



NORDREGIO
Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

Nordic Cross-border Cooperation Committees and Cross-border Authority Integration

Nordic Working Group 2: Globalisation
and Cross-border Cooperation

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Nordic Working Group 2: Globalisation and Cross-
border Cooperation

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Nordic co-operation

takes place among the countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as the autonomous territories of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

The Nordic Council

is a forum for co-operation between the Nordic parliaments and governments. The Council consists of 87 parliamentarians from the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council takes policy initiatives and monitors Nordic co-operation. Founded in 1952.

The Nordic Council of Ministers

is a forum of co-operation between the Nordic governments. The Nordic Council of Ministers implements Nordic co-operation. The prime ministers have the overall responsibility. Its activities are co-ordinated by the Nordic ministers for co-operation, the Nordic Committee for co-operation and portfolio ministers. Founded in 1971.

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Stockholm, Sweden, 2005

Contents

Introduction	7
Part 1. Differences and similarities of the eleven cross-border committees	9
Geographical differences	9
Organisational differences	10
Similarities between the cross-border committees	11
Common purpose	11
The same remit	11
The same collaborating authorities	13
Similar roles	13
Overall observations	14
Part 2. Cross-cutting elucidation of key topics	17
Border obstacles	17
Integration of authorities	19
The role of the Nordic Council of Ministers	19
The role of Interreg	21
References	23
Appendix 1:	25
Overview map showing the locations of the eleven cross-border committees	25
Appendix 2:	29
Table summarising the cross-border committees	29
Appendix 3:	35
Fact sheets on each cross-border committee	35

Introduction

The overarching vision of the “Nordic regional-policy collaboration programme 2009–2012” is: “Nordic collaboration is to be the driving force in the development of a new, stronger regional policy. At the heart of the new policy is the use of close collaboration between various levels of decision-making and sectors to meet, head on, the challenges inherent in globalisation for the purpose of sustainable consolidation of the Nordic region’s development opportunities at local, regional and national level.”

This vision is to be implemented by a focused effort within the three priority action areas: sharing experiences and knowledge building; globalisation and cross-border collaboration; and third-generation regional policy.

To develop these priority areas, the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy (EK-R) appointed four task forces at a meeting on 16 June 2008, tasked with developing proposals for specific initiatives and projects in each action area in dialogue with EK-R. The task force for the Globalisation and cross-border collaboration action area is thus mandated to “develop proposals for the development of new barrier-reducing initiatives anchored in local and regional needs”. The task force comprises 5 representatives from the Nordic Cross-border Cooperation Committees as well as two representatives from each of the government authorities in the Nordic region.

In its work, the task force for globalisation and cross-border collaboration has taken up the subject of cross-border integration of authorities, in part in order to chart public-sector cross-border organisation at the local and regional levels in connection with major commercial investments and in connection with cross-border collaboration between public authorities. This paper is part of this work.

Part 1 of this paper gives an overview of the eleven Nordic Cross-border Cooperation Committees (hereafter cross-border committees), both as a factual overview of the individual committees’ geographic context, organisational structure and project activities, and also as a comparison of the similarities and

differences of the cross-border committees. Part 2 sheds light on some key elements and conditions concerning the work of the cross-border committees. This cross-cutting elucidation deals with border obstacles as a separate subject; the importance of the cross-border committees in terms of the integration of public authorities, as well as the importance of the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Interreg programmes to the border region collaboration of the cross-border committees.

It must be emphasised at this juncture that wherever individual cross-border committees are mentioned anywhere in the text, these are simply examples of cross-border committees that work with these topics and projects, so this text is not to be regarded as an exhaustive overview.

The eleven cross-border committees included in this study are the eleven committees that received financial subsidy in 2008 from the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy (EK-R) under the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Of the eleven cross-border committees, eight have received a subsidy from EK-R for a number of years, while the remaining three first received a subsidy in 2008. Of these, only one, TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna, is an entirely new organisation, as the other two, Tornedalsrådet and Bothnian Arc, have existed as partner organisations since 1987 and 1999 respectively.

The material on which this survey was based comprises telephone interviews – conducted in June and July 2009 – with a representative of each of the cross-border committees’ secretariats; presentation material from “Grænseregionalt Forum” [border region forum] held in Trondheim in June 2009; available material from the cross-border committees’ websites; annual reports; and their 2008 and 2009 applications and annual reports to EK-R.

The locations of the eleven cross-border committees can be seen on the map in Appendix 1, and they are each introduced in the fact sheets that comprise the appendix 3 to this paper.

Part 1. Differences and similarities of the eleven cross-border committees

The eleven cross-border committees differ from one another in a great many points: first and foremost, their geographical locations create various conditions for their operations, but organisationally, too, they are structured very differently, and this has a knock-

on effect on their work areas. At the same time, their operations in the border regions also mean there are a number of similarities in the conditions and subjects of their work.

Geographical differences

It can be seen from the enclosed map that there are major differences in the geographical scope covered by these cross-border committees, and how peripherally situated the border region is in a Nordic economic context.

The border regions vary from quite small areas, such as Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland at only approximately 9,500 km², to vast areas such as the North Calotte Council, which covers three large regions in the north (305,000 km²), and NORA, which covers a total land mass in excess of 2,480,000 km², plus an even vaster marine area between Member States.

In addition, the border regions vary from regions dominated by metropolitan areas, such as the Öresund Committee with both Copenhagen and Malmö in its region and a population density of 185 inhabitants/km², to peripherally situated areas with a very low population density, such as Tornedalsrådet, with a population density of just 1.5 inhabitants/km².

Finally, the geographical locations of the individual cross-border committees mean that the number of national administrative systems involved varies from two (e.g. Norway/Sweden in ARKO and Sweden/Finland in the Bothnian Arc and Kvarken Council), to three (Norwegian-Swedish-Finnish in the North Calotte Council and the Mid Nordic Committee), to 4–5 for an organisation such as NORA, which has to interact with the administrative echelons of Greenland, Norway, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and, to some extent, Denmark in the course of its work.

These differences in geographical scope have implications in terms of how cohesively the region is perceived – both internally and externally – and also creates different working conditions for a cross-border committee that seeks to serve the entire area it covers. One trend evident in the material is for the large regions to take a broader regional view of projects that cover significantly greater distances – such as NORA's “Transatlantic café” project.

More specifically, these geographical differences affect which problem areas the regions work with. Several cross-border committees cover peripheral areas (nationally and internationally) and, as a result, topics such as depopulation, lack of educational opportunities and expensive infrastructure projects to service rather a small population characterise the political challenges in the region. At the other end of the scale are the dense commuter belts where a topic such as minimising border obstacles for these commuters is an important work area for the cross-border committee. One action area does not exclude another, of course, but the existing geographical conditions are of vital importance in determining which topics the cross-border committee members and their collaboration partners are interested in becoming involved in. Even a more overarching remit such as regional development, which is of course a remit shared by all cross-border committees, is affected by the geographical reality of the border region, whereby the matter of which initiatives to set in motion depends both on the region's situational conditions and on what resources and potential exist in the region.

Organisational differences

The cross-border committees are also wide-ranging in their organisational structure and history, which in turn affects their traditional areas of operation, and the purpose for which the organisation was set up.

The member organisations in the individual cross-border committees come from different political levels – from purely municipal composite organisations (ARKO, Tornedalsrådet), to committees comprising representatives of both the municipal and the regional administrative level (Öresund Committee, Kvarken Council), to cross-border committees such as the North Calotte Council and the Mid Nordic Committee which also involve regional organisations and chambers of commerce as formal partners within their organisation.

As with the geographical differences, these differences also mean that, as a starting point, the purpose of the membership collaboration for these cross-border committees differs slightly. Municipal collaboration can be said to have more of a local focus in terms of its activities than is the case with the more extensive organisations – and perhaps especially the converse could be said to be significant to the work of the cross-border committees: the committees with exclusively regional members cannot focus their activities particularly locally. Committees with a mix of municipal and regional composition have the opportunity to initiate activities right across the region, or activities that only involve individual member municipalities.

In terms of age, too, there is a wide spread. A few of the cross-border committees were established as early as 1967 (ARKO and the North Calotte Council) or 1972 (Kvarken Council) and a number of others have a long tradition of collaboration behind them, e.g. NORA, which was established on the basis of the earlier “Vestnordensamarbejde” (western Nordic partnership), and Tornedalsrådet, which was established in 1987 by amalgamating two earlier organisations in the region. Unlike these long-standing committees, there is a brand-new committee, TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna, only established in 2009 and now seeking to consolidate its existence in 2010.

As far as the organisations with a long history of collaboration behind them are concerned, there is a long-standing tradition of cross-border collaboration in the region, and the cross-border committee has been able to consolidate its position as the natural anchor organisation for the region’s cross-border collaboration. Conversely, the long history can also mean that some cross-border committees have had to evaluate their purpose from time to time and perhaps even revitalise collaboration.

Revitalisation may be necessary in order to re-

engage the member organisations and identify a new, shared vision of where collaboration is supposed to lead, but in connection with changes in personnel, too, there may be a need to reformulate the purpose of the cross-border committee; the small regions, in particular, are vulnerable to changes in personnel. However, most of the cross-border committees that have a lengthy history behind them have revised and/or expanded their work areas at one time or another, and have made organisational changes to better reflect their current situation.

Another organisational difference that has a very real impact on the day-to-day workings of the cross-border committees is their resources – the number of staff in their secretariats, finances, and opportunities for external project involvement. The size of the cross-border committee secretariats ranges from one-person secretariats (Skärgårdssamarbetet, ARKO), to secretariats with a few employees (Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland, Kvarken Council, Mid Nordic Committee), to NORA which, in addition to quite a small main secretariat on the Faroe Islands, also has liaison officers in the other Member States. The Öresund Committee is by far the largest secretariat, with a staff of ten, and in addition it serves as the host organisation for the secretariats of Interreg in the Öresund Region (9 employees) and the Danish part of ØresundDirekt (6 employees).

Secretariat sizes depend to some extent on the finances of the committee in question. One committee operates primarily on funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers (the North Calotte Council), whereas the vast majority of committees also receive substantial financial subsidies from their member organisations. These differences in resources – both human resources such as time, networks and commitment, as well as financial means – affect the number and/or size of projects under the auspices of the committee. This picture is not without ambiguity, however, since a number of committees with small secretariats are also involved in Interreg (Tornedalsrådet, TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna), which enables them to initiate activities that reach beyond the scope of funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers. The same is also true, of course, of the large secretariats, where involvement in external projects also helps to fulfil the purpose of the cross-border committee with regard to regional development. As the host organisation for the Interreg IV A Öresund Kattogat Skagerrak programme, the Öresund Committee, as the sole cross-border committee, is not allowed to apply for Interreg funding.

Similarities between the cross-border committees

Despite the fact that the above-mentioned differences are very striking in a comparison of cross-border committees, there are also a number of similarities.

Common purpose

First and foremost, the main purpose of all the cross-border committees is to contribute to increased growth and development of the individual border regions. This concept of development is rooted in an expectation that dynamic and well-integrated regions will be able to retain and attract companies and people because bigger regions have a better foundation in terms of resources for growth and development, and because each region

has the potential for further development.

Thus, all the cross-border committees also have the same task: to break down physical and mental border obstacles within their region and to encourage member organisations, collaboration partners, residents, politicians, companies, etc., to look beyond national boundaries when addressing the region's potential for development.

The same remit

Despite the fact that the geographical differences already referred to give the cross-border committees vastly different problem areas to work with, their overall remit is not all that different.

Business development

Business development is a natural focus for all cross-border committees, since economic growth is essential to regional development. The individual cross-border committees deal with this differently – depending on the availability of potential and collaboration partners – but job creation is absolutely vital to all eleven border regions. The following is just a selection of these initiatives¹: The Öresund Committee works to dismantle legislative border obstacles that prevent companies and commuters in the region from being active in both the Swedish and the Danish market; NORA allocates the majority of its project support funds to projects involving maritime resources, which is the largest commercial sector by far for all four Member States; and Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland organises annual lead-generating fairs for companies in the border region.

Building networks

Since the cross-border committees are themselves a network of their member organisations, building networks is an absolutely fundamental activity for all the cross-border committees. Above all, the existence of cross-border committees means that a political and often also administrative network has been created between the member organisations, a network which is used in working on all of the topics that each individual cross-border committee has enshrined in its articles of association and action plans.

Secondly, a majority of cross-border committees also regard it as a significant task to build networks among other players on both sides of the border. Often, business networks are formed between companies and business organisations (Bothnian Arc, Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland), but there are young people's social networks, too (Mid Nordic Committee; Tornedalsrådet); networks involving institutions of learning (Kvarken Council; Bothnian Arc), and networks in the energy sector (Kvarken Council; the North Calotte Council; Tornedalsrådet) are notable examples of unifying action areas.

¹ The vast majority of other remits can also be said to relate to (the potential for) business development: training of the workforce makes the region more attractive to companies; investment in infrastructure directly affects the region's ability to retain and attract companies; energy initiatives can provide niche advantages, and cultural projects that reinforce regional identity can help the young people – and hence the workforce – to remain in the region.

Such networks may be established as part of a specific project, but all cross-border committees also organise seminars, meetings, conferences, fairs, etc., which serve as meeting platforms for regional players and thus also serve to create networks. Finally, some cross-border committees (the North Calotte Council, NORA) also offer specific assistance in identifying project collaboration partners as part of their project financing operations.

Infrastructure

As far as the majority of cross-border committees in the peripheral regions are concerned, the expansion of existing infrastructure and/or the establishment of new infrastructure is an important remit – both as a basis for the economic development of the region and as an integral initiative within the region. For example, expansion of rail traffic between Oslo and Stockholm will be important to the economic development of the ARKO region, and good crossings over Kvarken are essential both for the cohesion of the border region and for the economic potential, e.g. in connection with tourism. Infrastructure is also an important topic in densely-populated regions, with both the Öresund Committee and Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland looking to expand and add to the existing infrastructure.

For many cross-border committees, working with infrastructure is a way of improving and establishing roads and railway lines, but priority is also given to maintaining and establishing air and ferry services where these play a crucial role either in mobility within the region or where these may even be the foundation for keeping commerce alive. Work on air and ferry transport is thus material to the most peripherally situated regions, such as North Calotte and Vestnorden, but for a committee such as the Kvarken Council, too, transport options for crossing Kvarken are central to the work of the committee. Finally, the Öresund Committee is working to gain Swedish national recognition that Copenhagen Airport in Kastrup, Denmark, is the international airport of the Öresund region, and thus the Swedish government should contribute to the development of Kastrup.

However, infrastructure also includes IT infrastructure; this topic is of particular importance in the peripheral regions. This is because it is expensive to establish IT infrastructure, so it requires a great deal of investment, but also, the population and companies in those peripheral areas in particular can use IT, to some extent, to overcome the long distances. The social and commercial importance of IT is unavoidable today, and for this reason, poor IT infrastructure makes a peripheral location even more peripheral.

Tourism and nature

The cross-border committees are all situated in part or in whole in scenic regions, so tourism is a recurring remit. NORA is working to create networks among businesses in the tourism sector, while other committees participate more in physical development projects to create the basis for attracting more tourism (offers for expedition tourists – NORA; improvement of Norrskensvägen – Tornedalen; interconnected cycling trails – Skärgårdssamarbetet). Other cross-border committees work more generally to protect nature in their region, e.g. Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland's involvement in the establishment of Kosterhavet-Ytre Hvaler national park, and the Kvarken Council's long-term project to have Höga Kusten and Kvarken's Skärgård included on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The North Calotte Council's project to create cross-border collaboration to protect the region's wild salmon from salmon parasites is another example of conservation that has a major impact on regional tourism as well.

Culture

Reinforcing regional identity and culture is an important remit for just about all the cross-border committees, and the initiatives for and purposes of the projects are many and varied: ARKO works with the special culture surrounding Finnskogen with a view to reinforcing regional identity; the Bothnian Arc "Music on Top" project seeks to protect and develop the region's musical skills, while the Mid Nordic Committee has a complete cultural programme of annual culture days and a culture prize with a view to developing a wealth of culture to help to retain the population of the region. The Öresund Committee works to publicise cultural institutions and events on both sides of the Sound via an online database, and staged the "KulturParlamentet Øresund" ["Öresund culture parliament"] to highlight culture as a factor in development and the need for a dedicated Öresund region cultural policy.

In North Calotte, the minority Finn and Lapp cultures contribute hugely to the ability of the region to attract tourists, and accordingly the North Calotte Council works to preserve the regional cultural diversity by supporting Laplander collaboration projects throughout Lapland, as well as projects to promote the Finnish-related minority cultures in Northern Sweden and Northern Norway.

Border obstacles

Dismantling border obstacles that render cross-border collaboration and mobility more difficult is of course a vital task for all the cross-border committees. In the

interviews, many committees referred to the mental border obstacles as the greatest barriers, and all the initiatives that involve parties on both sides of the border help to a large extent to remove this blind spot regarding the potential to be found across the border. Thus, it can be said that all the cross-border committees work towards dismantling border obstacles in all their projects. Nevertheless, border obstacles can also be understood in a more literal sense as legislative or administrative border obstacles that prevent or limit the opportunities of citizens and companies to operate freely across Nordic borders.

Some cross-border committees address this aspect of border obstacles more specifically in their purpose than others (the Öresund Committee, Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland, the North Calotte Council), but all cross-border committees involve this remit in their work whenever they come across it.

Environment and energy

Sustainability, the environment and energy are a recurring theme in a number of the remits of the cross-border committees. The Öresund Committee is working to develop a dedicated regional climate strategy; the

Kvarken Council has mapped out the prerequisites for wind power in the Kvarken region, and several cross-border committees are investing in bio-energy as part of their business initiatives (Bothnian Arc, Tornedalsrådet, the North Calotte Council).

Regional planning

Working with these remits contributes overall to the economic and social development of the individual border regions, but several cross-border committees also put a special focus on producing dedicated strategic planning for the region. Various attempts are made to coordinate local and regional plans at a higher strategic level: the Öresund Committee's member organisations have adopted a joint development strategy for the entire Öresund region; the Mid Nordic Committee has participated in the ProMidNord Interreg project, the purpose of which was to boost the Mid Nordic region as a macro-region; also, many of the infrastructure projects are closely linked to the strategic potential of border regions; in addition, infrastructure is planned into the needs, relocation patterns, commuting and general development potential of the border region.

The same collaborating authorities

Common to all the cross-border committees is the fact that their key collaborating authorities in the first instance are their member organisations. The member organisations determine the purpose and thus the remit of the cross-border committee, and thus these are the key collaborating authorities of the cross-border committees – both when initiating projects and for solving problems in the region.

Next, the cross-border committees involve a wide spectrum of local, regional and, to some extent, national and international players and authorities in their work. Who these are in a particular case will depend on the problem area in question: local and

regional enterprises and business organisations become involved in connection with business development; regional and national politicians are contacted about infrastructure requests; local and regional administrative authorities become involved when dealing with border obstacles (e.g. the regional offices of the Swedish national social insurance authority Försäkringskassan and the Swedish Tax Agency) and in other projects, where their involvement is relevant (e.g. municipal officers in connection with staging cultural festivals), and other players such as schools, hospitals, libraries, local associations and special-interest organisations, etc., become involved where relevant.

Similar roles

Project roles

An important aspect of the work of all the cross-border committees is to initiate various types of projects. This project work has several elements to it, such as initiating, facilitating, implementing, participating directly, coordinating and organising, as well as (co-)financing.

These roles overlap, of course, and they can be

difficult to distinguish in practice, because although the cross-border committees can be said to play different types of roles in different types of projects, they can also wear several different hats within the same project.

One clear, consistent role is that of initiator: when the cross-border committees' action areas need to

be expressed in concrete activities, their own initiative is most often the key starting point.

When it comes to building networks, the cross-border committees are often both the initiator and the facilitator; i.e. they may start up business networks with the intention that only the first step will need their assistance, and that the network will then be able to exist without their help (Bothnian Arc, Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland). Thus, the cross-border committee also becomes the facilitator to enable the network to start up in the first place.

At the same time, other projects within the same subject area and in the same cross-border committee may require more of the cross-border committee's direct implementation of the project, such as Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland's lead-generating fair and Bothnian Arc's match-making events.

In projects of a more directly problem-solving nature, such as dealing with border obstacles, the cross-border committees also take the initiative (especially the Öresund Committee in their dialogue work with businesses and with the cross-border obstacles forum, Gränshinderforum), but they also have a decisive coordinating role to play with regard to the authorities involved, e.g. by getting relevant authorities on both sides of the border to come up with joint solutions.

In some large-scale projects, the cross-border committees also have the resources to play an active participating role, e.g. as project manager or by sitting on boards and reference groups (e.g. Kvarken Council), but this varies somewhat depending on the available resources in the secretariats and member organisations.

For some cross-border committees, part funding of projects is a very significant part of their work to promote development and collaboration in the region. Both NORA and the North Calotte Council have annual grants and dedicated application procedures, and, by prioritising areas for the applications, can thus influence and also often coordinate activities in the border region. For other cross-border committees, however, the task of part funding projects is an important way of supporting initiatives that they may not necessarily themselves have the resources to take up or participate in.

Overall observations

The similarities and differences described concerning the cross-border committees cannot be categorised directly in terms of typologies (e.g. dividing the cross-border committees into three types depending on

The role of lobbyist

Lobbying is another type of role that the cross-border committees play to a greater or lesser degree. First and foremost, it must be emphasised that the existence of border regions is seen very much as a kind of lobbying. As mentioned, building networks between the member organisations is their foundation, and even just working towards getting different organisations to work together for the good of the region can be regarded as a type of lobbying. At the same time, the organisational structure of the cross-border committees is such that they are an excellent political platform for additional lobbying. Ideally, the politicians and officials involved will continue working for the good of the border region as a whole in their own authority and can thus spread cross-border thinking further throughout their own authorities. Next, the political platform also means that the cross-border committees have a sound starting point to reach political levels other than their member organisations, e.g. by getting municipal and regional politicians to take their ideas and needs further, to the national level.

The lobbying work of the cross-border committees can basically be divided into two types of lobbying roles: external and internal lobbying. External lobbying is often a direct action area, as far as the cross-border committee is concerned. This may be lobbying at national or EU level for a specific matter that is very important to regional development, e.g. improvement of the railway network in Central Norway and Oslo–Gothenburg (Mid Nordic Committee and Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland), creation and expansion of transport options across Kvarken (Kvarken Council) or more generally increasing political awareness of a particular region (the Öresund Committee; Bothnian Arc).

All the cross-border committees practise internal lobbying, whether or not they are aware of this. By internal lobbying, we mean that they seek to increase awareness of themselves and the border region, and this task is directed at both their own member organisations and external partners within the region with which the cross-border committee wishes to collaborate. Internal lobbying is the ongoing task of drawing attention to the existence of the cross-border committee and making visible the need for the cross-border committee in the work of regional development.

geographical conditions, organisational structure and remits) – the picture is more complex than that. Overall, there is a wide spectrum with regard to the specific remits the cross-border committees work with,

irrespective of their geographical circumstances; neither are there any patterns with regard to remit, geography or organisational structure. Nevertheless, the above observations should indeed give an impression that, despite their differences, the cross-border committees also have many similarities.

Part 2. Cross-cutting elucidation of key topics in and for the work of the cross-border committees

Border obstacles

Formal border obstacles

In the “Gränshinderdatabase” (<http://granshinder.norden.org>), the Nordic Council of Ministers defines a border obstacle thus: “a border obstacle in this context is any kind of problem that limits or obstructs the opportunities of people and companies to operate freely across Nordic borders.”

Since the focus of the Gränshinderdatabase is the legislative obstacles, the definition is expanded thus: “Only problems that affect laws, the application of laws and EU regulations or administrative application prepared by authorities or similar bodies are regarded in this context as border obstacles. Obstacles arising from incorrect information or a lack of information/knowledge are not regarded as border obstacles.”

Thus it is clear that a border obstacle, in this definition, is to be understood as a legislative obstacle that obstructs cross-border mobility. Formal border obstacles are usually related to the labour market and arise when employees or companies need to operate across national borders. One example is cross-border commuters who work in one country and live in another, and thus the question arises as to which country they should have their labour market insurance and social insurance in. For companies, similar questions can arise in terms of which public systems they operate with in relation to individual employees, but there can also be problems relating to production and goods, e.g. which certifications apply in which markets. Because the national systems are structured quite differently, these questions can mean, for the individual commuter/company, that cross-border mobility is too expensive or too difficult, and these are exactly the sort of border obstacles that need to be resolved in order to increase cross-border mobility.

As already alluded to, the removal of border obstacles is a key work area for several cross-border committees, but because border obstacles are a highly

complex matter, this work takes place in the context of a number of other organisations. First and foremost, the cross-border committees collaborate with the Nordic Council of Minister’s Gränshinderdatabase, which is a border service that collects all the identified Nordic border obstacles, analyses the cause of the problem and updates the process of the problem and the solution, if any. This information is available at <http://granshinder.norden.org/>. Next, there is also collaboration with Gränshinderforum, which is a political task force appointed by the Nordic prime ministers to resolve these Nordic border obstacle problems, and the relevant cross-border committees also work with the bilateral boundary services “Grensetjänesten i Morokulien” (www.gtm.nu) – which work with border obstacles between Sweden and Norway – and ÖresundDirekt (www.oresunddirekt.com), an information service that provides public information from authorities to citizens and companies in the Öresund region, and seeks to promote collaboration between authorities and case officers in the region.

Ideally, the cross-border committees should not, as a starting point, themselves try to resolve formal border obstacles where changes in legislation are required on the part of the national authorities; instead, they should work in dialogue with the border services and pass on information and experience from the local and regional level. The Gränshinder database, Gränshinderforum and the bilateral border services are the cross-border committees’ platform for reaching the national levels. Together with Gränshinderforum, for example, the Öresund Committee has helped to develop a solution model that ensures co-involvement throughout the process.

The border services can seek to address some formal border obstacles. This is done in cases where involvement of the national level would only lead to

more bother than it is worth, e.g. if a straightforward, local solution can be found that does not necessitate any changes in legislation. In addition, there is a capacity limit with regard to the number of border obstacles that Gränshinderforum takes up each year, and for this reason, the cross-border committees sometimes choose to drive the matter forward themselves if Gränshinderforum does not prioritise the identified problem.

Thus, in removing border obstacles, the cross-border committees work in these ways: either through Gränshinderforum; via or jointly with the border services, or via their own task forces (e.g. Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland).

A related task that is not included in the initial definition of formal border obstacles but which is nevertheless important in order to minimise the perception of border obstacles is the matter of sufficient information. Here, the cross-border committees have a natural role to play – by being able to tell citizens/companies where they can find information and help (several cross-border committees have this information available on their websites), but also by conducting a dialogue with the border service in Morokulien and ØresundDirekt; plus the Hallo Norden information services – the Nordic Council of Ministers' own information services under the auspices of "Föreningerne Norden" [Nordic associations], which both collect and provide information on border obstacles.

Other border obstacles

In the concrete work of the cross-border committees, it is very apparent, however, that the legislative obstacles are not the only kind of border obstacle that the committees are working to dismantle. On the contrary, there are a great many physical, practical and mental border obstacles affecting scope for successful cross-border collaboration.

Above all, language differences and the lack of knowledge of one another's culture play a major role in the difficulties of cross-border working. The language barrier is particularly noteworthy in the Swedish-Finnish committees, and for this reason, Kvarken Council, Mid Nordic Committee and the North Calotte Council offer an interpreter service, but the language barrier can also be experienced in committees with

more closely related neighbouring languages, whereby young people in particular increasingly have difficulty understanding one another. Similarly, lack of awareness of one another's culture – work culture, organisational structures and public systems – means there is a blind spot for opportunities on the other side of the border. The cross-border committees speak of this overall lack of awareness of neighbouring languages, cultures and social structures as "mental border obstacles", and just about all of them list this mental barrier as the most difficult to dismantle, requiring constant work. The work of spreading awareness of one another's languages and cultures therefore amounts to important activities for the cross-border committees – the vast majority of committees initiate various cultural events and regard this cultural work as a fundamental part of their activities, because these activities are also regarded as being vital to the ability to establish strategic-economic and business-based networks and collaboration.

Another obstacle that renders collaboration more difficult is the great physical differences within the region and physical barriers such as the sea (Nora) and bay (Kvarken Council, Mid Nordic Committee) between neighbouring countries. The extent of the physical differences is of course greatest in the cross-border committees that cover a large area (North Calotte, NORA), and for this reason, the committees work hard to ensure cohesion within the region. In the smaller border regions, too, however, the physical distances are an important theme in the development of the region, e.g. Skärgårdssamarbetet, where accessibility between Sweden and Finland is important. Accessibility can in fact be understood in two ways: the physical infrastructure (road systems, ferry crossings, bridges, railways) and the more organisational obstacles such as getting two national transport systems to work appropriately in relation to one another across the border. Accessibility is thus an important topic for the majority of cross-border committees, and their activities are expressed in different ways: from lobbying at national level in order to gain funding for specific infrastructure projects (bridges, roads), to coordinating dialogue with transport authorities to ensure cohesive accessibility in the border region for local and regional backing, to maintaining air and boat traffic – and the focus can be directed towards accessibility within the region or to and from the region.

Integration of authorities

The border region is an artificial unit, and for this reason, a very important part of the work of the cross-border committees is to work constantly to maintain this cohesion. This applies both to the border region as a whole (citizens, companies, organisations and associations) and also internally within the cross-border committee, where involvement and commitment from the member organisations is crucial for the continuity of cross-border work. Therefore, the most important function of the cross-border committees in terms of integration of authorities on each side of the border is to keep their member organisations on board: believing in the importance of cross-border work, and thinking in cross-border terms when initiatives are to be set in motion and problems solved.

Since there are major differences in the organisational structures of cross-border committees, there are also differences in terms of which authorities are involved in the ongoing internal work of integration. Cross-border committees exclusively concerned with intra-municipality collaboration (ARKO, Tornedalsrådet) involve the local authorities, but the other cross-border committees also involve regional public authorities and chambers of commerce. NORA takes a particular stance here, since its members are the national authorities of Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands in addition to the County Municipalities of Western Norway.

The individual projects and collaborative activities in the border regions also imply that players at various administrative levels collaborate within various themed

areas. The administrative levels vary both because the involvement of several administrative levels may be necessary for individual projects and also because a theme that could be an area of responsibility for regional authorities in one country could be a municipal responsibility in another – when it comes to coastal zone planning, for example. Depending on the nature of the project, this integration of authorities across national borders can range from practical exchanges of information to more specific problem solving. All actions pertaining to border region collaboration are thus essentially based on information about the other party, and thus the very fact of having an organisation such as the cross-border committee, which knows both administrative systems, is valuable.

The cross-border committees bring together players at both local and regional level and represent an arena in which this sort of coordination across different administrative levels can be explored in detail based on well-founded working relationships.

The provision of public welfare services is a particular challenge in sparsely populated areas. The services of ensuring a civil response system, health, education and care are a constant challenge in many border municipalities. Collaboration on such services between local and regional authorities, possibly national authorities in some cases, seems to be an important aspect of the integration of the authorities in border regions; likewise, resolving border obstacles demands a high degree of integration of authorities.

The role of the Nordic Council of Ministers

Support

Operational and project support from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) both play a vital role in the work of the cross-border committees, with both financial support and the symbolic value of being selected for support.

Operational support is of course important in order to maintain regional cross-border collaboration, as support for continuous operation is very important in determining whether the cross-border committee is able to function long term as the natural organisation in which the region's cross-border collaboration is anchored. A continuing institution means there is a regional organisation in the area that acts as a natural focal point for matters of regional collaboration, and

which can be the starting point for Interreg applications, for example.

In the same way, project support from the NCM also plays a vital role for cross-border committee activities; this is of course the case for projects financed solely by NCM project support, but projects to which the cross-border committees contribute part funding are in many cases also dependent on the ability to raise this funding in order to be entitled to apply for additional funding from other sources. As it becomes increasingly difficult to raise project funding nationally, the NCM's contribution is becoming more and more important as a source of part funding.

For a new cross-border committee such as

TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna, there is a great deal of symbolic value in the fact that the NCM has chosen to provide funding for its work. This is important both internally within the cross-border committee – in terms of member organisation involvement and the willingness to expend resources on border region collaboration – and externally when the cross-border committee has to go out and engage with other partners in its activities. The established cross-border committees, too, have stressed the importance of being a cross-border committee under the Nordic Council of Ministers in legitimising their role and work. At the same time, cross-border committees also serve as a local and regional anchor of the Nordic Council of Ministers via the close links between cross-border committee activities and operational and project support from the NCM.

Finally, all cross-border committees expressed great satisfaction with being part of a cohesive group of cross-border committees. They are all in agreement that they have much to learn from one another and evidently value this network highly and are keen to develop it further. In this connection, it should also be mentioned that the Nordic Council of Ministers funds an annual “Gränseregionalt Forum” [border region forum] whereby the cross-border committee secretariats and politicians are invited to a two-day seminar. The programme varies from one year to another, but the intent is to deal with topics relevant to the work of the cross-border committees. Thus, this forum serves as a meeting platform for the cross-border committees and accordingly helps to raise the perception of being a group of cross-border committees under the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Thematic significance

The themes of the NCM’s work programme have major impact in terms of the themes within the cross-border committees, both with regard to funding and with regard to political awareness. Project support is allocated to projects if the theme accords with the NCM’s priorities, and thus the NCM directly influences the work areas of the cross-border committees. Political awareness is primarily a matter of certain topics being easier to address politically within the region if the NCM has elevated the topic in its action programme.

Not all committees agree that the themes prioritised by the NCM are equally important to their own region, however, and for this reason there is a lack of accord in some committees between the NCM’s priorities² and the cross-border committees’ own purposes and designated action areas. One prominent objection is that some work topics perceived as significant in the border regions are not rewarded in terms of NCM’s priorities. A clear example here is cultural projects, which, from a border region perspective, are vital to general socio-economic development in the region, but because the cultural sphere belongs more to EK-K (Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Nordic Cultural Cooperation) than EK-R (Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Regional Policy - which is where cross-border committee subsidies come from), there is perceived to be a discrepancy here between the NCM’s themed priorities and the wishes and needs of the cross-border committees. In general, the cross-border committees express a desire for better dialogue with EK-R concerning themed priorities.

In the matter of which topics are particularly suitable for work under border regional auspices, there is not necessarily a disagreement as to the NCM’s priority areas, but the cross-border committees would prefer to see more consideration of the local and regional context, and to explore whether there is room for other initiatives, such as culture and identity.

² In the NCM’s Cross-border Region strategy for 2009–2012, the priorities are: development of competitiveness in business; identifying and dismantling border obstacles; sustainable and climate-friendly environmental and energy solutions, as well as infrastructure.

The role of Interreg

The eleven cross-border committees are involved in the Interreg programmes in widely differing ways, ranging from TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna, which was set up as an offshoot of an Interreg project, to NORA, which does not itself participate but is happy to help with part funding if the project harmonises with its purposes, and the other cross-border committees, which to a large extent are project participants themselves. Because the Öresund Committee is the host organisation for the Interreg secretariat for the Interreg IVA Öresund region and Interreg IVA sub-programme Öresund, they cannot themselves participate actively in Interreg projects, but the close links between the Öresund Committee secretariat and the Interreg secretariat mean that the Interreg programmes are nevertheless indirectly a part of the member organisations' cross-border activities, since the Öresund Committee's member organisations can participate in Interreg projects outside the Öresund Committee.

For the cross-border committees as a whole, the Interreg programmes represent above all an external opportunity to finance more and larger projects within their themed work areas. Thus, the Interreg programmes contribute to more of the desired NCM initiatives being realised, and for many cross-border committees, involvement in Interreg projects has become one of the most important project activities in recent years. At the same time, the established Nordic cross-border committee work itself has meant there was a platform for applying for and implementing Interreg projects: *“It makes a considerable difference whether INTERREG support was accommodated into existing local cross-border cooperation structures or whether the launch of INTERREG actually triggered cross-border cooperation initiatives that had not been existing beforehand”*³. The success of the Interreg projects in the Nordic countries can therefore be said to be conditional on the experience and tradition of cross-border regional collaboration.

The launch of Interreg led to strong competition between new and better-established collaborative organisations in European border regions. One characteristic of the well-established Nordic cross-border committees is that they have given representatives

of local and regional authorities a prominent role in this work. In the Nordic countries, Interreg A programmes are largely an arena for regional players.

The Interreg programmes have created new formal conduits for the implementation of border region collaboration in the form of programmes, selected priority (collaborative) areas and projects. The Nordic cross-border committees were well equipped to use Interreg as a supplementary financing instrument. Initially, some of the NCM-supported collaborative organisations such as Skärgårdssamarbetet, the North Calotte Council, the Kvarken Council and the Öresund Committee took responsibility for developing the Interreg IIA programmes (1996–1999), and also for implementing these, while the Kvarken Council also played an important role in the Interreg III programme.

However, Interreg implies a major administrative burden in terms of the implementation of border region collaborative initiatives, and the EU directives that govern this collaboration have made it rather more difficult to implement some of the themed collaborative projects that dominated Nordic cross-border collaboration from the late 1970s through to the early 1990s.

From the mid-1990s and the decade that followed, local authorities were much more strongly represented in the Nordic Interreg A programmes' governing bodies. In the programme period 2007–2013, the cross-border committees have had a more reserved position in relation to the implementation organisation for the Interreg A programmes than before. Nevertheless, the cross-border committees are an important pool of experience which can support the Interreg programmes as local information points (as in the Interreg IVA Bothnia Atlantica programme), as project initiator or as project partner (in all the Interreg IVA programmes). Some Nordic border region collaborative organisations have also been careful to expand their geographical zones of coverage so they accord with the programme regions of the Interreg programmes. This way, Interreg continues to be a catalyst for many of the activities in the cross-border committees.

³ Perkman, M. (2003). Cross-border regions in Europe: significance and drivers of regional cross-border co-operation, in European Urban and Regional Studies, vol. 10, no. 2: 153–171, p. 156.

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Hagstova Føroya (Statistics Faroe Islands) - <http://www.hagstova.fo/>

Hagstofa Íslands (Statistics Iceland) - <http://www.hagstofa.is/>

Kalaallit Nunaanni Naatsorsueqissaartarfik (Statistics Greenland) - <http://www.stat.gl/>

Statistiska centralbyrån (Statistics Sweden) - <http://www.scb.se/>

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Tilastokeskus (Statistics Finland) - <http://www.stat.fi/>

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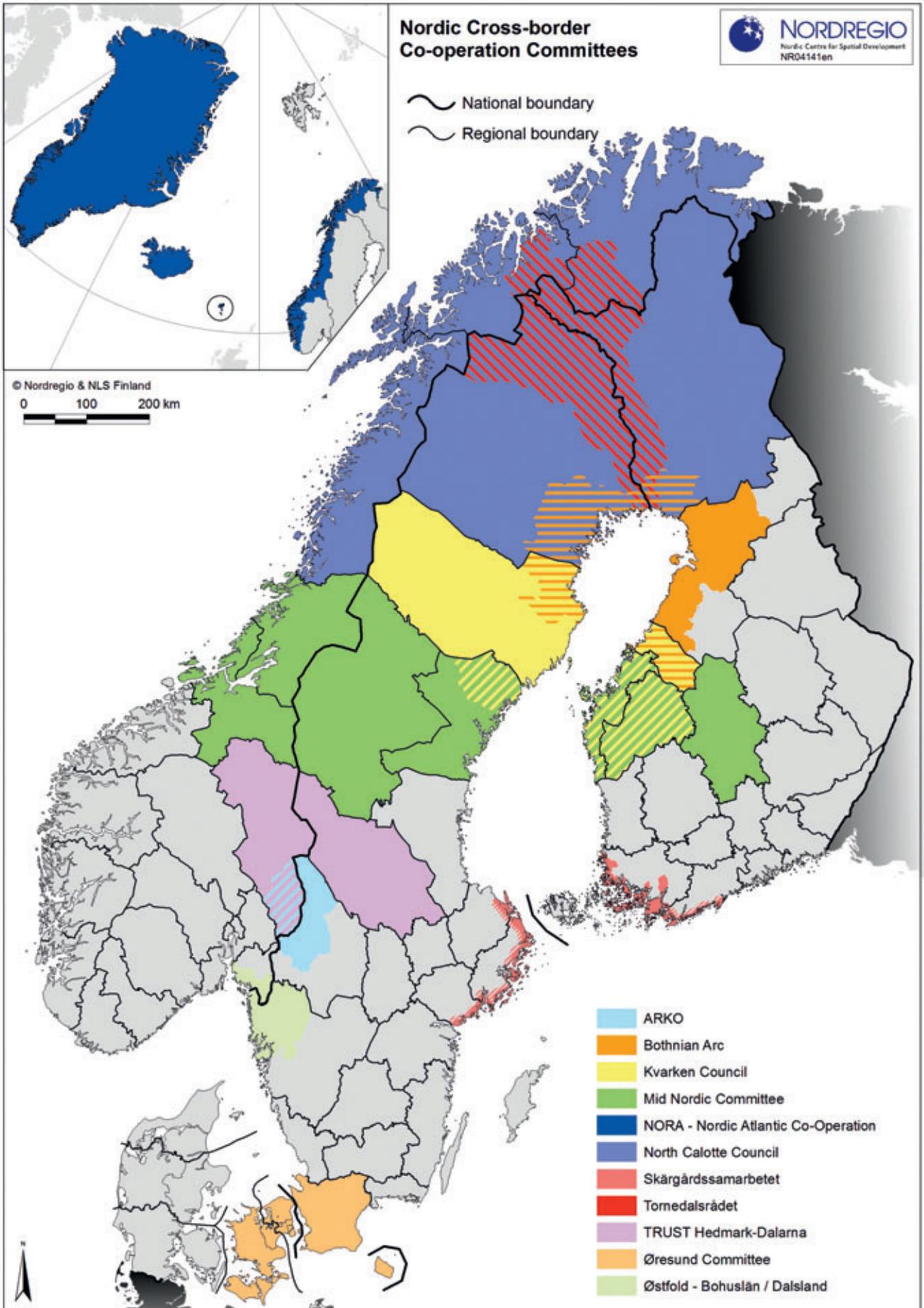
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Appendix 1:

Overview map showing the locations of the eleven cross-border committees

Overview map showing the locations of the eleven cross-border committees



Appendix 2:

Table summarising the cross-border committees; includes information on the geographical regions of the committees and their member organisations, plus their year of establishment

Table summarising basic information on the 11 cross-border committees

Region	Countries	Member organisations	Area (km²)	Population	Population density (inh./km²)	Year of establishment
ARKO www.arko-regionen.org	Norway	7 municipalities Eidskog, Sør-Odal, Nord-Odal, Kongsvinger, Grue, Åsnes, and Våler	13 000	115 000	9	1967
	Sweden	4 municipalities Arvika, Eda, Torsby, and Sunne				
Bothnian Arc http://bothnianarc.net	Sweden	7 municipalities Haparanda, Kalix, Luleå, Boden, Älvsbyn, Piteå, and Skellefteå	50 000	700 000	14	1999
	Finland	5 sub-regions Kemi-Tornio, Oulu Arc, Oulu, Raahelä, and Ylivieska 1 regional council Central Ostrobothnia				
Kvarken Council www.kvarken.org	Sweden	1 municipality Ömsköldsvik 1 region Västerbotten	93 000	750 000	8	1972
	Finland	4 municipalities Vaasa, Seinäjoki, Kokkola, and Jakobstad 3 regional councils Ostrobothnia, Southern Ostrobothnia, and Central Ostrobothnia				

<p>Mid Nordic Committee www.mittnorden.net</p>	<p>Norway</p> <p>Sweden</p> <p>Finland</p>	<p>2 county municipalities Nord-Trøndelag and Sør-Trøndelag</p> <p>2 county councils and 2 municipal associations Jämtland and Västernorrland</p> <p>3 regional councils Central Finland, Ostrobothnia, and Southern Ostrobothnia</p> <p>1 regional organisation Swedish Ostrobothnia association of culture and education</p>	<p>150 000</p>	<p>1 400 000</p>	<p>9</p> <p>1977</p>
<p>NORA www.nora.fo</p>	<p>Greenland</p> <p>Iceland</p> <p>Faroe Islands</p> <p>Norway</p>	<p>The Government of Greenland</p> <p>The Icelandic Government</p> <p>The Faroe Islands' Home Rule Government</p> <p>9 counties in coastal Norway Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn & Fjordane, Møre & Romsdal, Sør-Trøndelag, Nord-Trøndelag, Nordland, Troms, and Finnmark</p>	<p>2 480 000 (of which ice free area: 720.000)</p>	<p>2 500 000</p>	<p>1</p> <p>(3,5)</p> <p>1996</p>
<p>North Calotte Council www.nordkalottradet.nu</p>	<p>Norway</p> <p>Sweden</p> <p>Finland</p>	<p>3 county municipalities Finnmark, Troms, and Nordland</p> <p>Norwegian association of local and regional authorities (KS Northern Norway)</p> <p>1 county administrative board and 1 county council Norrbotten</p> <p>Municipalities of Norrbotten</p> <p>Norrbotten chamber of commerce</p> <p>1 regional council and 1 ELY centre Lapland</p> <p>Lapland chamber of commerce</p> <p>1 municipal representative</p>	<p>305 000</p>	<p>900 000</p>	<p>3</p> <p>1967</p>

<p>Skärgårdssamarbetet www.skargarden.com</p>	<p>Sweden</p>	<p>3 county administrative boards Stockholm, Södermanlands, and Uppsala 3 county councils Stockholm, Södermanlands, and Uppsala 2 regional councils Finland Proper and Usimaa</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>65 000</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>1978</p>
<p>Tornedalsrådet www.tornedalen.org</p>	<p>Norway</p>	<p>4 municipalities Storjford, Nordreisa, Kåfjord, and Kautekeino 4 municipalities Haparanda, Övertorneå, Pajala, and Kiruna 6 municipalities Enontekiö, Muonio, Kolari, Pello, Ylitornio, and Tornio</p>	<p>63 000</p>	<p>95 000</p>	<p>1,5</p>	<p>1987</p>
<p>TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna www.trusthedmark-dalarna.com</p>	<p>Norway</p>	<p>1 county municipality and 1 county governor Hedmark</p>	<p>56 000</p>	<p>465 000</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>2008</p>
<p>Öresund Committee www.oresundskomiteen.dk</p>	<p>Sweden</p>	<p>1 region and 1 county administrative board Dalarna</p>	<p>20 000</p>	<p>3 700 000</p>	<p>185</p>	<p>1993</p>
<p>Denmark</p>	<p>2 regions The Capital Region and Zealand 3 municipalities Copenhagen, Frederiksberg, and Bornholm 2 municipal liaison committees (KKR) The Capital Region and Zealand</p>	<p>1 region Skåne</p>	<p>4 municipalities Malmö, Lund, Landskrona, and Helsingborg</p>			

<p>Østfold-Bohuslän/ Dalsland</p> <p>www.granskommitten.com</p>	<p>Norway</p> <p>Sweden</p>	<p>8 municipalities Halden, Aremark, Fredrikstad, Sarpsborg, Hvaler, Rygge, Råde, and Moss</p> <p>1 county municipality Østfold</p> <p>14 municipalities Strömstad, Tanum, Munkedal, Sotenäs, Lysekil, Orust, Uddevalla, Dals-Ed, Bengtsfors, Åmål, Mellerud, Färgelanda, Vänersborg, and Trollhättan</p> <p>1 region Västra Götaland</p>	<p>9 500</p>	<p>468 000</p>	<p>49</p>	<p>1980</p>
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Appendix 3:

Fact sheets on each cross-border committee, containing information on their vision, organisational structure, priority areas, financing* and project volume* and ongoing activities

* Here it is important to note that the stated 2009 annual turnover and project volume is not necessarily representative for all years. 2009 is merely chosen to give an indication of the extent of the activities of the cross-border committee.



ARKO

Vision

The vision for the activities in ARKO is to develop the region as a meeting place across the border, strengthen the settlement, and create more employment.

Members

Norway Sør-Odal, Nord-Odal, Kongsvinger, Grue, Åsnes, Våler, and Eidskog municipalities

Sweden Sunne, Torsby, Eda, and Arvika municipalities

The border region

The 11 municipalities in ARKO cover an area of about 13 000 km² and the area has a population just over 115 000 inhabitants.

Organisational structure

ARKO was established in 1967 and was until 2009 led by a steering committee consisting of both the administrative and the elected heads of the 11 member municipalities. These 22 members met at least twice per year. Among the committee members a working group was established, consisting of three politicians and two civil servants – three Norwegian and two Swedish.

From 2010 and onwards, ARKO is led by a chairman and a steering group. The steering group was reduced from the previous 22 members to four – two politicians and two civil servants. The previous working group has been discontinued.

Twice a year, a member meeting is held where decisions are made on statutes, budgets, policies, annual results etc. At these meetings, all the member municipalities are represented by both their administrative and their elected heads, a total of 22 members.

ARKO has one person employed in its secretariat, which is located in Morokulien Info Center right on the national border.

Financing

ARKO is financed in part with funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers and in part with member fees. In 2009, ARKO's turnover was 1.4 million SEK where the Nordic Council of Ministers funding comprised 61 %, the member fees 26 %, and other resources 13 %.

Focus areas

In its latest action plan ARKO has selected the following priority areas: business-growth-innovation; sustainable development-infrastructure; and culture-language-identity.

Project volume in 2009

3 projects

Description of project activities

The project activities of ARKO are one way to reach and finance the priorities that are listed in the action plan. Above all, ARKO promotes collaborative projects and activities with stakeholders within different areas but in some cases also by running their own projects/activities. Through active and ongoing information activities and through networking with collaboration partners, municipal organisations, associations, networks and businesses on national and EU project opportunities, ARKO contributes to develop the priority areas of business, infrastructure, and culture.

Ongoing activities

The exchange of information between the member municipalities occur via meetings, emails and written information. ARKO is a network building organisation where information is spread through internal and external meetings and via newsletters. Information and publications to external interested parties are also published from time to time.

Bothnian Arc



Vision

The Bothnian Arc region is to be developed into northern Europe's most functionally integrated border region as well as the most northern concentration of industry, research and competence of the European Union.

Members

Sweden Haparanda, Kalix, Luleå, Boden, Älvsbyn, Piteå and Skellefteå municipalities

Finland Kemi-Tornio, Oulu Arc, Oulu, Raahe, and Ylivieska sub-regions as well as the regional council Central Ostrobothnia

The border region

The Bothnian Arc region is a coastal zone around the Gulf of Bothnia in the northernmost part of the Baltic Sea. The region covers about 50 000 km² and is home to about 700 000 inhabitants.

Organisational structure

Bothnian Arc is an economic association, registered in Sweden and with its seat in Haparanda. The association was established in 2002 but the cooperation in the region began already in 1998 when three projects were grouped under the umbrella project, the Gulf of Bothnia.

The overall governing decisions are made at the annual general meeting, where all members have a representative present. At the annual general meeting the board with its 13 members and their alternates is elected. The chairman and the members of the board are elected for a term of two years. The presidency rotates each term between Sweden and Finland. The board selects an executive committee which has five ordinary members, five alternates, and two associate members.

The main secretariat of the Bothnian Arc is located in Haparanda and offices are also found in Oulu and Luleå. The association employs one executive director and one fulltime employee in the secretariat.

Financing

The activities of the Bothnian Arc are financed by member fees, funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers and potentially from other sources. In 2009 the turnover was approximately 2 577 000 SEK and the revenues were distributed as follows: member fees 55%, Nordic Council of Ministers 45 %.

Focus areas

The association follows a three-year business plan. The prioritised action areas for 2009-2011 are: Increased regional cooperation and activation of actors; lobbying; activation of cooperation between businesses and organisations; increasing the amount of projects in the Bothnian Arc region; as well as marketing the Bothnian Arc.

Project volume in 2009

Bothnian Arc has not been the lead partner for any projects in 2009 but the association has participated in four ongoing EU-projects. The association has participated in several groups that work towards building and developing network and/or plan new projects in the region. Bothnian Arc has also collaborated with Tornedalsrådet on three different activities.

Description of project activities

Bothnian Arc participates in the implementation of ongoing projects and stimulates initiatives to new projects in the whole Bothnian Arc region. Seminars and meetings are organised between different actors and sectors to initiate joint Interreg projects. Bothnian Arc can apply for funding from a.o. the Interreg IV A Nord programme for its own projects but primarily the association is to act as an initiator, advisor and co-applicant when other actors apply for funding for transnational projects.

Ongoing activities

Bothnian Arc stimulates actors to concrete cross-border cooperation through increased networking and project activities. The efforts to abolish border obstacles are reinforced when several actors in different fields collaborate actively across the border. Bothnian Arc is in continuous dialogue with actors, civil servants, and policy makers at the national, Nordic, and European level as well as within the Baltic Sea Region.

Kvarken Council

Vision

The Kvarken Council is to work on the development of the Kvarken region as a functional, competitive, and well-integrated border region in the Northern part of the Baltic Sea Region. The goal is to have a good transportation infrastructure and good connections both within the region and towards the surrounding world and to play an active role in the Nordic and European cooperation.

Members

Sweden Region Västerbotten and Örnköldsvik municipality

Finland Ostrobothnia, Southern Ostrobothnia, and Central Ostrobothnia regional councils, and Vaasa, Kokkola, Seinäjoki, and Jakobstad municipalities

Others 21 members (municipalities, schools, organisations, associations, etc.)

The border region

The Kvarken region has 750 000 inhabitants. The area covers 550 km x 250 km and is divided by an 80 km wide sea border which is served by a regular ferry crossing (duration 4.5 hours). Approximately 22 % of the population on the Finnish side of the Kvarken region are Swedish-speaking.

Organisational structure

The Kvarken Council is a non-profit association, registered in Finland, and it was established in 1972. The association is led by a board consisting of 12 members. Each member has a personal alternate. The board meets 4-5 times per year, and in addition an annual meeting is held. At the annual meeting representatives from all key members are invited, a total of 26 persons who all have voting rights. Other members are entitled to attend and voice their opinions. The project activities are led by their own separate steering groups.

The secretariat of the Kvarken council is located in Vasa, and another office is found in Umeå. The Kvarken council has two permanent staff members, a director and an assistant. In 2009, the Kvarken Council employed 8 project employees - full-time as well as part-time - and had 8-10 consultants linked to different projects.

Financing

The activities of the Kvarken Council is financed through member fees, funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers, and project funding. In 2009, the Kvarken Council had a total turnover of approximately 1 million Euros. The revenues of the year were distributed as follows: member fees 22 %; Nordic Council of Ministers 27 %, and project funding 51 %. In 2009, the funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers co-financed four projects led by the Kvarken Council, and five projects lead by another partner.

Focus areas

The Kvarken Council follows 3-year action programmes. The focus areas for 2010-2012 are: transportation and infrastructure; environment and energy questions, and bridging border obstacles in the broadest sense.

Project volume in 2009

In 2009, the Kvarken Council was the lead partner of two large EU-funded projects and one smaller one. The Kvarken Council also co-financed and participated actively in seven other large cross-border, mostly EU-funded, projects.

Description of project activities

The project activities are a way to reach and fund the targets that are set for the Kvarken Council and which also follow the priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers. By operating their own EU-projects the Kvarken Council has a clear role and responsibility in cross-border issues. The Council also work actively to start up new projects, find collaboration partners, hold meetings, organise briefings, and co-finance projects. Infrastructure is one of the most highly prioritised project activities for the Kvarken Council since functioning traffic across the sea border between Sweden and Finland is a precondition for any cross-border cooperation.

Ongoing activities

In addition to basis and project activities, the Kvarken Council works actively with establishing and maintaining various cross-border networks and meeting places, disseminating information, lobbying and exchanging experiences. The Kvarken Council also maintains a rental service of simultaneous interpretation facilities for both small and large conferences in both Sweden and Finland.

Mid Nordic Committee



Vision

The Mid Nordic Committee cooperates with the intent of promoting sustainable development and growth in the Mid Nordic Region based on historical and cultural affinities and a common regional development interest.

Members

- Norway* Nord-Trøndelag and Sør-Trøndelag county municipalities
- Sweden* County councils and municipal associations of Jämtland and Västernorrland
- Finland* Ostrobothnia, Southern Ostrobothnia and Central Finland regional councils, and the Swedish Ostrobothnia association of culture and education
- Others* County Administrative Boards in Jämtland and Västernorrland and the Satakunta association

The border region

The Mid Nordic region has approximately 1 400 000 inhabitants and covers the Mid Nordic regions from the coast of Norway, through the central part of Sweden, across the Gulf of Bothnia, and to Central Finland.

Organisational structure

The Mid Nordic Committee is a non-profit organisation registered in Sweden. The Committee was formed as a formal Nordic Cross-border Cooperation Committee in 1978 but cooperation in the region goes further back. It is led by a management group consisting of seven members, one from each member region. The management group meets 3-4 times per year. The Mid Nordic Committee which is the supreme governing body meets every spring and autumn.

The secretariat of the Mid Nordic Committee is located in Härnösand, Västernorrland, and there is also an office in Jyväskylä, Central Finland. In 2009 the Mid Nordic Committee employed three employees: an office manager, a committee secretary and an economist. The secretariat is supported by a resource group consisting of civil servants from all member regions. In addition, there are a number of thematic working groups, project groups, and networks.

Financing

The Mid Nordic Committee is financed by revenues from members and partners as well as the Nordic Council of Ministers. The total turnover in 2009 was 2.700.000 SEK. Of the revenues in 2009 the member fees made up 44 % and the grants from the Nordic Council of Ministers 56 %. In 2009 the Mid Nordic Committee participated in projects with a total turnover of 47 000 000 SEK, of which the major part is EU structural funds.

Focus areas

The Mid Nordic Committee operates according to a three-year strategy, *Mid Nordic cooperation – strategic direction for 2009-2011*. The priorities are cross-border cooperation to strengthen innovative and entrepreneurial environments, improvement of the East-West linkages, promotion of culture and creative industries and the Nordic community, and development of environmental technologies and renewable energy.

Project volume in 2009

The Mid Nordic Committee actively participates in eleven projects that are primarily financed by the EU structural funds (Sweden-Norway programme, Botnia-Atlantica programme, Baltic Sea programme and Objective 2). Smaller cross-border projects and feasibility studies are conducted only when local and regional financing is available.

Description of project activities

Through co-financing the Mid Nordic Committee shall participate in projects, feasibility studies, and short-term activities based on the priorities set by the Committee and the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Mid Nordic Committee will also be proactive, initiate and run projects with a clear Mid Nordic profile.

The Mid Nordic Committee is only to run projects when no other clear project leader exists. The continuing activities of the Mid Nordic Committee should not in any way be funded by project funding.

Ongoing activities

The Mid Nordic Committee monitors and participates in policy processes through developing documents and position papers to national authorities and EU institutions and through active participation in the European Commission working groups or in similar groups at the national, Nordic and international level. The Mid Nordic Committee also works to stimulate the existing networks within the Mid Nordic cooperation area and to contribute to the creation of new networks where needs are identified.

Vision

NORA seeks to boost North Atlantic collaboration in order to create a powerful Nordic region, characterised by strong, sustainable economic development – among the four member states and increasingly also the western neighbouring regions.

Members

Greenland The Government of Greenland

Iceland The Icelandic Government

Faroe Islands Home Rule Government of the Faroe Islands

Norway Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn & Fjordane, Møre & Romsdal, Sør-Trøndelag, Nord-Trøndelag, Nordland, Troms as well as Finnmark counties

The border region

The NORA region includes Greenland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and coastal Norway. Together, their land mass and maritime area is larger than Continental Europe. Approximately 2.5 million people live in this region.

Organisational structure

NORA is a collaborative body under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers, based on the Faroe Islands. It was established in 1996.

The NORA committee comprises 12 members, with up to three members elected by each of the participating countries. The members are appointed for a period of four years. Each country has one vote on the committee and the committee has a quorum if one member from each country is present. The committee meets once a year.

The committee elects a task force from among the committee members; these are elected for one year at a time and meet three or four times a year.

NORA's main secretariat is located in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, and employs a staff of three. In the other countries, four liaison officers staff the secretariats in Iceland, Greenland, Western Norway and Northern Norway.

Financing

NORA is financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers, supplemented with a national contribution from the four participating members: the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and coastal Norway. In addition, NORA receives a variable contribution from any surplus remaining from the Vestnordenfonden fund – in 2009, NORA's share of this was DKK 125,000. In 2009, the Nordic Council of Ministers' contribution amounted to 76% of total funding; member contributions accounted for 18% and other sources of support, 6%. Total turnover in 2009 was approx. DKK 9.5 million.

Focus areas

The framework for NORA's work is established in the 2005–2010 Strategic Programme, and each year, this programme materialises as a more specific action plan. Overall, work is done to achieve sustainable development in terms of the economic, social and environmental aspects. More specifically, work is done within the following sector action areas: Maritime resources; Transport; Tourism; Information and Communications Technology; and Other Regional Collaboration. Support is given to local and regional initiatives that could reinforce regional collaboration or lead to the development of significant new areas of collaboration, even if these lie outside the selected action areas.

Project volume in 2009

In 2009, NORA initiated and continued twelve strategic initiatives and co-funded 27 external projects.

Description of project activities

A significant part of NORA's work is project support for external projects in the region within the aforementioned action areas. Support can be given to collaborative projects that involve partners from at least two of the four NORA countries.

In 2009, NORA instigated a number of strategic activities designed to spotlight NORA as a strategic-political organisation that contributes to the discussion of important regional problem areas. These activities include a stronger focus on the demographic challenges and the consequences of climate change in the NORA countries, an OECD analysis of the region as well as increased collaboration with the western neighbours of the Nordic Region.

Ongoing activities

NORA works continuously to create and maintain political and professional arenas where problems affecting the North Atlantic region can be discussed and joint strategies can be developed. The main secretariat and the four regional secretariats take care of ongoing administration and monitoring of project work in progress. Communication activities also account for a substantial part of day-to-day operations. NORA distributes a monthly "Nyhedsbrevet Nordatlanten" ["North Atlantic newsletter"] and prepares annual reports; the website is also given high priority.



North Calotte Council

Vision

Through their work the North Calotte Council will support an economically, socially and environmentally balanced development in the Cap of the North and contribute to the creation of a strong European cooperation area in Northern Europe with a single identity and increased functionality.

Members

Norway Finnmark, Troms and Nordland county municipalities, and KS Northern Norway

Sweden Norrbotten County Council, the county administrative board of Norrbotten, Municipalities of Norrbotten, and Norrbotten Chamber of Commerce

Finland Lapland Regional Council, Lapland ELY centre, Lapland Chamber of Commerce, and one municipal representative from the municipalities of Lapland

Others The county governors of Nordland, Troms and Finnmark

The border region

The Cap of the North comprised the northernmost regions of Norway, Sweden and Finland. The region is largely located north of the Arctic Circle. The total land area is 305 000 km² and its population close to 900 000 people. The Cap of the North is also home region for the Sami, the indigenous people of the North. The region is characterized by beautiful countryside with rich natural resources, sparse population, remoteness, and inaccessibility. The residents have a relatively high education and skills level.

Organisational structure

The North Calotte Council was established in 1967. The Council includes 12 representatives from the regional authorities and organisations that are responsible for regional development. The North Calotte Council meets 2-3 times per year.

The steering group of the Council consists of five members, a civil servant from each region. The steering group is responsible for the ongoing activities and meets 6-8 times per year. If necessary, the North Calotte Council can set up working groups for temporary assignments. For the cooperation within environment and nature conservation a network group has been established: the North Calotte Environmental Council.

The North Calotte Council is always under the auspice of a host organisation which is a regular member of the Council. The Council has no independent legal status. Since 2003, the secretariat of the North Calotte Council has been located in the Lapland Regional Council in Rovaniemi and has one full-time employee.

Financing

The North Calotte Council's activities are largely funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. In 2009 the contributions from the Nordic Council of Ministers constituted about 90 % of the revenues. The annual turnover is 490 000 euros.

Half of the operating expenses to the secretariat are paid by the region of the current chairman. Only 13.5 % of the Nordic Council of Ministers funding covers administration costs while the remaining app. 400 000 euros are distributed to external stakeholders as project funding. The total project turnover the North Calotte Council achieved by the use of the Nordic funding, was 4.73 million euros in 2009.

Focus areas

The activities of the North Calotte Council are based on the long-term priorities set in the Council's own three-year action plan and on the priorities that are set centrally at the Nordic level e.g. in the strategy programme of the Nordic Council of Ministers and in the annual presidency programmes.

In 2009 the North Calotte Council focused on 7 priority areas: regional competitiveness (including business and innovation development, research and development, and entrepreneurship), border obstacles, sustainable environmental and energy solutions, infrastructure and linkages, exchange of experiences and identity reinforcement, joint management of environment and natural resources; and information activities.

Project volume in 2009

In 2009 the North Calotte Council ran its own border obstacles project. The Council also co-financed 9 Interreg projects that were initiated in 2008 and 10 other multi-year projects. In 2009 the Council granted funding to another 10 multi-year Interreg projects and 12 projects outside the Interreg scheme. The total number of projects that the North Calotte Council co-finances and participates in is thus around 40.

Description of project activities

The project financing is an important tool of the North Calotte Council and makes the council stronger as initiator of new collaborative processes. Projects are mainly carried out by external stakeholders. Thereby the experiences and competences of Nordic cross-border cooperation are spread to a wider group of stakeholders, which helps to strengthen the integration of the region.

The North Calotte Council grants Nordic funds to projects that are in line with the priorities of the Council. However, the Council is never the sole funder of any projects but requires that the project participants invest their own money in the collaboration and that other investors have a potential interest in supporting the project. The funding from the North Calotte Council can cover up to 50 % of the budgeted costs of the project.

The Nordic funds are important for co-financing Interreg project that may have difficulty finding other national funding sources. The Interreg projects also have to be in line with the priorities of the North Calotte Council to qualify as beneficiaries. The co-financing rate of Interreg projects is between 5 and 18 per cent of the total project budget.

Ongoing activities

The North Calotte Council creates networks and strategic alliances across nation border in the Cap of the North in order to promote sustainable economic and social development in the region. The Council is working with advocacy especially on issues of concern to all three countries, such as the future status of regions in the EU's cohesion policy. The information activities of the Council include dissemination of Nordic information on the Cap of the North and of current news from the region in a newsletter which is published on the internet 4-6 times per year.

Skärgårdssamarbetet



Vision

Skärgårdssamarbetet links the archipelago region and works toward developing its specificity and maintaining it in a sustainable manner for the benefit of both the resident population and for visitors.

Members

Finland Finland Proper and Uusimaa regional councils

Sweden The county councils and the county administrative boards of Stockholm, Södermanland and Uppsala

Until June 30 2010, the Government of Åland was also member of the Skärgårdssamarbetet.

The border region

Skärgårdssamarbetet comprises the archipelago areas of the participating Swedish and Finnish counties which has approximately 65 000 inhabitants.

Organisational structure

Skärgårdssamarbetet was established in 1978 and the supreme governing body is the Skärgårdshavets cooperation council. The council consists of maximum 14 members with a maximum of seven members from any of the two national subregions. The council term follows the mandate terms of the bodies that appoint representatives. The cooperation council holds two regular meetings per year.

The cooperation council appoints a board consisting of no more than nine members; three from Southwest Finland, one from Uusimaa, three from Stockholm County, one from Södermanlands County, and one from Uppsala County. No alternates are appointed.

The role of the board is to prepare and execute the activities that the cooperation council refers to the board and to update and prepare the questions that should be subject to work within the cooperation.

The secretariat of Skärgårdssamarbetet is located in Turku and has one full-time employee, the cooperation secretary.

Southwest Finland has the administrative responsibility for the cooperation secretary and is also the executive agency of the funds that the Nordic Council of Ministers annually grants to Skärgårdssamarbetet.

Financing

Skärgårdssamarbetet is financed partly by the Nordic Council of Ministers and partly by the members of the organisation. In 2009 the turnover was 143 100 euros of which the grants from the Nordic Council of Ministers accounted for 36%.

Focus areas

The priorities of Skärgårdssamarbetet are: development of enterprises and entrepreneurship – with a focus on youth, environment and energy; demographic development, and culture.

Description of project activities

In 2009 Skärgårdssamarbetet has expanded their outreach activities to initiate new projects by bringing together project actors from the different archipelago regions.

Ongoing activities

The task of Skärgårdssamarbetet is to act as a general cooperation and information organisation in the two archipelago regions. A key activity is to initiate, finance and implement cross-border projects and events in the region. Skärgårdssamarbetet has been a key player and facilitator within the Interreg cooperation.

Vision

The ambition of Tornedalsrådet is to promote the mutual and international cooperation of the municipalities and the inhabitants in the region by promoting the region's interests and its development while preserving the cultural heritage of the Torne Valley.

Members

Norway Storfjord, Nordreisa, Kåfjord and Kautekeino municipalities

Sweden Haparanda, Övertorneå, Pajala and Kiruna municipalities

Finland Enontekiö, Muonio, Kolari, Pello, Ylitornio municipalities, and Tornio city

The border region

The Torne Valley is the region where Sweden, Norway and Finland meet. The region takes its character from the four cultures that are found here: the Swedish, the Finnish, the Norwegian, and the Sami. Approximately 95 000 people live in the Torne Valley.

Organisational structure

Tornedalsrådet was established in 1987 – as a merger of the Swedish ‘Tornedalskommunernas Förbund’ and the Finnish ‘Tornionlaakson kuntain toimikunta’.

The organisation consists of a council, a board, and a secretariat. The council has 33 members. The chairman and two vice chairmen are elected annually and the positions are distributed democratically between the three countries. Tornedalsrådet has one regular meeting per year and in connection with this a Torne Valley conference is organised as part of the overall work of creating awareness and development of the region.

The board has 14 members – one representative from each member municipality. The board is responsible for the operational activities and can when necessary appoint ad hoc working groups. The board meets at least 4 times per year.

Tornedalsrådet is registered as a municipal organisation and is based in Sweden. The secretariat is located in Haparanda, Sweden.

Financing

Tornedalsrådet has an annual budget of 1.5 million SEK. This budget covers the financing of the basic costs. In addition, in 2009 Tornedalsrådet received 600 000 DKK from the Nordic Council of Ministers to operate project activities. The total turnover for 2009 was thus app. 2.3 million SEK. 65% of the turnover was financed by member fees and the remaining 35 % by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Focus areas

The mission of Tornedalsrådet can be summarised in six points: protect the interests of the member municipalities and their residents; increase the attractiveness of the Torne Valley through branding and marketing; developing the business sector and labour market; promote education and skill development; develop infrastructure and linkages; and maintain and develop the culture of the Torne Valley.

Project volume in 2009

In 2009 Tornedalsrådet financed eight projects from the funding made available by the Nordic Council of Ministers. In addition the council conducted an Interreg IVA NORD project (with a budget of 360 000 SEK) from 2008-2010.

Ongoing activities

Network building within the municipal and regional sector, business development, education, labour market (through participation in the EURES Crossborder Tornedalen); culture (through Tornedalsrådet's working group on culture); cross-border health care (through participation in the Interreg project 'Gränslös Vård II'), etc. Tornedalsrådet has an active collaborative alliance with Bothnian Arc.

TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna



Vision

The attractiveness and competitiveness of the border region is to be strengthened through a cross-border cooperation and partnership between Hedmark and Dalarna.

Members

Norway Hedmark county municipality and the county governor of Hedmark

Sweden Region Dalarna and the county administrative board of Dalarna

The border region

Hedmark and Dalarna cover a combined area of 56 000 km² with approximately 465 000 inhabitants in a mountainous area.

Organisational structure

TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna is a project which is part of an Interreg project and through which a formal organisation is under construction. The project began in 2008.

The project is organised by a steering group consisting of one representative from each of the four collaborating institutions. The steering group meets twice a year. In addition a project and management group has been set up which consists of representatives from the administration and project leaders from the four collaborating institutions. The project and management group meets at least six times per year.

The project formulation also makes it possible to establish thematic coordination groups and specific working groups if necessary.

The daily management of the project is carried out by a project leader employed by the Hedmark county and a project coordinator from Region Dalarna.

Financing

The start-up of TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna is funded by the Interreg 4A Sweden-Norway programme and a 3-year grant from the Nordic Council of Ministers. The total budget for the three years is approximately 14 million SEK. The Interreg funding covers 87 % of the total budget, while the Nordic Council of Minister's contribution makes up the remaining 13 %.

Focus areas

The project is guided by an action program for the years 2009-2011. The prioritised target areas in the programme are: 1. Development and establishment of networks and collaborative areas in order to strengthen the innovative capacity in the region; 2. Marketing and enhancement of the strengths of the region; and 3. Establishment and development of tools, methods, and models that can boost the cross-border cooperation.

Project volume in 2009

14 projects

Description of project activities

Obviously the aim of the ongoing projects is primarily to contribute to regional development and growth but also to establish a formal cross-border cooperation committee. A further objective is to highlight with both politicians and civil servants the need for transnational cooperation in the region. TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna is also working actively to start-up new projects, find partners, and host seminars and information sessions focusing on the target areas that are selected in the action programme and which are in accordance with the priorities of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Ongoing activities

Increasing visibility of both TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna and the border region as a whole is an important ongoing priority and this includes information dissemination, design and distribution of leaflets, construction of web sites, distribution of newsletter, and general contact with the press.

Öresund Committee

Vision

The overarching vision for the region is to create 'the Öresund region – Europe's most attractive and competitive region'.

Members

Denmark The Capital Region, Region Zealand, City of Copenhagen, City of Frederiksberg, Regional Municipality of Bornholm, KKR Hovedstaden, and KKR Sjælland

Sweden Region Skåne, City of Malmö, City of Helsingborg, Lund Municipality, and Landskrona Municipality

The border region

The Öresund region covers approximately 20 000 km² and has 3.7 million inhabitants.

Organisational structure

The Öresund Committee has since 1993 been an important political engine behind the regional development around Öresund. The committee is the only political cooperation that covers the entire Öresund region.

The Öresund Committee consists of 36 elected politicians; 18 from the Danish and 18 from the Swedish part of the region. For each committee member is also appointed an alternate, and both representatives and alternates are appointed by the member organisations themselves. The members serve for the duration of their political mandate in their respective country. The Öresund Committee is the highest governing body for the cooperation. It approves the overall objectives and the action plan. The Committee meets at least twice a year.

The President and Vice President of the Committee lead the work in both the Committee and in an Executive committee. Both the President and the Vice President sit for a one-year period, with the positions alternating between Swedish and Danish representatives.

The Executive Committee consists of 12 members: six from Denmark and six from Sweden. They meet when necessary but at least 4 times per year.

The Öresund Committee finds itself in the zone between the public and the private sector but is defined as a private interest group with political governing. The Committee is registered in the municipality of Copenhagen.

The secretariat is located in Copenhagen and has 9 employees and 1 trainee.

Financing

The Öresund Committee is financed by contributions from its members. In 2009 the member fee amounted to 2.82 DKK per inhabitant in the Öresund region. These revenues amounted to a total of 10.412.000 DKK in 2009, which is 89.7 % of the total revenue. The Nordic Council of Ministers grants the regional cooperation a basic funding. In 2009 this amount was 1.200.000 DKK which is approximately 10.3 % of the total revenues.

Focus areas

Efforts to meet the long-term objective have been targeted towards a common development strategy. During 2008-2010, the Öresund Committee has developed a regional development strategy for the Öresund region, ØRUS. This strategy focuses on four strategic priority areas: knowledge and innovation; culture and experiences; cohesive and varied labour market; and accessibility and mobility. These four priority areas are the foundation for the long-term development strategy but in addition, being an attractive climate smart region is a theme that traverses all four priorities. ØRUS was adopted as the official development strategy for the Öresund region by the members of the Öresund Committee in May 2010 and is probably the only regional development strategy between two countries.

Project volume in 2009

23 projects

Description of project activities

The Öresund Committee participates in project activities that are self-funded, co-funded, or in projects where they can participate in steering groups instead of contribute with financing.

Ongoing activities

The Committee has per the 1st of January 2009 implemented a reorganisation in order to make the political work more efficient. In 2009 and 2010 the Öresund Committee has further strengthened its role as a political platform and lobby organisation. The work aims to generate tangible political results and focus is on areas that are in need of a common political effort.

Communication and marketing are important parts of the work of the Committee; this takes place via the web page, www.oresundskomiteen.dk, the media, photo bank, and various publications such as newsletters and annual magazines.

Gränskommittén Østfold-Bohuslän/Dalsland



Vision

The Cross-border Committee intends to contribute to developing the cross-border area Østfold-Fyrbodal into an attractive cross-border region for people, businesses and organisations to work and live in.

Members

- Sweden* Västra Götaland Region, the municipalities of Strömstad, Tanum, Munkedal, Sotenäs, Lysekil, Orust, Uddevalla, Dals-Ed, Bengtsfors, Åmål, Mellerud, Färgelanda, and Vänersborg, and Trollhättan City
- Norway* Østfold county municipality, and the municipalities of Halden, Aremark, Fredrikstad, Sarpsborg, Hvaler, Rygge, Råde and Moss

The border region

The Committee comprises 14 municipalities in Western Sweden and 8 municipalities in South-eastern Norway. The region covers approximately 9 500 km² and holds close to 468 000 inhabitants. The region is located in a scenic area between Oslo and Gothenburg. Norway's link to Europe, the E6 motorway, runs through the region. Tourism, trade and manufacturing are the most important industries.

Organisational structure

The Committee was formed in 1980 and is an organisation that is legally placed within Fyrbodal municipal association. The activities are led by a board consisting of 26 members and 26 alternates. Each member organisation appoints their representative to the board. The board meets 4 times per year and the board meeting rotates between the members. In addition, there is an executive committee consisting of four members and four alternates which are appointed by the board. The executive committee meets 4-5 times per year.

A smaller secretariat at the Fyrbodal municipal association in Uddevalla, Sweden manages the daily work. The secretariat employs one fulltime committee secretary. In 2009 the Committee has also employed two project leaders - one full-time, one part-time - linked to different projects.

Financing

The activities are financed through member fees, funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers, and project funding. In 2009, the Committee had a total turnover of approximately 4 million SEK. The revenues were distributed as follows: member fees 18 %, Nordic Council of Ministers 35 %, and project funding from members and businesses 47 %.

Focus areas

In its Action programme 2009-2011, the Committee has prioritised five focus areas: border obstacles, business, infrastructure/linkages, cooperation/exchange of experiences, and environment/health.

Project volume in 2009

Totally, the Committee has in 2009 been involved in 34 projects, whereof six were run by the Committee or where the Committee has been an active participant.

Description of project activities

The project activities are a very important medium to achieve the Committee's objectives. The Committee primarily initiates projects, finds collaborators, co-finances, and participates in various projects and only secondarily runs their own projects. The projects must benefit the border region on both the Swedish and the Norwegian side and have a link to one of the prioritised focus areas.

Ongoing activities

In addition to the project activities the Committee works actively to establish and maintain various cross-border networks/meeting places, information activities, advocacy, work on border obstacles, and exchange knowledge.



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