



NORDICTALES

*Nordic 'Al Capone' goes
after tax-dodgers*

**HOT NEW
NORDIC FOOD**

*Culture funding breathes new cyber
life into Hans Christian Andersen*

**FREEDOM TO THINK
FOR YOURSELF**

*Making us
more mobile*

**AROUND THE REGION ON
A MASTER'S DEGREE**

*When love and
borders clash*

On the pictures

Page 2: Halldór Ásgrímsson, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers
Page 3: Jan Erik-Enestam, Director of the Nordic Council
Page 5: Kristin Halvorsen and Allan Bell
Page 6: The Isle of Man
Page 11: Tina Nordström
Page 17: Professor Dr. Anatoli Mikhailov
Page 19: Anastasiya Matchenko
Page 22: Ole Norrback

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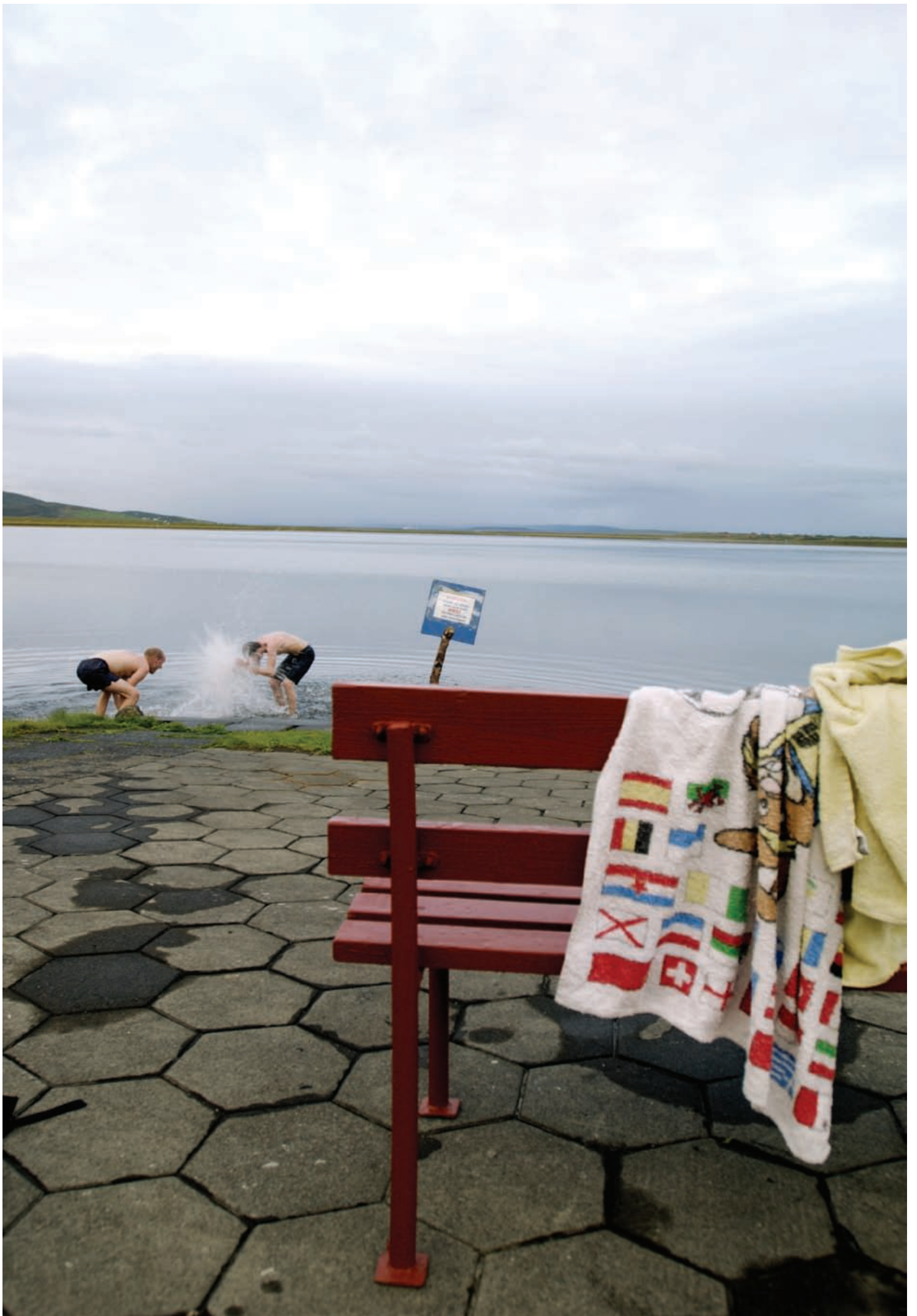
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Nordic co-operation

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.

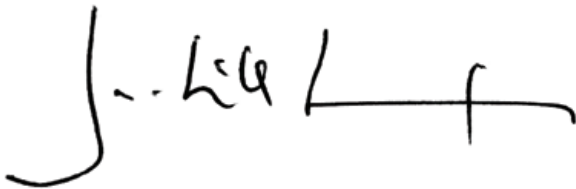


*The Nordic Prime
Ministers decided on a
long-term joint approach
to globalisation at their
summer meeting in
Finland in June 2007.*

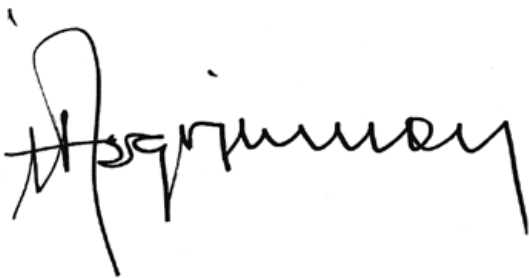




The objective is a competitive Nordic Region. The means include even closer collaboration on climate change, research, innovation and energy, marketing the Region to the outside world and promoting freedom of movement.



Jan-Erik Enestam
Director of the Nordic Council



Halldór Ásgrímsson
Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers

In April, a Nordic Globalisation Forum will be held in Riksgården, Sweden, under the heading *A Competitive Nordic Region in A Globalised World*. The issue will remain high on the Nordic agenda of the future.

Our countries have taken a huge step forward into a world characterised by change. The Adjacent Areas are developing and reforming, the EU is growing and countries like China and India are now major players on the world stage. Acting as one in the EU, the UN and other international organisations makes the most of our joint strengths.

It is important that we work together on the issues of today and of the future, that we have clear goals in mind, and that we focus on the areas where we will have the greatest impact on actual outcomes, which is exactly how our Nordic inter-parliamentary and inter-governmental partnerships already function.

But what does all this mean for Nordic citizens and companies? What does Nordic co-operation mean for a family that is about to move from one Nordic country to another and wants to transfer its child benefit entitlement? What does it mean for a Belarussian student whose university has been closed down and who has to study in exile? What does it mean for people who have money stashed in tax havens like the Isle of Man?

This is just a small sample of the huge range of ideas, projects, stories, papers, meetings, initiatives and hours spent working late into the night that Nordic co-operation generated in 2007.

This is the story of a moment that Nordic tax civil servants are still celebrating. A tale of co-operation and goodwill, in which borders are wiped out and information means everything. A story about money – huge sums of money, if we are to believe the estimates.



NORDIC 'AL CAPONE' GOES AFTER TAX-DODGERS



In Oslo in late 2007, the Minister of the Treasury from the Isle of Man signed bilateral information exchange agreements with his Nordic counterparts. The agreement represents a first step towards making international tax-dodging a thing of the past. Other agreements of this nature will be reached in the next few years. Travelling the world, with his office in his pocket and Paris as his home base, *Torsten Fensby* is the tax authorities' very own Eliot Ness.

It starts with a trip from Paris to the Isle of Man, the first leg of a journey that was to take in Jersey, Aruba and the Dutch Antilles, all booked by the Nordic countries' tax offices.

'My colleagues thought I was mad to leave the OECD office in Paris to work for the Nordic governments,' Fensby recalls. 'And yes, I was nervous,' he continues. 'I felt a kind of unease that has since become the norm for me. The OECD had already put together a list of what it classified as "unwholesome" tax regions and regimes. It had noted promises from 33 states to renounce secrecy. The pieces of the jigsaw were falling into place, and progress was beginning to be made. But, for a variety of reasons, the OECD pulled the plug. That was when I began to put everything into the Nordic project. I believe in it and the final chapter hasn't been written yet.'

Fensby is the man in the smart suit who does the dirty work. He has season tickets for the world's airlines and a briefcase full of experience, conviction and willingness to co-operate. With his links to the Nordic countries and the OECD's Paris office, Fensby is the Nordic answer to Eliot Ness, one of the men who brought down Al Capone.

'Working together gives the relatively small Nordic countries greater clout in OECD negotiations, giving us a chance to put an end to tax dodges. The negotiations also give the Manx government, and others like them, the chance to forge a new image for themselves, to attract more tourists, to develop the activities that make them unique and to cultivate new, and less shady, export markets.'

The Oslo agreement was a major boost to this work. Other events are important too, however; the next US presidential election, in particular, may prove to be of major significance.

'Since 11 September 2001, when the war on terrorism was stepped up, information has meant everything,' he explains. 'The Bush administration's willingness to exchange financial information to fight terrorism has indirectly facilitated our work. Whoever wins the race in 2008, they will be important. This time, however, it is mainly the Democratic candidates who have expressed a willingness to fight tax evasion, in some cases tangibly, in their manifestos.'

SUCCESS RAISES EXPECTATIONS

'Originally, we thought agreements would be reached with three or four states in the first year or two,' Fensby explains. 'But the Oslo agreement with the Isle of Man could cause a domino effect. I wouldn't be surprised if we have agreements with at least six states around the world in the near future.'

Over the piece, a mutual trust has built up between Fensby and the countries involved in the negotiations. This confidence in each other is crucial to his work. The Manx authorities, in particular, showed great willingness to co-operate and recognised the positive effects the



FACTS

▶ The Nordic Finance Ministers signed bilateral agreements with the Isle of Man at a press conference in Oslo on 30 October 2007. The Tax and Information Exchange Agreements (TIEAs) give the authorities access to information about the capital investments and incomes of people subject to tax. To follow up on the OECD's work to combat international tax avoidance, the Nordic countries decided in 2006, under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers, to commence negotiations with offshore financial centres. The agreement with the Isle of Man is a tangible first step in a comprehensive initiative that already includes negotiations with Aruba, Jersey and the Dutch Antilles.

▶ The OECD is an international organisation for economic co-operation and development. Its members include the Nordic countries.

▶ Eliot Ness, born in Chicago of Norwegian parents, was a man of the people who helped put a stop to Al Capone's criminal career. Al Capone was convicted of tax fraud and given a long prison sentence.

agreement would have on their country – for example, there is the possibility of a boom for some of its financial niche products and a cleaner image makes it easier to attract new companies.

'For the Nordic countries,' says Fensby, 'the agreement has two tangible effects. The first is preventative, in the sense that anybody planning a tax dodge will think twice about it. The other is the probability that anyone who has already parked their capital on the island to avoid tax at home will get cold feet and try moving the money elsewhere.'

Discussions have already started with the other islands off Britain, and Fensby expects to visit the West Indian Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands soon.

'Hopefully, we have seen the start of a clean-up,' he says. 'Things will get more awkward for people who try to withhold tax, even though it will be decades before we can say our work is done. My mandate from the Nordic Council of Ministers runs until mid-2009.'

The project has already attracted attention in other countries. Because Nordic co-operation is seen to be effective, it is seen as something that may be of interest to other OECD countries.

It is difficult, for obvious reasons, to estimate just how much Nordic tax revenue is lost in this way. Access to information has been – and still is – poor. Swedish estimates suggest the real figure may be many billions. The Oslo agreement represents an important milestone, but the Nordic finance ministers know further agreements are a necessity. For Fensby, a long journey has just begun.

HOT NEW NORDIC FOOD



Baltic herring marinated in herbs with black bread. Jerusalem artichoke bavaroise with pickled tomato. Or how about shrimp rolls with horseradish? Or a piping hot mushroom omelette? All of it, of course, made from the freshest possible Nordic ingredients.

In any list of Nordic success stories, it would be impossible to leave out New Nordic Food. Since the programme was launched in autumn 2006, it has attracted massive interest from the general public, the media and stakeholders in the food, tourism and design industries.

‘Nordic cuisine is going to be the next big global thing,’ says no less a figure than Ferran Adrià, master chef at the legendary, Michelin star restaurant elBulli in Spain, named ‘best restaurant in the world’ on several occasions. His words bear witness to the huge gastronomic potential in the Nordic Region.

NOT JUST FOOD

What, exactly, is New Nordic Food? And why has the programme made such an impact? The simple answer is that most of us love food and are interested in it. Despite its name, however, New Nordic Food is about much more than just food. It is not solely designed to promote food culture and gastronomy, it also promotes elements such as design and tourism that are associated with Nordic food.

The progress made by the project is, to an extent, a consequence of globalisation. It is not just a matter of getting Nordic cuisine out into the rest of the world. In an increasingly globalised world, it is also important to preserve national, regional and local values, including those that flourish in our homes. A comparison can be drawn between Nordic cuisine and Mediterranean food, in that each country or region contributes with its special, unique raw materials, design and gastronomy, but under an overall umbrella. In the north that umbrella is ‘New Nordic Food’.

AMATEUR CHEFS

New Nordic Food gives entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, farmers and other stakeholders in the Nordic Region the opportunity to combine forces, e.g. to apply for funding for promising projects. One project to receive funds from New Nordic Food is a competition to find the Region’s best amateur chef, which is being held for the first time in 2008.

‘We want to involve everybody who is interested in food and, at the same time, promote the use of Nordic raw materials,’ says Reidar Dieserud from Norway, the man behind the competition.

Five finalists, one from each Nordic country, will be chosen to compete in the final, where they will be asked to conjure up a winning three-course menu using ingredients from their home country.

New Nordic Food supports a whole host of other interesting and useful initiatives, including a project on narratives that feature Nordic food, a congress for Nordic master chefs and a Nordic gastronomy innovation store. It also invests in school pupils, health and food.



AMBASSADORS

New Nordic Food has appointed 14 ambassadors from the five Nordic countries and three autonomous territories. Their remit is to draw attention to the programme in their home countries, a duty they have performed with great success. In autumn 2007, they got together in the food Mecca, Grythyttan in Sweden, to discuss the future of New Nordic Food.

The ambassadors include famous chefs and celebrities, such as the TV chef Tina Nordström from Sweden, Renè Redzepi from the Michelin restaurant Noma in Copenhagen and the former agriculture minister Juha Korkeaoja from Finland.

‘New Nordic Food is designed to make us more conscious of the culinary gifts we possess in the Region,’ Tina Nordström says.

DIPLOMA TO THE ICE HOTEL

In 2007, New Nordic Food awarded its first honorary diploma, along with a NOK 100,000 prize. The fact that the prize went to the exotic Ice Hotel in Jukkasjärvi in Sweden serves as a perfect illustration of the fact that New Nordic Food is not just about eating. The judges noted that the Ice Hotel attracted not only Nordic citizens and other Europeans, but also Japanese, Chinese and American tourists, with its mixture of food, design and nature. At the Ice Hotel, Nordic design and culture are closely interwoven with Nordic food and food culture.

New Nordic Food has swept through the food, gastronomy, tourism and design scenes in the Region. The ambitious programme has also attracted major international interest, and has been widely reported abroad.

‘Chefs who have long looked to France, Italy and Spain for inspiration and ingredients are now literally combining their backyards for the raw materials to create a cool new Nordic cuisine,’ said one observant piece in Time magazine by Lydia Itoi.

FACTS

▶ New Nordic Food (NNM) was launched at the Nordic Council Session in Copenhagen 2006.

▶ The programme, which is run by the Council of Ministers, has a budget of approximately DKK 23 million for 2007-2009.

▶ New Nordic Food is designed to develop, promote and publicise the values and potential inherent in Nordic food and Nordic food culture.

▶ As well as the Council of Ministers, the Nordic Innovation centre (NiCe) is another key player in the implementation of New Nordic Food.

▶ There are 14 New Nordic Food ambassadors from the five Nordic countries and three autonomous territories.

▶ Further information about New Nordic Food is available at www.nynordiskmad.org



In every good fairy tale, the hero has to endure all manner of trials and tribulations before winning the hand of the princess, not to mention half the kingdom. It was much the same story for Danish computer games company Guppyworks until Hans Christian Andersen and the Nordic Game Programme entered the picture and the fairy tale started to come true.

CULTURE FUNDING BREATHES NEW CYBER LIFE INTO HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN





The tale of the computer games company Guppyworks might have come straight out of a storybook. One that starts...

Once upon a time, there was a Danish games company called Savannah. It was riding high on the crest of a wave of children's games and was the only Danish company to make its mark on the electronic games map in the mid-1990s. Games like *Ghost with a Cold* and, later, the *Bille and Trille* series were solid success stories, and the company's founder and director, Per Rosendal, was a happy boss. Right up until 2001, that is, when a company called Nordic Softsales took over as the new publisher of Savannah's games. Not long afterwards, the company went bankrupt and a great deal of money vanished from Savannah's coffers with amazing alacrity, never to return.

'We sold Savannah and cut our staff from 30 to four, so I was getting pretty tired of the games industry,' Rosendal recalls.

His desire to produce games had not completely evaporated though, and a while later he was approached by Egmont Imagination about creating a game to supplement their cartoon series about the Danish icon, Hans Christian Andersen.

'At the time, I found it hard to imagine interactive games based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales because they already worked so fantastically well in book form,' he says. 'But I couldn't quite shake off the idea, and suddenly it struck me that you wouldn't necessarily need to copy his stories – his life would make a great fairy tale background for a game and it was a story that hadn't been told before.'

FINDING INVESTORS

Rosendal co-founded Guppyworks with Andreas Møller in 2003, specifically to create *HCA: The Ugly Prince Duckling*. Despite having one of Denmark's most famous cultural personalities as the main character, attracting investors was to prove difficult. Guppyworks contacted about 100 different cultural foundations in its search for funds, and didn't get a penny from any of them. Not even the Hans Christian Andersen Foundation wanted to know,

and they fund all sorts of projects related to the man himself.

'The reason they gave, almost every time, was that our project was commercial so couldn't be deemed cultural,' Rosendal explains.

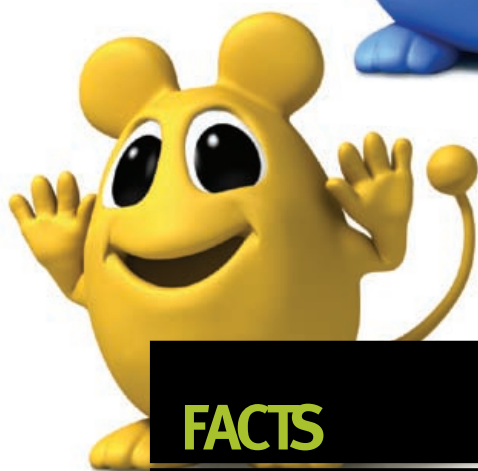
SUPPORT ISN'T JUST MONEY

Luckily for Guppyworks, they managed to get money from the European Media Plus funding scheme and state investment funds such as Vækstfonden (The Growth Fund) and Syddansk Innovation (South Danish Innovation). In 2006, the Nordic Game Programme was launched, and proved to be a great help to Guppyworks' progress.

'You might say that Guppyworks really started to grow at the same time as the Nordic Game Programme was set up, so we have derived great benefit from its activities,' Rosendal says.

As well as development funding for the HCA series and a forthcoming game, *Guppylife* (an online role-playing game aimed at girls) the Game Programme has been a great help in other areas.

'The Nordic Game Conference in Malmö has been incredibly important for us and the Nordic games industry in general. It provides the industry with a local focal point,



FACTS

The Nordic Game Programme was established in 2006 by the ministers of culture. The objective is to stimulate the number and quality of Nordic-produced video games for children and youngsters.

The Game Programme has helped fund Guppyworks.

An important part of the programme's activities is to support the development of innovative and creative Nordic games projects. By earmarking money as direct development funding for Nordic companies, new Nordic intellectual property rights are generated, and gamers have more Nordic video games to choose from.

Since the programme started in 2006, a total of DKK 7 million has been allocated to 20 different projects. Guppyworks received development funding for two of them: September 2006: DKK 600,000 for the game *HCA: The Snow Queen and the Magic Mirror*. May 2007: DKK 300,000 for the game *GuppyLife* (awarded to Guppyworks Norway).

where we meet once a year to network and talk with other developers. The conference has attracted such major global attention that it also provides an interface with the international games scene, which makes it an even more important place to be,' he explains.

REACHING THE REST OF THE WORLD

Rosendal also praises the Nordic Game Programme's export activities.

'The programme has been incredibly good at putting together Nordic delegations and arranging stands at international trade fairs and conferences. Not only does that strengthen a Nordic sense of community within the industry and promote us as a single region in a globalised world, but it also lets small new-starts show off their wares and maybe clinch vital deals,' he enthuses.

'Such outward-looking initiatives are important to the success of our industry. For the companies lucky enough to be awarded money, production funding isn't enough on its own; marketing is needed too. Small companies simply don't have enough muscle to attract attention from potential international partners at the major trade fairs,' he adds.

AN INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRY

Although Guppyworks has been really pleased with the support it has received from the Nordic Game Programme, Rosendal does not think the Nordic games industry should concentrate exclusively on attracting public-sector funding.

'If you want to make sure that games are produced that offer an alternative, in terms of content, to ones from the big gaming countries like the USA and Japan, then direct funding – much like the culture funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers – is of crucial importance. Otherwise, they just wouldn't get made. At the same time, you have to be aware that the games phenomenon is more international by nature than other cultural sectors, like film for example. It's important not to pay too much attention to the film funding available in the Region, but to focus instead on the content and quality of the games and help Nordic developers get out and meet the market.'





Imagine taking a whole university – students, lecturers, everything – and moving it to another city in another country. A university in exile, with students in exile and lecturers in exile. That is exactly what the influential Belarussian European Humanities University (EHU) in Minsk did in 2005, after President Aleksandr Lukasjenko had closed it down in 2004.

**FREEDOM TO THINK
FOR YOURSELF**

Officially, the European Humanities University (EHU) was closed because the state needed the building. Unofficially, it seems more likely that the non-state university had become far too western-oriented and the President was unable to control it. The staff and students refused to be cowed though and, in 2005, the University re-emerged in Vilnius, Lithuania, where humanities and social sciences are now taught.

DEMOCRACY FOR BELARUS

'It is amazing how the institution could reinstitute itself and be up and running in such a short time. It shows how committed people are to the cause,' says Artūras Vasiliauskas, project co-ordinator at the Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Vilnius.

His job is to administer the financial support the EHU receives from the Nordic Council of Ministers and the EU. He believes that the EHU is one of the most solid EU democratisation projects relating to Belarus and that, in its support of the University's students, it is helping at least one social group.

FREE AND INDEPENDENT

Anastasiya Matchenko was part of the first intake of exile students in 2005.

'I am completely different from when I entered the EHU,' says the 21-year-old, now halfway through the third year of her bachelor in European and international law.

She radiates self-confidence and single-mindedness, clearly thinks for herself and keeps up-to-date with current affairs. According to Matchenko, however, thinking for yourself, having your own opinions and expressing them out loud is far from the norm for the majority of her fellow Belarusians.

'It is very important for Belarusians to think freely,' she says, and goes on to explain that this was not what

she learned at the state university in Minsk, where she studied for a year before starting at EHU.

Matchenko opted for EHU because it is both more difficult and more interesting to study there, and because it teaches in a completely different way to the State universities at home. She believes you need to be a special type of person to study at EHU:

'I feel more free here. Here, I am independent. If I want to do something I will do it, even if my country does not want me to.'

BELARUS IN EUROPE

Matchenko says that EHU is characterised by openness, independence, critical thinking and analysis, and that its students are highly motivated and ready to make choices. For most Belarusians, studying so far from home is a big step.

'Some students started at EHU because they were politically active at home, or played music in independent bands.

Not things that would bother anybody in the Nordic countries perhaps, but activities that can force a Belarusian to leave home nevertheless.'

As a member of one of the first groups of Belarusians to experience their country from the outside, Matchenko finds it interesting to see Belarus' situation from this perspective:

'You can analyse the situation with knowledge,' she says. 'Who are we in Europe? How can we integrate with the rest of Europe? I am sure Belarus will need that knowledge.'

EUROPOS HUMANITARINIS
UNIVERSITETAS
EUROPEAN HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITY
ЕВРАПЕЙСКИ ГУМАНИТАРИНИ
УНИВЕРСИТЕТ



BIG CHALLENGES IN EXILE

Being a student in exile is not necessarily easy. According to Matchenko, many of them have experienced harassment at the airport in Belarus on their way to Vilnius. Unpleasant questioning and the checking of laptop computers show that the State is keeping an eye on them. Having EHU on their CVs also means their career opportunities are uncertain. What is certain is that they won't be able to get jobs in the public sector while Lukasjenko is in power.

For lecturers in exile, the situation is even more complicated.

'There is a political risk connected to working with the EHU,' says the Deputy Rector, Professor Vladimir Dou-naev.

Many of the lecturers at EHU have been expelled from Belarus because of their academic work, some of the best in their fields among them. The lecturers at EHU have no job security. They cannot officially be appointed as professors or publish articles in Belarus, and they are isolated from the academic community at home. Nevertheless, Dounaev says that some of them still do a lot of underground work at home.

COURAGE AND DEVOTION

'Belarus needs intellectual resources who understand the issues of social transformation in post-totalitarian states,' says the Rector, Professor Doctor Anatoli Mikhailov.

He believes that is why EHU is important.

'Our way of approaching these issues is so much predetermined by previous communist ideology which destroyed social sciences and humanities,' he continues.

Mikhailov thinks that Belarussian society has no future without this knowledge, and at EHU they are trying to build it up.

Mikhailov talks warmly about his students and lecturers.

'They have courage and devotion to do something different. They are ready to meet challenges and solve problems that do not make their lives easier. For this they need support,' he says.

EHU's future depends, amongst other things, on donors. Belarus' future depends very much on President Lukasjenko. The day Lukasjenko is no longer in power,

the hope is that EHU's students will be able to spread their knowledge at home and build a new future for their country. Matchenko is deeply grateful to those who took the decision to support EHU.

'It's pretty early to judge now what value our situation will bring in the future, but I am strongly convinced I will refer to it as something extraordinary and worth going through,' says the student in exile.

FACTS

Lithuania has hosted EHU since 2005. The Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) began supporting the university in early 2006, after being contacted by Lithuanian officials.

The EU and NMR are providing EHU with a total of €7.76 million in the period 2006-2011. The NMR office in Vilnius co-ordinates this financial support. EHU also has other donors. The possibility of establishing a trust fund, perhaps with effect from autumn 2008, is also being explored.

The students get a monthly grant and housing benefit.

The university has some 900 full-time students on bachelor's and master's programmes. Some also study by distance learning or part-time.

The university cannot advertise in the usual way. Much of its advertising is done through independent internet media and by word of mouth.

Belarus became part of the Soviet Union after World War One. It declared independence from the Soviet Union on 3 July 1990. Many Western countries consider Belarus to be Europe's last dictatorship.

MAKING US MORE MOBILE

Marja should be able to work in Sweden and have her pension rights transferred to Finland. And Peter should be able to study in Denmark and have his qualifications recognised at home in Norway. Making life easier for the Region's 25 million citizens is a top Nordic priority.





Ole Norrback's job is to make life a bit easier for people like Marja and Peter. An MP for many years, the former minister and ambassador has been handed a remit, along with the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers, Halldór Ásgrímsson, to do his utmost to remove the obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement that still exist between the Nordic countries.

For the next couple of years, the duo will head up what has been dubbed the 'Freedom of Movement Forum'. Its objective is to make the borders even more open, so it is easier for individuals and companies alike to move and work throughout the Region.

'Freedom of movement has always been problematic. But it's a problem waiting to be solved. And, by co-ordinating national legislation, we also hope to prevent new obstacles from evolving,' Norrback says.

MORE THAN A STUDY

Norrback conducted a wide-ranging study of obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement at the start of the decade but the new mandate he now shares with the Nordic Council of Ministers is of an altogether more practical nature. The idea is to address and solve tangible problems by means of direct contact with official bodies throughout the Region.

'We have been given a strong mandate by the Prime

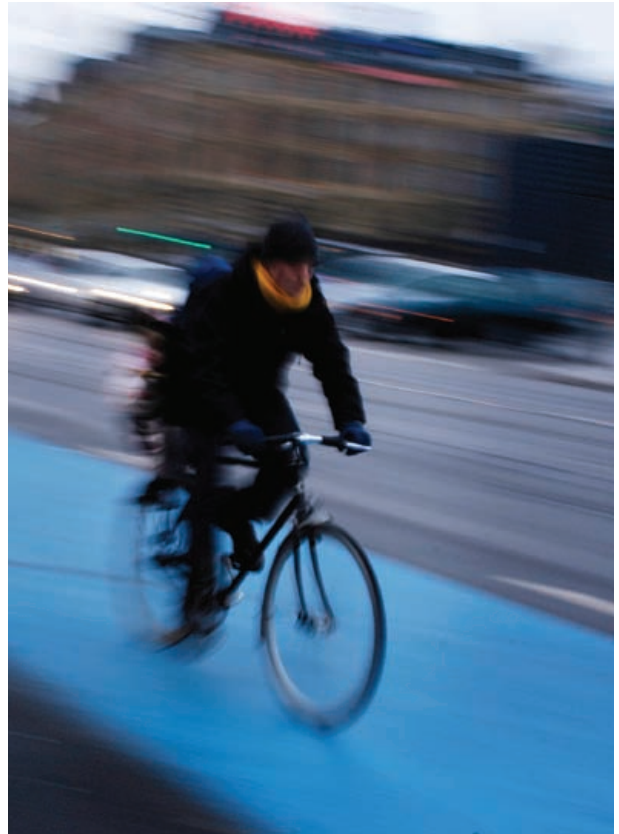
Ministers,' says Norrback. 'And we have substantial support from both the general population and parliamentarians.'

The decision to set up a special forum was taken at the Nordic Council's annual Session in Oslo in autumn 2007. Nordic parliamentarians have been strongly proactive on the issue for many years.

FOCUS

According to Norrback, certain areas require particular attention. One of these is the wide gulf in tax legislation between the different countries. Another is the welfare sector, where much work remains to be done to facilitate the transfer of pension rights accumulated in other countries.

A great deal also remains to be done in the education sector, e.g. the recognition of qualifications in other countries. Attention also needs to be paid to the private sector, especially to business. Norrback points out, for example, that different tariffs are levied on telephone calls in the different countries.



PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Ole Norrback has personal experience of the obstacles that exist to cross-border freedom of movement. He has moved around the Nordic Region a great deal, and his move to Oslo when he was appointed Ambassador in 1999 was not without its difficulties.

'I had to get a Norwegian civil registration number, of course,' he explains. 'And since that took a while, it was weeks before I was able to open a bank account.'

Norrback proposes the use of the same civil registration number throughout the Region, perhaps with a national code suffix.

It is not only within the Nordic Region that a need is perceived to facilitate freedom of movement.

'The same is also true of the EU. It is significantly easier for Nordic citizens to move to, and work in, another Nordic country than it is for them to move and work elsewhere in the EU.'

'The EU should be working on this issue as well, even though it would be an even more complicated process. But if our project is a success, the model could also be applied elsewhere,' says Norrback, who today works for the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on issues related to the Baltic Sea.

FACTS

Born 18 March 1941 in Övermark, Finland.

Graduated from high school in 1965.

Member of parliament 1979-1987, 1991-1999.

One of Finland's longest-serving ministers (4,370 days). Served as Minister for Nordic Co-operation, Minister of Defence, Minister of Education, Minister of Transport, Minister for Europe and Minister of Overseas Trade.

Chair of the Swedish People's Party 1990-1998.

Left politics in 1999 and became an ambassador, first to Oslo, then to Athens.



AROUND THE REGION ON A MASTER'S DEGREE

Six months studying energy in Trondheim, six in Helsinki and six in Gothenburg. That could soon be the reality for students on a Nordic Master's programme that allows them to study at different sites in the Region.

In 2007, the education and research ministers launched a number of new Nordic Master's programmes designed to encourage closer cross-border co-operation in higher education in a new way.

About a quarter of the Nordic Council of Ministers' budget of approx. DKK 910 million in 2008 is earmarked for education, training and research. The fact that the Prime Ministers decided to prioritise the challenges posed by globalisation also serves to highlight the importance of the education sector.

When the programmes were advertised, the Council of Ministers received three or four times the number of applications they had expected. Forty-one consortia, consisting of central institutes of higher education from all of the Nordic countries, applied to take part. The plan had been to select the best three, but so many high quality applications were submitted that the education ministers agreed to double the number. The Finnish minister, Sari Sarkomaa, was pleasantly surprised by the extent of the interest in the new programme.

'I am pleased that so many institutions wish to prioritise co-operation with other Nordic establishments. It is also good to see that input has been received from all the biggest universities in the Region. Good networks, based on their strengths, need to be established between the universities,' Sarkomaa pointed out.

FROM OLD AGE TO ENERGY

In June, the six best programmes were selected by an independent evaluation committee, which agreed that more than half the applications had been of a quality worthy of support. The universities in Åbo and Jyväskylä in Finland, Bergen in Norway, Copenhagen and Århus in

Denmark and the Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden are the main co-ordinators of the six projects, which involve 17 institutes of higher education. The new Master's programmes cover a variety of disciplines, and include research into old age, computer technology, the roots of religion in Europe, energy, the marine environment and climate change.

The six programmes were presented in Tammerfors in December 2007 at a seminar that proved so popular the organisers had to stop accepting applications after more than 300 had been received. Interest in working more closely together is great, not just at universities and educational establishments in the Nordic Region, but also in the Baltic countries. This was seen clearly in the interest expressed in the important Nordplus Framework Programme, in which the Baltic and Nordic countries now participate on equal terms.

'BRAIN CIRCULATION'

At the seminar, Rector Krista Varantola of Tammerfors University, which has helped promote this new form of partnership, spoke about the dilemma between 'brain drain' and 'brain gain', concluding that the ideal would be some form of 'brain circulation' which allowed some of the well-educated youngsters to take home with them experiences gained in other countries. It should be noted, however, that the data shows that 20-40% of European students who study for a PhD in the USA stay there after they have completed their studies.

Virpi Uotinen, co-ordinator of the programme for research into old age at Jyväskylä University, spoke about



the advantages of exchanging experiences with partners from Lund University and the University of Iceland, and mentioned that students would benefit from the fact that research into old age is not the same in the three Nordic countries.

Another partnership brings together some of the leading technical universities: the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim, Chalmers University of Technology in Gothenburg, the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Helsinki University of Technology and the Technical University of Denmark (DTU). They are working with the University of Iceland on a Master's in energy research. Åge Søsveen, a senior advisor at NTNU, stresses the countries' different strengths.

'The Nordic Region has a variety of energy forms. The Danes specialise in wind power, the Swedes know about nuclear power and Iceland has different types of thermal energy, while Norway is good at oil and gas. We will bring those different skills together and make the most of them. I have every faith that the partnership will be a success.'

ATTRACTIVE REGION

Gard Titlestad, Head of the Education and Research Department at the Nordic Council of Ministers, stresses that the Nordic Master's programmes are designed to help make the Region more attractive as a place to study and conduct research.

'We want our part of the world, the Nordic Region – indeed the whole of the Baltic Sea Region – to be thought of as one of the most attractive regions in the world. We want our own youngsters to see it as an attractive place. We don't want to make it more difficult for young people to travel and study. On the contrary, it has to be attractive for young people to venture forth – and then come back. The Region can derive major benefits from considering itself as a single unit instead of separate countries, as a joint domestic market for higher education, research and innovation. Close Nordic co-operation will increase our chances of success in a world characterised by globalisation and internationalisation.'



FACTS

The Nordic Master's programmes

An independent evaluation committee selected six projects from 41 applicants. The six projects represent 17 participating institutes of higher education from all the Nordic countries.

Each of the six programmes will receive up to DKK 1 million from the Nordic Council of Ministers to develop Nordic Master's programmes in a number of different disciplines.

Some will start in 2008, while others require longer preparation and will not commence until early 2009.

WHEN I LOVE AND BORDERS CLASH



We cross a lot of borders in the Nordic Region. We cross them when we move between countries. We commute across them every day. We move across them to where the jobs are. And some of us follow the love of our lives across them to neighbouring countries. We cross borders in our hundreds of thousands. Children are born, businesses are founded, people get married and buy holiday homes on the other side of borders. And, just when we least expect it, national legislation puts a spoke in the wheel. Because, of course, the Nordic Region is not a country – it is five different nations with five different statute books.



It is not hard for ordinary citizens to run into difficulties when moving between Nordic countries. When Anna Sophie Liebst arrives at her job at Hello Norden each morning, she is met with an inbox full of emails from people who have encountered problems after moving to another country.

Hello Norden has offices in all the Nordic capitals. The workload is heaviest in the Stockholm office, because Sweden is the biggest country in the Region. Here, the enquiries cover every aspect of life: children, schooling, day-care, bank transactions, personal finances, discrimination, equality and much, much more.

It is Hello Norden's job to help people cope with these obstacles, whether by drawing a problem to the attention of politicians and the authorities or by providing information about how to navigate your way through the red tape.

AMOUR SANS FRONTIÈRES

The Halvorsen and Poulsen families are a prime example. Their joint history began when Nils (Swedish-Danish) and Guro (Norwegian), met while studying in Australia nine years ago. On returning home after their finals, Guro decided to move to Stockholm to be with Nils. She recalls that it was easier to move in those days.

'You just packed a bag and jumped in the car. It's a bit more complicated now,' she says, while Nils nods in agreement.

The couple contacted Hello Norden just over a year ago. They were thinking of moving to Norway and were expecting their first child, which had raised issues concerning parental allowances. They had been told that, because they both worked in Sweden, neither of them would have the right to maternity or paternity grants if they moved.

PARENTAL ALLOWANCE – NOT FOR EXPORT

'The concept that Swedish parental allowances were a non-exportable provision was one of the first problems I worked on when I took up this post,' says Anna Sophie Liebst, project manager at Hello Norden.

A combination of unemployment rates in Sweden and higher wages in Denmark and Norway has increased emigration, resulting in a lot of cases like the Halvorsen-Poulsen family landing on her desk.

Anna Sophie got in touch with MPs, civil servants, ministries and social insurance offices, drawing their attention to the issue. It emerged that the social insurance authorities had misinterpreted the regulations. Thanks to her efforts, it is now possible to take the parents' allowance



with you when you move from Sweden to another Nordic country.

Good news for Guro and Nils – since they first contacted Hello Norden, they have become parents to little Saga, now five months old, and their move to Norway is imminent.

‘I can take my Swedish parents’ allowance with me, but as soon as I get a job with a Norwegian employer I’ll lose it,’ Guro points out.

Both parents laugh in a resigned manner. They have clearly had their fill of trips back and forth to official bodies to clear things up.

‘The big worry is, of course, that you lose out because of it,’ explains Guro. ‘Perhaps we should have waited until our parental leave was over, but I had a good job offer and I wanted to spend some time in Norway between jobs just to let us settle in a bit.’

CELEBRATING NATIONAL DAY IN NORWAY

With everything now in place, the couple are able to relax and enjoy their last week in Stockholm. They have copies of everything they might need from the child welfare centre, and the child benefit is in hand.

‘The only thing I feel a bit nervous about now is the lack of a guaranteed day-care place,’ says Guro.

‘It just doesn’t work in quite the same way as in Sweden.’

They’re not worrying about that for now, however, and the family is looking forward to their new life in Oslo, where the main attraction is the proximity to both the mountains and the sea. The slightly shorter Norwegian working week will also mean less time in day-care for little Saga who, thanks to the move, will be able to celebrate her first Norwegian National Day on 17 May in style.

‘She might even get to wear a mini version of the Norwegian national dress.’

FACTS

▶ **Hello Norden is the Nordic Council of Ministers’ information service for private individuals and companies who need guidance when they move around the Region.**

▶ **Hello Norden has offices in Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway.**

▶ **Hello Norden identifies obstacles to cross-border freedom of movement and brings them to the attention of Nordic civil servants, politicians and others.**

▶ **Hello Norden is found at www.hallonorden.org**

The Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR) is the formal forum for co-operation between the Nordic governments. Informal consultation and exchanges of information are also common.

FACTS ABOUT THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND THE NORDIC COUNCIL

The Nordic Council (NR) is a political forum for co-operation between Nordic parliamentarians and their governments. The NR holds a plenary session once a year, at which parliamentarians meet with Nordic ministers. The rest of the year, the work of the Council is done by five permanent committees and the Presidium.





THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The purpose of the NMR is to promote Nordic co-operation, the collective Nordic identity and Nordic interests in the world at large. Decisions are reached by consensus.

A separate Council of Ministers co-ordinates work on each of the topics where the countries have agreed to collaborate. The Prime Ministers have the ultimate responsibility for the NMR but in practice it is delegated to the Ministers for Nordic Co-operation and their representatives, the Nordic Committee for Co-operation. Most of the Councils of Ministers meet several times a year. They are aided in all their work by Committees of Senior Officials and by the Council of Ministers' Secretariat.

The NMR currently consists of the following Councils of Ministers:

Economy and Finance

Social and Health Policy

Business, Energy and Regional Policy

Fishery and Aquaculture, Agriculture, Food and Forestry

The Environment

Gender Equality

Culture

Legislation

Education, Training and Research

Working Life

The Ministers for Nordic Co-operation.

MINISTERS FOR NORDIC CO-OPERATION

As at February 2008

Cristina Husmark Pehrsson Sweden

Jan Vapaavuori Finland

Heidi Grande Røys Norway

Össur Skarphéðinsson Iceland

Aleqa Hammond Greenland

Runar Karlsson Åland

Bertel Haarder Denmark

Høgni Hoydal the Faroe Islands

THE NORDIC COUNCIL

The NR takes initiatives on and discusses political issues. It suggests the direction in which Nordic co-operation should progress, and monitors whether the governments comply with its decisions. The NR works in many policy fields, e.g. the environment, social and health policy, culture, education and training, children and young people, business, equality, justice, international co-operation and welfare.

THE PRESIDUM OF THE NORDIC COUNCIL

As at February 2008

Erkki Tuomioja

President, The Social Democratic Group, Finland

Christina Gestrin

Vice President, The Centre Group, Finland

Erling Bonnesen

The Centre Group, Denmark

Niels Sindal

The Social Democratic Group, Denmark

Lyly Rajala

The Conservative Group, Finland

Árni Páll Árnason

The Social Democratic Group, Iceland

Berit Brørby

The Social Democratic Group, Norway

Dagfinn Høybråten

The Centre Group, Norway

Inge Lønning

The Conservative Group, Norway

Rolf Reikvam

The Left-Socialist Green Group, Norway

Sinikka Bohlin

The Social Democratic Group, Sweden

Johan Linander

The Centre Group, Sweden

Kent Olsson

The Conservative Group, Sweden



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