Rules of Procedure for the Nordic Council
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 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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The Rules of Procedure for the Nordic Council adopted in 1971 were revised, as per Article 59 of the Helsinki Treaty, and new rules were adopted by the Session of the Nordic Council on 13 November 1996. These Rules of Procedure came into force on 1 February 1997.

The Rules of Procedure for the Nordic Council were revised by the 53rd Session of the Nordic Council on 30 October 2001 and by the 57th Session on 27 October 2005. These revised rules came into force immediately after they were adopted.

An amendment to Article 73 was approved by the Session of the Nordic Council on 29 October 2008. The amendment came into force on 1 January 2009.

The Rules of Procedure for the Nordic Council adopted in 2001 were revised, as per Article 59 of the Helsinki Treaty, and new rules were adopted by the Session of the Nordic Council on 2 November 2011. These Rules of Procedure came into force on 11 January 2012.

The Rules of Procedure for the Nordic Council adopted in 2012 were revised, as per Article 59 of the Helsinki Treaty, and new rules were adopted by the Session of the Nordic Council on 3 November 2016. These Rules of Procedure came into force on 11 January 2017.
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Part 1
Organisation and sessions

§ 1 Council bodies
According to the Helsinki Treaty, the Council bodies consist of the Plenary, Presidium and committees. The Plenary also elects a Control Committee and an Election Committee.

§ 2 Sessions
At least one regular session is held per annum, during which the time and venue of the following regular session are fixed. The Presidium is empowered to change this decision should circumstances require.

Other sessions or theme sessions are held at the behest of the Presidium or when two governments or 25 elected members submit a request for one. The time and venue are determined by the Presidium.

§ 3 The Plenary
The Plenary is the Council’s supreme decision-making body. Its composition is prescribed by the Helsinki Treaty, which also states that the Plenary adopt recommendations, make other representations and present statements of opinion to one or more governments or to the Council of Ministers.

§ 4 The Presidium
The Presidium is the Council’s supreme decision-making body when the Plenary is not sitting and has the same powers as the Plenary. It is responsible for the Council’s activities and co-ordinates them with national parliaments and international organisations.

§ 5 Committees
The Council has four committees: the Committee for Knowledge and Culture in the Nordic Region, the Committee for a Sustainable Nordic Region, the Committee for Growth and Development in the Nordic Region and the Committee for Welfare in the Nordic Region. The committees prepare business within their areas of competence prior to final consideration by the Council.
§ 6 The Control Committee
The Control Committee exercises parliamentary oversight over activities funded from Nordic budgets and conducts any audits determined by the Plenary.

§ 7 The Election Committee
The Election Committee draws up lists of nominations and organises any elections held during the Plenary.

§ 8 Delegations
The Helsinki Treaty sets out the delegations and their composition.

§ 9 Party groups
The elected members are entitled to form party groups. A group must have a minimum of four members, from a minimum of two different countries.
§ 10 Members
At the opening of a session, the Plenary approves a list of members and alternates. Changes to the list must be determined by the Plenary and cannot be made during a debate or other deliberation.

§ 11 Seating
Elected members and government representatives are seated separately in the chamber in places determined by the Presidium.

§ 12 President and Vice-president
The President and Vice-president for the following calendar year are elected in ordinary session from among the elected members for the country in which the next ordinary session is to be held.

§ 13 Observers
The Sámi parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden have observer status via the Sámi Parliamentary Council, with speaking rights during general debates and as otherwise determined by the Presidium.

§ 14 Guests
The Nordic Youth Council is invited to sessions of the Nordic Council and has the right to speak in the general debate and otherwise as per the Presidium’s decision.

The Presidium may invite representatives of popularly elected bodies and other persons to a session and grant them speaking rights.

§ 15 Chairing
Meetings are chaired by the President or by another member of the Presidium. Any member who has taken part in a debate on an item of business cannot chair the deliberations on that same issue.

§ 16 The public
Meetings are open to the public unless the Plenary decides otherwise due to particular circumstances.
§ 17 Agenda
At the opening of a session, the Plenary must approve the agenda proposed by the Presidium, which includes all matters to be considered and a timetable for the whole session. Amendments can be made later by a two-thirds majority.

§ 18 Quorum
The Plenary is quorate when a minimum of 44 elected members or alternates are present. For business on which only certain countries are entitled to vote under the terms of the Helsinki Treaty, at least half of the representatives from these countries must be present.

§ 19 Mandatory preparation of business
Every item of business must be prepared either by the Presidium, by one of the committees or by the Control Committee before the final deliberation at the Plenary. Elections are organised by the Election Committee.

§ 20 Minutes
Minutes must be taken at every session. They must include a record of every item of business, statements and decisions taken as well as information about proposals, motions, divisions, results of divisions and the names of speakers. Complete written minutes must be taken of all interventions made in the course of regular sessions and, if the Presidium determines, in the course of other types of sessions.

During other sessions, the minutes may be in written, audio or video format.

§ 21 Supplementary rules
At the opening of a session, if the Presidium submits an appropriate resolution, the Plenary is empowered to enact supplementary rules for the conduct of the session. Subject to consultation with the Presidium, these supplementary rules can be amended at a later point by a two-thirds majority.
Part 3
The Presidium

§ 22 Composition
The Presidium consists of the President, Vice-president and a maximum of 15 elected members. All countries and party groups must be represented.

§ 23 The Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland
In meetings where matters affecting the Faroe Islands, Greenland or Åland are discussed, an elected member of the appropriate parliament has the right to be present, speak and submit proposals.

§ 24 Right to participate
The Nordic Youth Council has the right to participate in meetings of the Presidium. The representative may participate in the Presidium’s debates, but not in its decisions.

§ 25 Convening sessions and the agenda
The Presidium sends out notice of a session not less than one month before the scheduled date. The notice must also state which business will be discussed. At the beginning of each session, the Presidium must present a proposed agenda that takes particular account of topical issues. Every member has the right to propose agenda items to the Presidium.

§ 26 Allocation of duties and planning of meetings
The Presidium decides which bodies prepare matters for deliberation by the Plenary and is generally responsible for the planning.

The Presidium draws up an annual schedule of meetings for Council bodies.

§ 27 Special responsibilities
In addition to that which is laid down in Article 4, the Presidium is also responsible for dealing with overarching political and administrative matters, including the budgets of the Council and of the Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as with foreign affairs and defence and security policy.

§ 28 Quorum
The Presidium is quorate when at least half of its members are present. In matters on which only certain countries are entitled to vote under the
terms of the Helsinki Treaty, at least half of the representatives from these countries must be present.

In a tied vote, the chairperson has the casting vote.

Decisions can be made by written procedure if the decision-making members agree. Written responses must be presented.

§ 29 Minutes of decisions
The Presidium and committees minute decisions made at their meetings. Any action points are approved at the meeting. The minutes are distributed no later than 14 days after the meeting is held, and must be approved by the chair and adopted or amended at the next meeting.

The minutes are published on the Nordic Council website.

§ 30 Meetings
Unless the Presidium decides otherwise, its meetings are not public. Representatives of the delegations and the party groups’ secretariats have the right to be present unless there are particular reasons why this should not be the case. The Presidium can also invite other individuals to attend and speak at its meetings.

§ 31 Delegation
The Presidium can delegate its right to take decisions on individual items of business, or groups thereof, to other Council bodies, to one or more members of the Presidium or to the Council Director.

§ 32 Working groups and other preparatory bodies
The Presidium can set up working groups for particular tasks, determine their composition and set out their mandate, remit and timeframe. Such arrangements do not affect the ordinary preparation of cases as per Article 19.

§ 33 Report
Each year, the Presidium submits a report to the Plenary on all of the Council’s activities.
Part 4
Committees

§ 34 Appointment and composition
Each committee must consist of 16–18 members. Each committee appoints a chairperson and vice-chairperson. The Plenary appoints the members, chairperson and vice-chairperson. In the absence of both the chairperson and vice-chairperson, the committee appoints a chairperson for the day.

§ 35 Right to participate
Members of national governments, including the governments of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland, may participate in committee deliberations but not in their decision-making.

In committees that lack representatives from the Faroe Islands, Greenland or Åland, an elected member from them may take part. If so agreed with the Danish or Finnish members of the committee, this member may participate in the decision-making instead of a Danish or Finnish representative.

The Nordic Youth Council has the right to attend committee meetings. The representatives may attend the committee debates, but not participate in the decisions.

§ 36 Extended observer status
The Sámi parliaments in Finland, Norway and Sweden have extended observer status via the Sámi Parliamentary Council, with the right to attend committee meetings when there are issues on the agenda that affect the Sámi people. The committees determine the meetings and proceedings to which the invitation applies. The right to participate does not include the right to vote.

§ 37 Decisions
The regulations in Article 28 and Article 29 apply.

§ 38 Meetings and public access
The committees decide the time and place of their meetings, as per Article 26 (2). Extraordinary meetings can be called by the
committee chairperson and must be called if one quarter of the committee's ordinary members so request.

Meetings are not public unless a committee so decides in a particular case. Otherwise, the regulations in Article 30 apply.

§ 39 Meeting papers
Notice of a meeting must be issued one month in advance. The agenda and accompanying material must reach the members and anybody else affected one week before the date of the meeting.

§ 40 Deputations
Subject to guidelines to be set by the Presidium, deputations may attend and present their points of view.

§ 41 Duties
In addition to matters referred by the Presidium, committees must monitor developments within their areas.

Every committee must have a current plan of activities.

§ 42 Co-operation with national and international committees
Committees must seek co-operation with corresponding bodies in national parliaments and international organisations.

§ 43 Further rules
The Presidium is entitled to set overarching regulations for the work of the committees.
§ 44 Appointment and composition
The Plenary appoints the chairperson and vice-chairperson plus five other members and their personal alternates. None of these may be a member or alternate in the current Presidium or have been a member or alternate in the previous calendar year. Each country must be represented.

The regulations in Article 23 and Article 30 apply. Extraordinary meetings can be called by the chairperson and must be called if three members so request.

In the absence of both the chairperson and vice-chairperson, the committee appoints a chairperson for the day.

§ 45 Decisions
The Control Committee is quorate when four members are present. The regulations in Article 28 (2) and (3) and Article 29 apply.

§ 46 Special responsibilities
The Control Committee can submit its opinion to the Presidium on the interpretation of the Helsinki Treaty, other agreements on Nordic co-operation, these Rules of Procedure and other internal regulations.
Part 6
Processing business prior to final decisions

§ 47 Submitting proposals
All items of business must be submitted in writing and contain a proposal for a decision. A proposal may be withdrawn by the body or member responsible for submitting it.

An alternate who has not taken over the place of a member has the right to sign a member’s proposal but not to submit one.

§ 48 Consultation and statements
If several bodies are affected by the same item of business they must be consulted. The Presidium, the committees and the Control Committee are entitled to request statements from other Council bodies on the item of business currently being processed.

§ 49 White papers
The body responsible for the preparation of an item of business must present a white paper containing a justification and a proposal for final consideration by the body responsible for the item of business concerned.

A member has the right to state reservations about a white paper or a statement under Article 48. If the white paper contains a proposal for a decision, the reservation must follow the same procedure as the recommendation or statement.

§ 50 Time for final consideration
A white paper cannot be processed by the Plenary prior to the day following the one on which it was available to members, unless the Plenary agrees otherwise by a two-thirds majority.

§ 51 Opportunity for debate
Members must be given the opportunity for debate before the Plenary makes the final decision on an item of business.

§ 52 Referral back of proposals
The Plenary is entitled to refer a proposal back to the body which presented it. If this course of action is proposed during a debate,
the debate must be suspended and members given the right to speak and decide on the proposal. If it is approved, consideration of the item of business is suspended. If not, the debate is resumed. A new vote to refer the proposal back may be taken once the debate is concluded.

§ 53 Deferring items of business

The Plenary is entitled to defer deliberation of an item of business to a later date during the session or to a later session. The latter requires a two-thirds majority and involves the item of business being prepared again. Otherwise, the same regulations apply as in Article 52.

§ 54 New motions

If an elected member wishes to submit a motion other than that contained in the white paper, this must be done in writing and distributed to the members unless it is obvious what is being proposed. During the debate, the member can be given the floor immediately in order to propose the motion without having to submit a justification. The item of business may be postponed to a time later in the session if one-third of elected members present so agree.
Part 7
Plenary debates and decisions

§ 55 Order of speakers
The Presidium can set rules for the order of speakers. In the absence of such rules, speakers take the floor in the order they are entered on the list of speakers.

§ 56 Right of reply
Irrespective of the speaking order, a member who is directly affected by a remark must be given the floor for a maximum of two replies. Unless otherwise determined in Article 21, the chairperson may also give the floor to another member for a maximum of two replies.

A reply may only contain information, correction or refutation and may not last longer than two minutes, unless otherwise determined under Article 21.

§ 57 Speaking time
On the proposal of the Presidium or chairperson, the Plenary can limit the length of contributions for a particular debate or for part of the session. Such a decision can be made in the course of a debate.

§ 58 Closure of debate
On the proposal of the chairperson or five elected members, the Plenary can decide by a two-thirds majority to close the debate on an item of business. Such a proposal may not be subjected to debate.

§ 59 Decisions
When the debate on an item of business has concluded, the Plenary makes its decision. All cases are settled by a vote.

§ 60 Internal decisions
Internal decisions are documented in the Nordic Council’s annual report, as per Article 33.
§ 61 Divisions
Voting is open and is done by roll call or by means of the electronic voting system. It is possible to vote Yes, No or Abstain. In the event of a tied vote, lots will be drawn to decide the outcome.

Incompatible proposals will be voted on first so that only one alternative proposal remains. Members will then be asked to vote either for the main proposal or the remaining alternative proposal.

§ 62 Questions
Elected members may pose questions to the national governments, including those of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland, as well as to the Nordic Council of Ministers. Oral questions must be posed and answered during a special question time to be held at a time proposed by the Presidium in accordance with Article 17. Written questions must be answered within six weeks of receipt.
Part 8
Elections

§ 63 The Election Committee
The Election Committee consists of seven members elected by the Plenary. The Committee elects a chairperson and vice-chairperson from among its own number.

§ 64 Decisions
The Election Committee is quorate when four members are present. The regulations in Article 28 (2) and (3) and Article 29 apply.

§ 65 Nominations
The party groups and members who do not belong to any party group can, within a period specified by the Election Committee, nominate candidates for elections held by the Plenary. However, the delegations nominate the President and Vice-president and the members of the Nordic Investment Bank’s Control Committee and the board of the Nordic Cultural Fund.

When submitting nominations, a balance must be sought between the Nordic countries and between genders. Membership of national committees should also be taken into account.

§ 66 Mandate periods
Unless otherwise stipulated, all mandates are for the following calendar year.

§ 67 Proposals by the Election Committee
The Election Committee draws up a proposal for names and, if required, the number of members. It must take into account Article 65 (2).

The Plenary can reject a proposal but cannot amend it. If it is not accepted, an election by secret ballot must be conducted as per Article 68 or Article 69.
§ 68 Election of a single person
If only one person needs to be elected, this will be done by secret ballot if an elected member so requests.

§ 69 Proportional elections
If two or more persons are to be elected, this must be done by a proportional secret ballot, if requested by a number of members corresponding to the number of members present divided by the number to be elected plus one.

§ 70 Lists of candidates
If proportional elections are held, the deliberations may be suspended if necessary to allow sufficient time for lists of candidates to be drawn up. Such a list should contain a maximum of as many names as there are posts to be elected and should list the candidates in order of preference. A list must be signed by at least two members and submitted to the Secretariat no later than the time specified by the chairperson. Lists are numbered in the order in which they are received. Those voting must state the number of a candidate list on the ballot paper.

§ 71 Method of election
Proportional elections are decided according to the D'Hondt method. In each round of voting, the person with the highest divisor is elected. The divisor for a list is equal to the votes cast for the list as long as no one from the list concerned has been elected yet. Once a person has been elected, the figure is divided by two, and when two are elected by three, and so on. Where there is a tie in the number of votes or the divisors, the outcome is decided by drawing lots. Candidates are elected in the order they appear on the list.

§ 72 By-elections
If the need for by-elections arises between sessions, they are conducted by the Presidium following nominations in accordance with Article 65, within a time period specified by the Presidium and following a proposal from the Election Committee.
§ 73 Alternates
In the absence of a member of a body other than the Plenary or Control Committee, the appropriate party group appoints an alternate who must be a member or alternate member of the Council. For members who do not belong to a party group, the member’s party nominates the alternate. Delegations from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland appoint alternates in the absence of ordinary members. Alternates on all bodies are subject to the same regulations as members.
Part 9
Other provisions

§ 74 Languages
The languages of the Nordic countries are treated equally at Council meetings. The working languages are Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. Interpretation to and from Finnish and Icelandic is provided according to need. Important documents should be translated into the languages of the Nordic countries.

§ 75 Work for Council bodies
Except in exceptional circumstances, elected members must be members of either the Presidium, a committee or the Control Committee.

§ 76 Conflicts of interest
Members are not allowed to take part in the processing of any item of business that directly affects them or anyone close to them.

§ 77 Rules of conduct
Inappropriate comments about other participants, the use of offensive language or otherwise breaching normal meeting decorum will not be tolerated. Spectators who cause a disturbance can be expelled. In the event of disorder, the chairperson may expel all spectators.

§ 78 The Council Secretariat
The Council Secretariat is responsible for conducting meetings in collaboration with the delegation secretariat in the country where the meeting is to be held.

The Presidium appoints the personnel and sets the guidelines for the work of the Council Secretariat, which prepares the business to be processed by Council bodies. During this preparation process, the Secretariat must collaborate with the secretariats of the delegations and the party groups.

§ 79 The delegations
The delegations elect their chairperson and vice-chairperson from within their own number.
Each delegation is responsible for ensuring that decisions are implemented in their own country.

§ 80 Registration of party groups
The Presidium sets the rules for the registration of party groups and their representatives.

§ 81 Funding for party groups
A party group is entitled to funding for its Council activities provided it demonstrates to the Secretariat that it fulfilled the requirements stipulated in Article 9 in the year prior to the year in question. If a party group changes in such a way that it no longer fulfils these requirements, it will only receive an allowance for the remaining individual members in the following year.

Funding consists of a basic allowance which is the same for all groups plus an allowance per member. The Presidium determines the allowances when drawing up the budget for the year in question.

The Presidium determines any additional rules for party funding.

§ 82 Funding for individual members
A member who does not belong to a party group receives the same individual allowance, unless one of the groups has already received the allowance for the individual concerned as per Article 81.

§ 83 Accounts
Those who receive funding under Article 81 or Article 82 must submit accounts for the previous year no later than 15 May. The Presidium must audit the accounts at its first meeting after 15 May and may set further rules for bookkeeping and accounting.

§ 84 Suspension of the Rules of Procedure
In special cases, the Plenary may suspend these Rules of Procedure if so proposed by the Presidium and supported by a two-thirds majority vote.

These Rules of Procedure take effect on 1 January 2017.
The Nordic Council was formed in 1952 to coordinate co-operation between the parliaments and governments of Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. Finland joined in 1955. When the Nordic Council of Ministers was formed in 1971, the Nordic Council was transformed into a purely inter-parliamentary body.

The Council consists of 87 MPs elected by the national parliaments. The delegations from the Faroe Islands and Greenland form part of the Danish delegation. The delegation from Åland forms part of the Finnish delegation. The Council launches initiatives of its own, acts in an advisory capacity, acts in a supervisory capacity and plays a proactive role in official Nordic co-operation. The Nordic Council bodies consist of the Plenary, Presidium and committees.