the things governments could do is to commission business analyses of how trafficking actually works. Then we'd know how best to deploy the police and make the gangs run the real risk of losing money."

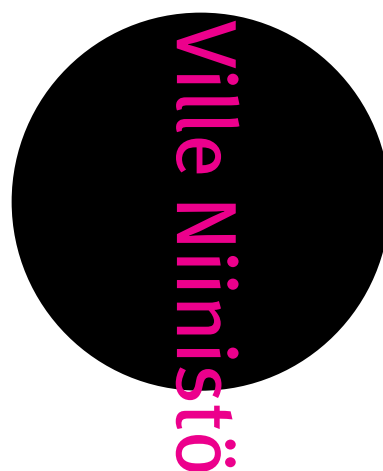
The Danish MP, who is committed to a wide range of issues, was also involved in the debate about the United Nordic Federation in 2010. When will it happen?

"I don't think we'll see a federal state like Germany or America. I think in a decade or so we'll see a new type of federal state that is, first and foremost, based on the people

themselves wanting to work far more closely together. And then we'll see many of the current obstacles to freedom of movement removed, resulting in far closer co-operation in all areas. In the same way that the Passport Union arose out of Nordic co-operation in the wake of World War II, I think change will come, and that people and governments will reach out across borders and work together far more than they do today."

NO MORE DEPORTATION OF NORDIC CITIZENS

WHEN IT EMERGED IN 2010 THAT DENMARK IS DEPORTING NORDIC CITIZENS WHO APPLY FOR SOCIAL-SECURITY BENEFITS, THE NORDIC DEBATE BECAME SOMEWHAT HEATED. THE REACTION OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL MAY HAVE BEEN STRONG BUT DENMARK HAS SO FAR REFUSED TO CHANGE ITS POLICY. VILLE NIINISTÖ, CHAIR OF THE CITIZENS' AND CONSUMER RIGHTS COMMITTEE, HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST VOCAL CRITICS.



THE COMMITTEE STARTED to look into the issue in January 2010, when the Council of Ministers' information service, Hello Norden, uncovered several cases of citizens being expelled from other Nordic countries.

"If we're serious about cross-border freedom of movement in the Region, we need to acknowledge that this Danish practice is the antithesis of what we're trying to achieve," says Niinistö. "It's impor-

tant that the Nordic Council takes action, that it isn't just a talking-shop. To be relevant, the Council needs to summon the courage to address issues like this."

INTEGRATION MINISTER FAILS TO MEET NORDIC MPS

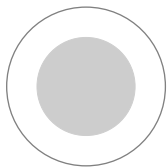
On several occasions in 2010, the Danish integration minister, Birte Rønn Hornbech, turned down the opportunity to meet the Citizens'

○ **VILLE NIINISTÖ MP**
CHAIRS THE GREEN
LEAGUE GROUP IN THE
FINNISH PARLIAMENT.
HE ALSO CHAIRS THE
NORDIC COUNCIL CITI-
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“If we’re serious about cross-border freedom of movement in the Region, we need to acknowledge that this Danish practice is the antithesis of what we’re trying to achieve. It’s important that the Nordic Council takes action, that it isn’t just a talking-shop. To be relevant, the Council needs to summon the courage to address issues like this.”



Committee, an action Niinistö and his fellow committee members find difficult to comprehend.

“It’s disloyal for one country to deliberately interpret the social security convention differently from the other four. It’s extremely difficult to understand her reasoning. This isn’t just a legal issue. It’s a political one. It’s a matter of principle. Refusing to engage in debate is unacceptable. That’s why the annual Session of the Nordic Council in Reykjavik decided to exert further pressure on the governments to act on this issue.”

The Session in Reykjavik in November requested that the other governments exert pressure on Denmark

to change its practice and discuss the deportation issue.

So far, the Nordic governments have not criticised Denmark, but Niinistö does not believe the issue will go away.

“In principle, the governments usually don’t hold discussions like that in public. They prefer to remain on good terms with each other. But the Finnish Presidency of the Council of Ministers in 2011 fully intends to revisit the issues. The Danish government must order its authorities to change their practice. As I understand it, there isn’t even any need to amend legislation, so it should be fairly easy for the government to sort out.”

The Citizens’ Committee asked law professor Kirsten Ketscher to look at the Nordic Convention on Social Security from a legal point of view.

“The essence of Ketscher’s findings is that both the convention and EU rules provide more extensive rights than those applied in Denmark,” explains Niinistö. “She thinks the European Court of Justice would rule against Denmark if one of these cases was taken to it. Denmark has long wanted to interpret EU rules its own way, despite the majority of other member states adopting a different approach. This interpretation goes against the principles of freedom of movement, both in the EU and in the Nordic Region.”



Niinistö reports that he and his colleagues on the Citizens' Committee have received several calls from people who have been told in person by Danish officials that they are to be deported.

"The actual number of Nordic citizens deported from Denmark is probably much higher than the figures we have received."

ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE

Niinistö has previously stated that Denmark ought to withdraw from the Convention if the government does not change its mind.

"It's really a matter of principle. If you don't respect an agreement,

you shouldn't be part of it, because that simply isn't sustainable in the long run. At the Session of the Nordic Council, several Danish members voted for the Citizens' Committee's proposal, so even at home the Danes face opposition to their practice."

Niinistö thinks that the debate and the media coverage of the issue have heightened interest in Nordic affairs in general, an interest that has, in turn, led to more probing questions about the nature of Nordic co-operation, e.g. what do Nordic values really mean if they are not adhered to in practice?

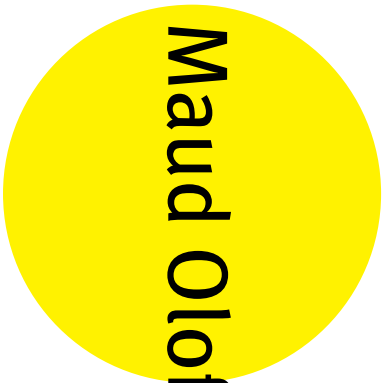
As far as the United Nordic Federation is concerned, Niinistö is not optimistic.

"I can't see it myself but as politicians we do sometimes have to address issues that don't appear to the outside observer to be matters of principle. That's why the deportation debate has been healthy. It illustrates that some Nordic issues are matters of principle, and that certain individual issues influence general social trends. Wetterberg's idea is important because it raises the issue of how to generate added value from Nordic co-operation and how to develop it in the future."



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PUSHING FOR A GREENER EUROPE



Maud Olofsson

THE NORDIC GOVERNMENTS FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT A JOINT ELECTRICITY MARKET, COMBINING A VARIETY OF METHODS OF GENERATION (GEOTHERMAL POWER, NUCLEAR POWER AND HYDROELECTRICITY) WITH RENEWABLE SOURCES, WOULD HAVE MASSIVE SYNERGY EFFECTS.

○ MAUD OLOFSSON IS THE SWEDISH BUSINESS AND ENERGY MINISTER AND CHAIR OF THE CENTRE PARTY.

THE NORDIC STATES and autonomous territories have mapped out the desired direction for work in 2011 that will lead towards a greener Europe. It includes realising the ambition of a joint electricity market for customers and consumers.

“What we are doing is historic. As we continue to develop the joint market, we will show Europe the way towards the joint European market envisaged in the EU 2020 strategy. According to Swedish Energy Minister Maud Olofsson, this work will also

significantly increase the potential for exerting influence on European development.”

GREATER HARMONISATION

At the 2010 Globalisation Forum, the prime ministers pointed out that there are many ways in which the Nordic electricity market could be enhanced that would benefit consumers, the climate and security of supply. Olofsson and her Nordic colleagues have outlined the main themes for the work to come. All the indications are that

2011 will be another breakthrough year in the transition to a Nordic electricity market.

“The big challenge is to continue to push for harmonisation of the market in the Region, so the increasing volumes of sustainable energy are integrated into the grid,” she emphasises.

MODEL REGION

The Nordic electricity market is often cited as the best in Europe. Exactly how it gained this reputation may be a matter of opinion, but Olofsson plans to maintain it.

“The Nordic countries have shown courage. Our politicians have mapped out a direction and set ambitious targets, and our consumers want green technology and sustainable growth. They buy environmentally friendly cars and other products, which generates demand. The Nordic business community is at the forefront of meeting this demand. What is needed now is closer collaboration between politicians, research, business and consumers.”

MORE POWER TO THE CONSUMER

“Electricity prices have rocketed in recent winters, resulting in widespread criticism. High bills have hit private customers hard. Price increases have also affected industry, forcing some companies to shut up shop temporarily. One reason for the high prices is the cold, but higher consumption as the economy continues to recover has also put pressure on prices. A Nordic grid and more renewable energy are of vital importance to the price of electricity,” Olofsson points out.

“We need to boost production, increase the volume of renewable energy, improve our national grids and extend them beyond territorial borders. We need to look for Nordic synergy when

building new grids. An efficient new grid that also increases competition will help us avoid the kind of price shocks that often accompany the cold winter months.”

A great deal of work has been done in recent years to combat emissions of greenhouse gases, including the introduction of new sources of energy and efforts to guarantee supplies. At the same time as demand has increased, stricter environmental requirements have also been introduced, oil prices are rising, and there is an ever-greater need for more efficient use of resources. This applies to households, businesses, manufacturing and construction.

“Instead of national markets, we’ll have a Nordic consumer market for electricity. For the end-user this will mean greater competition. We won’t be restricted to buying electricity from our national provider. End-users will also have greater influence and more opportunities to determine their own patterns of consumption,” Olofsson stresses.

EXTRA ATTENTION TO SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS

Many sparsely populated Nordic areas are cut off from the grid. The energy ministers are determined to pursue promising technologies such as the storage of wind energy in water – what is known as “pumped storage” technology – which may provide green solutions in sparsely populated areas with limited access to the grid.

LOCAL COUNCILS NEXT

The Nordic Energy Municipality competition will be run in 2011 to reward local councils that commit to and launch ground-breaking energy

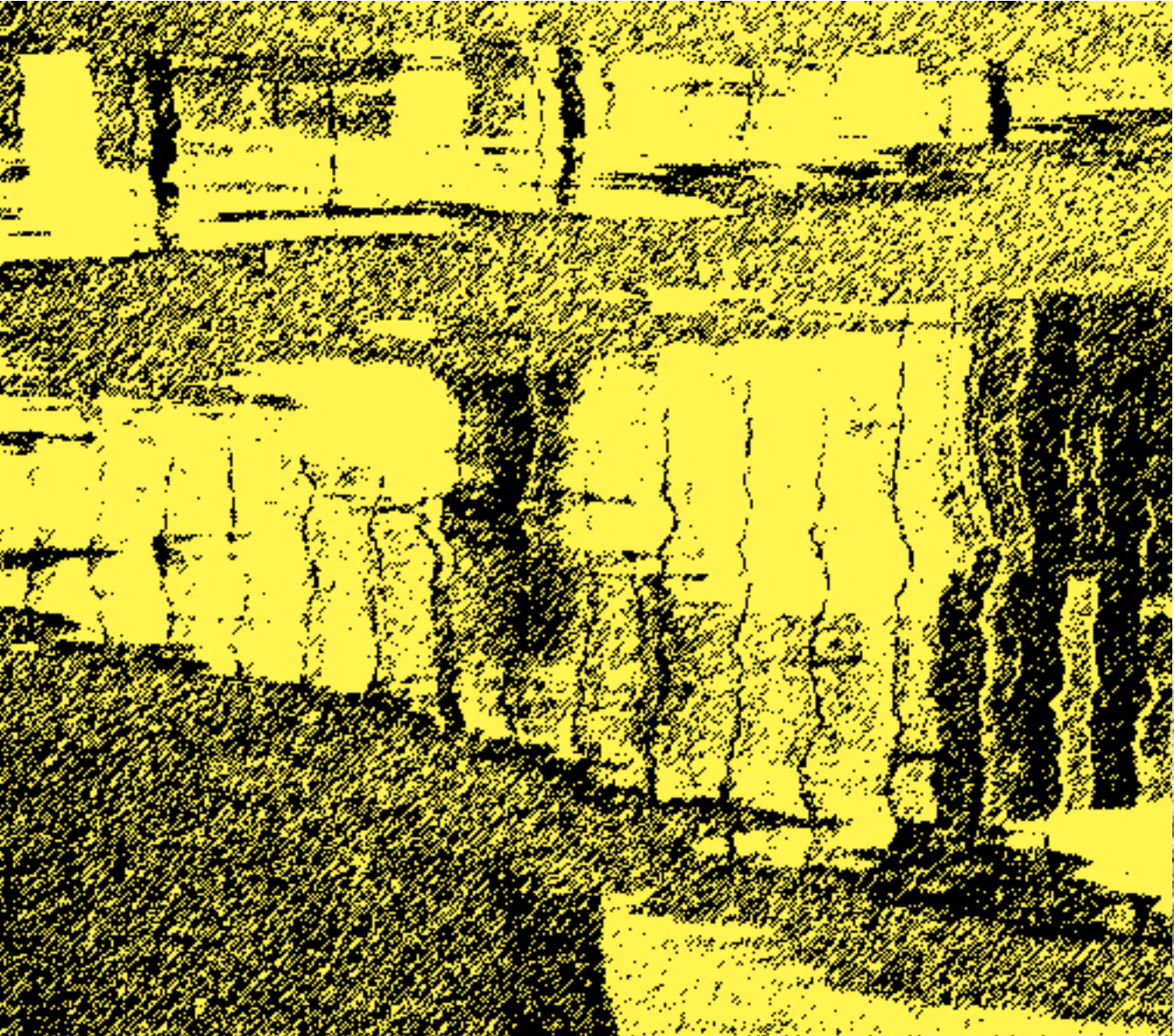
projects that help generate green growth and development.

“Local authorities are very interested in new energy projects, so it’s important to develop them at local level and involve local communities. It’s also a way for ministers to get to know about good local-authority projects,” Olofsson adds.

THE ELECTRICITY MARKET AND GREEN GROWTH

The governments also see an efficient electricity market as a prerequisite for business development, and consider the cross-border market of the future to be a key component in the strategy to promote green growth under the auspices of Nordic co-operation on globalisation. Developing clean technology and sharing knowledge will play important roles in the years to come, providing further impetus to green growth in the Region.

“The Nordic countries are all focused on the major challenge posed by climate change, but we also see it as a golden opportunity to create new businesses and new jobs. Converting to renewable energy sources is essential to green growth. Supplying the Nordic Region with green and renewable energy is one of the key tasks, but we also have to become more energy efficient and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The Nordic partnership is already unique and the Region is poised to make the most of these opportunities,” Olofsson concludes.



“We need to boost production,
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norden

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