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Nordic Council of Ministers

Cross-border Regional Optimal Solutions in Scandinavia – examples of and recommendations to the promotion of the borderless labour market

Final report for the project G.O.L.I.N. 2003-2005



G. O. L. I. N.

This report is written by the parties in the GOLIN-project, Öresund Committee, ARKO, Gränsskommittén Østfold-Bohuslän-Dalsland, Provincia Bothniensis Haparanda-Tornio. For more information about the project parties see the box in the back of report.



Cross-border Regional Optimal Solutions in Scandinavia
Examples of and recommendations to the promotion of the borderless labour market.
Final report for the G.O.L.I.N. project, 2003-2005

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G. O. L. I. N.

1	Preface	4
2	Background, purpose and aim	5
3	What have we done?	5
4	Recommendations on future efforts	6
4.1	Information.	6
4.2	Education	8
4.3	Simplification of rules and systems.	9
4.4	Strategic network and contact forums.	12
5	The "GOLIN regions"	14
6	Nordic utility	14
7	How do we proceed?	15
	Appendix 1 - Fine examples	16
	Information	16
	Education	16
	Authority cooperation	16
	Strategic network.	17



G. O. L. I. N.

1 Preface

This report is a synthesis of examples of, recommendations to and solution proposals for future efforts to improve well-functioning borderless labour markets. The report synthesises the results of the cooperation on exchange of experiences and solution proposals, which the parties behind the GOLIN project (Cross-border Regional Optimal Solutions in Scandinavia) have executed in 2003-2005, supported financially by the Nordic Council of Ministers via the Regional Sector, the Labour Market Sector and the Strategic Pool. The main activities include three seminars and a final conference.

The parties of the project are the Öresund Committee, Gränskommittén, ARKO and Haparanda-Tornio, which are all politically governed collaborative organs in the four Nordic border regions involved (for further information see the box at the back of the report). On seminars, the project parties have gathered the main actors possessing knowledge of the border regional daily life to exchange experiences and discuss problems, results and specific solutions to improve the borderless labour markets. Through the seminars, the actors' knowledge has been widespread; solutions tested in one border region have created inspiration for possible solutions in another border region.

During the process, the debate has been put into a Nordic perspective by including policies, strategies and activities from the Nordic cooperation to fulfil and develop the opportunities and potential existing in the utilisation of the different offers within the labour market and education.

By having well-functioning border regional labour markets, the Nordic border regions will be able to consolidate their growth potential and thus their position as efficient, well-integrated and dynamic border regions and strengthen the North as a whole in the European competition.

GOLIN shall be regarded as both a catalogue of ideas and a process. During the final debate on the final seminar of the project in March 2005, attention was paid to the learning gained from the GOLIN project:

- that it is necessary to start from practice and not always merely from rules and regulations
- that the nature of bureaucracy is slow and reactive and therefore must be challenged actively, creatively and specifically
- that we must enhance our ability to make the problems political by means of strategic lobby work





G. O. L. I. N.

- that an open and trustful cooperation centrally, regionally and locally is imperative to solve the border problems
- that we must be specific in our argumentation and solutions!

Thus, the GOLIN project has fulfilled its most important aim: to spread knowledge and ideas, provide inputs for the debate, create networks and provide inspiration for further involvement with respect to the cross-border regional questions. In the process, many actors have contributed with valuable experiences, ideas and views. We wish to use this opportunity to thank those who in one way or the other have participated in the project. Moreover, we gladly receive any comments, ideas or other views regardless of them concerning this report or the further process in and between the border regions.

2 Background, purpose and aim

The background of the GOLIN project is that all border regions are continuously faced with obstacles that limit the utilisation of the opportunities present in a borderless labour market. A well-functioning border regional labour market is a prerequisite for benefiting from the border regional potential to create integration, economic growth and increase employment. Not all problems can or should be solved legislatively. In the Nordic border regions, a large amount of knowledge and experiences with specific pragmatic solutions have been developed, which others could benefit from and which do not necessarily involve national legislation.

Hence, the project parties were interested in releasing the creativity, inventiveness and synergy that may arise when case officers, labour market parties, consultants and other local and directly involved "hands-on" occupied from different Nordic regions meet and are inspired by each other.

Subsequently, the purpose of the project is to compare and test specific examples of how borderless cooperation and joint utilisation of resources are handled in the respective regions. What problems have been tested in practice and what are the results – or may be the results – in the chosen areas of the border regional labour market in other parts of Scandinavia?

The aims for the project are to:

- Learn from each other in the participating border regions
- Inspire and enhance specific solutions in the individual regions
- Provide greater knowledge and understanding of the border regional problems and challenges to the people involved and public actors

Accordingly, a part of the aim has been to create a network that crosses borders in order to obtain a dialogue on and communication of specific experiences from the daily life in the border region.

3 What have we done?

The project parties have access to and participate in extensive networks with other actors in the border regions involved. Hence, excellent prerequisites for the creation of networks, exchange of experience, identification of obstacles and, not least, solutions exist. On this basis, the GOLIN project carried out the following seminars:

- 1) A flexible labour market and the importance of information Tanum Strand, Sweden, August 25th -27th 2003, 50 participants
- 2) A joint Nordic labour market in theory and practice Tornio, Finland, February 2nd - 4th, 2004, 60 participants
- 3) Education and competence support Elsinore, Denmark, September 14th -16th, 2004, 55 participants
- 4) Borderless labour markets in Scandinavia Final seminar, Copenhagen, March 1st -2nd, 2005, 75 participants.

The participants were representatives of tax offices, insurance counters, information services, education, employment parties, employment service etc.

For each seminar a synthesis with fine examples and recommendations was formed. The synthesis can be downloaded from www.norden.org/golin and on the web-pages of the project parties. In this final report an extract of the examples and recommendations considered most important by the project parties is provided as well as the results from the final seminar.

An important ambition of the project is to include the decision makers at the regional, national and Nordic level – officials as well as politicians – to implement the problems and solution proposals and to inspire and activate the possibilities of action in the political system.

4 Recommendations on future efforts

The recommendations from the seminars can be divided into four themes: 1) Information; 2) Education; 3) Simplification of rules and systems; 4) Strategic networks. On the following pages the recommendations and the solution proposals are presented in schemes. For each solution proposal, a target group is presented, which, assumed by the project parties, must be part of the responsibility to solve the problem.

4.1 Information

Problem: For the "users" of the border regions, typically companies, students or employers, it is imperative to have access to correct, transparent and uniform information on rules, systems, possibilities etc. It may be unclear where to find this information and, depending on who you contact, different answers and interpretations of the rules may be provided.

Utility: If we manage to spread the existing information by means of knowledge exchange, education, job rotation, creation of network etc., the authorities and the information services will acquire the same knowledge and understanding. Accordingly, it will be easier to obtain uniform and correct information. Hence, the cross-border regions will achieve greater functionality, and, subsequently, it will be easier to "navigate" across the borders for companies as well as citizens.





G. O. L. I. N.

Information	Aim	Recommendation	Solution proposal	Fine examples	Target group
	Goal oriented, correct and easily accessible information for employers, students and companies	Exchange of knowledge between information services	• The information services cooperate with Hello Norden • A co-ordinated call centre in Scandinavia for companies as well as citizens • Field trips • Face to face meetings	Oresund Direct Hello Norden Grensetjänsten (The Border Service)	Information services. Border committees, Nordic Council of Ministers (Border Region Forum)
		Develop information networks and extend the cooperation between regions and authorities	• One-Stop-Shop (integration of information and authority execution) • Biannual meetings between relevant parties, e.g. in border region forum (Nordic Council of Ministers) • Interactive meeting point in the North • Create a working group with representatives from all the border regions to co-ordinate the above	Oresundsinfo.dk OresundDirect-expertise network	Unions, labour market parties, employment service, authorities in and between the border-regions etc.
		Ensure the existence of information services	• The information services prepare a strategy to ensure their existence, they should: • Illustrate the importance of their role in a letter to the Nordic Council of Ministers and the national governments • Secure media time by means of lobby work	On the final conference of the GOLIN project a draft of a letter was prepared	The information services in all the border regions of the GOLIN project
		Information on advantages and opportunities for citizens and companies to enhance the incentives to utilise the possibilities on the other side	• Employers: recruitment from other countries. • Job seekers: information on advantages/disadvantages • Information on bottlenecks • Clarity on part time jobs	The publication: "Work in Denmark? Work in Sweden?" The bottleneck reports from ØAR	Industrial associations, information services

4.2 Education

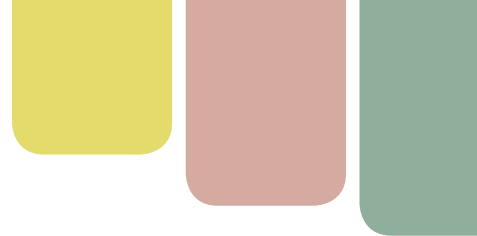
Problem: Education is extremely important for a well-functioning cross-border regional labour market; both with respect to access to educational offers in the entire border region, and with respect to recognition of the competence existing in the neighbouring countries. In the North we have come a long way when recognition of the different educations, cooperation on educational offers etc. are concerned; however, barriers still exist in the different border regions when education, trainee service and apprenticeship or application for jobs across the borders is in question. We can improve our cooperation on education and developmental needs across the borders.

Utility: A student who experiences a well-functioning border regional educational environment will be more motivated to apply for a job on the other side of the border later in life. Increased recognition of professional and educational competence in the neighbouring country will promote mobility among students and job seekers and, subsequently, strengthen the competitiveness in the border region. An improved cooperation across borders on youth, adult and supplementary education between the labour market parties, the industry and the educational institutions will promote the use of resources and create better educations that will meet the future needs for labour and ensure the region's competence supply needed in the long term.





G. O. L. I. N.



Education	Aim	Recommendation	Solution proposal	Fine examples (se appendix 1)	Target group
	Free mobility for students – recognition of the different educations (Cross-border regional follow-up on the Copenhagen process)	Create a base for cross-border regional competence support, (a balance between supply and demand of labour)	- Form working groups to enhance cooperation on education across borders and between the industry and the educations (especially within "trade related" educations) - Joint Nordic identification of new professions/jobs - Adjust education models to new "professions"	Competence Centre (kompetencerådet) Morokullien, The Industry Oresund Council (Industriens Øresundsråd)	Educational institutions, teacher training, politicians, labour market parties, employment service and companies, state
		Ensure opportunities for studying, trainee services, apprenticeships across borders	Support people applying for trainee services and apprenticeships across borders - Provide GOLIN money for an exchange of students/teachers in the Nordic countries - Create pilot projects (especially within "trade related" educations)	Haparanda-Tornio Granskommittén, Strömstad municipality	Som ovan + nationella och nordiska nationella valideringscenter
		Recognise educations across borders	- Apply the ETCS system to trade education - Extend information on education contents and jobs plus use of Europass - Have a pragmatic attitude - Automatic recognition of education in the long term	Europass Certificate of shared competence www.oresunds-info.org	As above + national and Nordic validation /recognition centres
		Common educations	- Ensure borderless companies' use of supplementary education in both countries - Ensure that "small" educations and trades will survive, e.g. by uniting them - Linguistic/cultural educations about and with "the other side"	Jewelleries-and, model carpenters-education in Oresund, Framtidsoperatören(future operator) Language school and Utbildning Nord (Education North) in H-T The Oresund University Uniska	See above

4.3 Simplification of rules and systems

Problems: Occasionally, companies and citizens fall between two stools – this must not happen. This may be due to rules being interpreted differently, which results in varying and sometimes wrong information. This creates insecurity and situations in which people risk receiving less or no transfer income for a period: some have been discharged from their employment due to illness or maternity leave because of different rules. Likewise, commuters experience that the administrative procedure occasionally can be very time consuming due to bureaucracy and complex questions. Companies experience extensive insecurity and complex rules because the rules for VAT; Staff benefits and pension are handled very differently. Different rules exist for company cars; in Denmark, Norway and Finland it is not allowed to drive back to the country of residence in the car the employer may provide.

Utility: If the rules are co-ordinated and transparency is increased, the base of knowledge used for choosing an education, trade or work “on the other side” will be enhanced. Furthermore, the functionality and the interplay across the borders will increase. Accordingly, security is strengthened and the incitements to look to “the other side” increase: trade may be increased and the risk of economic loss decreases.





G. O. L. I. N.

Compatibility between rules and systems for citizens and companies	Aim	Recommendation	Solution proposal	Fine examples (see appendix 1)	Target group
	Easy for citizens and companies to utilise the possibilities on the other side of the border	Easy administrative burdens, simplify forms	• Translate and simplify forms regarding tax, duty and VAT • A social security number in the North • Clarify tax rules in case of capital gain • Reduce fee when using foreign credit card • Simplify purchase between companies to ensure that purchase is regarded as border trade and, hence, VAT deduction is gained in the country of residence	Grensetjänsten (The Border Service)	Authorities, commuter organisations, movers, information services, companies
		Ensure compatibility between tax, social security and pension systems.	• Create a board to make the binding decisions and agreements, which will ensure that citizens and companies will not fall between two stools when they look to the other side • Clause in regulation to ensure that no one will fall between two stools until their question is solved • The rules for the unemployment fund should be revised to estimate where and if problems exist for people crossing borders • Prepare an agreement between the countries regarding social security, which considers the EU legislation • Share tax between country of residence and country of workplace	Danish/Swedish Tax agreement, Morokullien	State, labour market parties, social security systems
		Ensure compatibility in the frame conditions for the companies	• Co-ordination of rules for transport and infrastructure in case of long transports • Correlate registers for control between the countries • Common currency • Transparent employer fee • Transport companies that function across borders		
		Educate case officials on border problems – Border competence	• Seminars on the authorities of the neighbouring country • Job rotation within own organisation • Job rotation across borders • Quarterly seminars on authorities • Prepare action plans for this in all border regions	Border regional service such as Oresund Direct, Skat Øresund (tax service), grensetjänsten	Authorities
		Authority cooperation to remove barriers	• Vitalize the channels upwards • Increased dialogue/information between the national and regional levels • Establish "Border councils" in all border regions. When a problem is identified. 1. Elucidate if a problem exists (authorities complete this) 2. Identify who is responsible for solving the problem 3. Establish working groups	Grensrådet (the Border Council)	The political committees, labour market parties, industry, The Nordic Council of Ministers.



G. O. L. I. N.

4.4 Strategic network and contact forums

Problem: Today, the cross-border question is much focused on – problems as well as possibilities. However, several experiences and solutions are not utilised due to lack of knowledge and lack of spread of knowledge. A large amount of knowledge can be acquired from the colleagues and sister organisations of other border regions.

Utility: Formal and informal networks and forums can work as channels for spreading ideas and experiences. Through networks, it is easier to develop solution proposals for common unsolved problems. A united effort will elevate the involvement in the border question. The cross-border regions are full of possibilities for growth and employment.

Strategic networks	Aim	Recommendation	Solution proposal	Fine examples (see appendix 1)	Target group
	Improved utilisation of knowledge and synergy – improved and faster solutions	Communication of problems and solutions to decision makers and vice versa: The border regions may “test” the political solutions in practice	• Arrangements like Interreg’s “Interact” • Systematic “border policy” contact between The Nordic Association, border committees, Nordic officials and politicians • Re-vitalize the contacts to the policy creating level of officials • Pro-active alliances and an attempt to gain influence rather than reactive “half measures” • Articles on success stories, fine examples and pragmatic solutions • Promote the involvement in border political questions. • New definitions of the “cross-border politics” so that it includes e.g. growth and competitiveness • Agenda of possibilities for barrier focus • Focus via expert groups • Transparency between groups and initiatives • Market the North as an area of growth • Use the platforms that exist within the border regions	The Industry Oresund Council, Oresund Direct Network, Grensrådet (Border council)	All actors related to the border regional labour market, i.e. regional, national and Nordic labour market parties, case officials, border committees, The Nordic Association, The Nordic Council of Ministers, journalists/media
		Solutions should be implemented into all regions, not just one	• Spread information, experiences and ideas across the border regions • Notify when solutions have been developed		



G. O. L. I. N.

5 The "GOLIN regions"

In the North and in Europe, a number of border regions exist in which borderless labour markets function or are being developed. The degrees of functionality, integration and mobility vary immensely across the regions. In some regions numerous barriers have been removed and new service institutions for border commuters have been established, while other regions are still on an early developmental level or have other aims for the cross-border regional cooperation.

Regarding the North, the GOLIN regions are characterised by an intensive interaction the borders across, which is measured in the number of commuters crossing the border due to their education and work, trade, export, networks etc. In the GOLIN regions well-anchored and politically founded border committees, which work specifically and politically strategically for the development of the integration, competitiveness, employment and growth in the regions, are present. They are characterised by having access to wide networks, thorough knowledge of problems concerning border regions and, not least, a strong will and competence to solve the problems – either personally or via collaborators in the region.

The regions that manage to utilise the possibilities of the cross-border regional labour market may achieve a larger critical mass and a competitive advantage compared to other regions. Accordingly, they may provide inspiration with their best-practice to other border regions in the North, in the Baltic countries and other members of the EU and be dynamos for growth and welfare.

6 Nordic utility

The fact that the GOLIN project focuses on the specific, operational level with participants, who daily deal with problems concerning the borderless labour market, has met positive response from the participating border regions and in other Nordic cooperation groups.

Via the seminars, the GOLIN project has created new networks between and across the organisational types in the various cross-border regions. Experiences on solutions within the fields of common education, tax rules, education of case officials, information services, exchange of apprentices and teachers etc. have been exchanged. These experiences have prompted processes in the border regions, which will contribute to the promotion of the functionality of the borderless collaborations. In the border regions, problems as well as possibilities are regarded in full, i.e. across sectors and authority levels. This approach provides different potentials and solutions than those at a national level.

At a cultural level, the fact that we get to know each other with respect to language, culture, also work culture, and our different ways of developing solutions, has a positive effect on the labour market of a united North. We become familiar with and gain trust in the various systems for educations and jobs, which in the long run will make it even easier to create solutions for common cross-border labour markets.

The GOLIN project provides input to – and is in continuation of – other initiatives taking place within the Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU. The focus on the promotion of the labour market and the educational field is endorsed by EU directives which promote mobility across borders. An example is the so-called Copenhagen process, which strives at increasing the quality in the European trade educational system and at creating mutual trust between the countries. Furthermore, the EU ministers of education have decided to introduce a Europass (joint degree system) from January 1st, 2005. Likewise, the Lisbon-Convention and the Reykjavik Declaration are concerned with mutual recognition of higher educations.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has taken the initiative to prepare a report on "Recognition of trade competence in the North" which departs from the Copenhagen process. The Nordic Council of Ministers has politically decided to support the recommendations in the report on specific initiatives to exchange experiences in the North and in Europe, competition, credit systems in Europe etc. Initiatives such as the GOLIN project may provide inputs for these processes and "test" the various solutions in practice.

The GOLIN project may also support and supplement the process led by former Prime Minister, Poul Schlüter; he tries to convince the Nordic politicians to remove the border obstacles. The GOLIN project is mentioned in Poul Schlüter's report to the Nordic Council of Ministers, which we consider as a substantial recognition of the possibilities present in the cross-border regional creativity, the full perspective across sectors and a specific approach.



G. O. L. I. N.

7 How do we proceed?

The actors in the border regions possess the best pre-requisites for improving the integration across the borders in the Scandinavia. Several persons/organisations have taken the initiative in running some of the above solution proposals, but it is imperative that more actors participate. The GOLIN project emphasises the effect of relating pragmatically and specifically to the cross-border regional problems, to work creatively and focus on the well-planned and realistic solutions and utilise and strengthen the established networks and contact forums. The solutions exist at different levels: regionally, nationally, and nordically.

A central message from the final conference of the project, which we must pay attention to, is that the problems and the solution proposals should be run with great involvement and specifically by, with and for those who have the competence to solve them, regardless of level. We must identify the persons – journalists, officials, politicians – who are involved or interested in the questions and make the problems visible by illustrating the importance, the use and the full perspective of them.

At the conference in March 2005, it was evident that the link between the levels was not obvious and, hence, it has to be strengthened. It indicates, that the people occupied with cross-border questions in the regions are not being visible to the decision makers at a national and Nordic level. However, it is positive that these proclaimed great involvement in the cross-border regional questions and an interest to improve the dialogue with the cross-border regions on how we promote the border regional labour markets. This was emphasised by Per Unckel, the general secretary of The Nordic Council of Ministers.

Appendix 1 – Best practice - examples

An important part of the seminars was to exchange positive experiences and examples /best practice. The fine examples have been divided into themes: 1) Information; 2) Education; 3) Authority cooperation; 4) Strategic network. For further information links are provided afterwards the examples where possible. In other cases the border committee mentioned in parenthesis can be contacted.

Information

- Oresund Direct: www.oresunddirekt.com
- The Border Service: www.grensetjansten.no
- Haparanda-Tornio: www.tornio.fi
- Hello Norden: www.hallonorden.org

Education

- Education North: www.utbnord.se – cooperation between Nordic schools,
- Language schools (H-T)
- Exchange (purchase) of adult education, apprenticeships and teachers (H-T)
- Translation of education and jobs: www.Oresundsinfo.org (ÖR)
- Common educations for gold smiths and pattern makers (ÖR)
- Malmö-Lund Apprentice Pilot Project (ÖR),
- Certificate of shared competence (ARKO)
- EuroPass, including Certificate Supplement (EU) – addition to certificate of apprenticeship, translated into 4 languages, to improve the recognition and clarity of industry educations in the EU, <http://www.ciriusonline.dk/>
- The Future Operator: (ARKO) – network between schools, the industry, the labour market parties
- Uniska: www.uniska.net: triple helix network between research, private industries and authorities, Karlstad and Nordkalotten – education at a master level

Authority cooperation

- Authority cooperation (H-T): www.tornio.fi
- The Border Council (Morokullien, ARKO)
- Copenhagen municipality - Malmö Stad (ÖR)
- Ellsinore municipality –Helsingborg city, authority cooperation (ÖR): www.hhsamarbejdet.org

Strategic network

- The Industry Oresund Council. www.industribron.dk/om.htm: trade specific cooperation between the labour market parties in the industry trades on both sides of the Oresund – (ÖR)
- Competence council – cooperation between authorities and labour market parties (H-T)
- The Labour Market Council: www.oresundsinfo.org (ÖR)
- Ellsinore-Helsingborg dialogue forum: www.hhsamarbejdet.org: gathering of authorities, companies, labour market parties (ÖR)
- Oresund Direct's expertise network, gathering of authorities within tax and social security, the labour market parties, the Oresund Committee secretariat, information service etc. (ÖR)
- The border council (ARKO)



G. O. L. I. N.

Examples of solutions within social security, unemployment funds and banks:

- Maternity leave can be transferred. Fine examples concerning agreements for maternity and paternity leave.
- Fine examples of agreements concerning health insurance and unemployment funds
- Maintenance allowance for Nordic commuters close to bankruptcy partly exist
- Centralised handling of E-301 (scheme for transfer of rights for daily benefits) in Aetat in Kongsvinger, which will ensure the establishment of expertise knowledge and, accordingly, shorten the handling time
- Agreement between Denmark and Sweden on workers living in one country and working in other countries (the same employer)
- Commuter accounts, cooperation between banks in Oresund to make it possible to have wages transferred without fees



GOLIN – The parties: The border committees and The Nordic Council of Ministers

The Öresund Committee, www.oresundskomiteen.dk

The Öresund Committee is a collaboration forum for regional and local politicians on both sides of the Oresund. The Danish and Swedish governments participate as observers. The purpose of the collaboration is to create a region in which it is simple and easy for the inhabitants to live, study and work. The Öresund Committee functions as a platform for an increased collaboration across the Oresund. Among other things, the Committee initiates and runs projects within the labour market, regional analyses and regional development. Moreover, the Öresund Committee is the programme secretariat for the EU-programme Interreg IIIA.



Gränskommittén, Østfold-Bohuslän-Dalsland, www.granskommitten.org

The border committee Østfold-Bohuslän-Dalsland was founded in 1980 to improve the development in the area and to create a forum for questions regarding both countries. The border committee consists of 19 municipalities and the Västra Götalands region and Østfold municipality. The committee follows the development within the border region and takes the initiative in cooperation and borderless projects within the various areas. The aim is to remove the border and the obstacles that follow in the best possible way. Examples of accomplished/current projects: The Border Commuter folder, The EKO Museum Borderland, Borderless Education and Contact Fair for the industrial world.



Provincia Bothniensis Haparanda-Tornio, www.provinciabothniensis.org

The cities of Haparanda and Tornio are placed near the border between Sweden and Finland, the busiest border in Scandinavia. The collaborative organ of the cities, Provincia Bothniensis, was established in 1987 to develop and extend the borderless cooperation between the cities. Today, the cooperation includes community planning, local technique, education, culture, leisure time, work among young people, industry and tourism, social service and health service. The vision of Haparanda-Tornio for the future is to become an international centre in the area of Bottenviksbågen and Barent; a meeting point for culture, knowledge, flow of goods, innovation and people.



ARKO, www.arko-regionen.org

The ARKO cooperation has existed since 1967 and is one of the oldest active organisations for cooperation across the Norwegian-Swedish border. The ARKO region consists of 11 members. The aim for ARKO is to develop the region as a meeting point across the border, strengthen the settlement and create increased occupation – to see the region as a whole. ARKO initiates the Interreg project to enhance cross-border encounters, in order to profit by the possibilities that exist and regard the border as an advantage instead of an obstacle.



The Nordic Council of Ministers, www.norden.org

The Nordic countries have cooperated closely politically for 50 years. The Nordic Council was established in 1952 and since 1971 the Nordic governments have cooperated in the Nordic Council of Ministers. The presidency period is one year and shifts between the 5 Nordic countries. The aim of the Nordic Council of Ministers is to utilise the great potential for the Nordic collaboration, including improvement of the integration between the Nordic countries.



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